

ALEXANDER I. DEMCHENKO*Saratov State L. V. Sobinov Conservatory, Saratov, Russia*
*ORCID: 0000-0003-4544-4791, alexdem43@mail.ru***Universal Art Studies: Theory and Practice***

The centuries-long tradition of disciplines connected with artistic culture has always been directed towards the differentiated perception of each of the branches of art studies. Presently there are various approaches beginning to take shape towards the formation of an overall (universal) discipline of art studies as a discipline aspiring towards an all-encompassing sweep of a multiple-point areal of basic facts, names, phenomena and tendencies of world artistic culture. The formation of this meta-discipline corresponds to the processes of human consciousness, which continue to acquire greater relevance. The author asserts that the multi-disciplinary approach requires in the most emphatic way the usage of cluster technology, which in this case presumes the integration of resources of the various branches of art studies for an integrated mastery of artistic space in all its diversity. At the same time, it is necessary to make use of the method of artistic analysis with which the conception-based foundation of the musical compositions becomes pivotal. All of this leads to the perspective of transferal beyond the boundaries of a special scholarly discipline towards the horizons of a generally valid picture of the world. By perceiving the art of music as a testimony of the epoch that generated it, by evaluating it as a peculiar instrument of cognition, and by bringing to light its capabilities in the plan of modeling the image of the world and man, we acquire the most abundant albeit still little researched resources of a colorful and multidimensional historical memory making it possible to expand significantly and enrich our perceptions. In the educational milieu the formation of a renewed world-perception realized with the participation of universal art studies would make it possible to realize in the best possible way the basic subject of “world artistic culture.” For the sake of elaborating on the expounded concept, the “Center for Integrated Research” has been founded at the Saratov Conservatory, being the only such center in Russian institutions for higher education. The director of the center is Doctor of Arts, Professor Alexander Demchenko.

Keywords: general art studies, a multi-disciplinary approach, the artistic picture of the world, the Saratov Conservatory, the center for integrated artistic research.

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*ORCID: 0000-0003-4544-4791, alexdem43@mail.ru***Всеобщее искусствоведение: теория и практика**

Многовековая традиция наук, связанных с художественной культурой, почти всегда была ориентирована на раздельное восприятие каждой из отраслей искусствоведения. Ныне намечаются подступы к формированию всеобщего (универсального) искусствоведения как науки, стремящейся к всеобъемлющему охвату множественного ареала основных фактов, имён, явлений и тенденций мировой художественной культуры. Становление этой метанауки корреспондирует приобретающим всё большую актуальность процессам глобализации человеческого сознания. Автор утверждает, что мультидисциплинарный подход самым настоящим образом требует использования в художественных исследованиях кластерной технологии, что в данном случае подразумевает интеграцию ресурсов различных отраслей искусствоведения для комплексного освоения художественного пространства во всём его многообразии. При этом необходимо использовать метод художественного анализа, при котором стержневой становится концепционная основа произведений. Всем этим открывается перспектива выхода за пределы специальной научной дисциплины к горизонтам общезначимого гуманитарного знания с построением

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художественной картины мира. Осознавая искусство как свидетельство породившей его эпохи, оценивая его как своеобразный инструмент познания, выявляя его возможности в плане моделирования облика мира и человека, мы приобретаем богатейшие, пока мало изученные ресурсы красочной и многомерной исторической памяти, позволяющей существенно расширить и обогатить наши представления. В образовательной среде формирование обновлённого миропонимания, осуществляемое при участии всеобщего искусствознания, наилучшим образом позволяет реализовать базовый предмет «Мировая художественная культура». Для разработки изложенной концепции в Саратовской консерватории создан единственный в российских вузах «Центр комплексных художественных исследований». Руководитель центра – доктор искусствоведения, профессор А. И. Демченко.

Ключевые слова: всеобщее искусствознание, мультидисциплинарный подход, концепционный метод, художественная картина мира, Саратовская консерватория, Центр комплексных художественных исследований.

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The centuries-old tradition of academic disciplines connected with artistic culture has almost always been and still is now in every way directed at a ramified perception of each of the branches of art studies (the chief of which are philology, art studies as a discipline related to the visual arts and architecture, musicology, drama studies, and, since the 20th century, also film studies). Such specialization is absolutely natural, due to the vividly expressed specificity of any type of artistic creativity, and absolutely indispensable, since it provides the prerequisites for in-depth studies of the corresponding sphere of the arts. In recent times in the milieu of scholars of various specializations one can observe an aspiration to transcend the boundaries of their profiles. And more and more often attempts are being made to write research works being at an intersection of contiguous spheres of art studies. Thus, still in many ways spontaneously and mainly in the form of preliminary approbations, there are prerequisites beginning to take shape for the formation of a *universal art studies* as a discipline aspiring to an all-embracing diapason of a multiple areal of the basic facts, names, phenomena and tendencies of world art culture.

It is apparent that this meta-discipline can and must develop itself relying on the immense supplies of observations and generalizations of all sorts accumulated within the various directions of art studies. And this development is conceivable only along the line of integrating comprehension of preceding experience, which is expressed in an integral and complex approach to the analyzed material. By way of an indispensable conditions there is a provision of a span of all types of artistic creativity producing at the present stage, with the concurrent exception in their examination of any

barriers or “separation walls.” What is born in mind here are the customary boundaries between the various arts, and between them a rubrication according to types and genres. For another thing, the capacity of the researcher is intended to rise above the regional specificity towards what comprises the essence of the world artistic process.

The aforementioned does not mean that the peculiarities and color defined by the material of any given art, type of mentality and body of traditions of one national school or other are to be ignored. The question is in that the accentuations of all these moments it is preferable to correlate with the drawing out of the general and the mainstream in the development of spiritual culture taken in its international shearing strength. This is how all kinds of localizations and the inevitable unilateralism of the researcher’s quest are being overcome. An integrated approach with the reliance on mutually supplementing resources of various arts and the various national schools, characteristic for it, makes it possible to formulate the broadest possible generalizations.

The formation of a universal art corresponds to the processes of globalization of human consciousness, which are presently achieving a continuously greater topicality. These processes have been determined by the overall historical situation which has definitively been determined towards the beginning of the third millennium: the unviability and even the impossibility of any kind of national aloofness, and a growing interconnectedness of everything taking place in the contemporary world. The multi-disciplinary approach we are discussing demands most emphatically the use of cluster technology in artistic research. This term, applying the word “cluster,” in this sense presumes an integration of resources of various branches of art

studies for a complex reclamation of artistic space in its diversity and integrity.

About the conception-based method of artistic analysis

When the examination of a separately taken musical composition is at issue, which in the study of the world artistic culture presents one of the crucial moments, the most productive method is perceived to be the *conception-based method of artistic analysis*.

In art studies and pedagogy various methods of artistic analysis are used – from the consistently descriptive to the problem-based generalizing types. At the same time, one widespread demerit of this is the fact that study of musical compositions sometimes expresses itself in a sum of various types of observations, aspects and angles not connected with the logic of a unified, cementing core. In the capacity of such a core the conception-based foundation of the musical composition may serve most effectively of all. It is particularly the conception as the idea and content-based substrate, the expression of which is ultimately (whether consciously or intuitively) what the artist aspires to, which presents the highest unifying factor, bringing all and everything in the particular composition to a semantic wholeness. By means of such an approach it becomes possible to direct the analysis towards that super-task which determines the essence of the examined composition.

The main point of conception-based analysis is that pride of place goes to the exposure of the image-related semantic content, and all the components of argumentation (from the general historical particulars to technological computations) become subservient to the disclosure of the corresponding aspects. In other words, the goal of the present analytical method is not in the means of expression as such, but in expression proper, i.e. the image, character, idea and conception emerging on the basis of the utilization of certain means. At that, an ascent is carried out from the solely artistic to broader culturological and sociological categories, and from them – to comprehension of the universal panhuman content inherent in the analyzed musical composition. Consequently, this refers to the understanding of some particular artefact as an artistic testimony of the time period which created it, as art modelling the image of the world and the human being by the means inherent to it.

Presently art studies are closely approaching the conscious aspiration to view in artistic culture not

only a set of various types of phenomena inherent to various peoples and time periods, the comprehension of a concretely historical experience of mankind undergoing evolution, reflection of society and the inner world, the motive-dynamic and the emotional-psychological sides of human existence, the style of living and the overall atmosphere of existence. When speaking of the method in question, it is necessary to highlight the moment connected with historical subject matter. What is meant here is its inevitable actualization. The utterance of Vissarion Belinsky is well-known: “We question and examine the past so that it would explain to us our present and hint to us about our future” [2, p. 18].

Subsequently, this thought was variedly elaborated upon numerous times, and one of such variations has been formulated by Lion Feuchtwanger: “I never intended to depict history for its own sake... I cannot imagine that a serious novelist working with historical material would see in historical facts anything other than an artistic theme, which gives him the opportunity to express himself, his own perception of life, his time, his understanding of the world, in a more efficient manner” [4, p. 3].

Ultimately, such estimations lead to the conclusion that in a strict and precise meaning of the term historical subject matter as such does not exist at all – in one way or other it turns out to be the theme of contemporaneity, since everything in the art of the given time period correlates directly or indirectly with the relevant problem range.

The actualization is predetermined by the very specificity of the artistic process, the pivotal role of which is played by the artistic personality, which is a wholehearted product of its time, so the elaboration of historical subject matter is usually carried out on the basis of stylistic norms and structural-technological resources corresponding to the level of artistic thought of the current historical stage. The so-called historical color of a composition upon closer scrutiny always turns out to present exclusively the outer shell beyond which one can discern present-day characters and manifestations.

The functions of the usage of historical subject matter in topical aims are plenty in quantity. It can appear as a sort of metaphor, allegory or allusion, evoking associations and parallels of time periods, events and characters. Historical subject matter helps disclose the vital problem range in juxtaposition with the experience of a remote time, to endow the depicted entity with the desired illumination, makes it possible to open the curtain over what is still unclarified in

contemporaneity, has not yet been revealed distinctly and is perceived only in an intuitive manner.

Thereby, the historical subject matter emerges not as something self-sufficient, but serves as a special artistic tool for the manifestation of images of modernity, which makes it possible to connect the inner meaning of compositions bearing historical subject matter with a topical condition of existence.

The use of cluster technology and the conception-based method in artistic research works opens up the perspective of passing beyond the limits of specialized scholarly discipline towards the horizons of a generally valid humanitarian knowledge.

About the super-task of universal art studies

Such a departure may be realized along the paths of creating an *artistic picture of the world*, which appears as a “super-task” of universal art studies. And the content-, idea- and conception-based aspects of the artistic material, in their turn, end up forming the unifying foundation of the complex study of the phenomena of spiritual culture.

Historical scholarship, philosophy, aesthetics and the art studies of recent times demonstrate a greater interest in questions of modeling of the artistic picture of the world. In all appearances there appeared an imperative need in the expansion and deepening of our perceptions of what takes place with the human being and with the environment surrounding him. It is no longer possible to satisfy this need by the customary means of social-historical analysis, which induces researchers to turn to those little-studied resources which art possesses thereof.

The artistic picture of the world is a system of generalized perceptions of one historical time period or other, which is formed as a result of comprehension of works of art pertaining to the given period. Beyond the seemingly illusory qualities of the artistic texts there lies concealed an immense continent of human existence depicted in a peculiar manner, presented both in the spectrum of ideas, incentives and motivations, as well as in all sorts of possible emotional, intellectual, moral-psychological and motive-dynamic manifestations (one of the attempts at creating an artistic picture of the world – see [3]). Presently art studies have closely approached the conscious aspiration to see in artistic culture the memory of the ages, the imprinting of the concrete historical experience of humanity undergoing evolution, reflection of society

and of the inner world of the human being, the entire diversity of the boundaries of his existence. Reclamation of this memory in its sufficient fullness is possible only upon the conditions of complex study of all the arts developing in that time period, since notwithstanding the commonality of the object and its functions each one of them presents its own aspects in the disclosure of the common problem range – this is particularly what is served, in the long run, by their specific peculiarities, determining the autonomy of any kind of artistic creativity.

Not leaving out of account this indispensable and very fruitful specification, it is proper to emphasize that even more important is the commonality of tendencies and attitudes determined by a common feeling of people who belong to one and the same period of time.

What also unites the various arts is their correlation with philosophical knowledge and social history in terms of the fixation of what occurs with the world and with the human being. There are many points of intersection and crisscross moments between artistic memory and the scientific picture of existence. However, many of the phenomena reflected in art appear absolutely in a new light. In addition, in the artistic chronicles there exists a reflection of a broad circle of observations, which usually remains beyond the vision of historical science, which for the most part operates by means of facts and events. Art brings in such perspectives of “spectral analysis” of life processes and touches upon such strata of existence, which are practically unattainable for comprehension from the customary positions. The most important of them is connected with the spiritual world of man and with his emotional sphere – both in the typological whole and in the myriad individually inimitable manifestations.

This is why we ought to hearken to the assertion uttered back at the dawn of human history by Aristotle: “An artistic depiction of history is more scientific and more accurate than a precise historical description. The poetical art permeates into the very essence of the matter, whereas a precise account gives merely an enumeration of the particularities” [1, p. 85].

Perceiving art as a testimony of the period of time which generates it, evaluating it as a peculiar instrument of cognition, bringing to light its possibilities in terms of modeling the image of the world and of man, we acquire the richest, still unstudied resources of a colorful and multidimensional *historical memory*, making it

possible to expand considerably and to enrich our perceptions of the occurred and the occurring.

The aforementioned provides the foundations for formulating the following conclusions:

– artistic memory enriches significantly our knowledge of the world and the human being, gives in many a different dimension in apprehension of existence, since it possesses its own means of achievement of life processes and brings out a number of absolutely self-sufficient perceptions and aspects;

– a full-fledged reconstruction of the model of existence of any particular period of time is possible only on the basis of a synthesis of generalizations which are inherent to the philosophical, social-historical and artistic pictures of the world.

To summarize, by way of a conclusion, it is possible to assert that in reliance on principles and methods of universal art studies it is possible to achieve an integral perception and understanding of world artistic culture, and this, in its turn, may become a serious premise for integral perception and understanding of everything which happened and is happening on our planet.

About the tutorial discipline “World artistic culture”

As a direction of thought and knowledge, art studies are quite self-sufficient. However, the genuine power of any science reveals itself in its practical application, when from an isolated laboratory-abstract locus it passes onto forms of rather broad existence, thereby acquiring justifiability of its existence and its full value. With the greatest amount of consistency and regularity this is realized by means of universal education in its various stages.

What is it that induces to bring in more and more actively the horizon of corresponding knowledge during the various stages of education? First of all, the concept of education is absolutely unthinkable outside of mastery of at least the minimal amount of knowledge in terms of the basic art forms. And, second, the contact with the world of artistic images brings in its inimitable aspects into that multifaceted synthesis, which in common usage is dubbed the interest and taste to life.

It is also generally known that exposure to the wealth of artistic culture makes our feelings more refined and sensitive, and their spectrum more saturating and ramified. Moreover, special research has shown that the development of the anthropogenic era is in need of “replenishment”

from art, since this helps overcome the inevitable hypertrophy and even the inferiority of the urbanized and “digitalized” intellect due to the impact of the impulses of associative thinking, uninhibited fantasy, and elements of paradox and unpredictability, all of which are characteristic for artistic creativity.

It is natural to begin the formation of a renewed world outlook carried out with the aid of universal art studies right from the school bench. This is what particularly, to one degree or another, the basic subject of “world artistic culture” is designed to achieve, having been introduced starting from the 1980s in Russia on the level of general and special high school education.

Presently, in connection with the processes of humanitarization of contemporary education the question of introducing this subject into the institutions of higher education in Russia is also being raised. Its instruction in two levels presumes for the most part an introductory and descriptive mastery of the materials in intermediate educational institutions (high schools, gymnasiums, lyceums, colleges) and its problem-range generalizing presentations in higher educational programs.

Needless to say, this material must be varied depending on the age group of the corresponding group of students, with the consideration of the accessibility and possibilities of more or less adequate perception. Independently from all of this, particularly the all-inclusive of all types of artistic creativity (literature, the visual arts and architecture, music, theater, and in the 20th century also cinema) is perceived to be the most preferable.

Moreover, the unifying basis of such an education can and must be served by content-, idea- and semantic-based aspects and overall stylistic tendencies. The meaning-generating component, if placed at a central position, becomes very effective not only from the point of view of its function of a unifying pivot, but in terms of the greatest amount of communicative qualities for an auditorium of any level of erudition.

If one is to speak of a completed system of interaction of a course of world artistic culture with subjects of a specialized philological or some other kind of cycle, the all-embracing decision (what is meant here is chiefly higher, university-level education) is perceived to be next in order.

Education is carried out on the basis of a consistent mastery of the large-scale historical periods in their evolutionary motion from the depths of the centuries to the present time. This instruction



is carried out in a cluster-like examination of all the necessary constituent parts of artistic culture, and at a maximum the subjects related to social studies also become involved here – history, philosophy, aesthetics, etc. In this case the broad panoramic overviews of the state of the artistic culture of a given historical period are combined with a detailed examination of what is usually studied in traditional philological or artistic disciplines.

The summary mastery of the art created by the masters in the form of a systematically elaborated retrospective of artistic creativity is capable of significantly enriching the inner world of man, bringing him close to the ideal of a comprehensively developed personality.

The undoubted relevance of the examined approach is also determined by the wish to stimulate through a universally integrating perspective of the world artistic process the aspiration towards knowledge and cognition of universal tendencies and regular laws of development of earth civilization.

In other words, the goal is to develop by means of formation of an integrated, all-embracing view of world culture the capabilities of the individual to think and feel globally, as is required by the perspective of progress of mankind in its entry into the third millennium.

The Center for Complex Artistic Research

With the aim of realizing the expounded the conception the Center for Complex Artistic Research has been founded at the Saratov Conservatory. Its main aims consist in the following:

- a consolidation of research fellows aspiring to carry out complex artistic research (the Saratov Conservatory – Saratov – the Volga region – Russia with the departure to international cooperation);

- the development of a methodology of complex artistic research and carrying out practical scholarly work in studying the world artistic process in its various historical stages;

- building an artistic picture of the world interpreted as an instrument of cognition of existence and the richest resource of historical memory;

- affirmation of universal art studies as a new scholarly direction based on principles of integrative-global knowledge and the implementation of its achievements into educational practice;

- the preparation and publication of fundamental scholarly works on the history of art, taken as a whole (“The Ancient World,” “Antiquity,” “The Middle Ages,” “The Renaissance,” “The Baroque

Period,” etc.), as well as monographic works and compilations of articles on various issues of more specialized character;

- the preparation and publication of an “Encyclopedia of Art” (Literature, the Visual Arts, Architecture, Music, Theater, Cinema) and a set of specialized reference books (“Artistic styles, schools and trends,” “From the Artistic Treasury of the Volga Region,” etc.).

The positions indicated above testify of an undoubtedly innovational and unique character of the activities of the Center. The core of the Center is comprised by its fulltime employees – Doctor of Arts Alexander Demchenko and the Senior research associates – Candidate of Arts Victoria Alexeyenkova and Natalia Korolevskaya. Among the part-time employees there are specialists in the field of art studies, philology, culturology and a number of other disciplines from various cities of Russia and other countries. They include 16 scholars holding degrees of Doctors of Sciences (leading research associates), 25 holding degrees of Candidates of Sciences (senior research associates), as well as young scholars (junior research associates).

From the time of its foundation and up to the present day there is work carried out on fundamental research “The Universe of the Word, Color and Sound” in 12 volumes and the “Encyclopedia of Art” in 3 volumes.

A number of fundamental publications is being prepared for publication: the monograph “Mirovoy khudozhestvenny protsess. Evolyutsiya i zakonomernosti” [“The World Artistic Process. Evolution and Regular Laws”], the encyclopedic editions “Entsiklopediya avangarda” [“The Encyclopedia of the Avant-garde”], “Khudozhestvennye muzei mira” [“The Artistic Museums of the World”], “Shedevry arkhitektury” [“Masterpieces of Architecture”], etc. The periodical publication of collective works of the series “Dialog iskusstv i art-paradigm” [“The Dialogue of the Arts and Art Paradigms”] began. Each of the three already published editions opens with extended program material written by the editor and compiler Alexander Demchenko, and the chain of these preambles is called upon to outline step by step the entire panorama of the world artistic process through presentation of the corresponding generalizing thoroughfares. The essays and articles written by the participants of the project in the published compilations demonstrate an exclusively broad range of the researched material and the

utilized methodological approaches, including synergy and cognitive science: analysis of the so-called epochal styles, the crossover connections and syntheses of various arts, the principles of creativity and the reception of meaning-generation in the sphere of art, the migration of the archetypes of the spiritual tradition in the space of West-East, the evolution of the artistic avant-garde, the texts and implications of Soviet music in the context of the ideologems of socialist realism, the issues of post-dramatic theater, rock music in its reaching out to generally valid concepts, etc.

In Saratov and in a number of other Russian cities the work of the Center includes systematic

consultations concerning the questions of complex artistic research and work is overseen on concrete research works in the following directions: the artistic picture of the world, philosophical concepts in artistic creativity, questions of reinterpretation of the artistic text, the paradigm of the spiritual in the sphere of the arts, regional artistic culture, the art of music in a general humanitarian context, etc.

The activities of the Center for Complex Artistic Research is called on to bring into sharp focus the horizons of a new scholarly directions and to provide the initial basic generalizations, proceeding from which humanitarian knowledge of the world and the human being may acquire qualitatively new perspectives.

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