

## Musical Education

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## Video Clips as a Relevant Format for Presenting Classical Music and Their Use in the Educational Practices of Universities

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**Abstract.** The article examines the audiovisual format of a video clip created around a piece of classical music. Content of this kind is widely available on the Internet. A review of the literature on the topic demonstrates the fundamental focus of researchers on the general socio-psychological typology of music videos and the almost complete lack of attention paid to the methods of their implementation. Focusing on the use of this format of work in the pedagogical practice of music universities, the article considers two general technological approaches for creating a video clip. The first type consists of a simple music track assembled in a presentation program to accompany slides reflecting the individual associations of the creator. The second type represents a visualised commentary on the emotional character of the music that corresponds to the logic of the musical structure of the piece and the forms of presentation of the thematic material (motifs, phrases, sentences). A distinctive subspecies of this type takes the form of a replacement of the sound design of a scene from a movie. To inform the discussion, around twenty projects presented on the creator-owned channels of Liudmila Naryzhnaya and Galina Taraeva are analysed.

**Keywords:** classical music video clip, video clip creation techniques, video clips in educational practice

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## Introduction

Video clips whose soundtracks feature classical music are a common form of creative endeavour among Internet users. Examples of this kind of media product are extremely numerous. By entering any popular classical composition in the miniature genre (for example, waltzes by Frederic Chopin or pieces from *The Seasons* by Pyotr Tchaikovsky) into the browser address bar, it is possible to find dozens of “visual fantasies” on the corresponding work, often comprising ordinary slide shows, with an audio recording (concert, studio, or even home music-making) used as the audio background. On Liudmila Naryzhnaya’s internet channel alone, there are more than a hundred such samples.<sup>1</sup> The abundance of this kind of content encourages theoretical understanding of the phenomenon in terms of its origin and typology (see, for example: [1; 2; 3]). The most significant aspect of such a theoretical study will consist in analysing the principles of video editing used in the production process. The popularity of the music video format, especially among young people, has encouraged the present author to widely use its varieties in her own teaching practice, namely, to update didactic techniques for replenishing background material in the student’s auditory memory and developing creative skills.

### The Problematic of the Video Clip in Scholarly Reflection

A number of aspects of the video clip are discussed in the contemporary scholarly literature. In the first place, it is worth mentioning the article by Natalia Samutina, [4] which examines the issues of the relationship between visualisation and verbal text in a popular song,

in which the video clip is described as perhaps the most common audio-visual format that synthesises the form of song and video sequence for a screen representation. In her dissertation on the connections between classical music and contemporary mass culture, Darya Zhurkova explains the new phenomena in terms of the unprecedented development of mass media technologies. [5] In particular, she notes that today a whole range of personal manipulations with classical music is becoming available to anyone, whether dubbing amateur videos, installing a personalised telephone ringtone or creating audio-visual greetings for sending to friends and acquaintances. At the same time, in the article by Tatyana Filanovskaya *Relevant Forms to Introduce Classical Musical Heritage to Modern Audience* presentations using modern information and computer technologies are not mentioned at all. [6] The author named only three formats for performing classical music (although today there are more) — non-standard venues open-air, non-academic stage image of performers (live communication with the audience, in particular humorous), a combination of classical and popular music in one project.

Meanwhile, the analysis of methods for creating visual music videos appears to be poorly reflected in scholarly research. Nevertheless, some authors have attempted to present a taxonomy and classification of their generic types. Tatyana Shemetova, for example, formulates her task in this way, indicating in the title of the article — “approaches to describing a music video.” [7] In particular, three such approaches are defined: (1) semiotic, which in connection with the presence of verbal, musical and iconic components is also designated as polycode; (2) cultural, related to

<sup>1</sup> Liudmila Naryzhnaya’s Internet channel.

URL: <https://youtube.com/channel/UCX8ewNLHvXWCByp1HLvMHpg> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

the “formulaic narration” (here the author refers to the American cultural scientist John Cavelti); (3) aesthetic, in which the term film-cathexis is distinguished (definition of Alexey Orlov) to evoke an understanding of the feelings, ideas, and thoughts of the composer with a powerful flow of emotions from the subconscious.

Erika Sovetkina’s dissertation *Aesthetic Features of Music Video Clips* was completed at the Department of Screen Art at the Moscow Institute for Advanced Studies of Television and Radio Broadcasting Workers. [8] The author’s analysis of the means of creating a video clip presented in it covers the most general principles. From the point of view of figurative visual impact, the author distinguishes “background (visual),” “choreographic,” and “film” clips. She attributes the following functions to music videos: aesthetic, recreational, educational, relaxational, promotional, and integrative. However, there is no specific analysis of the visual elements of music videos in Erika Sovetkina’s work; moreover, the material considered in her dissertation is not classical music, but popular song.

From the above review of studies devoted to modern video clips, it follows that at present the problem of techniques used to visualisation miniature classical musical compositions (or fragments of larger forms) has not yet been covered in the scholarly community. Since the topic of the present work is determined by the author’s interest in using clips as part of the educational process at conservatories, the emphasis on the techniques used in their creation is particularly relevant.

### Music Videos in Educational Practice

In contemporary performing culture, visual accompaniment of music is carried out in a wide variety of formats. For example, enlarged images of performers on screens located near the stage are widely used during concert performances. The need for them is due to

the fact that when a musician performs in front of an audience of thousands, the overwhelming majority of viewers are simply unable to discern his or her real appearance. However, even in the space of a small hall, screens are often used, on which portraits of the artist, as well as posters, scenes from his or her life, photos of types of activities (for example, teaching), etc. are displayed. Presentations of visual associations of the music being performed are also possible — thus, in the Rostov Philharmonic, one of the concerts representing the Romantic program of “enchantment and witchcraft” music was accompanied by images of gnomes, trolls, fairies, elves, witches, Baba Yaga, Koschei, which were projected onto the screen of the back curtain.

The 20th century brought a new form of visualisation of academic music, which became wildly popular: cartoons based on a piece of classical music. This genre was initially popularised by Walt Disney. The first full-length animated film, *Fantasia*, was created in 1940. The audio sequence included works by Johann Sebastian Bach, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Igor Stravinsky, Ludwig van Beethoven, Modest Mussorgsky, Franz Schubert and other composers. On the eve of the millennium, a wonderful anniversary cartoon *Fantasia 2000* was released, which included the music of *Rhapsody in Blue* by George Gershwin. Today, cartoons whose soundtracks are based on classical music pieces constitute a vast layer of audio-visual musical culture. Such forms of visualisation as “cartoon commentary” are of particular interest in the context of the present article. However, such cartoons differ from music videos primarily in terms of their scale, typically ranging from 8–10 minutes to half an hour. The music video clip format discussed in the present work typically lasts from 2 to 5 minutes.

Common examples of visualisation of classical music on the Internet include:

the sound of a piece with a synchronous shift of the pages of the musical text, superimposing a video sequence of one or another content on the soundtrack with a recording of a classical piece, direct video recording of its performance (on a concert stage or in a studio) using several video cameras, which permits the editing of a clip showing the musicians from different angles and with a change of plans (from general to close-up and macro plans of hands, fingers, lips, notes, etc.).

By enhancing the emotional perception of music and comprehension of its meaning, such visual associations thus serve to encourage reflection. At the same time, a reverse process also occurs: when combined with video information, music enriches the visual image to compensate for the complexities of its precise verbal formulations.

The diversity of the mentioned forms of music videos can be reduced to two types. The first is the simplest example: ad hoc accompaniment of the music with visual materials. This is performed in a presentation program (for example, PowerPoint or Prezi) and involves a sequential change of visual objects. These can include landscapes, flowers and other plants, portraits from painting and graphic reproductions or original photos, household items (dishes, decorative details, etc.), interiors. In the vast majority of cases, the authors of such clips do not set themselves the task of matching the visuals to the music. As a rule, the selected video fragments are not identical in duration; sometimes the sound from

beginning to end is accompanied by only one image. Since these are short clips (from two to five minutes) intended for a general audience, such videos are not generally distinguished by a particularly creative approach or complex technical work. To create them, it is enough to master the simplest computer program. Today, almost all students have the skills to work in various video editors to create presentations on many academic subjects.

Examples of this kind can be found on the creator-owned channel of Galina Taraeva.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the educational video clip posted there *Pointe Shoes*<sup>3</sup> to the music of the prelude op. 11 No. 8 in F-sharp minor by Alexander Scriabin comprises a selection of photographs of pointe shoes and graceful ballet poses. The video also includes short clips from Darren Aronofsky's film *Black Swan* (in particular, the scene with Natalie Portman and Vincent Cassel dancing). Although the pictorial series reflects the cult of the era to which Scriabin belonged, i.e., the world of choreographic plasticity characteristic of it, the photographs do not correspond to the structure or emotional planes of the music. The same can be noted in the video clip based on footage from James Cameron's *Titanic*,<sup>4</sup> where the scene of the birth of love between the heroes (Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet) is simply accompanied by the love theme from Sergei Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, which fits well with the details of the film's mise-en-scènes. In the video *Demon. Hvorostovsky*<sup>5</sup> the music (the romance of the Demon from the opera of the same

<sup>2</sup> Galina Taraeva. URL: [https://youtube.com/channel/UCKQanm5h\\_0ZtjHsGd5GCI6g](https://youtube.com/channel/UCKQanm5h_0ZtjHsGd5GCI6g) (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>3</sup> Pointe shoes: educational video. Galina Taraeva. URL: [https://youtube.com/watch?v=XQyT\\_-jRKR4](https://youtube.com/watch?v=XQyT_-jRKR4) (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>4</sup> Scene from the film *Titanic*. Galina Taraeva. URL: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=wlafeCbU-gk&t=19s> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>5</sup> Demon. Hvorostovsky. Galina Taraeva. URL: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=9MTSeCWhemM> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

name by Anton Rubinstein) is accompanied by photos of Dmitri Hvorostovsky himself in this role and other singers, as well as reproductions of art by Mikhail Vrubel. These are also only tangentially connected with the emotional-tonal logic of the *arioso*, or with the structure of the musical form. There are many similar clips on the above-mentioned channel of Liudmila Naryzhnaya, which elicit enthusiastic comments from users. However, the visual associations often seem not entirely appropriate. Such is, for example, a video in which the famous Adagio from Gustav Mahler's *Fifth Symphony* is accompanied by sunsets, flowers, animals and swans.<sup>6</sup> For the listener who knows that this work reflects the composer's ecstatic and tragic love for his young wife Alma Schindler, this decision makes one doubt the correspondence between the choice of images and the meaning of the music.

The second type of music video clip demonstrates a desire to correlate visual objects with musical logic and emotional content: the change of slides conveys the emotional meaning of small fragments of music, including through motivic variation and changes in thematic material. In clips of this type, the video sequence corresponds to musical structures — motifs, phrases, periods, and sections of the form. For example, in the visualisation of Mozart's piano sonata in *A major* K. 331<sup>7</sup> presented in a video clip on Galina Taraeva's channel, the change in lyrical and active motives is clearly emphasised

by the comparison of reproductions of female and male portraits from the 18th century. The playful nature of the variations is also embodied through canvases depicting various everyday scenes with the participation of historical and mythological characters riding on swings, taking picnics in nature and engaging in courtship. In the video clip based on the miniature *April* from Tchaikovsky's *The Seasons*,<sup>8</sup> a clear correlation of motifs with the image emerges: the motif variation is "illustrated" by similar landscapes, the changes are accompanied by contrasting pictures. For example, changes are manifested in the shapes of icicles, the appearance of a frozen river, and the appearance of a forest landscape. The exact repetition of motifs is illustrated with the same picture. A similar technique is used to present visual objects in Tchaikovsky's *October*:<sup>9</sup> repeating ascending scale-like melodic lines are illustrated by variations of a forest panorama; similar cadence turns are executed by a kind of visual leitmotif comprising a yellow maple leaf on the surface of a pond.

Sometimes such clips turn out to be real discoveries. Thus, an unknown author posted video clips on the Internet in which individual parts of J. S. Bach's *Suites*, performed by the Chinese cellist Yo-Yo Ma are presented against the background of reproductions of 18th century portraits and photos of famous actors and actresses.<sup>10</sup> The smooth transitions of faces with varied facial expressions very

<sup>6</sup> Gustav Mahler. Adagio. *Symphony No. 5*. Liudmila Naryzhnaya. URL: <https://youtu.be/5FKN-0MiGCg> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>7</sup> Mozart. *Sonata in A major*, part 1, fragment: educational visualisation. Galina Taraeva. URL: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=b5LLwSYKSGU> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>8</sup> Tchaikovsky. *April*. Galina Taraeva. URL: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=317DC98CtRU> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>9</sup> Tchaikovsky. *October*. Galina Taraeva. URL: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=Pb5lsj0CkY> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>10</sup> Yo-Yo Ma. J. S. Bach: *Cello Suite No. 1* in *G Major*, *Prélude*. URL: <https://yandex.ru/video/preview/15201338926839021188> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

accurately convey the intonational contrasts of the musical material — whimsical changes in the intonations of the motives of sadness, joy, inspiration, grief, which distinguish the outstanding performance of Yo-Yo Ma.

When created by students, music videos of both types can serve as a kind of psychological test material for the teacher.<sup>11</sup> Although the first type of video clip is quite simple, it nevertheless provides an opportunity to touch the inner world of the student, while the second presents a more substantial understanding of his or her ideas about the content of music.

The “two-way” approach taken to the creation of video clips by students in educational practice can help to awaken their creative imagination: the student is asked to create two different types of clips for the same work, selecting an appropriate video sequence for each. An example is the video clip *Moonlight* by Claude Debussy,<sup>12</sup> posted on Galina Taraeva’s website, which, as might be expected, is built on night lunar landscapes. The gradual development of the motifs is achieved through different formats for the delivery of content in the presentation program to enable a smooth transition when mixing from one scene to another, the development of the image from one central point, the folding of the frame, “curtains,” etc. Another emotional and semantic version is presented by a fragment of the same piece — *Various Thoughts on Music by Debussy*.<sup>13</sup> Here the selection of images reflects the calm,

contemplative character and poignant tone: a plaster figurine of an angel on the palm of a hand, individual ears of corn, leaves close-up, drops of dew, jellyfish, shards of a broken wine glass...

A special type of work with a video clip in educational practice is the selection of music for a fragment from a film to replace the original soundtrack. An example of a very witty approach to such a learning task is the version of the ending of the cartoon *Shrek* with a Caucasian dance song posted on the Internet — both the movements and facial expressions of the singing characters cannot help but make you smile. The educational video assembled from a fragment from Leonid Gaidai’s film *It Can’t Be* is also highly amusing. During the lovers’ date at their friend’s apartment, the dialogues are replaced by the soundtrack of Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony*.<sup>14</sup> Instead of enjoying the hugs and kisses of his lover (Svetlana Kryuchkova), Anatole (Oleg Dal) is overcome with fear of being caught. While nervously anticipating the appearance of “witnesses” of his illicit relationship, he shudders at any rustling sounds represented musically by the Beethoven’s famous “fate motif”. “So fate knocks at the door” — the intonations of Beethoven’s theme became a musical metaphor for both the black cat entering the door and the owner’s husband ringing the doorbell.

Another interesting example of educational visualisation is related to the replacement of the musical accompaniment of one of the

<sup>11</sup> The author of the present article uses the form of the music video clip in various disciplines (from the analysis of musical form to modern didactic technologies, writing essays and even when working on dissertations).

<sup>12</sup> Debussy’s *Moonlight*: educational visualisation. Galina Taraeva. URL: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=cKsNS0DnfpQ> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>13</sup> Various Thoughts on Debussy’s Music: A Study Visualisation. Galina Taraeva. URL: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=WDpXCSrYzNM&t=19s> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>14</sup> *It Can’t Be*: dubbing a scene from the film. Galina Taraeva. URL: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=Eqz6YxE2LL0> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

fragments of Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Stalker*. Here we are talking about the disturbing scene in which the Writer wanders through the ruins of a meteorite that fell into the Zone to an unknown and terrible secret place of "fulfilment of the most cherished, most hard-won desires". In the original, this terrifying journey is set to the opening theme from Beethoven's *Pathétique Sonata*. The replacement was made with the music of the slow movement of the *Second Piano Concerto* by Alfred Schnittke.<sup>15</sup> The surreal and at the same time simple tone of Schnittke's music corresponds remarkably precisely to this fragment. In a personal conversation with the author of the present article regarding this replacement, the famous Bulgarian film director Georgi Djulgerov remarked that: "Tarkovsky would die of envy if he heard this!"<sup>16</sup>

Although the present article focuses on short video clips, it is worth separately considering some more detailed projects implemented in the author's teaching practice. These are videos presenting portraits of musicians (composers, performers) and groups, as well as those dedicated to the events of concerts and festivals. The duration of such videos tends to range from 15 to 20 minutes. And although these are actually "stories", the main requirements are the extensive use of music and "intrigue" in the presentation of information. Examples can be found on the aforementioned channel of Galina Taraeva. The project *Ivo Pogorelić. Two Lives* profiles the Croatian pianist, whose

playing has been described as eccentric as well as divine.<sup>17</sup> His biography has been shrouded in unusual stories. The musician first became famous as a result of the controversy that ensued from the "oddities" of his interpretation of Chopin's Second Ballade, leading to his elimination from the third round of the Tenth International Chopin Competition. Pogorelić married his teacher Alisa Kezheradze, who worked at the Moscow Conservatory; however, following her unexpected death, he stopped performing for 11 years. Following his return to the stage, his interpretations were completely different, but equally unusual (examples of which may be heard in the video).

In the project *Gambler. Boris Berezovsky*<sup>18</sup> the statement "I hate Chopin!" becomes intriguing. The eminent pianist explains that this extreme formulation serves as an incentive for improvisation. An example of the latter in the video is the *Etude Op. 10 No. 12* in *C minor* in the version of Leopold Godowsky, who performed the piece with his left hand in *C-sharp minor*. Another project is *Bayan-Mix*<sup>19</sup> — a fascinating story about two laureate accordionists, Sergei Voitenko and Dmitry Khramkov. They put their conservatory skills to the service of popularising classical music, turning academic concerts into variety shows. Their revolutionary concept presents a button accordion duet in a style drawn from rock culture. The project Noninho reveals the paradox of Astor Piazzolla's tango, whose passionate expressivity is compelling despite the

<sup>15</sup> *Stalker*. Galina Taraeva. URL: [https://youtube.com/watch?v=KK8p8vXy\\_9I](https://youtube.com/watch?v=KK8p8vXy_9I) (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>16</sup> Georgi Dimitrov Djulgerov (b. 1943) — Bulgarian film director, screenwriter and producer. Studied in Moscow at the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography. He made about 30 films.

<sup>17</sup> *Ivo Pogorelić. Two Lives*: educational film. Galina Taraeva. URL: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=NFEBoYElau4> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>18</sup> *Gambler. Boris Berezovsky*: educational film. Galina Taraeva. URL: [https://youtube.com/watch?v=\\_VVmbaV\\_ppU](https://youtube.com/watch?v=_VVmbaV_ppU) (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>19</sup> *Bayan-Mix*: educational film. Galina Taraeva. URL: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=EF9MIj2t5oo> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

sad circumstances of its composition (the piece is dedicated to the memory of a beloved father who tragically passed away).<sup>20</sup> Footage from Vladimir Mashkov's film *Papa* is originally combined with music and biographical facts. The project *Victoria. A Tale*<sup>21</sup> presents two alternative visualisations of Mendelssohn's Overture from the Suite *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The video sequence compares two of the most important phenomena of British culture in the mid-19th century (during the reign of Queen Victoria) — an unprecedented industrial boom and the escape of artists from reality into the world of a magical fairy tale. The project *The Secret of Success* reflects the intriguing story of the birth of Nino Rota's popular song *Speak Softly Love* from Coppola's film *The Godfather*. The author uses this example to reveal the technique of a composer who created his own symphonic style in the field of film music.

To summarise the above considerations, we emphasise that the variety of techniques for making a video clip for classical music described in this article is demonstrated mainly in educational projects posted on the above-mentioned channel. The taxonomy of types of performance is determined by the main task of revealing the feasibility of having students create a video clip whose soundtrack basis is a piece of classical musical. The use of video material of this kind in musical teaching practice can serve as an incentive to comprehend the meaning of music in a creative format.

The two approaches to performing visual accompaniment to a musical piece are, of course, conditional; in specific situations, they can be combined in different proportions. The student can be given the twin tasks

of randomly alternating video sequences while the music is playing or precisely correlating them with the logic of intonation development and musical structures. The quality of the assignment is assessed during a discussion of the video clip following its viewing in a classroom setting. It should be noted that students generally enjoy performing such exercises and are eager to participate in the discussion. And for the teacher, these forms of work are an invaluable opportunity to make closer contact with the psychological world of students, in terms of their feelings, imagination, and fantasy world.

The use of visual commentary on music as a practical exercise in educational practice is still in its infancy. This it can be relevant to cite an example from foreign practice. Xu Ge, a Chinese flute professor at the Wuhan Conservatory of Music, creates such projects for his students in a special class and posts them online. Two examples are available for the Russian user — Alcina's Aria by Handel and the Aria of J. S. Bach from *Suite in D major*.<sup>22</sup> They demonstrate the world of European Baroque and Classical culture, which is almost completely unfamiliar to Far Eastern people. According to the stories of a postgraduate student at the Rostov Conservatory who studied with Xu Ge, the professor practices with his students not only at concerts, but also in class, wearing costumes from the historical periods of the works being performed.

## Conclusion

The article has discussed the use of classical music videos in theoretical disciplines at university level. They captivate students with

<sup>20</sup> Noninho: student educational clip about tango by Astor Piazzolla. *Galina Taraeva*. URL: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=1mC3oS9eynA> (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>21</sup> *Victoria. A Tale*. *Galina Taraeva*. URL: [https://youtube.com/watch?v=zby\\_VS0zX90](https://youtube.com/watch?v=zby_VS0zX90) (accessed: 25.11.2024).

<sup>22</sup> *Professor Xu Ge's Project*. URL: <https://youtu.be/BuDk8clmsY8> (accessed: 25.11.2024).



a modern format of working with computer programs and, most importantly, with their creative nature, encouraging young people to demonstrate their work to their classmates, to understand an audience's reaction, and to actively discuss the advantages and disadvantages of their projects. On the one hand, these exercises help the teacher to compensate for the typically rather modest auditory background memory of the contemporary student, while on the other hand, they carry an important psychological and didactic function due to focusing attention on the spiritual and emotional atmosphere

of learning. In the latter case, it is important that the teacher not only demonstrate how to create clips, but also evoke a reaction of feelings to the music, including the logic of melodic and textural movement, syntactic structures, and articulatory division. Ultimately, the process is about developing listening skills and musical thinking. In conclusion, we may express the hope that the more detailed acquaintance with this format of modern culture will be able to convince contemporary teachers to include music videos in both theoretical and practical music disciplines.

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