

The Works of Lev Abeliovich (1912, Vilno – 1985, Minsk) in the History of Musical Culture of Belarus: Reflecting on National Self-Identification

The problem of national originality of art was actual at all times, only the perspective of its acuteness changed from time to time. The processes of assimilation which actively revealed themselves at the end of the XXth century have become global nowadays. And the question of preservation of any country's national culture remains essential.

Researchers [7, 9] distinguish three basic components of everyday life of the nation:

- Speech intonation of a verbal language which can be included as a component into the artistic whole and effect the structure of the musical text through features of its intonational and rhythmic content;
- National tradition of playing music which includes folklore and secular oral or oral and written professional tradition;
- Liturgical music which generated its own tradition. These components are sources of national originality, basis in formation of national art mentality and national style. Among the three components folklore remains a core of national life.

On the frontier of the XIXth–XXth centuries European professional music enters into a phase of active interaction with folklore. The process of «renovation through folklore» acquires its special importance in Belarusian music which is the youngest in the European composer culture as it entered the musical field of the XXth century with practically undeveloped potential of the “ethnic”.

Belarusian music, as we know it today, formed owing to efforts of composers of several generations. Formation of professional composer school occurs after the revolution of 1917 when eastern Belarus in 1919 became part of the USSR. Along with the composers, who were born in Belarus (G. Pukst, N. Ravensky, A. Bogatyryov, S. Polonsky, I. Ljuban) Belarusian professional musical traditions were also founded by the composers who came to Belarus from other regions: N. Tchurkin (from Georgia), N. Aladov, A. Turenkov, E. Tikotsky, V. Zolotaryov, A. Klumov whose formation was related to Petersburg school, M. Kroshner (from Ukraine). At the late 1940's through early 1950's musicians whose creative formation began in Warsaw – L. Abeliovich, E. Tyrmand, G. Wagner joined this group. However, in connection with occupation of Poland in September 1939, Belarus became their second motherland.

A huge role in formation of priority positions in musical art of Belarus of the 1950th–1980th played the creative work of L. Abeliovich (1912–1985), one of the greatest composers of Belarus of the second half of the XXth century, member of the Union of Composers of the USSR (1940), the Honoured Worker of arts of Belarus (1963). His compositions have opened a new page in the history of Belarusian music. Interpretation of the experience which has been accumulated by West European musical art of the XXth century, active aspiration to fill up information vacuum, establishment of creative contacts with outstanding musicians of the present – such as N. Mjaskovski, D. Shostakovich, – all this was new to musical culture of Belarus and in full measure demonstrated the active creative position of L. Abeliovich. As pianist Oleg Krimer noted in his memoirs, «his creative work was the card of everything most worthy, fundamental, highly professional, fair, that took place in Belarusian art... Having lived an incredibly difficult life, Abeliovich managed to preserve his outstanding individuality, and not to lose it on a tempting, easier way of conformism» [the citation on: 3, p. 239].

Formation of his musical self began in Vilno where Abeliovich was born in 1912 in the Jewish assimilated family. He received decent education: gymnasium, the faculty of law at the University of Vilno. Irresistible attraction to music and desire to study in a conservatory, against his parents' will, were the reasons of his leaving the university. Unfortunately, 25 years of future composer's life which he spent in Vilno, remain practically unknown. It should be assumed that Abeliovich took private lessons of playing the piano that gave him the chance to enter in 1935 the pianist faculty of the Warsaw conservatory (class of professor Z. Dzhevetsky), a little later – the composer faculty (class of professor K. Sikorsky); and in 1938 to take part in F. Chopin pianists contest. Mastering of late-romantic harmonies, serial technics, folklore work became in full measure apparent in the first famous composition created by Abeliovich in Belarus – Variations for the piano (1939).

Tragical events of September, 1939, occupation of Poland, have radically changed Abeliovich's destiny,

who after summer vacation continued education in Belarusian conservatory, in the class of prof. V. Zolotar'ov. Friendly relations between students from Warsaw – M. Weinberg, G. Wagner, E. Tyrmand get stronger there. There Abeliovich discovers Russian classical music, Belarusian folklore, becomes member of the Union of Composers of the USSR (1940). Symbolic is the date of Abeliovich's graduation – the 21st of June 1941, beginning of the Great Patriotic War, with the start of which he goes to a military service in Gorky. Shocks of war years left an indelible trace in the life of Abeliovich: unfortunately, he could not see his family who became victims of the Holocaust (probably; they died in ghetto in Vilno). Not by accident, the war theme becomes central in his creative work in future.

In July, 1943 a composer receives a call from Moscow: on Mjaskovsky's recommendation he becomes student of the Moscow State conservatory. The years of stay in Moscow became years of productive work under the guidance of Mjaskovsky whose creative work had a great impact on Abeliovich. A significant role in formation of Abeliovich as a composer played Dm. Shostakovich, with whom Abeliovich became very friendly thanks to M. Weinberg.

In 1948 a decree «About the fight against formalism in music» was issued; Mjaskovsky and Shostakovich got under the blow. In 1951, after Mjaskovsky's death, Abeliovich had to return to Minsk.

During this period of creative work composer tried different genres: instrumental sonata and variations, Concert for piano and suite, cycles of pieces and chamber and vocal music. It should be noted that during his stay in Moscow Abeliovich created compositions on Belarusian folk themes (the Overture for a symphonic orchestra on Belarusian themes, Suite on themes of Belarusian folk songs for two pianos, Two polyphonic four-handed plays on Belarusian folk themes for a piano), a cycle of programme plays for violin and piano («Kolybelnaya», «Poema», «Pejzazh», «Two Dances») which were highly evaluated by David Ojstrah: «Abeliovich's violin plays reveal indisputable skill of the composer, knowledge of the instrument, true artistic taste. Thematic material has connection with intonations of Belarusian folklore» [the citation on: 5, p. 12]. We shall also indicate the composer's appeal to Belarusian dulcimer for which he writes Twenty preludes in 1949. As researchers mention, musical themes of separate preludes are connected with intonations of Belarusian folk songs widely popular in those years. Why does Abeliovich address to Belarusian folklore simultaneously with mastering of stylistics of music of Mjaskovsky, Shostakovich? Is it the reaction to the decree «About the fight against formalism in music» and the creation of works available to wide audience? At the same time he writes two piano sonatas in a difficult musical language. Meanwhile in these sonatas Abeliovich also addresses to Slavic folklore: second subject group of the first movements of sonatas are written in the spirit of folk lyrical song, and in themes of scherzo and finales one can hear intonations typical of dance folk music.

The years from 1953 to 1971 are not marked with important events in L. Abeliovich's life: the composer works on new opuses in Minsk, time-proved warm friendly relations with M. Weinberg will continue. Stalin epoch is replaced by the period of "Khrushchev's thaw" that affected lives of creative intellectuals who gather not only for plenums of the Composers Union, but also in summer months in Ruza. The importance of Lev Abeliovich's results is determined by a high rank of the Honored Worker of arts of BSSR conferred to him in 1963.

In composer's creative work genre priorities were determined. During a short period of time Abeliovich created four symphonies and program overtures for a symphonic orchestra, three piano sonatas, two piano cycles «Fresca №1» and «Fresca №2». The composer actively worked in vocal genres, wrote chamber and instrumental compositions for different performing groups.

For the first time vocal works of the composer include Belarusian poetry (poems of J. Kolas, M. Tank, A. Bachila, M. Bogdanovich), the Belarusian language. Along with them in Abeliovich's romances, a little later in the 4th symphony, the major ethnodifferentiative thematic line of Belarusian art is revealed – complex of "homeland", the most extensive content layer of the national and patriotic orientation uniting ethnically relevant images (nature, native language, native land songs etc.).

In Abeliovich's creative work one more figurative and subject component of the national Belarusian context – topic of the Great Patriotic War – is reflected especially vividly in such compositions of Abeliovich, as «Military ballads» (texts by S. Evseeva, S. Vilenski and his own), «Partisan ballads» (text by Ostrejko, M. Tank, V. Dubovka), piano cycles «Fresca №1» (1965) and «Fresca №2» (1972).

A vivid author style of Abeliovich formed in the 1960th. Each of his compositions created until 1985 is characterized by original author's concept. More seldom the composer addressed to folklore sources, but if they are displayed, their dramaturgic role has a determinative importance. The evidence to this can serve

L. Abeliovich's Third and Fourth symphonies. A few compositions in the creative biography of the composer can be identified as autobiographical. Perhaps, the brightest of them is the Third symphony (1967) dedicated to M. Weinberg, Abeliovich's best friend. In the ending of this lyric and tragic symphony at the level of quoting Abeliovich introduces a popular Belarusian folk song «Perapyolachka». The image of a female quail, an undemanding grey little bird, serves as an ethnosymbol of Belarusian culture (probably of the complex of "homeland"). It is possible to understand the idea of the composer who is quoting the theme of a folk song, only knowing the general concept of the symphony. The first movement of the Third symphony acts as the beginning-reflection withdrawing from the vanity of everyday life:

Figure 1. L. Abeliovich. *Symphony №3, I movement*



The second movement (scherzo) became the reflection of the objective world – rigid, authoritative:

Figure 2. L. Abeliovich. *Symphony №3, II movement*



Fugue in the creative work of Abeliovich has always been a bright expression of his "self": it's not by chance that the composer chooses this form for a psychologically subtle third slow movement of the cycle (the fugue theme is similar to the 1st movement of Bartok's work «Music for the strings, percussion instruments and celesta»).

Figure 3. L. Abeliovich. *Symphony №3, III movement*



In the finale the process of development is so intensive that the resolution of the symphony's collisions is not expected: h-moll theme of the first subject group reminds of the «Pathetic» symphony by Tchaikovsky, short phrases accenting the intonation of a question appeal to dramatic scherzo.

Figure 4. L. Abeliovich. *Symphony №3, IV movement*

The second subject group for which c-moll is chosen outlines the genre shape of a march. The tension of thought increases with each measure of music. Can the melody of clarinet in a dialogue with horn stop it? At the culmination from a bassoon sounds the theme of the chorus of a song «Perapyolachka». A folk song «Perapyolachka» is characterized by a soft phrases, which is absent in this symphony.

The opposite tendency in the work with folklore material, in formation of a symphonic cycle is observed in the Fourth symphony of the composer (1970), with an untypical for Abeliovich appeal to lyrical-genre type of symphonism. Abeliovich's three movement symphony, chamber in character, is filled with themes in the national spirit.

Already in the first movement of the symphony the composer shows a wide spectrum of genres of Belarusian folklore: the dance and motor theme (first subject group of the 1st movement) and a theme of tapping, typical of Belarusian polka (second subject group of the 1st movement), plaintive crying leading to an archaic layer (the theme of the soloist bassoon in the introduction):

Figure 5. L. Abeliovich. *Symphony №4, I movement*

Having different genre bases, themes are united with common intonations, which allows to speak about the principle of thematic unity with a constant thematic renovation. In the work with themes a variant and variation method of development is used, formation of the texture with features of heterophony (an episode in development).

Lyrical themes of the second movement also have the genre nature. Researcher Kolesnikova indicates the parallel with archaic calendar Belarusian songs, lyrical songs of a later origin [5, p. 63–64].

Figure 6. L. Abeliovich. *Symphony №4, II movement*

Variations of soprano-ostinato to which the composer appeals in this movement, certainly, lead to the traditions of Russian classical music.

The finale of the symphony becomes the reflection of the creative search of the composer, as a result of which an essential figurative transformation takes place: the lyrical theme of the first subject group is sounds expressive in reprise, the dance and playful of the second subject group is becomes the reflection of a parody, grotesque beginning. Such transformations return to the dramatic symphonies of Abeliovich, reflecting the present-day reality and nostalgic retrospective, to the antiquity of a human life.

Figure 7. L. Abeliovich. *Symphony №4, III movement*



That is how the coda-catharsis is perceived: the dynamic movement of music stops, the expressive orchestral bells in combination with celesta, a harp and a piano sounds. Thus, by means of creative reconsideration of folklore the lyrical-genre symphony is created, reflecting the composer's view on the present-day reality.

The music of L. Abeliovich in the context of Belarusian culture has a vivid tragic orientation, which is resulting from the composer's world view, possibly from his private life. Isn't Jewish self-identification of the composer reflected on the level of figurative, lyric and tragical tune of music? Years after Abeliovich's death in conversations with a Moscow composer Grigory Frid (born in 1915), the family of M. Weinberg was opening the world of music Abeliovich. G. Frid met Abeliovich only in Rusa where in summer months composers from different corners of the USSR gathered for creative meeting. In conversations there came up facts about the destruction of Abeliovich's parents in ghetto in Vilno, about his warm friendly relations with M. Weinberg who had the same destiny, about the reasons of leaving Moscow in the 1950th. And a whole range of Abeliovich's compositions is understood differently: Aria for a violin and a chamber orchestra (1965), piano cycles «Fresca №1» (1965) and «Fresca №2» (1972)¹, the Third symphony. Isn't this music the reflection of the Holocaust theme, the memory of the nation which practically disappeared in the years of the Second World War? There are no vivid intonation turns which characterize the Jewish musical culture in the music of Lev Abeliovich. At the same time unconditional is the special expression of themes in a number of compositions, a significant role of improvisation in the beginnings of themes of monologue character, typical of cantor prayers (see, for example, the introduction to the Fourth symphony, basic themes of the first movement of the Third symphony, the second movement of the Piano trio). This side of Abeliovich's music has to be investigated.

Thus, creative work of Lev Abeliovich became a bright page in the history of development of Belarusian musical culture. By addressing to folklore, he managed to enter the centuries-old national tradition. Probably, it appeared to be not so difficult because during centuries the Belarusian nation formed in conditions of being part of the Great Duchy of Lithuania, Rzech Pospolita. And Belarusian folklore became genetically close to the person who was born in Lithuania in the Jewish family, received the first elements of composer profession in Poland, and was brought up on music of Mjaskovsky, Shostakovich. Possibly, this combination of traditions helped Abeliovich to become master of the European scale, and in the 1960th–70th to show the way which many young Belarusian composers will choose addressing to the genres of symphony, sonata, piano suite, chamber and vocal music.

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¹ «The Fresca №1» (1965): «The steps in night», «Fugitive», «Grief hour», «The burst», «The calm», «The procession», «Requiem», «Scherzo», «Fulfillment», «The Fresca №2» (1972): «Prologue», (the glade, where the person dies), «The chase», «Obsessive thoughts», «Avalanche», «Unconsciousness», «Grief», «Despair», «Grotesque of death», «The death hour», «Vocalize», «Epilogue».

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Santrauka

Levo Abeliovičiaus kūryba (1912, Vilnius–1985, Minskas) Baltarusijos muzikinės kultūros istorijoje: tautinės tapatybės įžvalgos

Baltarusijos nacionalinės kompozitorių mokyklos formavimasis XX amžiuje, skirtingų tautinių kultūrų kompozitorių vaidmuo: Rusijos (N. Aladovas, V. Zolotariovas, J. Tikockis, A. Klumovas, P. Podkovyrovas), Ukrainos (M. Krošneris), Lenkijos (T. Šnitmanas, L. Abeliovičius, M. Vainbergas, E. Tyrmandas, H. Vagneris).

L. Abeliovičiaus kaip baltarusių muzikos klasiko istorinė vieta, kompozitoriaus stiliaus formavimosi keliai.

L. Abeliovičiaus kaip muzikanto formavimasis Vilniuje (1912–1935): asimiliuoto žydo tarnautojo šeima, Vilniaus universiteto Teisės fakultetas, privačios muzikos pamokos. Neištyrinėti L. Abeliovičiaus gyvenimo puslapiai. Kompozicijos (prof. K. Sikorskis) ir fortepijono (prof. Z. Dževeckis) studijos Varšuvos konservatorijoje (1935–1939). Pažintis su XX a. Vakarų Europos muzika.

1939-ieji, Varšuvos okupavimas, žydų varymas į getą, priverstinis persikėlimas į Baltarusiją.

L. Abeliovičiaus kūryba Baltarusijos muzikos raidos 1939–1941 ir 1944–1985 m. kontekste. Folklorizmas – dominuojanti tendencija XX a. Baltarusijos kompozitorių kūryboje.

1939–1941 m., Baltarusijos valstybinė konservatorija, V. Zolotariovo kompozicijos klasė, A. Klumovo konsultacijos; Varšuvos konservatorijos studentų žydų (Vainbergas, Tyrmandas, Abeliovičius, Vagneris) draugystė.

XIX a. rusų kompozitorių tradicijų, baltarusių folkloro įsisavinimas: baltarusių meninis mentalitetas (emocinės romantizmo kategorijos), nacijos formavimosi istorinė lemtis, Lenkijos, Lietuvos, Baltarusijos ryšiai.

1941–1944 m., karo metai, Gorkio miestas, tarnyba užnugaryje.

1944–1951 m., Maskva, Maskvos valstybinė konservatorija, N. Miaskovskio kompozicijos klasė. Kompozitoriaus stiliaus susiformavimas, kūrybos baltarusiškoji linija:

- nacionalinė poezija (romansai ir dainos) pagal M. Bogdavičiaus eiles;

- baltarusių liaudies daina kaip istorinis socialinis „dokumentas“, citavimas: pjesės smuikui ir fortepijonui, „Šokis“, „Lopšinė“, Siuita baltarusių liaudies dainų temomis dviem fortepijonams, dvi polifoninės pjesės baltarusių liaudies temomis fortepijonui keturioms rankoms, Baltarusiška uvertiūra simfoniniam orkestrui.

1951–1985 m., Minskas, L. Abeliovičiaus kūryba. Brandaus stiliaus su žanro prioritetais (simfonija, siuitos, sonata fortepijonui, romansai) susiformavimas. Lyrinė dramatinė ekspresija, psichologinis akcentavimas, XX a. muzikos romantinė tradicija ir stilistinė norma (Miaskovskio, Šostakovičiaus tradicijos).

Vaizdinis siužetinis nacionalinio baltarusių konteksto komponentas, jo tematiniai kompleksai („istorinė lemtis“, „gimtoji žemė“) ir L. Abeliovičiaus kūryba: Trečioji ir Ketvirtoji simfonijos, „Karo meto baladės“ pagal S. Jevsejevą, S. Vilenskio ir jo paties eiles, „Partizanų baladės“ (ž. Ostreikos, M. Tanko, V. Dubovkos).

L. Abeliovičiaus kūryba brandaus romantinio tipo folklorizmo sąlygomis su dominuojančia estetinė pozicija „folkloras kaip profesinio stiliaus atnaujinimo šaltinis“ (V. Antonevičius): Trečioji simfonija (baltarusių liaudies dainos „Putpelėlė“ dramaturgija), Ketvirtoji simfonija (išsigilinta į seniausius baltarusių folkloro klodus), Trečioji fortepijoninė sonata.

Savęs kaip žydo identifikacija kuriant lyriškai tragedinio pobūdžio Baltarusijos muzikinei kultūrai nebūdingą muziką, skirtą holokausto tragedijai atminti (šeimos žūtis Vilniaus gete): du ciklai fortepijonui „Freskos“, Trečioji simfonija (skirta Vainbergui), Arija smuikui ir kameriniam orkestrui. Šių kūrinių aptarimas Baltarusijos muzikologinėje literatūroje per Didžiojo Tėvynės karo tematikos prizmę. Ypatingas dalies kūrinių tematikos ekspresyvumas, monologo pobūdžio temose ryškus improvizacinis pradas, būdingas kantorius maldoms. L. Abeliovičius – baltarusių ar Baltarusijos kompozitorius? Svarstymai šios problemos rakursu.