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Practical Music Making in the Context of the Educational Process of the Musical Classes of the Imperial Russian Musical Society in the South of Russia

The article examines the activities of the Musical Classes of the Rostov and Novocherkassk Sections of the Imperial Russian Musical Society (IRMS) from the perspective of the role of practical music-making in acquiring knowledge of the art of music. The statistics of the student concerts is brought in, the consistency in their organization is marked, on the basis of which the conclusion is arrived at that the main particular feature of the Musical Classes affiliated with the IRMS was the practical orientation of the instruction. Various forms of music-making are examined: solo performances, as well as those as part of ensembles and symphony orchestras. The repertoires of the student concerts were comprised predominantly of works by the composers of the Classical-Romantic period. The program of the student chamber ensemble morning and evening concerts were distinguished by the diversity of their programming, their cognitive constituent, as a rule, was connected with a panorama of names, genres and forms. The programs of the student orchestral concerts are perceived to have been more organic in their constituency. They were also frequently comprised according to the principle of contrast. Of great significance were the student opera productions. As the result of active work of the Opera Classes of the IRMS, the students mastered in a practical way large strata of Western European and Russian opera classics. In the general educational process a significant role was also played by the “adult” concerts, especially in such formats as monographic and historical concerts, as well as concert-lectures.

Keywords: musical education, the musical life of Rostov, the musical life of Novocherkassk, student concerts.

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Практическое музицирование в контексте образовательного процесса Музыкальных классов Императорского Русского музыкального общества на Юге России

В статье рассмотрена деятельность Музыкальных классов Ростовского и Новочеркасского отделений Императорского Русского музыкального общества (ИРМО) с точки зрения роли практического музицирования в обретении знаний о музыкальном искусстве. Приведена статистика ученических концертов, отмечена системность в их организации, на основе чего сделан вывод о том, что главной особенностью Музыкальных классов при ИРМО была практическая ориентированность обучения. Рассмотрены различные формы музицирования: выступления сольные, а также в составе ансамблей и симфонического оркестра. В репертуар ученических концертов входили преимущественно произведения композиторов классико-романтического периода. Программы камерных ученических утренников или вечеров отличались разнообразием, их познавательная составляющая, как правило, связана с панорамой имён, жанров и форм. Более органичными представляются программы симфонических ученических концертов. Они также нередко составлялись по принципу контраста. Велико значение и оперных ученических постановок. Благодаря активной работе оперных

классов ИРМО, учащимися практически осваивались большие пласты оперной западноевропейской и русской классики. В общем образовательном процессе значимую роль играли также и «взрослые» концерты, особенно такие форматы, как монографические, исторические концерты и концерты-лекции.

Ключевые слова: музыкальное образование, музыкальная жизнь Ростова, музыкальная жизнь Новочеркаска, ученические концерты.

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The formation of musical education in the southern provincial cities of Russia, as it is well-known, was connected with the activity of the Imperial Russian Musical Society (IRMS)¹, with the Musical Classes established by them, which were later transformed into intermediate special educational institutions. This is how it was in Rostov, as well as in Novocherkassk. In correspondence with the sole Statute for such kinds of educational institutions, all the subjects were divided into the artistic and academic ones. The former ones included performance on orchestral instruments (string, woodwind and percussion), performance on the piano and the organ, singing, as well as music theory and music history. The academic included the Law of God (i.e. religious studies), Russian, arithmetic, geography, world and Russian history, foreign languages (German, French, Italian – a choice of one), as well as penmanship. The level of studying the academic disciplines was planned at least on the level of the first four grades of the male grammar schools of the administration of the Ministry of People's Enlightenment. Paragraph 3 of the Statute asserted that the artistic subjects are taught according to the program and curriculum compiled by the council of the college, are examined in one of the conservatories and are approved by the Chairman of the IRMS².

Let us turn our attention to the cycle of music theory classes, which among the required subjects on four of the performance departments of the Musical Classes was mandatory. The newspaper "Priazovskiy kray" ["The Near-Azov Region"], which regularly published announcements of the enrolment into the Musical Classes, specifically informed of the faculty, drawing the attention of the potential students to the names of the musicians which were famous in the city. For this reason, it is for certain known that starting from 1896 the class of solfège and music theory was taught by Matvey Pressman – the first director of the college (1896–1911), a graduate of the Moscow Conservatory, a pupil of Alexander Siloti, a brilliant musician, a pianist. From 1899 he also

taught the harmony class. Then, in various years, most likely, due to the fact of Matvey Pressman being busy, the theory subjects – solfège and music theory (except for harmony) were taught by highly educated pedagogues among the performers – I. K. Gorsky (a cello instructor, a member of the string quartet), Piotr Fedorov (a cello instructor, 1905), and K. V. Wagner (an instructor of the class of performance on brass instruments and bassoon, 1907). Since 1898 music history was taught by V. A. Khavkin. Later (starting from the 1917–1918 academic year) the theoretical disciplines were taught by talented violinist Liubov Streicher-Bichter – a free-lance artist who graduated from the Petrograd Conservatory as a violin student of professor Leopold Auer and as a composition student of professor Anatoly Lyadov; the music history class was taught by composer Mikhail Gnëssin (here all commentaries are redundant).

In the Musical Classes which opened in 1911 in Novocherkassk solfège, elementary music theory and harmony was taught by violinist Roman Kaminsky, while from the third year of the existence of the classes (1913–1914) music history was introduced, which was taught by pianist Maria Nemirovskaya. Later in the First Novocherkassk Musical College, which was established in 1917–1918, music history was taught by Mikhail Gnëssin.

What was the content-wise component of these courses, particularly music history, how did the pedagogues' authorial individuality reveal itself at that time – at the present time it is not deemed possible to answer these questions. Something else is apparent here: a considerable role in the acquisition of knowledge about music literature was played due to the broadly developed system of practical music-making, which comprised an essential part of the educational curriculum.

Did the young educational institutions have the material and human resources at their disposal? We shall answer this question on the example of the Rostov Section. Its expansion from the modest Musical Classes

– through the Musical College of the IRMS until the lobbying of the idea of reorganizing the college into a conservatory – all of this bears witness of their accumulation. The thoroughness and fundamental character of the knowledge offered by the educational institution led to the project of transforming the Rostov Musical College into a conservatory. By 1913 this seemed to be quite feasible with the appropriate pecuniary support of the government, which instigated the Directorate of the Rostov Section of the IRMS to turn to the City Duma of the city Nakhichevan-on-Don. In this appeal, dated on September 6, 1913, it was written: “... at the present time over 420 students are provided musical instruction at the college. Musical instruction of performance on various instruments, singing (solo), choral singing: secular and sacred is given, a special class of church choirmaster course has been opened, and ensemble classes have been established: a student orchestra and a string quartet”³. What is important in the quoted fragment of the document is that the resource of performers of this educational institution was quite powerful for mastery of a broad world musical repertoire. It is important to emphasize that towards 1913 the work in the orchestral and string quartet ensemble classes, along with the solo performance practice, has already become an educational tradition embedded from the first days of its activities. It is apparent that study of music theory and music history “factored” through a corpus of musical texts veritably mastered by the students, since parallel to the mastery of the rudiments of music theory, harmony and music history within the framework of the curriculum, a lion’s share of the study of music literature at the performance departments accounted for the work connected with the students’ concert practice. It is exemplary that during the period from 1896 to 1916 there were 157 student concerts that took place in Rostov. For comparison, let us also cite other figures: during that same period of time there were 52 concerts involving the participation of invited musicians, and 105 concerts involving the pedagogues and members of the society⁴. In other words, the number of “adult” concerts equaled the number of the student concerts.

The student concerts were organized by the department systematically numbered from 5 to 15 per season. As a rule, these were students’ evenings, student opera performances, as well as thematic concerts devoted to memorable dates or events. Sometimes they positioned themselves as being beneficiary. Before 1914 all of these events were generally accessible and comprised a significant portion of the overall content of the city’s concert life. Starting from 1914 closed

student evenings were introduced, which could only be attended by the pedagogues and students of the Musical College. But the number of the generally accessible student concerts remained at the present levels.

In the Musical Classes established in 1911 in Novochoerkassk the concert life of the students also began to seethe at once. In the report from the 1911–1912 season it is stated that during that period “5 student musical assemblies took place: 2 closed ones, 2 open ones, one student concert for the benefit of the needy students. In addition, in the city theater an opera performance was set up for the benefit of the hungry, with the participation exclusively of the pupils of the musical classes – soloists, choristers and orchestral performers”⁵. The dynamism augmented consistently, as did the number of the students (during the first year there were 212 of them).

The cited statistics makes it possible to come up with the conclusion that the main characteristic of the Musical Classes organized by the IRMS, which were subsequently inherited by the musical college, was the practical orientation of the studies. Already from the first course the students were involved into a system of concertizing, and this allowed them to accrue a certain experience, to broaden their sound experience, to master numerous musical compositions pertaining to different styles, and also directly developing the skills of performance master. The most successful students were even granted the right to participate in chamber concerts of the faculty members of the Rostov Section in a string quartet ensemble.

A characteristic feature of the pedagogical school of the IRMS was the directedness at various forms of music-making. The students performed in concerts in ensembles and symphonic orchestras and as solo performers. The repertoire of the student concerts was primarily comprised by works by composers of the classical-romantic period. Most frequently they involved compositions by Gaetano Donizetti, Ludwig van Beethoven, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Mikhail Glinka, Anton Rubinstein, Charles Gounod, Johann Sebastian Bach, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Piotr Tchaikovsky, Frederic Chopin, Felix Mendelssohn, and Georg Goltermann.

The programs of the student chamber performances in the mornings or the evenings were quite diverse, judging by their motley of genres and styles; they were comprised of compositions learned by the students. Many of the posters illustrate this given principle. Thus, in the first student evening from October 27, 1899, the etudes of Karl Leschhorn and Joseph Raff could be found side by side with a Sonata by Ludwig van Beethoven

and a Sonatina by Fritz Spindler, alternating with arias from operas Fromental Halevy, a scene from a ballet by Charles Beriot and Variations by Ignacy Paderewski (Illustration 1). There were similar concert programs of student evenings on October 25 and November 8, 1908. Such concerts, formed according to the principle of *a little bit of everything*, had their own pluses: their cognitive component, as a rule, was connected with a panorama of names, genres and forms.



Illustration 1. The Poster for the First Student Evening on October 27, 1899

Much more organic were the programs of the student orchestral concerts. They were also frequently assembled according to the principle of contrast. But while during the first period of activity of the Musical Classes and the Musical College their programs included not only orchestral music, but also ensemble and solo numbers, as was indicated, for example, on the poster of the orchestral concert of March 3, 1903 (Illustration 2), then gradually the programs of such orchestral evenings became more and more integral and included predominantly or exclusively orchestral music, which is testified by the posters of 1915 from March 2 (Illustration 3) or April 18.

Special mention must be made of the student opera productions organized by the Rostov Section of the IRMS. Naturally, the Rostov Section could only allow itself to organize concert performances of operatic compositions with stage elements, however, the opera productions were still on demand from the public; frequently they even took place under the aegis of beneficiary concerts. Altogether during the time period between 1896 and 1916 21 opera productions were organized.



Illustration 2. The Poster for the Orchestral Concert on March 3, 1903



Illustration 3. The Poster for the Orchestral Concert on March 2, 1915

The repertoire filling of the opera concerts was quite diverse. In 1898 the first student opera production was organized. It featured the performance of Anton Arensky’s one-act opera “Raphael” and separate scenes from Mikhail Glinka’s “A Life for the Tsar” and Gioachino Rossini’s “The Barber of Seville.” For the first time on the Rostov stage Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s opera in 4 acts “The Marriage of Figaro” was produced. Another opera by the composer, produced as part of the student activities, exerted a lasting impression on the Rostov public – this was “Don Giovanni,” which was realized in three opera performances of the 1900–1901 season. Let us name

other well-known operas produced by the forces of the opera class in Rostov: Fromental Halevy’s “La Juive,” Georges Bizet’s “Les Pecheurs des perles,” and Charles Gounod’s “Faust” (Illustration 4). The level of difficulty of the compositions introduced into the students’ tutorial practice is most impressive. In 1902 the Rostov listener was able to familiarize himself with Sergei Rachmaninoff’s first opera “Aleko.” The operatic legacy of Russian composers was also represented by works by Anton Rubinstein (“The Demon”), Piotr Tchaikovsky (“Eugene Onegin,” “The Queen of Spades”), Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (“The Snow Maiden,” “The Tsar’s Bride”), and Alexander Serov (“Rogneda”).



Illustration 4. The Poster for the Opera Production of Charles Gounod’s “Faust” on March 21, 1900

It is exemplary that already during the first year of their activities the forces of the Musical Classes of the Novocherkassk Section organized a beneficiary concert-production at the city theater, the program of which included Act I of Charles Gounod’s opera “Faust,” Scene 2 of Act I from Piotr Tchaikovsky’s opera “Eugene Onegin,” and Scene 2 of Act I from the opera “The Queen of Spades” (Illustration 5).

Thereby, due to the active work of the Opera Class of the Rostov Section of the IRMS the students were able to learn large portions of the Western European and Russian opera classics. The opera productions set up on the basis of the Musical Classes in Novocherkassk and the Rostov Musical College presented an important part of the concert activities of the respective Sections of the IRMS and, undoubtedly, carried educational and enlightening goals, preparing the provincial audiences for appreciation of monumental genres of classical, complex in their content.

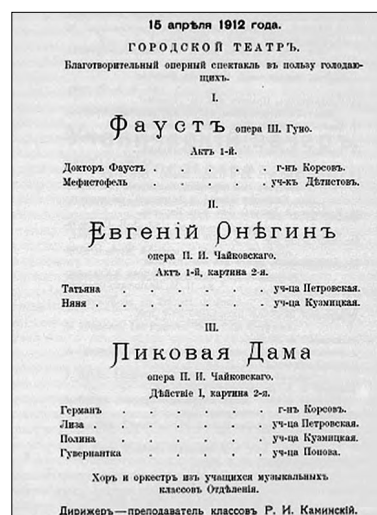


Illustration 5. The Poster for the Opera Concert-Production on April 15, 1912

But it was not only the direct performance activities which considerably influenced the educational process. The “adult” portions of the concerts included programs directly aimed at the formation of an integral perception of the musical legacy of the great masters of composition. First of all, mentioned must be made of the monographic concerts among them timed to coincide with various memorable or jubilee dates. Virtually every single concert season of the Rostov Section of the IRMS contained such programs. For example, the concert dedicated to the memory of Franz Schubert (February 3, 1897) or the concert in honor of the centennial anniversary of the birthday of Gaetano Donizetti (December 22, 1897), as well as the Second String Quartet Assembly dedicated to the memory of Piotr Tchaikovsky, with the assistance of Matvey Presman, O. I. Chaban and a string quartet ensemble (October 24, 1898), as well as the Fifth String Quartet Assembly devoted to the compositions of Ludwig van Beethoven, with the participation of Matvey Presman, O. I. Chaban, I. K. Gorsky, L. L. De Girolamo (March 21, 1899), etc. Altogether, the string quartet assemblies quite often carried a monographic character. At the same time, the poster for February 25, 1903 indicated: “Historical concert (Commemorating the History of the Development of the Russian Art Song) with the participation of the well-known performer of art songs by Russian composers A. V. Rienzi.”

A similar type of practice was inherent in the activities of the Novocherkassk Section. Thus, the Third Evening of Chamber Music, which took place on November 16, 1913, was devoted to the music of Ludwig van Beethoven, while the concert of December 1, 1913, as was indicated on the poster was

organized “in memory of the great Russian composer P. I. Tchaikovsky, on the occasion of the arrived 20th anniversary of his death.” The enlightening and educational essence of the event was emphasized by the program of the concert, which was opened with a reading of the composer’s biography. Only after this the Trio opus 50, as well as the first movement of the First Piano Concerto and the songs were performed.

Yet another type of musical event which it is impossible to refrain from recounting, in connection with the involvement of the students into the practice of concertizing, directed towards profound knowledge of music history is presented by the lecture-concerts. This practice pertains to the second decade of the 20th century, which does not diminish its significance. Thus, on November 9, 1910 in Rostov Nikolai Findeisen’s lecture “Richard Wagner – the Drama of his Life and his Musical Drama” took place. Director of the Ekaterinodar Musical College Anatoly Drozdov twice gave lecture-concerts to the Rostov audiences. Thus, on March 19, 1914 his lecture-concert on the theme of “Music in the Milieu of Contemporary Art” took place, while on November 14, 1915 he gave a lecture-concert dedicated to the memory of Alexander Scriabin. In 1916 (on April 28) Mikhail Gnossin, with the participation of singer M. I. Ramm, read a lecture with the title “Rimsky-Korsakov and Pantheism in Music.”

Similar to this is the practice of similar events organized by the Novochoerkassk Section. It is of interest that frequently the students themselves were brought in as illustrators. Thus, on October 28, 1912 in Novochoerkassk Nikolai Findeisen’s lecture on the theme “Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov as the most significant Russian composers” took place. The

poster informed of the plan of the lecture, and also that “during the break the students of the Musical Classes shall perform compositions by Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov” (Illustration 6).

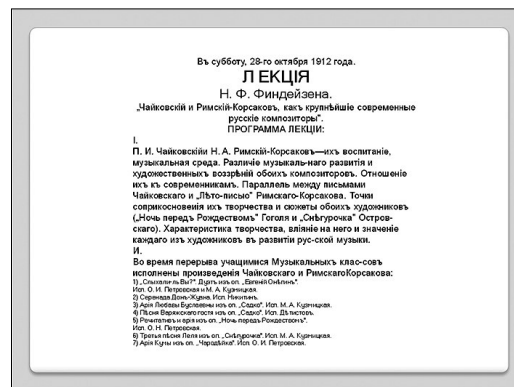


Illustration 6. The Poster for the Lecture-Concert on October 28, 1912

In conclusion it is necessary to emphasize that the quality of the educational conception realized by the IRMS both in the metropolitan and periphery sections was directly connected with the exposure of the populace to the world of music, with a constant necessity, transforming into a demand, for music-making and passing through the aural consciousness large quantities of sonar information. The domination of practical forms of instruction of the art of music created a powerful basis for mastery of theoretical and historical-cultural knowledge of the musical material. Subsequently inherited by the Soviet system of education, this practice has created its harvest, having provided the highest results, which once again confirmed the quality of the system of musical education installed by the Imperial Russian Musical Society.

NOTES

¹ The interest in the activities of the musical societies which influenced the development of musical culture and education in various countries presents a characteristic feature of contemporary scholarship (see: [4–7]).

² Statute of the Russian Musical Society: Project. St. Petersburg, 1869. 22 p.; Statute of the Russian Musical Society: [Consolidated by the Imperial Court on July 4 (16), 1873]. St. Petersburg, 1873. 18 p.

³ Report of the Rostov Section of the IRMS and the Musical College affiliated with it for the 1913–14. State Archive of the Rostov Region (GARO). Reference-Informational Fund. Inv. No. 7135.

⁴ The data on the basis of the reports about the activities of the Rostov Section of the IRMS (1896–

1916) discovered at the GARO. It must be noted that the Report on the Activities of the Rostov Section of the IRMS for the 1903–1904 season is absent at the GARO, however, the present fact did not substantially influence the compilation of an integral perspective of the Society’s activities. For extensive information about the concerts of the Rostov Section of the IRMS see: [2].

⁵ Report of the Novochoerkassk Section of the Imperial Russian Musical Society and its Musical Classes for 1911–1912. Compiled by F. I. Popov. 1st Year. Novochoerkassk: Printers’ Office of F. M. Tunikov, 1913. 99 p.

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