

Some Characteristics of Richard Strauss' Orchestral Texture with focus on symphonic poem "Don Quixote"

The main tendency for the way of developing of the West-European music is leading to understand that its culmination point is the final structuring of orchestra (chamber, symphonic and opera-orchestra). But this progress was possible because there was immense fond of compositions written for orchestra in the continuing centuries, including the works of the composer Richard Strauss. However, we couldn't say that the science for this part of the whole of one music composition is so old and so much developed. In the comparison with the elements melody and harmony for which argued even antique philosophers (including the different meanings of the term), for orchestra and its elements – orchestration, instrumentation, the theory is discussing only in the last four century. We must point to the fact that the constructing and reproductive elements of music instruments are still developing, so in that way every research on this field is almost unfinished.

Richard Strauss had great technical skill in composition and a predilection for massive orchestral effects and with his works he is one of the composers that are pointing up and construction up the orchestral music. All symphonic poems, but and operas which Strauss has wrote are representing extraordinary examples of orchestral mastery which for his years was big step in developing the orchestra and its interpretative possibilities. Paul Becker "Strauss, Debussy, and Puccini are end-points and their works look back. They are nationally conditioned works, masterly in form, carried with such magnificent superiority that together they represent the essence of European musical culture, and more particularly of the orchestral art, of their century". In words by Tome Mancev: "Richard Strauss is composer with fast, continuous and logical creative-musical thinking, who is making "incredible" progression of the instruments with rich and colorful parts"

Strauss interest in importance of orchestra as primary element of expression in symphonic works is reflected by his wish to improve the expert literature from the field of orchestration, working on the Berlioz' Treatise for orchestration. In which Strauss is underlining: "On every body that wish to gain influence success in art of orchestration and to give to his contemporaries at least two-three compositions that sounds good...I recommend that they should study great masters scores, but more important is that they should meet thoroughly with all instruments helped by their performers... and with secrets of orchestral sound".

Richard Strauss was one from few world composers that had found their way with their works, in transition moment of music art and history. With his life he is embracing end of the 19-th century; in which music is reaching the romanticism borders, until the 1949 year, years of one kind of music revolution, many styles and exceptional individuality. This are years of turbulent, social and political changes, especially in the Strauss's land, Germany, the initiator of two world wars. In great part of his life this is Time of the Kingdom, which forms and insures with firm security, strong German generation which would support the spirit of superiority and predominance. In this years we can find master-piece in art history, in literature – Chekhov "Three sisters", Tolstoy "Resurrection", Niche "Also sprach Zarathustra ", Freud is writing "The dreams interpretation"; art - Picasso is in his pink and blue

stage; and music – Mahler is finishing his 4-th symphony, Debussy and Schonberg are creating their “*Peleas and Melissand*”.. (for the first one-opera, and for the second one-symphonic poem). For encyclopaedist’s Strauss is one of the fullest representatives of the German musical heritage. Artist living the time of great conductors as one of the leading world conductors, and in the same time composer for whose performance of his own composition was in a way social events. People were coming from all parts of Germany just to attend his concerts. The experience in his career as conductor was essential for composer educative and artistic development rising from his direct contact with reproductive ensembles and orchestras. In the music historiography Strauss is marked as composer with great skills in picturesque expression of orchestral thoughts, strong, daring, with his personal identification. Led by literature or philosophic ideas in his symphonic poems he has developed the orchestral possibilities, without limiting him self in use of all instruments. In the words of Roman Rolan:”The Strauss’s feelings most of the time is without individuality. Shuman’s trembling; Mendelssohn religious feelings, the sweetness from the Italian masters, passion – Wagnerian. But, will -heroic, almighty passionate and all-powerful. This makes Strauss great and unique in his kind, in his time. In him we can feel the power that subjugates the people”.

Strauss’s interest in orchestra as a media for expression, for symphonic music, is directing his work in which his inspiration is transmitted in tone-poems. Starting with “*Macbeth*” op.23, “*Don Juan*”, op.20, “*Toad und Verklärung*” op.24, inspired by literature heritage he was continuously writing tone-poems, “*Till Eulenspiegel* “ op.28, “*Also sprach Zarathustra* “ op.30, “*Don Quixote*” op.35, “*Hero and World* ” op.40 and the last symphonic works “*Symphonia Domestica* ” op.53, “*Ein Heldenleben* ” op.64. In this tone-poems Strauss has always developed and refined his personal orchestral language. We can notice and the fact that in the time of creating the tone-poem “*Don Quixote*”, except of the few chamber and choir compositions in all others he has incorporated orchestra, as solo-instrument or voice with orchestra. Later, after his second opera “*Feuresnot*” (1990/1 year), Strauss has turned on opera music, creating another 13 operas and over 150 songs with pianoforte. Before this tone-poem beside those numbered, Strauss has created one opera “*Guntram*” (1892/3 year), few choir compositions, two symphonies (*Song of the traveller in the stormy time*-1885, *Aus Italien*-1886), Concerto overture, Horn Concerto, 4 Songs for voice and orchestra, and the greater part of the chamber music opus, more pieces for pianoforte solo and solo voice with pianoforte.

However, numerous musicologists and researchers of his work reveal strong synthesis in the relation opera – symphonic poem. Becker comments: “One might say that Strauss’s tone-poems are in reality operas without words, while his later operas, from “*Salome*” to “*Rosenkavalier*”, “*Ariadne*”...., are orchestral compositions which involve the singing voices. In every case words or thoughts were stimuli for the technical development and sonority of the orchestra, and in every case the voices them selves have become assistants to orchestral expression”. The symphonic work “*Don Quixote*” represents extraordinary example of composing mastery. “Strauss has probably written his most complicated score: *Don Quixote*” (J. Andreis).His importance is great because from one hand Strauss introduces in music history new percussion instrument with imprecise tone high’s – Wind Machine, from other hand he is developing new reproductive technique of tone producing – *Flaterzunge*, he is using mute on all brass instruments including tubas. With creating more timbre possibilities he’s directly influencing on the orchestration structure. “*Don Quixote*” up

to now is one of the least understood works of the master. This may be due to the fact that a finished performance is extremely difficult to accomplish” (R. Sprecht).

Symphonic poem “Don Quixote” Strauss has completed on 29.12.1897 year (year of birth of his son Franz), and the premiere was in Cologne on 8.03.1898, under the baton of Franz Wullner, one of rare world premiere of Strauss own composition conducted by somebody else. The most significant element which reflects the melody, rhythm, harmony, dynamic expression is the orchestra, with colourful timbre richness. Tome Mancev refers:” The concept orchestration indicates one of the most important quality defining elements of one orchestral work, without which it couldn’t exist as orchestral creation”. Explicitly, symphonic orchestration represents the orchestral sound and its sound realisation.

The orchestration is very dependant from all components of one composition musical form, all musical tools used with purpose to realise the idea contents. Precisely orchestral experience is in one way sound projection of the form and not impulsive, spontaneous process as creative act. In the dictionaries of Music for the term “Orchestration” is noticed: “Many composers have showed special skills in orchestration as Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, although Berlioz, Wagner, Mahler, Strauss, Ravel and Rimsky-Korsakov were masters of the art – Orchestration”.

The literature text of Miguel Serevantes “*Don Quixote*” is based on the two central persons Don Quixote and Sancho Pansa, and continuously their adventures following them in the attempt to realize their noble mission – Don Quixote to become a true knight (including here his beloved “Dulcinea” woman that he suppose to chose her, even without her knowledge of participation in this story). As much as the language of music can’t speak as real words, Strauss has tried to make the authentically retelling of so many times repeated Don Quixote idea – That even impossible is present and achievable just we are not enough willing to see “as the true knights”, to acknowledge as our own reality. But, at the end Don Quixote dies, resigning from his illusions. Although in the Strauss life time it’s very difficult to define what would be true heroism would be – The “Hero” reconciles at the end for the worthless efforts or he would be still fighting for his cause. Or maybe Strauss has asked him self:” With whom should we fight our battles and in which direction we should ride when injustice has conquest the breath in our chest, with the space of our thoughts, with the silence and consternation of the stars? Our revolt is so badly understand as the world it self. How can we try to fix injustice when, as Don Quixote on dying bed, we have lost after many stupidities, exhausted– the strength and our illusions to face our roads, battles and defeats?”(E.Sjoran). Inspiration from one man last hours of his life is used in Strauss symphonic poems for few times (“*Toad und Verklärung*”, “*Till Eulenspiegel*”)

We can locate Strauss hero’s in almost all symphonic poems, in the beginning as persons from novels (“*Macbeth*”, “*Don Juan*”, “*Till Eulenspiegel*”, “*Also sprach Zarathustra*“, “*Don Quixote*”) and “*Guntram*”, in a way - romances, and in “*Hero and World*”, “*Symphonia Domestica*”, Strauss become his own hero. For those ideas Strauss remark: “I think about my self as important as Napoleon or Alexander”. Although, the Strauss’s life time suggest by Romen Rollan: ”Creation and art - victory of defeated hero, nation, intoxicated from their conquests, their welfare, power, purity, asking them selves “Why would I triumph?”.

The symphonic poem “Don Quixote” as most important dramaturgy element carrying the melody, rhythm, harmony and dynamic is the orchestra and its timbre richness. As in the previous composers works with individualizations of one instrument or, as in Strauss works - individualization of groups; creating new timbres.

This is pointing the idea of synthesis of the genres: Symphony – Symphonic poem associating to the contemporary creating of the genre – Concert for orchestra (of course this is in much more simple form). It's very important because the tone-poem "Don Quixote" was written in 1897 year and the First Concert for orchestra was written in 1944, by Bela Bartok (from today's music encyclopaedia literature), but compositions titled as Concert for orchestra were written by G. Petrasis 1933/4 and Zoltan Kodaly 1939/40. Although, in the Strauss's composition dictionaries (Grove's dictionary and Symphonic music), the work "Don Quixote" is listed as a Concert for violoncello and orchestra. But, with further analyze of the score we can see that no less soloist treatment have solo violin, solo viola, bass-cl. and tenor-tuba, and all others orchestral instruments. In "Don Quixote" score the literature program is used only conceptually, two themes – appropriate for two characters Don Quixote and Sancho Panza and rhythmically - melodically allusions of their adventures, especially in their orchestral forming. Strauss was very careful in forming the characteristic of this two persons, using the Wagnerian method of light-motive (in this piece – theme of the person), but modified as light-timbre. Don Quixote is represented by solo violoncello, which is instrument carrying the weightiest in the interpreting the score (referencing in its presence and treatment). And Sancho Panza, his accompanist and his confuse psychological state is presented with unusual orchestral solutions, few thematic motives that exchanges bass-clarinet/tenor-tuba with solo viola/piccolo flute. "For Strauss's thematic development very characteristic is often interlacing on different sphere elements, which is created from typical Strauss's method of variant thematic structuring (general genetic connection in all themes of the piece), creating assumptions in polyphony treatment of the orchestral structure" (P. Stojanov).

The separate variations are presenting: 1. Departure, the adventure with the windmills, delusion that Strauss has stressed with impetus, vivacity, strength and poly-meter in Don Quixote instrument; 2. The adventure with the sheep's which in Don Quixote eyes are dreadful army sounded with tremolo muted brass instruments; 3. Sancho's wishes, peculiarities of speech and maxims, Don Quixote's visions for land of the dreams that should be conquered by them; 4. The adventure with the procession (woman in the coach, in the Don Quixote mind – prisoner for witch he suppose to be her knight in shining armor); especially sounded is the procession walking, Don Quixote struggle and procession vanishing; 5. Don Quixote vigil during the summer night (the only possible way to become a knight was that he should stay in the fields all night wearing army clothes). Presented with translucent type of accompany, homophony, and the leading role has violoncello-solo; 6. Dulcinea; 7. Don Quixote's ride through the air. Painted with the Wind Machine and especially pedal note (-D-) in Timp, Cb, indicates that the two heroes have not left solid earth, while their themes are raised four octaves higher, with appropriate use of instruments registers; 8. Their boat journey, the wonderful sound painting of the water drops seems as Strauss is innovator (using the punctual technique, certainly in the simple form). This variation has very individualized melodic lines in polyphony movement which are creating sound density; 9. The attack on the beginning monks, sound painted with two bassoons timbre in two-voice polyphony movement; 10. The main culmination of the work, duel and return home and at last the Epilogue, soothing and brightening. Don Quixote mind clears, and follows a melancholy meditation over the fantasies which had motivated him on foolish mission brought about by imagined adventures and at the end - a clarification in quiet harmony – with this transfiguration in his death.

The conception of the work, especially often use of light-timbres are coming from the fact that “Symphonic poems “Till Eulenspiegel” and “Don Quixote” are developed from sketches for scene’s musical plays-Operas” (L. Staikova), (S. Kukudov)

The tone-poem “Don Quixote” is complex score for a3 symphonic orchestra. The composer is always starting with the fact how will his idea be realized, with what instruments, and after would be the choosing of the musical means that are primary for chosen instruments, and at the end with which composing techniques all that would be written. Specific characteristic defining above mentioned in this tone-poem, the significance of the instrument choice is their role as light-timbre for “The story heroes”.

Many researchers of Strauss works are pointing to the Strauss’s knowledge of the instruments as remarkable. Strauss importance was in his using new thinks without considering will be that approved by the audience or not. He knew and how to use the unique charm of the strange, different instruments and the art of combining them in orchestra. It is the main characteristic of Strauss that his awareness was directed toward using of new instruments and toward the re-introduction of old types. In “*Till Eulenspiegel*” he used the rattle and in the “*Symphonia domestica*” he used the old oboe d’amore. In “*Woman without a Shadow*” the Bohemian glass-harmonica, then in “*Elektra*” he used the basset-horn, forgotten since the time of Mozart, and for the solemn scene of Oreste’s appearance he used the Wagner tubas. Besides the reminders of the old types of instruments he used some new types. For the purpose in the “*Don Quixote*” he used the wind-machine (Eolifono), for the first time, and later in the “*Alpine Symphony*”, instrument witch is used in the works of Morris Ravel “*Child and magic*”, “*Daphne and Chloe*”, and in Tchaikovsky opera work. Then in “*Salome*” and the “*Alpine Symphony*”, he used the Heckelphone, a kind of baritone-oboe, made by Heckel in 1904 year. Also Strauss has used to great advantage in “*Rosenkavalier*” at the presentation of the silver rose the celesta, invented in 1886, in Paris, by Mustel.

Next to the freshness of the instruments choice witch will be part of the orchestra, for Strauss’s symphonic works the significant role has his experience as a conductor that we have mentioned before, his direct contact with the performers and his knowledge of their abilities to play correctly very complicated parts. Maybe one of Strauss’s secrets, beside his experience as conductor is that what he is remarking in his new edition of Berlioz’ treatise on orchestration: ”I advise all my young colleagues to go into the tuning room of the orchestra and to study what the musicians are playing there, when they feel unobserved. In this way one can learn what the instruments can do in reality”.

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