

ON THE QUESTION OF LARGE MUSICAL FORMS

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Abstract: *The article examines the specific features of studying and performing large-scale musical forms in pedagogical practice. It analyzes the structural and artistic characteristics of the sonatina, sonata, variation cycle, and rondo, as well as the principal stages of working on such compositions. Particular attention is paid to the principle of contrast in sonata form, the issues of tempo and rhythmic unity, the development of performance skills, and the cultivation of students' artistic thinking. The article emphasizes the importance of pedagogical guidance in shaping a holistic perception of musical form, understanding the inner meaning of the musical text, and developing technical stability in performers.*

Keywords: *large-scale form, sonata form, sonatina, variations, rondo, exposition, development, recapitulation, musical interpretation, pedagogical repertoire, performance skills.*

The study of large-scale musical forms constitutes an essential component of professional musical and performance training. Work on sonatas, sonatinas, variation cycles, rondos, and concertos contributes to the development of musical thinking, performance culture, technical stability, and artistic perception. Unlike small-form pieces, large-scale compositions require students to possess a deeper understanding of musical development, the ability to trace thematic relationships, and the capacity to maintain structural integrity throughout the entire work.

As E. M. Dvoskina notes, "the doctrine of musical form includes not only descriptive typology, but also a theoretical category that helps comprehend the logic of the structural interaction between the parts of a musical composition" [1]. Compositions belonging to large-scale musical forms typically demonstrate extended dramaturgical development, thematic contrast, and structural complexity. The performer must reveal the individuality of each thematic image, preserve the unity of the dramatic conception, and construct a coherent line of musical progression. Such work demands a high level of concentration, developed memory, and the ability to quickly adapt to varying artistic and technical challenges. Large-scale musical works are characterized by expansive structures, contrasting thematic material, and prolonged musical development. The performer must reveal the individuality of each thematic image, preserve the unity of the dramatic conception, and construct a coherent line of musical progression. Such work demands a high level of concentration, developed memory, and the ability to quickly adapt to varying artistic and technical challenges. A special role in this process belongs to the teacher. The teacher's task is not only to acquaint students with works

from different historical periods and stylistic traditions, but also to cultivate meaningful perception of the musical text. It is important to teach students to understand the inner content of a composition, perceive music as an artistic image, and convey its emotional and semantic meaning through performance. In this regard, the principle of musical unfolding acquires particular importance. T. S. Kyuregyan emphasizes that “the principle of unfolding in musicology represents a fundamental method of the logical organization of musical development, in which the motivation of the material occurs through the consistent development and transformation of the thematic core” [2]. Awareness of this principle enables students to understand the internal logic of a composition more deeply and avoid fragmented performance.

A special place in performance practice belongs to sonata form, which serves as the foundation of the classical instrumental cycle. Its most important feature is the juxtaposition of two contrasting themes – the principal and secondary theme. Between them lies the transition section, which provides movement from one figurative sphere to another. The study of sonata form requires students to comprehend the dramaturgical logic of the composition and the structural function of each section – exposition, development, and recapitulation. Performers must be able to identify thematic relationships, perceive the direction of musical movement, and preserve tempo unity.

When working on a sonatina or sonata, it is advisable to:

1. Identify the principal and subordinate themes and determine their expressive character;
2. Demonstrate the contrast between thematic sections;
3. Analyze articulation and stroke techniques;
4. Practice technically difficult passages and position changes separately;
5. Strive for stable tempo and rhythmic precision;
6. Pay attention to dynamic nuances and their expressive significance.

Particular importance should be attached to maintaining a unified tempo-rhythmic pulse. Instability of tempo often leads to fragmentation of form, technical inaccuracies, and excessive agogics. This is especially noticeable during changes of texture, rhythmic patterns, or sharp dynamic contrasts. The final movements of sonata cycles are frequently composed in rondo form. Work on such movements involves the same principles applied to sonata allegro: attention to dramaturgy, thematic relationships, and structural integrity. Variation cycles occupy an important place among large-scale musical forms. Their specificity lies in combining features of a large-scale composition with characteristics of the musical miniature. The study of variation cycles contributes significantly to the development of artistic thinking, interpretative flexibility, and expressive intonational skills. The basis of variation form is the repetition of a theme followed by its transformation. Composers modify rhythm, texture, harmony, register, dynamics, or melodic contour while preserving the thematic unity of the composition. One of the principal performance tasks is the unification of all variations into a coherent

artistic whole. Students must understand which elements of the theme remain preserved in each variation and how the musical material develops throughout the cycle.

Caesuras play a significant role in variation cycles. They may emphasize the independence of individual sections or, conversely, unite the variations into a continuous musical process.

Proper distribution of caesuras helps reveal climactic moments and highlight the structural features of the work. Expressive performance of variations requires mastery of diverse bowing and articulation techniques such as legato, staccato, détaché, martelé, and their combinations.

Rhythmic stability is equally important, since variation cycles often contain complex rhythmic elements including syncopations, triplets, dotted rhythms, and extended pauses.

The rondo form originated in French musical culture. The word “rondeau” translates as “circle” and is associated with the traditions of medieval round dance songs in which an unchanging refrain alternated with newly introduced verses. A defining characteristic of rondo form is the periodic reappearance of the principal theme, or refrain.

Between its appearances are contrasting episodes distinguished by new thematic material, rhythm, texture, and emotional coloring. Through the repetition of the refrain, the composition achieves structural completeness and formal stability.

The rondo form was especially widespread among composers of the Viennese Classical School. Final movements of sonatas and concertos were often written in this form.

Such works are characterized by song-like and dance-like intonations, vivid imagery, and dynamic musical development. The contrast between the refrain and episodes contributes to a clearer perception of the structure of the composition and helps students better understand the principles of musical form.

Conclusion

Work on large-scale musical forms is a complex and multifaceted process aimed at developing the performer’s technical, intellectual, and artistic qualities.

Mastery of sonata form, variation cycles, and rondo contributes to the formation of holistic musical thinking, performance discipline, and artistic maturity.

Among the principal objectives in mastering large-scale musical forms are the achievement of tempo-rhythmic cohesion, comprehension of the dramaturgy of musical development, and the ability to integrate individual sections into a unified artistic whole.

Performance of such compositions develops auditory concentration, emotional stability, technical endurance, and the capacity for profound artistic comprehension of the musical text, which is an essential prerequisite for the formation of a professional musician.

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