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THE ROLE OF MUSIC THEORY AND IMPROVISATION IN INSTRUMENTAL INSTRUCTION: FOR GENERAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS AND MUSIC EDUCATION RESEARCHERS

Abstract. The article offers a theoretical analysis of the role of elementary music theory and improvisation in teaching musical instruments to general education school students. The author treats instrumental performance not as the memorisation of a particular melody, but as a unity of fundamental theoretical knowledge, performance skills and creative freedom. The paper substantiates the notion of a «musical language» — pitch, note duration, metre, rhythm, interval, chord, mode, tonality, timbre and musical notation — as a necessary precondition for instrumental learning: without this knowledge the student is unable to grasp the content of a melody or to perform it consciously. The rubob serves as an example showing how directly theoretical knowledge affects performance. The central part of the article is devoted to improvisation, characterised as a pedagogical tool for developing creative and musical thinking, rapid and independent decision-making, musical memory and aural perception, and self-confidence. The improvisational elements of Uzbek maqom, the bakhshi tradition and oral folk music are interpreted as a foundational resource for national instrumental education, and the conclusion proposes a pedagogical approach integrating theory, performance and improvisation. The article is theoretical and analytical in character, and its conclusions are offered as recommendations for teachers of music culture.

Keywords: *music theory, improvisation, instrumental performance, musical language, rubob, musical thinking, fundamental knowledge, maqom, bakhshi tradition, general education school, creative potential.*

CHOLG‘U O‘RGATISHDA MUSIQA NAZARIYASI VA IMPROVIZATSIYANING TUTGAN O‘RNI: UMUMTA’LIM MAKTABLARI VA MUSIQA TA’LIMI IZLANUVCHILARI UCHUN

Annotatsiya. Maqolada umumta’lim maktablarida o‘quvchilarga musiqa cholg‘ularini o‘rgatish jarayonida musiqa elementar nazariyasi va improvizatsiyaning tutgan o‘rni nazariy jihatdan tahlil qilinadi. Muallif cholg‘u ijrochiligini o‘zlashtirishni fundamental nazariy bilim, amaliy ijro ko‘nikmasi va ijodiy erkinlikning uzviy birligi sifatida ko‘rib chiqadi. Ishda «musiqiy til» tushunchasi — tovush balandligi, cho‘zim, metr, ritm, interval, akkord, lad, tonallik, tembr, nota yozuvi, kalitlar va notastan — cholg‘uni o‘rganishning zaruriy dastlabki sharti sifatida asoslanadi: bu bilimlarni o‘zlashtirmasdan o‘quvchi kuyning mazmunini anglashi va uni ongli ravishda ijro etishi mumkin emas. Rubob misolida nazariy bilimning ijro jarayoniga bevosita ta’siri ko‘rsatiladi. Maqolaning markaziy qismi improvizatsiyaga bag‘ishlangan: u ijodiy fikrlashni, musiqiy tafakkurni, tezkor va mustaqil qaror qabul qilish ko‘nikmasini, musiqiy xotira va eshitish qobiliyatini hamda o‘quvchining o‘ziga ishonchini rivojlantiruvchi pedagogik vosita sifatida tavsiflanadi. O‘zbek maqom ijrochiligi, baxshichilik an’anasi va og‘zaki xalq musiqasidagi

improvizatsion unsurlar milliy cholg‘u ta’limi uchun tayanch manba sifatida talqin etiladi. Xulosada nazariy bilim, amaliy ijro va improvizatsiyani uzviy birlashtirishga asoslangan pedagogik yondashuv taklif qilinadi. Maqola nazariy tahlil xarakteriga ega.

Kalit so‘zlar: *musiqa nazariyasi, improvizatsiya, cholg‘u ijrochiligi, musiqiy til, rubob, musiqiy tafakkur, fundamental bilimlar, maqom, baxshichilik, umumta’lim maktabi, ijodiy salohiyat.*

РОЛЬ ТЕОРИИ МУЗЫКИ И ИМПРОВИЗАЦИИ В ОБУЧЕНИИ ИГРЕ НА МУЗЫКАЛЬНЫХ ИНСТРУМЕНТАХ: ДЛЯ ОБЩЕОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫХ ШКОЛ И ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЕЙ МУЗЫКАЛЬНОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

Аннотация. В статье теоретически анализируется роль элементарной теории музыки и импровизации в процессе обучения учащихся общеобразовательных школ игре на музыкальных инструментах. Автор рассматривает освоение инструментального исполнительства как единство фундаментальных теоретических знаний, исполнительских навыков и творческой свободы. В работе обосновывается понятие «музыкального языка» — высота звука, длительность, метр, ритм, интервал, аккорд, лад, тональность, тембр и нотная запись — как необходимое исходное условие изучения инструмента: без этих знаний учащийся не способен постигнуть содержание мелодии и осознанно её исполнить. На примере рубаба показано непосредственное влияние теоретического знания на исполнительский процесс. Центральная часть статьи посвящена импровизации, которая характеризуется как педагогическое средство развития творческого и музыкального мышления, навыка быстрого и самостоятельного принятия решений, музыкальной памяти и слухового восприятия, а также уверенности учащегося в себе. Импровизационные элементы узбекского макомного исполнительства, бахшийской традиции и устной народной музыки трактуются как опорный источник национального инструментального образования. В заключении предлагается педагогический подход, основанный на единстве теории, практического исполнительства и импровизации. Статья носит теоретико-аналитический характер.

Ключевые слова: *теория музыки, импровизация, инструментальное исполнительство, музыкальный язык, рубаб, музыкальное мышление, фундаментальные знания, маком, бахшийская традиция, общеобразовательная школа, творческий потенциал.*

INTRODUCTION

Improving music education, developing students' creative potential and forming their musical thinking are among the most pressing tasks of music education today. In his speeches on culture and art, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. M. Mirziyoyev has stressed that love of melody, song and art takes root in our people from childhood, within the family, and that one can hardly find a household without a dutor, a doira or some other musical instrument [1]. Music is inseparable from human history. Its influence reaches deep: it is not only a form of art but a way of enriching a person's emotional, cultural and spiritual world.

How much a music culture lesson achieves depends largely on the teaching methods used in instrumental work. When students acquire musical skills, enrich

their musical thinking and learn to work independently and creatively with an instrument, they gain a way of expressing their inner world. Creative potential grows only where there is room for experience and self-expression, and music education offers exactly such room: children learn to think creatively and independently by playing instruments, singing songs and shaping melodies through improvisation.

In everyday practice, though, instrumental instruction often shrinks to the accurate reproduction of a prescribed melody, while improvisation drops out altogether or is treated as a privilege of the gifted few. This article starts from a different premise: elementary music theory and improvisation do not stand alongside instrumental instruction — they are its two supporting pillars.

LITERATURE REVIEW

V. A. Vaxromeyev's classical course in elementary music theory sets out the fundamental concepts of the musical language systematically, and its translated edition remains the principal reference work for the Uzbek music education system [2]. What matters here is how the book presents those concepts: not as isolated definitions, but as one connected system whose every element bears directly on performance practice.

B. Qurbonov examines the pedagogical and psychological side of instrumental instruction, linking the foundations of music pedagogy and psychology to the age-related characteristics of the learner [5]. His central insight for this study is that musical ability is no fixed given — purposeful pedagogical activity forms it. R. G‘. Qodirov describes the psychology of musical perception, memory and aural representation [4], which makes it possible to speak more precisely about the student's inner hearing and musical imagination. Read together, these works show instrumental instruction as a process in which cognitive, emotional and motor components work at once.

N. Norxo‘jayev turns to the improvisational layer of the national tradition and shows that improvisation is no borrowing from European or American genres but an organic property of local practice — one that school instruction can rely on [3]. S. Azimov describes the organology of Uzbek folk instruments and their place within national musical civilisation [6], and so supplies the factual basis for discussing instruments such as the rubob. Taken as a whole, the reviewed literature points to two conclusions. Music theory and the psychology of musical activity complement each other as foundations of instrumental instruction [2; 4; 5]; the improvisational tradition of national music, well studied in its own right, has yet to find its way into school instrumental methodology [3; 6].

METHODOLOGY

The study is theoretical and analytical. Its object is the process of teaching musical instruments in general education schools; its subject, the role of elementary music theory and improvisation within that process. No experiment, survey or

measurement of learning outcomes was carried out, so the article presents no empirical data and makes no quantitative claims.

Four procedures shaped the analysis. Theoretical analysis and synthesis of the scholarly sources identified the conceptual apparatus of the musical language and matched it against the tasks of instrumental instruction [2; 5]. Conceptual and terminological analysis clarified the notions of «musical language» and «improvisation». The comparative method served to weigh the improvisational elements of maqom, the bakhshi tradition and oral folk music as sources for school pedagogy [3; 6]. Pedagogical generalisation, finally, drew the recommendations from the author's own teaching experience. The conclusions reach no further than instrumental instruction within the subject of music culture in general education schools.

RESULTS

Any field has to be entered through its most basic knowledge. A student who takes up an instrument needs, from the outset, full information about the instrument itself — its structure, and the way performance situations arise on it — together with the theory that belongs to it, because performance knowledge rests directly on the theoretical foundations of music. Consider the rubob. To grasp the content and timbre of a piece, to hear what a melody means and to recognise how it is put together, a student must first understand the language of music and learn to think musically.

«Musical language» here covers the fundamental musical elements without which no one can learn to play an instrument or perform a melody: pitch, note duration, metre, rhythm, interval, chord, mode, tonality, major, minor, timbre, musical notation, clefs and the staff [2]. A performer who has not mastered them cannot render a melody on an instrument. The subject of elementary theory of music teaches these concepts, and school students should meet them step by step before they begin to play. The American psychologist and educator Jerome Bruner made the same point about fundamentals: once a learner grasps the underlying principles, the subject as a whole becomes more accessible.

Students' interest in art and in instrumental learning grows when a lesson asks for more than a performance of the piece — when they are invited to interpret a melody in their own way, to move more freely as performers, to develop the musical material and to voice their own emotions through music. This is improvisation. The word comes from the Latin *improvisus*, «unprepared» or «unexpected», and it involves creating melodies and rhythms through which students express themselves freely while remaining inside the learning process. In compositional practice it developed rapidly from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Today it is a fundamental component of such genres as jazz, blues and rock, and an essential creative tool across the field of art.

Improvisation asks the performer to shape a musical work freely, without having planned it out in advance, and to lean instead on knowledge, experience, musical memory, auditory perception and creative thinking [4]. Historical sources show how

large a place it has held in the musical cultures of almost every people: improvisational elements run through maqom performance, the bakhshi tradition and the oral folk music of the East and of Uzbekistan [3]. Maqom performers interpret a piece in their own distinctive manner, drawing on established melodic patterns and modal systems. Bakhshis do the same when they deliver an epic narrative, creating new musical and poetic elements as the circumstances of the performance demand. Improvisation, in other words, generates new artistic images and musical ideas.

In the making of a new work, improvisation often comes first. The composer or performer tries out melodic, rhythmic and harmonic variants, and the ideas that survive are then refined into a complete and original composition. It pushes musicians past established patterns, towards new musical solutions and unconventional ideas, and the creative process becomes more flexible and productive as a result. Reproducing a pre-composed work offers nothing comparable: improvisation lets performers make music on the spot, in a manner that is recognisably their own.

The pedagogical functions of improvisation in instrumental instruction can be set out as follows. *The development of creative thinking*: improvising, students give their ideas sound, and so learn not merely to follow written notation but to perform freely and voice musical ideas of their own. *The development of musical thinking*: improvisation lets them not only hear music but imagine and create it, and musical thinking in turn sharpens their sense of timbre, rhythm and melody, feeding the growth of musical hearing and aural perception [4]. *The formation of rapid and independent decision-making*: students learn to decide quickly and on their own, which pushes them towards distinctive musical passages and melodic ideas of their own invention.

Two further functions complete this system. *Unstructured improvisation* frees students from established patterns and lets them open new musical directions, guided by their own musical feelings, perceptions and creative intuition. *Improvisation through exercises and games* helps them master the musical process and sharpen their performance skills; free improvisation on a predetermined pitch or tonal centre stimulates creative thinking while a work is being performed. Improvisation also builds self-confidence. It teaches students to think quickly in unexpected situations and to find performance solutions that suit their individual abilities within a particular modal framework. Invited to try out new ideas without fear of making mistakes, they grow readier to experiment creatively [5].

DISCUSSION

These observations suggest that theoretical knowledge and improvisation do not oppose each other; they depend on each other. Theory without improvisational practice stays inert — information a student can recite but not use at the instrument. Improvisation without a theoretical foundation slides easily into an arbitrary run of sounds with no modal or rhythmic logic. The conceptual system of elementary music theory [2] supplies the very material a student improvises with: interval, chord, mode

and tonality stop being objects of memorisation and become the means of free musical utterance.

Maqom and the bakhshi tradition [3] give school pedagogy a resource that lies culturally close to the student and therefore motivates more strongly than models borrowed from other musical cultures. Improvising inside a familiar modal framework, a student feels less of the «doing it wrong» barrier, since the aural experience being drawn on was acquired outside the lesson. Study of the performance capabilities of national instruments [6] strengthens respect for the national musical heritage at the same time, so that the pedagogical and the educational effect coincide.

The conclusions offered here are theoretical propositions. They agree with the sources cited and with the author's own teaching experience, but no experiment has tested them. Testing them empirically, and differentiating improvisational tasks by age [5], are the natural next steps.

CONCLUSION

Teaching a student to play an instrument should not end with the performance of one melody or composition. The real pedagogical task is to develop musical thinking, creative potential, aural ability, independent thought and the skill of free self-expression — which means organising instrumental instruction consistently and progressively, in close connection with fundamental musical knowledge. Students need enough knowledge of the instrument they are learning: its structure, the proper performance posture, how its sound is produced and what gives it its distinctive character, along with the basic knowledge of elementary music theory [2; 6]. With national instruments, joining theory to practice matters especially. A student should learn not only to play the correct notes but to perform a melody with understanding and feeling, to recognise its character and to carry musical thinking into the sound.

Teaching musical instruments in general education schools therefore calls for a working integration of theoretical knowledge, practical performance and improvisation. Such an approach consolidates what students know, develops their musical thinking, realises their creative potential and deepens their interest in instrumental performance. Above all, it shapes them into something more than performers who reproduce prepared works: into creative individuals who understand and feel music, interpret it independently and want to express musical ideas of their own. For teachers of music culture this suggests one practical rule — let every stage in the mastering of a theoretical concept carry an improvisational task built on it. For researchers it leaves the task of verifying that relationship empirically.

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