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### **Hrytsun Yu. M. Ethnic Culture Synthesis in Ihor Kovach's Music Art**

#### **Abstract**

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest to music language intonation peculiarities research. The composer of the second half of the twentieth century, a representative of the Kharkiv School of composition, Ihor Kovach (1924-2003) is in the area of the scientific interests. The objectives of the study are to prove that according to the analysis of the following composer's works: "Armenian dance for fortepiano" (1954), "Romance for Violin and Piano № 1 Esdur" (1955), "Concerto for Piano and Orchestra", "Concertina for Violin and Chamber Ensemble" are composed on the basis of the best Slavic and oriental samples of music culture national stylization. Though I. Kovach was not involved in the new movement of folk style and did not model contemporary folk samples. So far the method applied to "Second Symphony" (in memory of Khachaturian) where melodic, modal and harmonic means, rich with oriental colouring, is used. The results of the research support the idea that Kovach's art is an outstanding sequence of the national cultural context impact. Without taking this into account it is impossible to comprehend master's distinctive way of creative thinking. The present results are significant in the subsequent researches in the area of music art.

**Key words:** I. Kovach, synthesis, ethnic cultures, music language, genres.

**Problem statement and its connection with significant scientific and practical research tasks.** Despite that Kharkiv branch of the National Union of Composers in Ukraine is one of the oldest in the country, the music heritage of plenty of composers has not still been investigated. Ihor Kovach is one of such composers.

Ihor Kovach was the Ukrainian composer, representative of the Kharkiv School of composition, member of the National Union of Composers in Ukraine since 1960. But even being known and recognized, he did not receive the proper scientific attention, having shared the fate with his numerous Kharkiv colleagues. One of the ways of filling in the gap is to disclose composer's intonation thesaurus.

**Relevance of the issue.** Ihor Kovach lived in Kharkiv most of his life. He studied at the Conservatory of Kharkiv and worked there until his death having devoted his art to the native city. Nevertheless, his creative art to compose music originates from Abkhazia, the place of composer's childhood. The amazing

musical culture of the Abkhazian land, which, in fact, influenced Ihor Kovach's creativity, was reflected in his music.

**Analysis of recent research works and publications.** The work of Ihor Kovach was primarily analysed in the genres of music criticism and journalism dating back to 1960-1980. A brief outline of the life and work from his birth till the end of 70-th, was performed by N. Tyshko according to the demands of the genre. Studies of 1990-2007, mentioning the name of I. Kovach, are dedicated to the Kharkiv School of composition as a whole. Composer's genre and style portrait still remains unexplored.

**Object of the study** is to reveal the synthesis of ethnic cultures in the art of Ihor Kovach, the Ukrainian composer of the second part of the XX century

**Subject of the study** is symphonic, instrumental and singing genres in the composer's music works.

**The presentation of the study material.** Ihor Kovach spent his childhood in Abkhazia (1924-1937), where his parents moved in 1925. His father, Konstantin Kovach had a great impact on the future composer and played a major role in his creative work. K. Kovach himself is mentioned as an Abkhazian folk music researcher in the following studies by N. Tyshko: "Always in search" [6], "Artistic generosity" [8] and in her essay on I. Kovach's life and work "Creative portraits of Ukrainian composers" [7]. It is relevant to mention that the work of composer's father K. Kovach, a famous composer-folklorist, is presented in the thesis <sup>1</sup>by Chegiia M. N., where Abkhazian music life of the 1910-1920 is described in the aspects of ethnic interactions and professional becoming [9].

In Sukhumi Konstatin Kovach worked in the newspaper office "Soviet Abkhazia", successful folklorist and musician. This later reflected in some of I. Kovach's individual style. Konstantin Kovach was the first who started collecting Abkhazian folk songs and studying the national instrumentarium<sup>2</sup>. Afterwards he published the collection of "One hundred and one Abkhazian folk

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 1, part I

<sup>2</sup> Character of K. Kovach is depicted in the book by G. Gulia "Dmitrii Gulia"

songs” and “Songs of Kodori Abkhazians”<sup>3</sup>. In addition, he showed himself to be an active representative of the Abkhazian culture<sup>4</sup>, the founder of music school<sup>5</sup> and republican music academy, ethnographic choir, string quartet in Sukhumi, First State Symphony Orchestra of Abkhazia.

From an early age I. Kovach heard Abkhazian and Georgian music, which deeply rooted into his thesaurus. Caucasian themes got naturally involved into many of his compositions and became the part of his music language. This concerns not only his melodic component but modal, rhythm, timbre. Early compositions by I. Kovach were alive with musical intonations of the Caucasus folks, “but for Kovach neither ethnographic attitude to folk music, nor citing method was typical. His music is characterised by summarised inner hearing, not by the amount of the individual techniques, by the organic unity of the universals and particulars, the national and international. This brought emotional openness, colourfulness, intonation peculiarity, brightness and vividness of the sketches and variety of rhythm and orchestration to his mature compositions” [4:12].

Over the years, from college and up to the 1990s, being already a mature composer, an inextricable link with the Eastern-Slavic musical cultures traced in I. Kovach’s compositions. I. Kovach’s first works, where childhood experiences played out, reflected in his music language. They are as following: “Armenian dance for fortepiano” (1954) “Romance for Violin and Piano № 1 Es-dur” (1955). In 1959 Ihor Kovach graduated from Kharkiv conservatory with Honours Degree. At the final examination the “Concerto for piano and orchestra”, which musical language tonally and rhythmically had the oriental influence, was performed. Later in 1966, “Concertina for Violin and Chamber Ensemble” was composed. It was a milestone in the composer's work. That year the composition was presented at the International Veniavskii Composers' Competition in Poland, where I. Kovach became the winner of the second prize<sup>6</sup>. In musical context of the composition the

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<sup>3</sup> The collection was published in 1930.

<sup>4</sup> For his various activities K. Kovach was awarded the title "Honored Art Worker of Abkhazian ASSR" (1933) and was elected as a member of Abkhazian Central Executive Committee of two convocations.

<sup>5</sup> Thereafter, the music school was named in honour of K. Kovach.

<sup>6</sup> I. Kovach shared the award with Turkish composer Ilhan Usmanbas and Czechoslovak composer Jan Kapr.

Eastern roots are clearly traced. In intonation and harmonic meanings these are the sequences of parallel seventh chords, accords of quarto-quint structure, chromatic idioms predominance; tonality is veiled by altered seventh chords, accords, chromatisms and altered scale tone introduction, melodic motion along characteristic intervals and tritones.

In 1971, the composer once again turned to to the genre of instrumental concert. He composed “Concertino for Piano and Chamber Ensemble”<sup>7</sup>, where the Oriental colouring is traced. I. Kovach was aware of his music connection with one of the Caucuses, having special receptiveness to it. This is evidenced by his conversation with the Ukrainian music expert Y. Shcherbinin: “In this “Piano Concertino” my youth likes have been manifested. While living in Sukhumi I heard Abkhazian and Georgian music a lot. In this Concertino such oriental folk music tones are felt, which I couldn’t get rid of during the process of my creative work and I will never do. The intonations of numerous folks, inhabiting our homeland, come true in the creative works of Soviet composers. This, obviously, enriches musicians’ language potential...” [10:2].

In 1982 the composer created “Second Symphony” (in memory of Khachaturian) which was the author’s version of the “Second Symphony part I”. “Second Symphony” is a kind of synthesis of oriental culture bedding which is expressed not only in the composer’s music but in the manifestation of the eastern mentality which is one of the main areas in the creative portrait of the composer.

“Second Symphony” is a sort of musical gift to A. Khachaturian. It is not still known what prompted I. Kovach to pay tribute to the Armenian composer. The explanation is likely to be found in their common Caucasian roots. As it has been mentioned above, I. Kovach imbibed oriental tone and sharp specific rhythms of the Caucasian music since early age. That is why, quoting M. Kalashnyk and P. Kalashnyk Armenian classical music “full of optimism and national diversity was always close to composer’s artistic individuality” [4: 12]. H. Kukol also mentions A. Khachaturian’s influence on I. Kovach’s style, indicating such

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<sup>7</sup> Chamber Orchestra includes band woodwind, string and percussion instruments.

common features as: “temperamental rhythms of oriental music instrumental themes, <...>, lifestyle, and spirit of optimism” [5: 85].

It is supposed that the dedication of the symphony is something more than the immortalisation of the Armenian composer. In contrast sound the image of the Armenian people with their tragic fate, original art, and passionate temperament was presented. It is significant that I. Kovach, far from neofolklorism, did not go towards the creation of pictorial ethnographic compositions, he embodied the spirit of the nation itself, perceived by him through Khachaturian’s instrumental music. Thus the concept of the original symphony arose. That allowed I. Kovach to avoid popular at this time new tendencies and radicalism of the avant-garde music language.

The Second Symphony is a three-part period, each part of which has got the name: “Memory”, “Landscape”, where the oriental colouring is manifested. The music reveals the beauty of the Caucasian nature; the preamble introduces the atmosphere of contemplation; the third part is called “Temperament”. The parts are joined together by the logic of drama development from the image of weeping through expressive contemplation, to rousing finale of the atmosphere of sorrow. I. Kovach turns away from interpretation and thematic invention: there are no wide breath lasting melodies in the compositions; and short little second “core” - tune stands out in the composition. This tune goes through the whole composition. According to emotional atmosphere and nature of every part it covers the horizontal both in melodically meaningful cues, in trichord melody, and in more explicate phrases, in rhythmic ostinato. In parts I and III the recombination of thematic material takes place. In part II “core” - tune appears in a veiled form. In the symphony such peculiar author’s features are observed: the arrangement of the contrast themes and images, and their rhythmic return.

It ought to be noted that in the Second Symphony composer’s “oriental” tonal thinking is presented. The author often refers to the low level V in a minor key, elements “tune of D. Shostakovich” (low II, VI and VIII scale tone), the extensive use of the possibility of major-minor changeability The harmonic language is

complicated with the sequence of reference to the 12-tone scale, the use of clusters, and graphic music recording music does not always contain the key signs. The rhythmic organization of the Symphony distinguishes with frequent change of pulsation, the large number of various ostinato. The big role is given to drums as a carrier of specific phonics, and as a method of rhythmic pulsation accentuation.

The latest work, being the “oriental” dominant in the Ihor Kovach’s works is “Concertino for cello and chamber orchestra” (1990), where national eastern colouring is observed with large strokes in melodic intonation and rhythmic structures.

**Conclusions** The investigation of Ihor Kovach’s music art shows that his national and individual style is one of his individual peculiarities. Here we have to point out the value of quarto-fifths intonations, and quarto-fifths accompaniment. Great attention is paid to the group of percussion instruments. Ostinat support of small and large drums often accompanies musical context in almost all the composer's works of different genres. The particular attention is given to varied ostinat accompaniment such as chord, octave, melodic, giving the composition an equal ripple, clear rhythm.

Rhythm plays an important expressive and formative role in the composer's works. I. Kovach uses almost all its possible resources. Regular accent is next to the variable ostinato, with frequently changing metric pulsation, rhythm voices are close to polyphonic superposition of different shapes. At the same time the rhythm nomination on one of the first places in the composition style corresponds to of the twentieth century music trends and reflects the composer's childhood experiences, which deeply penetrated his consciousness.

There are also works in the composer’s creative arsenal where national sources are one of the dramatic components, the main means of expression. Thanks to their use, music got that unique colouring that is specific only to oriental intonations.

**Perspective**

The heritage of I. Kovach is multifaceted and diverse. Only one aspect of the composer's creative style has been disclosed. It has become a subject of the suggested scientific study. Further investigation of his work, being subjected to scientific understanding and assessment of the musical material, covers various spheres of artistic genre palette of the composer. Appeal to Ihor Kovach's work is properly reflected in the completion of the performers, instrumentalists and conductors creative repertoire.

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