

# Vocal Ensemble

## Aesthetics, History, Practice

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**Abstract**—This article considers the most essential aesthetic problems of vocal ensemble's performance. Musical ensemble is presented not only as the quintessence and expression of aesthetic, culture-philosophical and social shifts of an epoch, but it also is a concept for more efficient investigations of solutions for the most urgent problems of our times. The author brings up to date the specificity of individual-personal and mutual in ensemble culture as a some kind of aesthetic component, which is necessary for a musical work's interpretation. The author also explains the necessity of complex methodology creation for studying the researched phenomenon, which is based on achievements in the field of aesthetics, cultural philosophy and study of art, i.e. the cross of disciplines. The ensemble's culture specificity is exposed as art study concept and unique aesthetic category. The aesthetic sense of musical ensemble is analyzed as dual personal-social and communicative concepts, the typical peculiarity of which is an universal communication and individual constant that allows achieving integral art solution in the process of decoding and realization of composer's thought. This point creates an interpretative foundation for artists, and recipients become more objective and informed and can grasp the emotion from the work of art.

**Keywords**—*vocal ensemble; music; aesthetics; ensemble performance*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of understanding the professional vocal ensemble of creating music seems to be relevant because of its the insufficient knowledge and, along with this, the urgent need to understand it for aesthetic thought, and for musicians. Peculiar, unique situation ensemble performing at the joint existence of various forms of music-making was noticed by Aristotle [6, p. 637; 7, pp.124-125], who showed his characteristic categorical belonging of supreme harmony, which allows us to judge what this kind of musical practice from ancient times were erected to the rank of musical aesthetics, representing the highest form of manifestation of the human spirit. A noticeable increase of interest in ensemble work, as well as tangible improvements in social status of the ensemble at the present stage of existence and development of world history and culture, marks the evolution of the deep cultural and socio-dynamic processes occurring at various ontological levels of human development. Despite the huge interest in musicians-practitioners and real picture of a dynamic ensemble

performance, ensemble phenomenon of culture is one of the smaller aesthetic categories. To the study of ensemble music-making turn, as a rule, either on the concrete empirical level, the pedagogical and musical practice or in the context of historical and theoretical awareness of a product.

### II. THE AESTHETIC FOUNDATION OF THE VOCAL ENSEMBLE

The most acute problem of modern aesthetics is the study of the theoretical and methodological features of ensemble creativity as a separate paradigm of science involves the study and analysis of the ontological foundation of the musical ensemble as a multifunctional phenomenon with inherent aesthetic, cultural philosophy, social and communicative functions.

This approach draws us to the development of a new methodological concept, based not only on fundamental aesthetic position, but also on the performing and interpretative content of a musical work that combines aesthetic, cultural philosophy, historical and practical concept of ensemble skills [5, pp. 160-169].

First, the aesthetic property of the ensemble performance that should be noted is the commonality. In the fundamental work of P. Florensky «The Pillar and ground of the truth. The experience of Orthodox theodicy» [3] in which the author explains the nature of aesthetic culture not as a unified spatial-temporal process, and not as an evolutionary paradigm, but as an objective unity, indicates that the highest achievement of aesthetic harmony is possible only through joint understanding and identification of themselves as part of cosmic existence. In a collaborative effort, ensemble music performance directly puts this function into practice. The aesthetic harmony of musical co-creation is one of the strategic poles of the antinomy of musical art. Musical aesthetic language of ensemble works is a unique semiotic structure in which a real fixation and the practical use of the lexical elements of the music of Genesis defines a joint performance. Then, as a result of aesthetic cognition of artistic interpretation of a musical work, they acquire their meaning. No doubt, strictly fixed rules are not a characteristic feature of the ensemble. It should be noted that many symbolic melodic turns (for example, the medieval sequence *Dies irae*, in the Catholic Liturgy are used as a proprioceptive mass, narrating the Day of wrath (judgment day)) used in the works of composers of different eras

("Fantastic Symphony" by H. Berlioz and «Dance of death» K. Saint-Saens as an example of the collective creativity of the ensemble; Paraphrase on the Dies irae «Totentanz» of Franz Liszt and «Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini» by Sergei Rachmaninov as an example of co-creation ensemble soloist and orchestra; Quintet for piano and strings N. Medtner – the sample chamber-instrumental ensemble, vocal composition «Our age» – the ensemble of voice and piano and so on etc.), are sealed semiotic structures in an existing musical practice, and are the signs and ligaments, allowing musicians to decrypt the text and accurately identifying common points of content and the appropriate interpretation. Following the aesthetic quality inherent in the ensemble culture is characterized by organic unity of individual and general. The individual exists in each performer participating in the ensemble, but each of their aesthetic perceptions of the qualitatively are diverse and have a specific structure and orientation. The combination of various ontological representations stored in auditory and developing the experience of any member of collective music-making form a unique society. The structure of the inner ear musicians in the polyphonic ensemble: facing the surrounding «sounding the world», hearing unceasingly transforms, transforms, combines the events, thoughts and impressions. In this way, the current auditory space by the individual is transformed and directed their attention to the aesthetic essence understanding of the interpreted works. Exactly this method is the formation of a productive musical aesthetic-dialogical thinking.

One of the fundamental features of musical-aesthetic messages in the ensemble is the gnosis of the creative act – from the composer's mind to the recipient. The Chinese philosopher Mencius, wrote about ensemble performance: «What is more pleasing one to enjoy music or together with others? Better together with others. What is nicer – with a few enjoy it together or with many? Better together with many» [8, p. 209]. The aesthetic sense of the ensemble has a bidirectional personal and social and communicative function. The specifics of which how exactly are informative, along with this deeply emotional factor, is that only in the interaction of individual and personal interest, intensive joint search single artistic decision the objective content of the songwriting for artists creates the most fertile ground for interpretation, and the recipient as a result is transmitted to the most objective and full information and emotional picture of the work. Under the aesthetic perspective of the ensemble, the culture is aware of such categorical characteristics, which often remain invisible in exclusively musicological approach. Music, art hearing, when this is revealed most fully mobile, are unlike stable arts visual range of painting, sculpture, architecture. In the joint culture of musical performance there are two types of variant coexistence of historical and directly ensemble [9, p. 154]. Historical occurs together with the change of epochs, cultural change, change of ethical and aesthetic ideals, etc. Ensemble the group of performers, transformed and synthesized within their individual style. The performers in most cases understand that the modern interpretation of the works can take away from the understanding of the content of composition and concepts of the composer himself. Born in this dilemma – the problem of

choice between tradition and modern (often biased) musicians practice the vast majority hold positions of contemporary interpretation. L. Auer pointed out that there can exist one fixed way of interpretation by the performer of a musical work, because there is no steadfast, the reference criterion of awareness is beautiful [1, p. 139-140]. Method and manner of performance, adopted at one historical time may be completely unacceptable in another. In this case most clearly come to the fore basic aesthetic categories of beauty and ugliness. What is the choice? The question always remains «the conscience» of musicians, but in any case the management of the higher ideals of Harmony and Light must be guiding their work. Reliance and desire for beauty not only gives a moral right to broadcast the sacred information stored in the musical composition, but by playing music and allows you to achieve inner perfection, thereby transforming its appearance aesthetically.

Ensemble culture, is of huge significance in the ontological knowledge, including basic personality traits, dominance of the relevant thoughts of his time and varied aspirations of his aesthetic reflection. The social orientation of the ensemble of culture is aimed directly at understanding personal relationships, understanding of interference, and, as a final goal, - to an extensive dialogue, the elimination of fragmentation and psychological barriers, the achievement of spiritual harmony. P. Ricoeur noted that in an ensemble co-creation touching a fundamentally different aesthetic positions. A distinctive specific feature of the creative work of P. Ricoeur, is the desire to «think together position, often acting as antinomical» [2, p. 38]. Thus, the P. Ricoeur shows the relevance of ensemble performance and its aesthetic semantics.

### III. THE HISTORY AND PRACTICE OF VOCAL ENSEMBLE

Arising from a unique choral culture and organically combining a romance art, vocal ensemble gained in the historical development of their autonomy. Great value vocal ensemble is in the choir of the specified bow – solo vocal performance. Evolving synchronously with romance, vocal ensemble undergoes a deep transformation: in the invoice, in particular, from monody to polyphony developed structure. In prosodic terms, the genre fits well in the aesthetic direction of the art of a particular period, and therefore it is quite natural to note that are beyond the intonational parallels: let's specify, for example, related to the intonation of the duet «You don't come again» and the song «I remember a wonderful moment» M. Glinka. Duet «The charm of Bygone times» by A. Dargomyzhsky dock musically, Aria of Lensky from the opera «Eugene Onegin» by P.Tchaikovsky, as well as his «Scottish ballad» intonation similar with thematic material the role of Tatiana from «Eugene Onegin».

Of particular importance in the development of the genre of chamber vocal ensemble was the work of local composers ' school of the nineteenth century, it evolved from a simple samples for composers-Amateurs a special genre that crystallized in the works of M. Glinka, A. Dargomyzhsky, P. Tchaikovsky and etc. A rather peculiar fate vocal ensemble in the context of development and existence of other genres. In the opera ensembles took the lead (along with solos)

positions, as cantatas or oratorios of Russian authors, they are not practically used, and these differ fundamentally from the huge number of such examples in the works of Western European composers. It is interesting to review the relationship of the vocal ensemble with instrumental transcriptions (suffice it to recall the work of F. Liszt), in which composers used melodic and sometimes textured material various vocal ensembles (less often – intimate, often – operatic), and, on the contrary, there are quite a large number of arrangements of popular instrumental pieces for vocal ensembles. In this context, quite clearly looks like an example of a vocal quartet, A. Borodin's «Serenade of four Cavaliers to one lady», in the style and technique of an instrumental quartet. Genre vocal ensemble in the context regarding the creativity of Russian composers became pronounced in the nineteenth century. Few lost their positions in the XX century – particularly in connection with a fundamental change of aesthetic reference points: on the one hand the specificity of the genre, for a century existed as an elitist kind of art, came in dissonance with the aesthetic directions of twentieth century. On the other hand, the negative role was played by the instability of the performing ensembles. Note that in instrumental performance genres such as the string quartet or piano trio functioned as coherent groups with a stable group of musicians, vocal ensembles can in most cases have a variety of timbral content that has not always been in favor of stability of performance, and, consequently, the establishment of aesthetics and performance traditions.

Note that as such has not been a philharmonic tradition of performing the whole concert of vocal and ensemble programs for several reasons. The first reason is the low interest of students in the national education vocal to ensemble performance as a form of collaborative music-making, necessary for the formation of singer-professional. Jewelry performance specification, carried out in this work, knowledge of instrumental methods of intonation require students great perseverance and the availability of appropriate training, but this is not always the case.

The second reason we point out the existence of intermediate vocal ensemble roles between solo and choral performance that did not contribute to its progressive development. The vocalists, trained in the tradition of solo performance, often do not realize the urgent need to master the art of vocal ansamblevaja. The choir, in most cases, do not have bright enough votes. This is the fundamental difference in the methodology of training of the musician-instrumentalist, a student ensemble skills from the very basics and by the time of graduation variety of practice abilities.

The third reason consists in the features of the repertory, or rather, lack of knowledge and systematization of the entire vocal-ensemble repertoire. Identifying the aesthetic essence of contemporary ensemble partnership is a critical issue. Joint performance carries a powerful intellectual, spiritual and emotional a consolidating action, which is realized in actual practice musical communication.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The aesthetic purpose of the ensemble is extremely important in our time – a time of acute political, social, economic, ethnic upheavals and shifts. It is in joint music-making of the XXI century clearly there is an aesthetic tendency towards confrontation antidualhownosti of our era, the resistance increase in the indifference, callousness and cruelty. P. Hindemith, in his work «The World of the composer» writes: «The Russian Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the American President, along with his other colleagues could at least once a week to play and sing in an Amateur ensemble, thereby showing to the world the example of an initiative directed to lofty goals, and then the fate of humanity would be resolved in the best way» [9, p. 38].

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