

TEXTS AND CONTEXTS OF GENRE IN THE MUSIC OF JĀZEPS VĪTOLS

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Summary

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The variety of the genre palette in the works of Jāzeps Vītols and his contemporaries – the founders of Latvian music and the Latvian school of composition – is the basis for the genre and colour variety of all subsequent Latvian composers throughout the entire history of Latvian professional music culture development. Therefore, the genre issue is a very interesting and relevant topic for research, particularly today, when the meanings of genre priorities and models are actively changing. It can be considered both internally, i.e. in terms of the actual heritage of a Latvian classical composer (genre texts), and externally, i.e. in relation to the work of his predecessors (Romantic composers) and contemporaries (genre contexts) with whom Vītols shares a congenial spirit in aesthetic purposes and musical thinking.

In the work of Jāzeps Vītols, almost all of the genres that existed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are present – the three main groups (instrumental, vocal, and vocal instrumental genres) have a very extensive internal differentiation, covering a broad range of genres. For example, the vocal group includes such genres as solo songs, vocal ensembles, and choral works. The vocal and instrumental group includes songs, ballads, cantatas, as well as oratorios and sacred works. The instrumental group includes both orchestral works (symphonies, overtures, symphonic portrayals, fantasies, suites, ballads, serenades, etc.), and works of instrumental chamber music such as string quartets, legends, other works for ensembles, as well as many different kinds of piano works (sonatas and sonatinas, variations, etudes, dances, individual pieces or pieces combined in opuses). Theatrical music can be considered as an independent group.

Even a general overview of each genre group allows the drawing of parallels with composers that Vītols himself considered closest to him in music (R. Schumann, J. Brahms, F. Chopin and others). His piano works are particularly significant in this sense, as genre contact points are clearly noticeable.

It is typical for Vītols to combine piano pieces in opuses – for example, he combined preludes and etudes with other pieces (meditation, impromptu, lullaby, intermezzo). Interestingly, when considering such cycles composed in 1895–1897 we can note a certain regularity from the point of view of both genre and quantitative composition – multiple

actions of a symmetrical principle. Thus, the whole group of works (op. 17–20, 22, 23, 25) forms a certain macrocycle, where unifying principles remain in force.

Two more peculiarities are characteristic to Vītols. Firstly, among works of different genre groups a principle of combining three pieces into one opus is apparent (except piano music as well as solo vocal, vocal ensemble and choral music). Secondly, the factor of genre unity in these groups is significant. In the first place, it refers to the genre of ballad, which appears both in choral works (most often – 13 ballads), and in vocal instrumental and instrumental works. In instrumental music, the composer “borrows” from the realm of vocal music (song, small song, lullaby, legend, serenade), which is another “romantic” aspect of the composer.

The article describes only the basic features, which are most apparent. On one hand, there is Jāzeps Vītols’ devotion to genre tradition, on the other – his close relationship with the romantic direction in the development of his musical art.