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ON THE CLASSICAL TRADITIONS OF AZERBAIJANI PIANO ART

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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to characterise the peculiarities of classical traditions in the history of Azerbaijani piano culture and generalise these traditions. The priority of the study is to consider the classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano culture as aesthetic principles of its functioning. **The research methodology** is based on a categorical understanding of such a concept as classical. The significant phenomena of the piano art of Azerbaijan are considered from a contextual aspect. The study is based on the principle of historicism, which is characterised by diachrony; the history of Azerbaijani piano art is covered in stages. **The scientific novelty of the research** is the first to generalise the classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano culture based on historical material. The first attempt to classify the classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano culture is essential. **Conclusions.** At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, studying Azerbaijani piano culture required a reevaluation, new approaches, and generalisations. Creative consciousness, embodied in the classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano art, acquires diversity and multidimensionality in contemporary phenomena. This is why the present research relies on the importance of interpreting classical traditions. The classics of Azerbaijani piano culture serve as a model for future generations of Azerbaijani pianists. The classical performance paradigm was based on important factors such as the high professional skills of pianists and a deep understanding of musical works, their artistic reading, interpretation, and interpretation. The outstanding pianists of the second half of the 20th century are united by a common ideological, performing and musicological approach, which can be called a 'solid foundation' of Azerbaijani piano art. Classical traditions represent both applied and professional techniques, as well as music's philosophical and aesthetic concepts. The classical traditions of the Azerbaijani piano culture, laid down by prominent figures, developed as a natural combination of the performance and pedagogical levels. The integrity and completeness of the classical style define the distinctive features of pianism.

Keywords: music; performance; piano; classics; tradition; culture

Introduction

Outstanding pianists of the second half of the twentieth century were distinguished by a cohesive school of thought with a solid and fundamental foundation.

Classical traditions represent both applied and professional approaches and a philosophical and aesthetic concept of music.

These classical traditions in Azerbaijani piano culture were established by eminent figures and evolved as a natural combination of performing and pedagogical levels. The integrity and completeness of the classical style define the distinctive features of pianism.

Purpose of the article

The purpose of the research is to characterise the features of classical traditions in the history of Azerbaijani piano culture and generalise these traditions. The priority of the study is to consider the classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano culture as aesthetic principles of its functioning.

Recent research and publications analysis

Classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano art represent a particular system of performing principles. The term – classical traditions reflects the unity of piano art's essential properties. The appropriateness of using this concept is based on the fact that it can generalise the specific features of piano culture.

In the second half of the 20th century, the piano school of Azerbaijani performers was formed. The classical traditions of the piano school of Azerbaijan and national piano performance were laid down.

The classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano culture in Azerbaijan represented a holistic phenomenon with enormous potential for development.

Using the concept of the classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano culture, we refer to the Azerbaijani performance school, which developed as a historically established national school of pianism. More specifically, this refers to the performance school of a generation of Azerbaijani pianists and teachers united by common artistic and aesthetic principles of performance and teaching.

The concept of classical traditions in Azerbaijani piano art is evident. However, according to researchers, the idea of classical traditions requires generalisation and argumentation.

Closely related to the concept of classical traditions in piano culture is the concept of a piano school, which can be distinguished in the following way. For example, piano schools differ by nationality – Italian, German, etc. – and piano schools are associated with individual figures – pianists.

Researchers of piano culture differentiate the various types of performing schools as follows:

1. by style;
2. by national specifications;
3. by uniform artistic and aesthetic principles;
4. by individual pedagogical focus;
5. by professional orientation (Seidov, 1988, p.130).

Using this table, we can say that the classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano culture reflect unified artistic and aesthetic principles.

The article is devoted to the study of musical art: A. Magerramova (2008), R. Mamedova (Sarabska) (2021), K. Dadash-zade (2022), G. Makhmudova (2006), O. Voitovych (2022), T. Seidov (2006) and other researchers.

Main research material

The classics of Azerbaijani piano culture served as a model for subsequent generations of Azerbaijani pianists.

They were characterised by professional skill, organic interpretation of musical works, conviction and confidence in their correct perception and understanding.

The outstanding pianists of the second half of the 20th century were distinguished by a typical school with a solid, fundamental foundation.

Outstanding individuals created the classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano culture, as they developed as a natural combination of performing and pedagogical layers.

The classical style's integrity and completeness also defined pianism's corresponding characteristics. Azerbaijani pianists representing the classical direction of piano culture stood at a high level of mastery. In this respect, the perfection of their command of the tools of piano art played a significant role.

The classical traditions were embodied in the practices of Azerbaijani pianists, whose performances had a powerful spiritual impact.

These traditions in the history of piano art were passed down through the direct perception of the performance process. At the same time, a particular cultural foundation served as the basis, allowing the nature of the performed work to be revealed. This laid the foundation for qualities that hold great potential for developing Azerbaijan's piano school.

The deep connection between pianistic techniques, technical skills, and the aesthetic interpretation of a musical work was at the core of the formation of classical traditions in Azerbaijani piano art. The synthesis of clear rules with an understanding of the prospects of performance culture was an important priority.

In classical piano performance, spontaneousness, balance, the priority of structure, pedagogical generosity, and the teacher's maximum dedication to developing their student's mastery come to the forefront. The encouragement of individuality and independence in young pianists is strongly emphasised.

The classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano culture were based on the parity of two leading principles: on the one hand, the rational understanding of the laws governing musical works, along with strict clarity and logic in methodological approaches. On the other hand, the work's emotional impact had its aspects in the musical interpretation of the piece. The objectification of the interpretation of musical works manifested itself in forming the classical traditions of the Azerbaijani piano school.

It is important to emphasise that preserving the fundamental categories of piano art, meaning the mastery of professional skills, has always been combined with the cultivation of the individual qualities of pianists. In other words, the classical school of professional mastery was based on the precision of reproducing the musical text and the aspiration to convey its inner essence.

Strict adherence to the author's text did not overshadow the desire to feel and convey the underlying subtext of the work, its inner essence.

The aspiration for organicity, wholeness, and meaningful interpretation, which corresponds primarily to the musical text, distinguishes the classical school of Azerbaijani pianism. At the same time, stereotypes and performance clichés are directly opposed to the pianist's internal dynamics and emotional-psychological mindset.

At all stages of its history, the Azerbaijani piano school was characterised by virtuoso, vibrant playing and emotional dynamics combined with the proportionality of compositional vectors. The integrity of structure and clarity of dramaturgy were paired with the inner depth of performance.

The idea and meaning of a musical work and the understanding of style through feeling were important prerogatives for the masters of the Azerbaijani classical piano school. The general parameters of classical traditions and the contemporary functioning of piano culture are based on the priorities of performance art:

- The performer's individual style;
- The national characteristics of the context;
- Aesthetic principles of purposefulness, unity, and harmony;
- The professional school.

According to A. Magerramova (2008), the unifying factors of classical traditions and their modern functioning are:

- Profound depth of content;
- Realistic truthfulness;
- Logical understanding of performance;
- Dramaturgical conceptuality and integrity;
- Mastery of piano sound;
- Organic unity of the individual parts and the whole, from a single measure to the dramatic entirety;
- Balance and equilibrium between intellect and emotion (p. 145).

The classicism of the Azerbaijani piano school was based on the artistic parameters of pianism, which were characterised by the following traits:

- Rational foundation;
- The logic of clear structure in the work;
- Precise calculation of dynamic aspects;
- Priority of proportionality in meaningful accents;
- The value and clarity of performance interpretation;
- Strict loyalty to the text of the piece;
- Internal logic is used to correlate musical text and imagery.

The future potential of the classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano culture reveals itself in the implementation of specific priorities:

- Recreating the artistic concept of the work;
- Performance professionalism;
- Individual understanding of the musical work;
- The necessity of preliminary analysis of the piano piece;
- Independence in musical thinking;

- Understanding the correct correspondences between musical characteristics and the means of their realisation;

- Studying high examples of musical classics.

Classical traditions in Azerbaijani piano art are based on the classical foundations of the pianist's training. Essential parameters of classical education have developed in Azerbaijani piano culture.

The classical training of a pianist was based on three critical aspects of understanding a musical work:

1. The central focus is on the overall idea of the musical work, forming a goal and creating mental images; the priority is the dynamic comprehension of the work.

2. The process of mastering the musical work and deepening the understanding is gradual and lengthy, requiring a progressive development of its interpretation.

3. Classical alignment between a sufficiently long study period and the maximum achieved result.

The requirement to adhere to the musical text and remain faithful to every note the composer wrote was combined with teaching students to develop their vision of the work. In other words, the generation of pianists that emerged with the birth and development of the Azerbaijani piano school instilled creativity in their students. It did not restrict the emotional and psychological understanding of the piece.

Classical performance of musical works was characterised by a rational foundation, which contributed to the integrity of interpretation, clarity, and logical coherence of execution. At the same time, sincerity and inspiration were among the essential aspects of the classical performance of piano works.

What commonalities exist between the classical piano school that emerged in the 20th century and the modern priorities of pianism?

- A high level of professionalism;

- Individual creative interpretation of musical material;

- The artistic talent of the performer;

- Harmonious correlation between the emotional-psychological and rational aspects of piano art;

- Piano performance as a harmonious balance of the rational and emotional;

- The priority of predetermined imagery and content;

- The musical work as a complex of style, dramaturgy, form, imagery, distinctive features of intonation, technical issues of sound production, dynamics, agogics, and fingering;

- Every sound must be complete, resonant, and deep.

- The integrity of the artistic and performance outcome.

Classical traditions were formed in Azerbaijani piano culture as an understanding of the synthesis between a rational and individual approach to education.

Maximum attention to the creative uniqueness and natural talent of each student was expressed in the following:

- The priority of intellect;

- Precision, clarity, conciseness;

- Fundamental and meaningful generalisations;

- Strictness with oneself, self-criticism;

– A clear vision of the performed work and a clear understanding of it.

The classical features of the Azerbaijani piano school, as its defining traits, took shape in the post-war years in the 1950s.

This formed the foundational basis of Azerbaijani piano culture. The Azerbaijani piano school possessed depth, substance, and parameters of exemplary functioning, which allowed it to be defined as a classical school.

Pianists of the older generation developed and implemented a system of musical education based, on the one hand, on universally significant principles of piano art and, on the other hand, on the development of the individual potential of their students. The undeniable advantages of such a system consistently bore fruit.

One of the first and leading teachers of the Azerbaijan State Conservatory was G.G. Sharoev.

A key feature which became fundamental in the context of the Azerbaijani piano school and stemmed from G.G. Sharoev's pedagogical system was the motivation to express one's individuality.

He was categorically against unifying students' creative potential and depersonalisation. Personal understanding of the musical work was encouraged.

The objectification of interpretation was reflected in the training of pianists in alignment with the idea of the work, maintaining semantic clarity, preserving the emotional and psychological tone of the musical piece, and, most importantly, remaining faithful to the composer's style.

Technical mastery of the performed material was not an end in itself for G.G. Sharoev: "Despite the differences in their individualities, students of G.G. Sharoev's class always had something in common: a synthesis of musical expressiveness and accessibility of technical means and possibilities" (Seidov, 1988, p. 18).

Researchers emphasised that "G.G. Sharoev primarily focused on revealing the poetic content of music... He was driven by a constant striving for truthful musical interpretation, for a more accurate unveiling of the music's essence. Notably, his understanding of works was marked by features of high classicism" (Seidov, 1988, p. 47).

From its very inception and development, the Azerbaijani piano school acquired the characteristics of national pianism. Undoubtedly, many features of the national style were formed based on the piano works of Azerbaijani composers.

The national colours present in the pianistic aesthetics are yet another aspect of the classicism of Azerbaijani piano culture.

M. R. Brenner nurtured in his students highly professional pianistic mastery and free command of pianistic resources. His student characterised the classicism of his performance style, prominent Azerbaijani musical figure and professor Tarlan Seidov (1988) as follows: "... The leading component was the rational foundation. Under the artist's hands, any work acquired surprisingly logical, clearly architectural contours... He preferred to achieve an overall emotional impression through the calculated management of all dynamic aspects. The pianist's concepts were always distinguished by the integrity of the architectonics and clarity of the performance plan... all of this allows us to classify Brenner as a pianist of the 'classical' type" (p. 39).

The fundamental traditions of the Azerbaijani piano school, along with its classical parameters, were based on the activities of pianists – F. Kuliev, N. Usubova, R. Atakishiyev, A. Zulfugarov – as well as E. Nazirova and E. Aliyeva.

A classical tenet of the post-war generation of Azerbaijani pianists was the belief that performance is not merely a reproduction of the text but the conveyance of the emotional and psychological aura of the musical work.

The post-war generation of Azerbaijani pianists was consistently distinguished by their initiative in interpreting piano works while ensuring the unwavering preservation of the firm and deep foundations of the composer's intent.

Coherence and multifaceted harmony characterised the classical traditions of the Azerbaijani piano school – a synthesis of practical utility and overall musical aesthetic value.

Conclusion

Studying Azerbaijani piano culture at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century required reevaluation, new approaches, and generalisations. Creative consciousness, embodied in the classical traditions of Azerbaijani piano art, acquires diversity and multidimensionality in contemporary phenomena. This is why the present research relies on the importance of interpreting classical traditions.

The classics of Azerbaijani piano culture served as a model for subsequent generations of Azerbaijani pianists. They were characterised by professional skill, organic interpretation of musical works, firm conviction and confidence in their correct perception and understanding.

The outstanding pianists of the second half of the twentieth century were distinguished by a cohesive school of thought with a solid fundamental basis. The classical traditions represent applied and professional approaches and the philosophical and aesthetic concepts of music.

These classical traditions of the Azerbaijani piano culture were laid down by prominent figures and developed as a natural combination of the performance and pedagogical levels. The integrity and completeness of the classical style define the distinctive features of pianism.

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ПРО КЛАСИЧНІ ТРАДИЦІЇ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКОГО ФОРТЕПІАННОГО МИСТЕЦТВА

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Анотація

Мета дослідження полягає в характеристиці особливостей класичних традицій в історії азербайджанської фортепіанної культури, а також в узагальненні цих традицій. У пріоритеті дослідження теми статті перебуває розгляд класичних традицій азербайджанської фортепіанної культури як естетичних принципів її функціонування. **Методологія дослідження** спирається на категоріальне розуміння такого поняття, як класичне. Значущі явища фортепіанного мистецтва Азербайджану розглянуто в контекстному аспекті. Дослідження базується на принципі історизму, якому властива діячність; поетапно висвітлюється історія азербайджанського фортепіанного мистецтва. **Наукова новизна дослідження.** У цій статті вперше узагальнюються класичні традиції азербайджанської фортепіанної культури на основі історичного матеріалу. Важливою є вперше зроблена класифікація класичних традицій азербайджанської фортепіанної культури. **Висновки.** Наприкінці ХХ – на початку ХХІ століття проблеми вивчення фортепіанної культури Азербайджану потребували нового осмислення, нових підходів, узагальнень. Творча свідомість, утілена в класичних традиціях азербайджанського фортепіанного мистецтва, у сучасних явищах набуває різноманіття, багатомірності. Саме тому це дослідження спирається на важливість трактувань класичних традицій. Класика азербайджанської фортепіанної культури слугує зразком для наступних поколінь азербайджанських піаністів. Класична виконавська парадигма ґрунтувалася на таких важливих чинниках, як висока професійна майстерність піаністів і глибоке розуміння музичних творів, їх художнє прочитання, трактування та інтерпретація. Видатні піаністи другої половини ХХ століття об'єднані спільним ідейно-виконавським і музикознавчим підходом, який умовно можна назвати «міцним фундаментом» азербайджанського фортепіанного мистецтва. Класичні традиції представляють як прикладний, так і професійний підходи, а також філософсько-естетичну концепцію музики. Класичні традиції азербайджанської фортепіанної культури, що заклали видатні діячі, розвивалися як природне поєднання виконавського та педагогічного рівнів. Цілісність і завершеність класичного стилю визначають відмінні риси піанізму.

Ключові слова: музика; виконавство; фортепіано; класик; традиція; культура

