

CLAVIER MUSIC BY J.A. BENDA FROM THE RAZUMOVSKYS' MUSIC COLLECTION

MUZICA PENTRU PIAN A COMPOZITORULUI GEORG A. BENDA DIN COLECȚIA DE NOTE MUZICALE A FAMILIEI RAZUMOVSKI

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The contemporary composers' limited knowledge of the musical culture of the second half of the 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries has led to the fact that in the repertoire of students there is a uniformity and standard in the performance of famous composers and their works of this period. The holding of a number of educational exhibitions by the staff of the leading libraries of the Czech Republic and Ukraine revealed a large layer of musical culture of hitherto unknown works and their authors, especially from the Razumovskys' music collection. The difficulty in reading the musical text in old keys did not become an obstacle to mastering this musical literature.

Of particular note are Georg Benda's Six Sonatas for Clavier. Interest is aroused not only by the comprehension of this work, but also by the personality of the composer, the era and the style of interpretation. The author strongly recommends including the composition of G. Benda Six Sonatas for Clavier into the educational repertoire of musical educational institutions.

Keywords: *clavier, harpsichord, piano, sonata, style, creative activity*

Cunoștințele limitate ale compozitorilor contemporani în domeniul culturii muzicale din a doua jumătate a secolului XVIII – prima jumătate a secolului XIX au dus la apariția unei uniformități și standardizări în repertoriul studenților vizavi de interpretarea operelor compozitorilor renumiți din acea perioadă.

Organizarea unui șir de expoziții instructiv-educative de către personalul unor biblioteci prestigioase, cum sunt cele din Cehia sau Ucraina, a scos în vileag mai multe aspecte ale culturii muzicale ale unor opere necunoscute până acum, în special, ale aceluia din colecția de note muzicale ale familiei Razumovski. Dificultatea în lecturarea textului muzical într-o modalitate arhaică nu a constituit un impediment în valorificarea literaturii de note muzicale. În acest sens, merită să menționăm cele șase Sonate pentru pian ale compozitorului Georg A. Benda. Un interes deosebit prezintă nu numai perceperea acestei opere, dar și a stabilirii personalității autorului, a epocii și stilului său de interpretare. Autorul recomandă includerea celor șase Sonate pentru pian ale compozitorului Georg A. Benda în repertoriul educațional al instituțiilor de învățământ muzical.

Cuvinte-cheie: *claviatură, clavecin, pian, sonată, stil, creativitate*

Introduction

The second half of the 18th – the first half of the 19th century is associated in the minds of musicians and of a wide range of the cultural society with the Viennese classics and the names of its representatives – J. Haydn, W.A. Mozart and L. van Beethoven. The works of these composers are mostly known to everyone, they are included in the programs of music institutions of all educational levels. Sometimes, the same work is repeated in the same examination process in the interpretation of different students that causes differences in performance and attempts to correct it in the direction of „accepted” i.e., „standard”. The conservatism and monotony of programs narrow the musical worldview of creative youth, and in the future will have negative consequences in the formation of the musician's personality. Acquaintance with the works of unknown or little-known composers, predecessors and contemporaries of the geniuses of the Viennese classics, who have been unjustly forgotten in our time, can be useful and interesting discoveries of old but eternal music.

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The Razumovskys' sheet music collection, stored in the music funds department of the V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine" (NBUV – abbrev. in Ukrainian), have long been known to the regular visitors of the library. The family collection consists of 1,682 items, including 356 manuscripts. Antique leather covers with gold embossing, cardboard covers with rare patterns, engraved title pages are indeed surprising and fascinating. The names of the authors, in many cases, were little or not known, and the works themselves, which are often recorded in ancient musical keys, require a lot of effort to reproduce, and this, unfortunately, does not seem optimistic to get acquainted with them. The authors of the significant part of the works in the Razumovskys' collection are Czech composers. Not all of these works have been published, the main part has not been republished either before or in our time [1 p. 7].

Real interest in them increased significantly in the 1990s. It happened due to two exhibitions. The fact is that in June, 1991 the exhibition *Emigraceze SSSR v meziválečném Československu* prepared by the staff of the National Library (*Klementinum*) in the Czech Republic, was represented at the NBUV in Kyiv. In response, the NBUV prepared an exhibition *Czech Music of the 18th Century from the Music Collection of the Razumovskys*. Musical editions and manuscripts from the Razumovskys' collection representing Czech composers were on display at Prague's *Klementinum* in November, 1991. The exhibition got a lot of attention not only from Czechoslovak and Ukrainian officials, but also from a wide range of musicians, amateurs and intellectuals. The music material presented at the exhibition in Prague became the subject of research and performance as well as aroused interest in other music of the collection, in the history of the Razumovsky family, in the era when the music collection was completed, in the works of great but little-known Ukrainian composers and the history of instruments [2 pp. 3-16].

Six Sonatas for Clavier by Georg Benda

The first edition of *Six Sonatas* by J.A. Benda published in Berlin in 1757 in the publishing house of Giorgio-Ludwig Winter is preserved in Razumovsky's sheet music book. (*Berlin: Giorgio Ludovico Winter*). The second edition of *Six Sonatas* made almost 100 years later – in 1864 in the 7th volume series *Treasury of Pianists (Le trésor des pianists)* published in Paris Aristide Farrens's (1794-1865) and Louise Farrens's publishing house (1804-1875).

J.S. Bach and other composers of the first half and middle of the 18th century composed their works, including musical texts for keyboard instruments that were printed on handmade thick yellowish-cream rag paper, partly in the ancient notes „Do”. It was almost impossible to create an idea of music because it is quite difficult for a modern pianist to navigate in such a recording¹. To get acquainted with the text, you must first transpose from the soprano note „Do” to the violin note, and this is not easy taking into consideration the richness and complexity of the texture, a large amount of ornamentation, unobvious to the modern musician alteration and other notes characteristic of ancient music. But the effort was worth it because even after finishing the first sonata and getting acquainted with the music, it became clear that the author is a great master, and the work has a high artistic value. Each subsequent decoded Sonata added confidence in the high quality of the music, and they showed a link between them and the possibility of executing it as a cycle in one concert, but it cannot be a necessary prerequisite. Each sonata lasted from 10 to 15 minutes. The Sonatas are 3-part: part I – moderately fast, part II – slow and part III – fast.

It's worth considering that at the time of Benda's sonatas, the main keyboard instrument, in addition to the organ, was the harpsichord, and the Viennese classical sonata as a genre had not yet been finalized. The same can be said about the instruments. In particular, the instruments of Gottfried Zilberman which were so insistently offered to J.S. Bach in Potsdam where Benda was living, probably, they could be familiar to the composer, although they were not yet perfect.

1 Special Archive of Sviridenko N.S.

In the middle of the 18th century, the sonata was in the process of its forming both as a genre and a form. The border between the old sonata and the classical Viennese one was the middle of the century. Quite often, sonatas were custom-made and, also, composers created them for educational purposes focusing on the average technical data of respectable students, especially student-girls [3].

Domenico Scarlatti's sonatas were mostly one-part, rarely 2-part. Other Italian composers – Benedetto Marcello, Baldassare Galuppi wrote sonatas often consisting of 4 parts. The French of the 18th century – F. Couperin, J.F. Rameau didn't have sonatas at all but they had a suite construction in the typical French form. In terms of the material structure, Benda's sonatas are closer to the works of Domenico Scarlatti than to those of Joseph Haydn. Although, as a composer J.A. Benda formed himself on the German land and his constant musical environment was the Chapel of Frederick II in Berlin and Potsdam, later the Chapel in Gotha and the Theater in Hamburg, but we must take into account that he had strong Czech roots. Thus, in his style, in particular in the 6 sonatas of 1757, there are more features of „mixed” and gallant style than the style of *Storm and Onslaught* (*Sturm und Drang*) that is characteristic of K.F.E. Bach. In K.F.E. Bach's sonatas, the 3-part form is clearly defined as in the first edition *Sonatas for Connoisseurs and Amateurs* (*Sechs Klavier-Sonaten für Kenner und Liebhaber, Erste Sammlung*) as well as in the Württemberg sonatas (*Seisonate per cembalo. Württemberg Sonatas*).

The contribution of the Benda family to the musical culture of Europe

Jiri Antonin Benda came from the Bohemian Benda family which had at least 12 famous musicians in the 18th century. Jiri Antonin was born on June 30, 1722 in the town of Old Benatky nad Jiseru. His father Jan Jiri Benda was a village musician who played the oboe, cymbals and shawm (wind oboe-like musical instrument) – these instruments were used to accompany dancing couples. Five of his six children became famous musicians: František (Franz), Johann Georg (Jan Jiri, 2nd), Jiri Antonin (Georg Antonin), Josef and Anna Franciska.

The older brother Jiri Antonin – Frantisek Benda (1709-1786) learned to play the violin himself and soon left the house in search of a better life. For some time, he sang in a choir in Prague, later in Dresden and Warsaw. He studied the violin with Karl Heinrich Graun in Vienna. After many years of travel in 1733, F. Benda entered the royal chapel of Frederick II (the Great) in Potsdam as the second violinist. In 1740 he became the first violinist of the choir, and in 1771 – conductor. Until the end of his life he worked faithfully under the patronage of the King of Prussia. He is considered to be the founder of the German violin school. His performance is characterized by a combination of virtuosity and melody, and the compositions contain elements of baroque, gallant style and sentimentalism. In time and content, his work stands between the Baroque and Viennese classics¹. He wrote a number of symphonies, 6 trio sonatas, 2 violin concertos, capriccios, etudes, etc. Intonations of Czech folk songs are heard in Benda's works.

Jiri Antonin Benda was educated in Bohemia. His first music teachers were his father and his older brother František. He attended the Piarist Gymnasium in Kosmonosy (Bohemia) in 1735, and from 1739 to 1742 he was a student of the Jesuit College in Jičín where he studied the basics of rhetoric and music. Benda's father was persecuted for secretly confessing evangelists. In 1742, with the assistance of his brother Frantisek during the First Silesian War the Benda family moved, that was reported, on behalf of the King of Prussia, by the Prince of Anhalt in the letter to his commander-King dated 03.03.1742: „... freed the parents of the virtuoso Benda from the Count from Klenov...”. From the Czech Republic, the family came to Berlin to join the Czech community. There, the older brother continued to educate Jiri Antonin, who quickly mastered the clavier and oboe that helped him get into the royal orchestra for 250 thalers a year. The ideas of Enlightenment reigned at the Prussian court in Berlin that was a contrast to the atmosphere in Bohemia. The acquaintance with European novelties formed the creative manner of J.A. Benda.

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Formation of intermediate styles between Baroque and Viennese classics

New aesthetic views and ideas were actively developed in Germany. Along with baroque music, new stylistic trends were established – gallant, sentimental style „Storm and Onslaught”. The polyphonic and gallant styles in the music of the 18th century existed side by side for a long time. The year 1750 was a turning point in terms of styles and the beginning of the Viennese era which was associated with the era of „mixed styles” before the formation of the Viennese classics¹.

Johann Mattheson (1681-1764) fought for the ideas of Enlightenment in the art of music in Germany and he denied the mathematical approach to music and asserted the humanistic meaning of the art of music. Mattheson saw not numbers and the physical strength of sound in music but the versatility of its content [3 p. 255]. Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773), one of the famous German musicians and a regular participant in concerts at the Potsdam Palace of Frederick the Great, continued and developed the theory of „mixed style”. If – Quantz wrote – to make a reasonable choice, to take the best of the musical styles of different folks, you can get a mixed style. Without going beyond modesty, it would be fair to call this style German not only because the Germans first used it, but also because it was introduced many years ago in various parts of Germany, where it continues to thrive, it is successful not only in our country, but also in Italy, France and other countries” [3 p. 267].

J.A. Benda as well as the children of J.S. Bach lived and created their compositions during the transitional period in the history of aesthetics. J.A. Benda was their contemporary and knew J. S. Bach personally. Karl Friedrich E. Bach was his teacher and colleague in Berlin and Potsdam. At that time, strict counterpoint was gradually dying out, clearing the way for other styles. Naturally, the sons of J.S. Bach did not continue their father’s style in their work. Johann Sebastian Bach sometimes said to his eldest son: „Listen, Friedemann, shouldn’t we go to Dresden to listen to these sweet songs?”. The playful definition characterizes the new style very well that began to take root in the late years of J.S. Bach. If the music of V.F. Bach – nowadays almost unknown except for his 12 polonaises – is the best that he created, and the plays characterize his style which now evokes in the memory of Brahms, the works of J.S. Bach’s second son – Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, in the opinion of the prominent harpsichordist of the first half of the 20th century Wanda Landovska, are similar to Schumann [4 p. 295]. The works of F. Bach are full of harmonic wealth – lyrical, tender, or reckless, or full of mournful accents. That’s how they are conceived now. K.F.E. Bach had a sad and painful nature, almost completely unlike his father’s character. The famous English historian Charles Bernie, who was fortunate enough to listen to Philip Emanuel often, wrote in his memoirs that he „knew better than anyone else how to extract the groan of pain from his instrument.” In his treatise *Versuch über die wahre Art das Klavierzuspielen* (*The experience of truthful art of playing the clavier*) K.F.E. Bach was able to solve and detect many problems of interpretation on the harpsichord, clavichord and early keyboard music [4 p. 296]. Thus, the composition was influenced not only by the intonation language of the era, fashion, style, but also by the personality of the author of the music.

The Gothic period in the creation of G. Benda

After several years in Berlin and Potsdam, J.A. Benda was appointed in 1750 to the post of conductor of the Duke of Thuringia, Frederick III of Gotha, with a payment of 600 thalers a year and full board. The cultural life of Gotha was not inferior to that of Berlin at that time, and there was a large collection of keyboard instruments at the Duke’s court – harpsichords, clavichords, early copies of clavier made by the Tyrol master Christian Ernst Friederici of Hera, from whom Leopold Mozart bought instruments for his son W.A. Mozart.² In the first years of his service, J.A. Benda wrote cantatas for the court chapel and various instrumental works. Since he had a special passion for the clavier in all its variants, clavier sonatas appeared in the style between baroque and classics at this time, which

1 Special Archive of Sviridenko N.S.

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became ideal literature for this instrument. Copies of his published *Six Sonatas* in the 1760s were given to the children of Leopold Mozart.

There isn't any internal structure of the sonata Allegro in the first parts of Jiri Benda's sonata yet. The text is more polyphonic than homophonic – harmonic, extremely beautiful in motive construction and requires, of course, rhetorical pronunciation. To realize the expressiveness of rhetoric, special attention should be paid to articulation and „*touche*” that equally refers to the performance on both harpsichord and clavier. Nowadays, the early sonatas by J. Haydn, W.A. Mozart and L. Beethoven are performed on the clavier despite the fact that during the authors' lifetime they were played on the harpsichord. In the harpsichord sound, the character of the music is perceived as festive, a bit detached, as an element of the atmosphere of an old music salon or home music. The clavier version sounds differently – the character of music changes in it showing the mood through the flexible dynamics which makes it possible to show a greater expression without conflict with the baroque style but revealing a composition in new stylistics that replaced the Baroque and sounds quite convincing. The performance of sonatas on the clavier reveals another aspect of understanding the meaning of music. Due to the flexible dynamics of the clavier, the music takes on a romantic character with a sentimental connotation.

Benda's following sonatas have no dedication, although someone's image is recognizable behind the beautiful music. In the first edition, the following text is placed on the title page: *Six Sonatas for cembalo solo* composed by Georg Benda, conductor of His Majesty the Lighter Duke of Gotha and Altenburg.

Title page of Six Sonatas for cembalo solo



Source: Musical works of the Razumovsky collection. Department of Musical Collections of the V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

The information on the title page does not contain recommendations for the obligatory performance of sonatas one after another, but after playing one, involuntarily there is a desire to play the next as if there is a plot connection between them – just as you want to read chapter after chapter of a fascinating novel. Further, on the title page, Benda noted that the sonatas were intended for harpsichord solo. It was a common instrument for him, and perhaps he did not see an alternative then, but in our time, there is such a choice. The following information from the title page states that the works were composed by Georg (the German version of the name of Jiri) Benda, and then – his position at the time – conductor of His Majesty the Duke of Gotha and Altenburg. The initial data indicate the year 1757 i.e., they were published, and shortly before that written, during the stay of J.A. Benda in Gotha. According to his biography, this is the happiest period of the composer's life, most of his creative work was written there, and the patron of his work at that time was Louise Dorothea, the wife of Frederick

III¹. Considering the payment that Benda received at that time for his work – 600 thalers with full maintenance, he was wealthy, and it is unknown what forced him to leave Gotha. His music was known and loved by a wide range of fans.

Conclusions

In education the *Six Sonatas* by J.A. Benda can be a useful material for processing the text in terms of understanding the motive construction of phrasing, the logic of the arrangement of phrases and the integrity of the material. All the three parts of each of the Sonatas are combined by dramaturgy and each of the *Six Sonatas* can be performed independently.

Sound practice is an integral and a significant part in the process of working on the musical text. The sound culture, nobility are the key to success in this work. The acquired experience of mastering the form and sound in combination with the developed musical intelligence will open space for understanding the performance style and communicating with the musical material of the works of the Viennese classics and romantics.

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