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## Vitaliy Kyreyko's *Ukrainian Passacaglia* Actualization of the Ancient Genre as a Feature of Composer's Piano Style

### «Українська пасакалія» Віталія Кирейка актуалізація старовинного жанру як ознака фортепіанного стилю композитора

**Abstract.** The paper examines the genre and expressive-stylistic concept of Vitaliy Kyreyko's piano works on the example of his *Ukrainian passacaglia*, as well as its role and place in the history of Ukrainian culture of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Vitaliy Kyreyko's piano music is an extensive sphere of the artist's fruitful creative work. It is an invaluable asset for Ukrainian culture that opens a separate page in the history of the national school of composition. The aim of the study is to analyze the genre-style and formative features of *Ukrainian Passacaglia* for piano as a significant work of Vitaliy Kyreyko's mature period, to characterize the actualization of the ancient genre of *passacaglia* as one of the trademark features of his piano style.

The methodology of work is based on the complex application of scientific methods: source study deals with historical archival sources on selected topics; cross-cultural method clarifies the context of the cultural environment of the artist; informative and communicative methods allow to obtain documentary materials, information, and facts through communication with the composer; analytical method was useful for the analysis of the musical material of *Ukrainian Passacaglia*; system-structural method was applied to summarize the acquired information.

**Keywords:** *Ukrainian Passacaglia*, piano works by Vitaliy Kyreyko, expressive and stylistic concept.

The rich and comprehensive musical heritage of the outstanding Ukrainian composer Vitaliy Kyreyko (1926–2016) is a very wide field for musicological and cultural-historical research.

The composer's body of work that consists of 299 opuses stands out due to his individual style concept, which forms a separate stage in shaping the history of new Ukrainian music. However, for some reasons, the work of V. Kyreyko did not receive proper coverage in regard to musical and theoretical developments. The reason for that is that the vast majority of his works have not been neither published nor performed. Only in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Iryna Shesterenko researched the life and creative path of V. Kyreyko and cataloged

the composer's oeuvre. Today, this area of art history requires significant analytical expansion and deep professional immersion in the musical world of a great Master.

**Problem statement.** Vitaliy Kyreyko's piano music is an extensive sphere of the artist's fruitful creative work. It is an invaluable asset for Ukrainian culture, opening a separate page in the history of the national school of composition. Kyreyko is one of those who repudiated all modern avant-garde techniques. Not obeying fashion, he created his own style that absorbed the classic-romantic traditions and the genuine beauty of Ukrainian melody.

Composer's piano heritage has been insufficiently studied in Ukrainian musicology. Some piano works

were analyzed in I. Shesterenko's candidate thesis and scientific-methodical manual *Vitaliy Kyreyko's body of work in the course of Ukrainian music's history*. Still, the problem of lack of research work is the most acute in regard to the composer's works of his mature and final periods.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyze the genre-style and formative features of *Ukrainian Passacaglia* for piano as a significant work of Vitaliy Kyreyko's mature period, to characterize the actualization of the ancient genre of *passacaglia* as one of the features of the artist's piano style.

**Results and discussion.** Throughout his life, the composer turned to writing piano works and created his own unique refined style. The variety of "romantic" genre palette of V. Kyreyko's piano works is impressive. In addition to traditional sonatas, suites, nocturnes, rhapsodies, waltzes, etudes, fantasies, poems, bagatelles, and musical moments, the composer uses his own definitions of the genre—"Memories", "Reflections", "Legend", "Fairy tale", "Watercolors", "Melody", "Duma" (Thought), "Folk song".

Continuing the traditions established by romantic composers, Vitaliy Kyreyko made "references" of sorts to the titles of R. Schumann's cycles. He created the piano cycles *Leaves from the Album* (op. 159, 1992) and *Album for Youth* (op. 210, 2001), which echoed the music of the composers of the previous era.

Turning to the ancient genre of Passacaglia, V. Kyreyko rethinks it in the Ukrainian cultural space, using not only the folk theme of the Ukrainian song *Dumy moyi* (My Thoughts), but also the thinking and principles of polyphonic development typical to the Ukrainian musical system. Thus, the work organically combines the musical achievements of the distant past and the artistic dimension of the present.

The first piano works appeared during Vitaliy Kyreyko's studies at the P. I. Tchaikovsky Kyiv State Conservatory. They had significant compositional features that later became characteristic of the artist's style: lyrical melodic narrative, reliance in the musical language on Ukrainian folk songs, deep imagery with philosophical connotations.

Kyreyko's early piano compositions included variations on the theme of his teacher Lev Revutsky (op. 4, 1948), *24 Piano Pieces for Children* (op. 8, 1950). Later, the composer's piano cycle *Akvareli* (Watercolors) — op. 47 (1968) and other works were published.

The next period of his instrumental work began with the creation of the First Sonata for piano (op. 63, 1970). The inspiration for it was the performance by the talented Ukrainian pianist Serhiy Skrynchenko, who later became the first performer of the work. Turning to the genre of sonatas throughout his career, Kyreyko authored 13 sonatas.

Since the 1990s, the composer has been paying more and more attention to the piano. This already mature period of his creativity was marked by the search for new meanings and forms, the shift of his previous artistic achievements into the piano field. His piano works became significantly scaled, complicated by polyphonic texture and symphonic thinking. The connection with Ukrainian folk songs that always was an integral part of V. Kyreyko's musical language, became

even more expressive and rich. During this period, four piano sonatas (No. 4–7), the *Ukrainian Passacaglia* (op. 163, 1992), and other opuses were composed.

In 1994, the artist wrote one of his best works—Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra (op. 166), which he dedicated to Iryna Shesterenko as the first performer.

The year 1995 was full of tragic events in the composer's personal life: his wife Inna Kyreyko and niece passed away, as well as the talented translator and poet Maria Gubko. In memoriam to his wife, he dedicated the piano work *Elegy* (p. 170), reminiscent of a requiem, imbued with deep drama and tragedy of the artist's personal feelings.

In 1995, Vitaliy Kyreyko created *Fantasia and Fugue* for piano (op. 168)—a bright polyphonic canvas that showed the skill of the composer-melodist in the sense of texture and timbre color and subtle perception of the beauty of folk melodic intonation. The composition was dedicated to the "memory of the unforgettable Maria Gubko" (as stated in the manuscript).

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was marked by for the composer with the gradual shift from the large unfolded musical canvases to more minimal means of expression and form. At the same time, the musical style remained original, integrating the accumulated achievements of the past years and preserving the clearly defined folk-song melody.

An interesting piano work of the artist's later years were the last sonatas, *Waltz-Fantasy* (op. 265, 2007) and *Waltz-Bagatelle* (op. 286), dedicated to Iryna Shesterenko, as well as the cycle *24 Preludes for Piano* (op. 221, 2002), four intermezzos (op. 287), *Ballet Suite in Five Parts* (p. 292), *Cossack March* (op. 295), nocturnes, impromptu, bagatelle cycles, and other compositions. Critical of his own creations, during the last years of his life Vitaliy Kyreyko repeatedly refined previous compositions, producing new editions.

One of the most significant works of Vitaliy Kyreyko's piano heritage was *Ukrainian Passacaglia* (op. 163) composed in 1992. Turning to the ancient musical genre, Vitaliy Kyreyko fulfilled one of the oldest ideas suggested to him by his great Teacher Levko Revutsky: to create a composition on the theme of the well-known Ukrainian folk song *Dumy moyi* (My thoughts), on the verse by Taras Shevchenko. This is how a bright composition, which organically combines the musical achievements of the distant past and the artistic dimension of the present, emerged. It intertwines the Western European traditions and ancient Ukrainian song origins.

The history of *Ukrainian Passacaglia* is quite interesting. This work has never been published in Ukraine. However, in addition to the handwritten copy from the archive of V. Kyreyko, there is also a printed version. It was created in the German commune of Fischingen by the Swiss organist Ambros Koch, Vitaliy Dmytrovych's friend, who came to Vorzel several times to meet with the Ukrainian composers.

*Ukrainian Passacaglia* successfully premiered on December 23, 2021 at the National Union of Composers of Ukraine at the Evening in memoriam of Vitaliy Kyreyko performed by Anastasia Zadiora.

Musical analysis of the work would not be complete without mentioning the history of the genre of Passacaglia. It is a dance of Spanish origin from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century that became widespread during the Baroque era. In French it was named *passacaille*, in Italian *passacaglia*, in Spanish *pasacalle* (from *pasar* “to pass” and *calle* “street”). Along with this, Passacaglia exists as an independent instrumental piece often a part of a suite.

This genre is characterized by solemn, sublime nature of music, slow tempo, three-part meter. The basis of construction is the principle of variations on basso ostinato with a relatively detailed theme. The basso ostinato can be opposed not only by polyphonic, but also by homophonic texture, both figurative and chordal.

At the initial stage of its inception, pasacalle was a Spanish song with guitar accompaniment. Hence, it could be stated that the melodic canvas of V. Kyreyko's *Ukrainian Passacaglia* is grounded in the “genetic” level of this genre.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, such variations flourished and reached perfection in the works of Pachelbel, Buxtehude, Handel, and Bach.

In the works of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the baroque form was used by composers only sporadically (e.g. in the finale of the Fourth Symphony by Brahms, in the Introduction to the opera *Valkyrie* by Wagner, Largo from the Piano Trio by M. Ravel, piano piece *Basso ostinato* by A. Arensky, Largo from the Piano Quintet in G minor op. 30 by S. Taneyev).

Influenced by neoclassical trends during the twentieth century, interest to this form re-emerged. New historical and cultural conditions have influenced the creative interpretation of the ancient form. The works by B. Bartok, P. Hindemith, A. Schnittke, I. Stravinsky, D. Shostakovich, S. Prokofiev, R. Shchedrin, S. Slonimsky, and others serve as vivid examples of this.

There are also many instances of passacaglia in the Ukrainian musical heritage: “Passacaglia” was a part of V. Kosenko's cycle *11 Etudes in the Form of Ancient Dances*, suite Passacaglia, Scherzo, Fugue by M. Kolessa, also it was used in E. Stankovich's *Sinfonia Larga* and V. Silvestrov's Fourth Symphony.

Passacaglia found its place in the works of Ukrainian composers also as a separate opus. Examples include: Passacaglia for organ by Ishtvan Marton, Passacaglia by Anatoliy Kos-Anatolsky, Passacaglia on the Galician theme by Oleksandr Kozarenko, *Passacaglia for the memory of ancient masters* by Svitlana Ostrova, Passacaglia for strings by Bohdan Kryvopust, two Passacaglias for flute, clarinet, oboe, piano, and string orchestra by Yevhen Stankovych.

The appeal to ancient genres in the works of Ukrainian composers has become one of the means of ambiguity in the expression of deep moral and ethical problems posed by complex issues of modern life.

In his *Ukrainian Passacaglia* Vitaliy Kyreyko showed the interest to stylization of the ancient genre, the search for balance between the emotional and the intellectual. Through the preservation of organizing musical factors, including the tonal basis of the work, the composer achieved

the strong structure and logic of the development of the musical thought. Giving the work a program name, composer encoded in it the quintessence of figurative thinking.

*Ukrainian Passacaglia* consists of **the theme and 22 variations with code**, each opening a sketch of national historical antiquity and demonstrating a masterful work with form, “fresh” harmonious solutions and professional skills of polyphonic techniques that are the most characteristic features of the artist's musical writing.

**The theme**, based on the first part of the Ukrainian song *My Thoughts*, was quite convenient in terms of further composing work with it. It was embedded in the 8-bar rebuild period (*vols. 1–8*), at that the second holding of the main ascendant motive sounds an octave lower. Restrained in character, the flowing melody (*andante cantabile*) is heard in the *d-moll* key in the low register in the octave doubling. It sustains in a triple time (6/8) and is simultaneously saturated with syncopated rhythm and repetitions of sounds. Heavy thoughts are a burden on the heart of the narrator (*pesante*). This is not only an exposition of the musical image, but also a philosophical rhetorical question, through which the voice of T. Shevchenko seems to reach, and then echoes deep from the ground, where the ancient ethnonym of Ukrainians has its roots.

During the further development, the sound is gradually intensified by increasing the volume, alternating layers of voices of polyphonic texture and covering more and more register range. Thus, the main thesis begins to be processed and saturated with new intersections of meanings and search for answers.

In the **first variation** (*marcato sempre, vols. 9–16*) the theme is complemented by the counterposition that is lively due to the more varied rhythm and melodic movement of the sixteenth durations. In contradistinction to the theme, the counterposition overshadows the re-structure of the period, adding freshness through the usage of a melodic minor in the second four bars and a short-term deviation in *C-Dur*.

In the **second variation** (*vols. 17–24*) the second counterposition is added from above the voice. It contains the initial intonation link of the theme—the ascending movement along the sounds of the tonic triad. Then the composer works exclusively with the exhibited material (theme and two counterpositions), without adding other lines of voices. With each new variation, new combinations and permutations are formed, all the new layers of texture are enveloped.

The first counterposition in **the third variation** (*vols. 25–32*) is duplicated in the octave by the upper voice. Meanwhile, the theme is decorated with short forshlags (*vol. 27*), which seem to emphasize it in a polyphonic sound.

**The fourth variation** (*vols. 33–40*) is a kind of inversion of the third. The same technique (duplication of voice up) is used for the second counterposition. Thus ends the exposition stage.

**The fifth variation** (*vols. 41–48*) is the first culmination in the general dramatic contrivance of the work. Unexpectedly, the listener's perception is struck by the flow of descending fast passages in upper register on the *fortissimo*.

The theme now sounds loud and menacing, however, the composer puts forward a remark *legato* so that it has not lost its plangent song nature despite the change of character and emotional saturation.

**The sixth variation** (vols. 49–56) is written in the style of an acute grotesque march. The sound in the triple time, which is untypical for the genre basis, is imbued with the sharpness of a short dotted rhythm. The absence of tonic harmony, a large number of chromatic non-chord sounds, the predominance of major chords (VI6, S<sub>major</sub>, II7# 3, III6, VII6)—all of this adds total dissonance to the overall sound and enhances the imagery of perception.

However, the state of anxious anticipation and excitement gradually dissolves at the end of the variation with a gradual slowdown. It is removed by a sudden radical change in the emotional sphere. **The seventh variation** (vols. 57–64) begins to sound on *the subito piano*. It embodies the sad lyrical and contemplative character after the surge of musical and dramatic development. The theme of basso ostinato is transferred to the upper register and is heard over two counterpositions that moved from one voice to another next.

**The eighth variation** (vols. 65–72) sounds hidden, mysterious, and even fantastic. For the first time, the leading theme gets rid of octave doubling, transfers to the middle register and sounds very carefully. The theme of passacaglia is echoed by a melodic line in the upper voice with a similar rhythmic pattern. The masterful possession of the composer-symphonist by means of timbre sound imagery should be highlighted.

The gradual dissolution of chromatisms leads to a tender lyrical-poetic narrative in **the ninth variation** (vols. 73–81, *Moderato con tenerezza*). The penetrating heartfelt theme in the enlightened *D-Dur* appears in the second octave in a modified form. The serene background is formed by tremolo, which accompanies the theme continuously throughout the variation. Harmony also acquires new bright colors.

The next **tenth variation** (vols. 81–88) continues to develop the major sphere. The imagination paints pictures of the East with its mystery and charm. The image-intonation color is introduced by using of harmonic major, delays and chords with altered tones. Thus, “thoughts” seem to force the listener to plunge into the world of own dreams and most cherished desires for a moment.

The theme returns to its “legitimate” place, i. e. to the lowest layer of the invoice, in **the eleventh variation** (vols. 89–96). In contrast to the previous ones, its music evokes a disturbing premonition, and a little later the general excitement increases (*molto cresc. ed accel.*). The illusory dreamy vortex dissipates. The main key *d-moll* returns.

**The twelfth variation** (vols. 97–104) is the second culmination of passacaglia. A squall of fast sextole passages falls from the melodic top. Simultaneously with the trembling octaves, that gradually fall the sounds of the tonic triad, the author introduces a descending chromatic motion, which was taken over the previous variation.

The end of the variation leads to a real tocsin call in **the thirteenth** (vols. 105–112, *L'istesso tempo*). Short second intonations are interrupted constantly by pauses and sound sharp and even loud.

Another unexpected contrast emerges. For a short time in **the fourteenth variation** (vols. 113–120) the mysterious-fantastic sphere of images is again carried out. The broken triplet arpeggios in the upper voice (*agitato*) sound mysteriously and excited at the same time. The composer uses ellipses, diminished triad, nature d56, non-chord sounds.

In **the fifteenth variation** (vols. 121–129) the harmonious plan of the previous variation with some modifications continues to develop. Instead, a new rhythmic discovery emerges—the theme is accompanied by quintiles, that ascend heavily. Thus, between the parties of the left and right hands there is a polymetry, which contributes to the effect of the collision of warring opposites.

Gradually dynamizing theme turns into **the sixteenth variation** (vols. 129–136, *Poco allegretto*). It combines the features of the previous ones, especially the twelfth: pulsating octaves in the upper and then in the middle register alternate with thirds chromatically moving down.

Chromatic motion completely pervades the next **seventeenth variation** (vols. 137–144, *Poco vivo*). In addition, here this movement seems interfering in all levels of the general polyphonic organization except for the constant *d-moll* theme. It makes an impression that eerie moans of witnesses of the most tragic pages of the historical past could be heard.

Approaching the dramatic result, in **the eighteenth variation** (vols. 145–152, *Andantino*) we observe a kind of calm, which precedes further decisive events. The sound is transferred to the middle and upper registers. The unanimous theme is performed canonically beginning in the lower voice, and the *risposta* corresponds to the octave higher one bar later.

**The nineteenth variation** (vols. 153–160) delivers the understanding that the struggle still continues. The theme in its main octave doubling is transferred to the lower register again and heard against the background of staccato pulsating chords.

The theme in **the twentieth variation** (vols. 161–168, *Andante, lugubre*) is gloomy and sorrowful in big and contr-octave. It is constantly cut through by the repeated alternation of sounds *cis-d* on the weak parts of the meter. The same technique is saved in **the twenty-first variation** (vols. 169–176) but now it sounds in octave doubling and descends sequentially. This time, the theme is presented in the form of incomplete triad chords.

The scene of intense fight is depicted in the last **twenty-second variation** (vols. 177–184). The theme sounds louder and saturated, because it doubles due to duplication in the right hand. It resembles an orchestral tutti covering the whole diapason and demonstrating the power of sound. The unison conducting of the main theme can be performed completely by brass wind instruments.

The triumphal **code** (vols. 185–200, *con somma passione* — i. e. *with the greatest passion*) is a reflection of the victorious apotheosis. It consists of two elements. In the first, presents the second part of the song *My Thoughts* (vols. 185–192) that sounds *fortissimo* in the form of full chords like a hymn. The organ point in the lower voice constantly affirms the tonic.

The second element of the code (vols. 193–200) begins anxiously with *the subito piano* (author's remark — *andantino ansioso*). A movement along the tonic triad sounds appears from the main minor theme followed by a transition to cadence. The last chords of passacaglia are playing with fanfare and solemnity also confirmed the tonic of *D-Dur* during the four final bars. The composition concludes majestically and proclaims the victory of life-affirming imagery.

Thus, Vitaliy Kyreyko created an extensive musical canvas which demonstrated both the skills of composition and a deep figurative and emotional content. The listener seems to witness the pictures from the historical past of the Ukrainian nation with its patience, suffering, lyrical tenderness, terrible struggle, mourning of the dead, and confirmation of the long-awaited victory.

The analysis revealed the following features of Vitaliy Kyreyko's compositional style:

**1. End-to-end dramatic development that permeates the entire work with a leading idea.** Passacaglia reflects the concept of the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, justice over dishonesty.

**2. Determining function of the composing factor, that combines contrasting elements of large-scale variation form.** Being well acquainted with the genre features, Kyreyko relies on the traditional understanding of passacaglia, saturating it with individual features. Even with the contrast of the compositional structure, an internal integrity is formed in a single dynamic development.

**3. Connection with the national music culture.** The undeniable influence of Ukrainian melody is evident already at the stage of core organization of the work — the theme of passacaglia. Choosing the Ukrainian folk song *My Thoughts* as a thematic basis, composer preserves its song nature throughout the composition.

**4. The composer's ingenuity in terms of working with the theme on relative preservation of the principles of polyphonic form.** In most variations, the theme remains the same. However, there is a unanimous holding of *My Thoughts*, doubling the octave statement, moving to different pitches of musical texture, the use of canonical holding of the theme in *Ukrainian Passacaglia*.

**5. Polyphony** penetrates into different voices of texture. It forms a general melodiousness of movement at all levels of musical organization.

**6. Symphonism of thinking.** Despite the fact that *Ukrainian Passacaglia* is a work for piano performance, it is equipped generously with coloristic techniques. Each variation contains an intricate polyphonic combination, where the voice lines have a certain timbre coloration. The most dramatic episodes can be correlated with orchestral tutti that creates a contrast with variations that appeal to the sound of single solo instrumental groups.

Thus, the scientific **novelty** of this research is the first detection of genre-style and formative features of **Ukrainian Passacaglia** for piano as a significant canvas of the mature creative period of Vitaliy Kyreyko. The paper covers the actualization of the ancient genre of Passacaglia based on that detailed leading features of piano style.

**Conclusions.** In the study, the concept of design variations for piano on basso ostinato, this monumental V. Kyreyko's cycle, was analysed. It reflects the synthesis of the influence of the traditions of Western European masters and the experience of Ukrainian predecessor artists with individual features of compositional writing.

Composition of V. Kyreyko's *Ukrainian Passacaglia* is marked with a thorough idea, a variety of artistic and figurative sphere and integrity of dramatic development of the proposed variations. It absorbed the most significant traits of the composer's expressiveness and perceived as a mirror of a kind of worldview doctrine of the artist. The programmatic idea of this work reflects a deep immersion into the historical past not only of the passacaglia genre, but also of the achievements of national music. *Ukrainian Passacaglia* is imbued with the musical and intonational components of the lyrical song, its undertone is felt in the nature of the author's polyphonic voice leading. The composer used characteristic melodic, scale-harmonic and rhythmic turnovers, as well as formative features of Ukrainian folklore. This enabled the rethinking of the genre, outside of the framework of established traditions and features of Ukrainian music.

Thus, based on the traditions of all previous culture, Vitaliy Kyreyko created his own unique refined style, combining classical balance of form, complexity of polyphonic layering of voices and principles of symphonic thinking with romantic emotionality of piano works.

The figure of Vitaliy Kyreyko is significant in the context of the formation of Ukrainian musical culture in 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The artist enriched the Ukraine school of composition with interesting concepts and a whole arsenal of his trademark musical means of expression.

**Prospects for further research.** Further study of the multi-genre component of the Vitaliy Kyreyko's body of work may be continued in the direction of researching the artist's instrumental compositions and their performance.

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## «Українська пасакалія» Віталія Кирейка: актуалізація старовинного жанру як ознака фортепіанного стилю композитора

**Анотація.** Розглянуто жанровий та виражально-стильовий концепт фортепіанної творчості Віталія Кирейка на прикладі «Української пасакалії», визначено її роль і місце в історії української культури ХХ — початку ХХІ століття.

Фортепіанна музика Віталія Кирейка є розгалуженою сферою плідної творчої праці митця. Вона становить безцінне надбання для української культури, відкриваючи окрему сторінку історії розвитку національної композиторської школи.

Мета дослідження полягає в тому, щоб проаналізувати жанрово-стильові та формотворчі особливості «Української пасакалії» для фортепіано як знакового полотна зрілого періоду творчості Віталія Кирейка, охарактеризувати актуалізацію старовинного жанру пасакалії як риси фортепіанного стилю митця.

Методологія роботи базується на комплексному застосуванні наукових методів: джерелознавчого — для вивчення історичних архівних джерел з обраної тематики; крос-культурного — для уточнення контексту особливостей культурного середовища митця; інформативно-комунікативного — для отримання документальних матеріалів, відомостей та фактів через спілкування з композитором (до 2016 року); аналітичного — для аналізу музичного матеріалу «Української пасакалії»; системно-структурного — для узагальнення набутої інформації.

**Ключові слова:** «Українська пасакалія», фортепіанна творчість Віталія Кирейка, виражально-стильовий концепт.