



## **Peculiarities of Rodion Shchedrin's Piano Cycles**

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**Abstract:** *This article discusses R. Shchedrin's piano cycles from 2002 to 2009. Four cycles - Diary, Questions, Romantic Duets, Simple Pages - are analysed. On the basis of these plays, there is a review in terms of the evolution of Shchedrin's style. The analysis leads to conclusions about the composer's own approach to the genre of the piano cycle in all four works, the variability of interpretation of the cyclic form in the space of stylistic unity and general principles.*

**Keywords:** *Rodion Shchedrin, piano cycle, analysis, style, genre, drama, form.*

**Introduction:** Piano works are an integral part of Rodion Shchedrin's. An integral part of Rodion Shchedrin's oeuvre. It is essential that the composer's authorial style It is in his piano works that the composer's authorial style The First Piano Concerto and the pieces Humoresca were written in the Conservatoire years. The First Piano Concerto and the pieces The Humoresque, "Imitations of Albaines, the Two-Voice In-A poem and Basso ostinato. Shchedrin, a brilliant pianist and graduate of the Y.

a graduate in J. Flier's class, played many premieres of his own works. Perhaps as significant as the Piano Concerto is the Piano Concerto is probably just as significant in the evolution of Shchedrin's The genre of the piano cycle becomes arguably just as significant in the evolution of Shchedrin's creativity. This This fact is particularly evident in the first decade of the twenty-first century. decade of the 21st century, when the composer's interest in to this genre is growing. Programmatic and non-programmatic cycles of miniatures appear in his He has programmatic cycles of miniatures in different periods (7 in total). Programmatic and non-programmatic cycles of miniatures appear in his works at different periods (7 in total), becoming a creative laboratory An artistic laboratory, a field for experimentation with composition techniques, styles, genres and forms These cycles of miniatures appear in his works at different periods (a total of seven), becoming a creative laboratory and a field for experimentation with composition techniques, styles, genres and forms, With new ways of playing on the piano and articulation techniques. What is important for Shchedrin is the possibility of realising short and vivid scenes and portrait sketches, the changeable movement of images in the programme miniatures. From his earliest works, Shchedrin developed his own principles of From his earliest works, Shchedrin developed his own principles of formo- Formation, which he himself describes as "portability", "brevity" or "telegraphic telegraphic style". This series can be continued with other The range can be continued with other definitions which relate to the ways in which This series could be continued with other definitions relating to the ways in which the whole is constructed and the structure of the theme: "montage", "framing", "fragmentation", "Mosaicism", "kaleidoscopic", combinatorial. These and other similar notions are already "commonplace" in the study of the artist's work. are already "commonplace" in studies of the composer's oeuvre composer's oeuvre, pointing in one way or another a particular peculiarity of his style of composition. aphoristic and concentrated expression musical thoughts.

**Main part:** The cycle's six pieces form contrasting Six of the cycle's pieces form contrasting pairs, alternating between calm and contemplative and lively-active states according to the principle "Six of the pieces in the cycle form contrasting pairs The seventh acts as a synthesizing coda, a generalizing finale of the cycle. The seventh performs the function of a synthesising code for a generalising conclusion to the cycle. The odd-numbered pieces (Nos. 1, 3, 5) line up in a line of images reflecting. Different shades of lyricism: from the intensely powerfully. A powerfully commanding chorale (No 1 Sostenuito assai) through dance-like graceful exersis (No 3 Allegretto moderato) to a tender lyricism, overshadowed by the by the sad meditations of the prelude (No 5 Lento, sempre poco rubato). The even-numbered pieces present an element of movement with a gradual acceleration of the tempo from the second to the sixth movement (L'istesso tempo - Allegro, ma non troppo - Presto ledgiero), Apparently this, together with the increasing intensity and intensity and density of the Diary's (see Figure 1). In each group of pieces, the musical language. The meditative pieces are chanted in four-voice. The meditative pieces are chanted four-voice. The meditative pieces are chanted four-sounding motifs with a flowing intonation, The energetic parts of the cycle have a rhythmic ostinato. The meditative numbers are chanted four-sounding motifs with a flowing intonation.

The first couple of pieces act as introductions - These "preliminary notes" set the tone for the entire to the whole musical diary. The five-stroke chorale of play number one is like an aphorism-epigrapha, very. The pentatonic chorale of piece no.1 is like an aphorism-pigrapha which is very significant for the entire Diary. A chorale is like an aphorism-epigrapha which is very significant throughout the Diary and directs his thoughts in a certain direction (see Excerpt 1). It's no coincidence that the chorale genre, as a transversal thought, The chorale becomes a signpost here and pervades pierces every piece in the cycle, invariably recalling of the eternal in the endless cycle of life.

### Example 1

**Sostenuito assai** \* 1932

(attacca)\*

Piece No 2 picks up on the metrical freedom of the first piece. The metrical structure of the first, but exhibits a transversal. A transversal image, realised in an uninterrupted rhythmic. A continuous rhythmic ostinato (movement thirty second). The gravitation towards the tonal centre "c" is clearly indicated. The tone centre "c" is clearly marked. The deliberate minimalism of the musical language. The deliberate minimalism in the means of the musical language: long rehearsals, capturing the "occasional The long rehearsals with the capture of the "occasional" tones. The bass and only four stretched consonants in the upper voices in the upper voices, like echoes of a chorale. Here The whole 12-tone chord is used, which which is filled in gradually over the course of 12 tact: c-h-ais-agis-g-fis-f-e-dis-d-cis. Shchedrin shows his own, author's interpretation of the dodeca- tion technique. The dodecaphonic technique.

The degree of contrast between the pieces of the second increases markedly. The simplicity of the melodious intonations of the balletically graceful piece No.3 is contrasted with the vigorous assertiveness of the fourth movement of the cycle. At the same time, as in the first pair, there are unifying moments between the plays between the first pair of plays. Whereas the first and second movements of the cycle are linked by a common tempo and metrical freedom (both pieces have no

measure), the third and fourth movements are based on a regular met rhythms (2/2 and 3/4). The plasticity of the melodic pattern and the slight swaying of the quarto-quinta movements in the third miniature recreate the lofty image of Maya Plisetskaya and recall the dreamy lyricism of The Lady with the Dog (see Example 2).

### Example 2



However, the genre qualities of the chorale are apparent in the reprise section of the piece, especially in its final tacts (vols. 32-36), where the descending bass movement in The descending bass movement is reminiscent of the first movement of the Diary. The seemingly prickly ostinato of the fourth piece leaves no room for the chorale, but it comes to mind again in the few sounds of the short melody which which hangs over the monorhythmic chords of the over the monorhythmic chords of the lower voices in tacts 16 to 24.

Pieces No 5 and No 6 are the most contrasting pair in the cycle. The imagery, genre, theme, tempo and texture contrast between these pieces reaches an extreme level. The fifth movement is the lyrical centre of the cycle, while the sixth is a rapid movement towards the semantic and dynamic climax of the finale (piece no. 7). A small addition in the coda function to this non-quadratic period is all that tochorale (Lento assai), or rather, its variant ending in a dissonant tonic (secunda chord h-e-c-g-c). The single-voice beginning of Song No.6 reminds us of the The single-voice beginning of piece No 6 reminds us of the start of a fugue with the leitintonation of the cycle from which the theme unfolds which unfolds the theme: c-h-a-d-cis-g-d-a. But after a deep pause from the same theme, only three times faster. three times faster, begins a violent perpetuum mobile with the sixteenths. to the very end of the piece. The movement stops The movement only stops on the first chord (fff) of the final of the cycle. Play No. 7 summarises the various aphoristic statements of the author of the Diary scattered over its pages, flashing back memories and episodes of various events that make up an entire life. They are personified here in certain genre-thematic models: the imitation of bell-ringing (Sostenuto alla Campani), the distant-sounding chorale (quasi Coro (from afar)), the melodious roman Mantic cantabile (Nuovo tempo (ma Lento)). These thematic models symbolise and reveal the most important categories of life for Shchedrin - the Orthodox faith, love and affection for tenderness to his wife. The former appears here, and in many of the composer's other works, in themes imitating the chime of bells and the distant singing of a church choir (the theme Lento assai contains intonations of Znamenny chant). The second theme is a gentle cantabile.

The genre models of chorale and instrumental arioso The genre models of the chorale and instrumental arioso, together with active themes embodying the energy of movement, run through the entire cycle. Rapid the rush of life is a thing of the past, in the code of the Diary. the stage is set for a reflection on life's core values. values. Is that not why the genre specificity of the thematic material becomes more concrete: the lyrical motifs of the cycle are concentrated in the last piece in a miniature (only 4 tacts) The lyrical motifs in the last piece are concentrated in a miniature (four tacts only) cantabile (Nuovo tempo (ma lento), 4th-7th tacts), and the choral elements are transformed into powerful chords of bell ringing (Sostenuto alla Campani, 1st-2nd tacts) and a theme imitating church singing by the timbre possibilities of the piano (Lento assai, 3rd tacts) (see Example 3).

Example 3

**Sostenuto alla Campana**

The musical score for 'Sostenuto alla Campana' is written for piano and features several dynamic and performance markings. It begins with a forte (*fff*) dynamic and includes a section marked *pp eco ff*. A later section is marked *pp* and *ff*, with a *molto* dynamic marking. The score includes a *(quasi gliss.)* section with fingerings (2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2) and a *lunga* marking. The piece concludes with a *sub. pp* dynamic and a *meno f lunga* marking.

**Lento assai**  
*pppp cant.* *poco rit.*

The musical score for 'Lento assai' is marked *pppp cant.* and *poco rit.*. It includes a *quasi Coro (from afar)* marking and a *(red.)* marking.

**Nuovo tempo (ma Lento)**

The musical score for 'Nuovo tempo (ma Lento)' is marked *mp cant. molto (quasi cant.)* and *poco*. It includes a *(red.)* marking and an asterisk (\*) at the end.

The final piece is composed of very short, contrasting thematic formations, or rather fragments of them (from the 1st to the 4th vol.), linked by the principle of montage in a mirror-symmetrical form with a lyrical episode as the centre of the composition: a (bell ringing) - b (chorale) - c (cantabile) - a1 (bell ringing) - b1 (chorale) - c (chorale). (chime) - b1 (chorale). The glueing moments are underlined with are indicated by new tempo markings: The tempo changes five times over the 12 bars. It would have been logical for the final monogram to appear Shched. But her letter-sounds are glimpsed much earlier, at the end of play No. 6, on the approach of the to the climax (bars 35-37). The monogram is hardly audible at all in the tumultuous stream of sixths sixths. This is Shchedrin's customary approach to the use of his monogram in the sheet music: he never foregrounds the letter-sounds of his name, hiding it in secret corners of the texture. Here the monogram, as if by the way, is spread across the two voices of the musical fabric.

Such is Shchedrin's Piano "Diary" - A novel about life that does not fit into one line but fits into the 12-page musical text, made up of short statements by the composer, a master of expressing aphoristic musical thoughts. musical thoughts that perform exquisite intellectual pirouettes.

Piano cycle of 11 pieces, Questions was written in autumn 2003 and is dedicated to the renowned Finnish pianist Olli Mustonen, who performed it for the first time on 9 October 2004 in London. October 9, 2004 in London. In this work, the composer gave the performer maximum freedom to manipulate tempi, strokes, nuances and the logic of the cyclic composition - all to the The pianist's imaginative interpretation. From the author - only the sheet music itself, and all "questions" regarding its actual sounding - to the the artist. This is what Shchedrin writes about in his commentary This is what Shchedrin says in his commentaries. Such is the limited aleatorics of Shchedrin, who is not inclined to make full use of the avant-garde's conquests, although he does not abandon them altogether.

"Romantic Duets", seven pieces for piano four hands, composed by Shchedrin on the eve of his 75th birthday, is dedicated to Martin Engstroem, the founder of the international music festival in Verbier, Switzerland. The work was premiered in Verbier on 28 July 2007. The work was premiered in Verbier on July 28, 2007. Performers: Roland Pontinen and Rodion Shchedrin.

The pieces are performed without intervals and alternate in terms of contrast, imagery, themes and tempo: 1. Andante cantabile; 2. Allegro sotto voce; 3. Maestoso con moto; 4. Allegretto moderato, a la gipsy; 5. Allegro, ma non troppo; 6. Andante recitando; 7. (Coda) Prestissimo. The cycle has a unified dramaturgical line admitting no breaks in it and, accordingly, the pieces are performed separately, thus forming a unified suite form. This is borne out by the intonation and thematic arches, interchanges and development of musical material expounded in previous pieces.

The following groups: authorial and, conventionally speaking, "non-authorial" lexemes. The author's lexemes and the 'non-curatorial' lexemes. This simplified systematization separates reminiscences and symbols of Romanticism from the organic tokens of Shchedrin's musical language, which over time acquired the significance of authorial rhetorical figures - So often they appear in his compositions and have a stable semantics. These include the seemingly common and typical intonation-rhythmic models, but infused with Shchedrin's individual "breath". These include the "cantabile figure", the "ostinati figure Too", "figure circulatio", "figure quasi campani". and the "figure of glissando".

Reminiscences of the Romantic era in the piano cycle Romantic Duets are allusions, quotations of style, genre and and very specific textual quotations. However, the allusion, which is the leitonation of the cycle here, can be interpreted in many signifi- cantly. This is the melodic formula of the groupet then in different variations. It first appears in Piece No. 1 (6th measure) and is repeated in Pieces No. 3 (bars 23-24) and No. 6 (bars 4-6 and 11). On the one hand, this motif is, in terms of its closeness to the original, an allusion to the music of The Poet Speaks, which closes the cycle. Schu The poet speaks" by R. Schumann's cycle "Children's Scenes". On the other hand, this motif is a crucified cadential melodic formula typical of the nocturne genre. Nocturne, i.e. an allusion to a musical genre. Finally, this lexeme as a melodic turn within a theme, rather than as an embellishment, may be considered a typical musical and rhetorical figure of the Romantic era. Its use in cantilian works by Romantic composers (nocturne, impromptu, intermezzo, etc). Shchedrin's somewhat ironic attitude towards this romantic cliché can be sensed in the contrast between the dry, ascetic 'tritone' theme without accompaniment and the unexpectedly soft and melodic cadenzas cut into it (see Example 4).

Example 4

The image displays a musical score for 'Example 4', consisting of two systems of staves. The top system includes a treble clef staff and a piano staff. The bottom system includes a bass clef staff and a piano staff. Performance markings include '(ten.)' at the beginning and end of phrases, '(poco allarg.)' indicating a tempo change, '(pp)' for pianissimo, '(senza trillo)' for a trill, and 'legato' for a smooth connection between notes. The score is numbered '6' at the start of the first system.

A cycle of seven impromptus, *The Simple Pages*, is Shchedrin's new meditation on romanticism. The cycle was first performed on 1 August 2009 at the Verbier Festival, where it was brilliantly performed by the Chinese pianist Yuja Wang. The Russian premiere of the series was held on 7 January 2010 under the baton of Ekaterina Mechetina. Russian premiere of the cycle took place on January 7, 2010 under the interpretation of Ekaterina Mechetina.

The dramaturgical canvas on which the impromptus are strung like beads is similar to Romantic Duets and is directed from the past to the present day: 1) Romantic Etude; 2) Unforgotten Mikaela; 3) Music for a Chekhov play; 4) Tsar's Procession; 5) Aria; 6) Remembrance of an Old Romance; 7) The Politician Speaks. rit...". Equally obvious is the prototype of Schumann's *Children's Scenes*, but even more distant than in the *Romantic Duets*, without explicitly quoting quotation. The parallels with the Shumanov cycle in Shchedrin's *Simple Pages* are more generalised and have more to do with the semantic depth of the author's more to do with the semantic depth of the author's concept. After finishing *Children's Scenes*, Schumann wrote to Clara Wieck that the miniatures were not for children but for adults as a reminder of The miniatures are not for children but for adults as a reminder of the happy, carefree times of their childhood. Shchedrin's cycle also turns to his own past - to the impulsive, overexpressed impulsive, impression-filled period of youth and early creativity. and into a more meaningful period of maturity.

Among the autobiographical signs is a musical image of one of Shchedrin's favourites. The musical image of one of Shchedrin's favourite Bizet's *Carmen*, once brilliantly embodied in *Carmen-Suite*. Only in his youth was Shchedrin more interested in the strong personality of *Carmen*, whom he painted in relief in a ballet for his illustrious wife Maya Plisetskaya, and in his later years the composer dedicated his elegant piano miniature ture (No 2) to the lyrical heroine of the same opera - Michaela. Only it's more of a loose fantasy. a fantasy, an allusion to the luminous feminine image of opera in the favoured manner of Shchedrin of these years from afar. There is also a small quote, hidden in the piece "Unforgotten Micaëla", which refers us to the famous duet of José and Micaëla (cf. No.7 in the opera's clavier) from Act I of *Carmen*: it is just four bars of orchestral accompaniment that overlap in parallel terzettes with Micaëla's vocal part in the second section (*Allegro moderato* for "You will go, she said, now to the town..."), where she talks to José about his mother (see primo 6). example 6). The three-part structure of the piece, Preceded by a recitative (*Recitativo in tempo Andantino* - 10 bars before the *Allegretto*) is reminiscent of the opera scene. operatic scene.

Example 6



The main theme of Impromptu No 3 is a tender, melancholic waltz whose melody, with a lull in the first beat and the key lyrical intonation of an ascending sextet, partly recalls the waltz Amur Waves that was popular at the start of the 20th century, partly the well-known romance The Chrysanthemums Have Long Blossomed in the Garden, and a very distant theme of Nina and Treplev's duet from Act I of the ballet The Seagull (cf. Kahá" (see Excerpt 7).

Example 7



The underlined genre marking of the pieces particularly stands out in the piano cycle Prostoje pięstymi (The Prospect Pages). Simple Pages, though a predilection for generalisation Genre has always been characteristic of Shchedrin. Let us remember the pieces from his Notebook for Young People.

The genre base of the plays serves as a kind of "The genre base of the plays is a kind of "stage" on which small theatrical reprises take place: characters waltz goodbye to the sound of love, the royal cortege rides to the sound of fanfares, someone plays the theme of the Red Sundress from afar to the chorus of the guitar strings, and a politician sighs in lullaby. in his own tittle-tattle.

The vocal nature of the Impromptus No. 5 "Aria" and No. 6 'Recalling an Old Romance'. They are a great example of the vocal music. Variant form, variable size, the linear development of the heterophonic texture, the unstable composition of the voices and the quavering The variant form, variable size, linear development of the heterophone texture, a non-stable vocal structure and nicking quartal passages in the ending stanzas of Aria a folk prototype of Russian long lyrical songs. The outline of the composition of Impromptu No 6 is defined by the melody of the well-known romance by A. Varlamov "Red Sarafan", hidden in the lace weaving of the texture. Varlamov's 'Red Sarafan' - it seems to dissolve in a haze of memories.

The examples of pieces No 2, Unforgotten Michaela, No 3, Music for a Chekhov play, and No 6, A Recollection of an Old Romance, are A Memoir of an Old Romance' are indicative of a change in Shchedrin's to the quotation of "alien" material.

The title of the sixth impromptu can be extended to the title of the sixth impromptu can be extended to other pieces in the piano cycle *Memories of...*, which in one way or another become reminiscences of the era of the Romanticism, appearing in a variety of genre invariants. Only the final piece of the cycle breaks out of its general retrospective thrust with an aggressive push, bringing it back to the present day. The impromptu "The politician says...!" is suddenly chanted. "The politician speaks" with its sudden, chanting phrase *ff* in rapid tempo (*Allegro vivo*) destroys the romantic poetics of reverie and reminiscence, plunging it into a disturbing atmosphere of modernity (example 8).

### Example 8

\*) On the wooden block, where the keyboard ends.  
Auf das Holz schlagen, wo die Tastatur endet.

Schott Music, Mainz 53 583

**Conclusion:** Thus the four piano cycles written by Shchedrin at the start of the twenty-first century demonstrate a number of similarities in the composer's approach to this genre. These lie, first and foremost, in the kind of thinking that unites these works, the master entering into a late style period. What does this mean for the composer? For Shchedrin it means a deepening of the neo-romantic, neo-canonical and retrospective tendencies, a strengthening of the lyrical and philosophical element and the autobiographical nature of his work, which is defined by the Diary cycle. In a series of brief, varied pieces in all four cycles, the composer wrote diary entries recording his impressions of past and present events and reflecting on time and on art, on his own creative path. The chamber nature of the genre The genre's chamberliness contributes to it. Rodion Shchedrin represents that rare type of creative personality when an artist manifests himself simultaneously in several incarnations. Shchedrin is well known not only as a as a composer, but also as a performer. However, few know that Shchedrin is also gifted with literary talent. Evidence of this is the librettos of his operas that he writes himself, articles, notes, and original literary sketches about loved ones, teachers, great composers, poets, and artists (see [7]). Shchedrin's literary abilities also manifested themselves in his memoirs "Autobiographical Records", which were also published during this same creative and life period (2002-2009) (see [8]). And this is not mysticism, but a logical pattern - a stage of wisdom and comprehension of lived life.

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