

The Specific Features of the Genre in A. Abbasov's Symphonic Poems

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Abstract. Various composers have played a highly significant role in the development of national musical culture. Their creative activity enriches the national musical treasury with multifaceted musical interpretations. Naturally, each of these interpretations possesses its own individual forms. The genres to which composers turn are equally diverse. In realizing a musical idea, a composer embodies a concrete artistic conception through the expressive means employed, the timbral richness of orchestral language, dramaturgical development, and the multidirectional evolution of the sphere of images.

One of the composers in Azerbaijani musical culture whose creative path bears an unmistakable personal signature is Ashraf Abbasov. As a composer endowed with distinctive individual qualities, Abbasov has secured a unique place in national musical culture through his original artistic legacy. The present article examines the works he composed in the genre of the symphonic poem, focusing on their formal and generic characteristics, the creative style manifested in these works, the thematic range he adopts, and the originality of his expressive means. His symphonic poems are characterized as among the most striking examples of the genre in the history of national musical culture. It is noted that the composer wrote his first works in this genre as early as the 1940s, and that these pieces constitute some of the earliest examples of the symphonic poem in Azerbaijani music.

In his symphonic poems, Abbasov underscores the importance of formal and generic features for his compositional thinking. He organically fuses national musical elements with components of European classical music. This synthesis enables him to emphasize national characteristics in his symphonic poems. The article discusses these and related aspects. It is also emphasized that Abbasov is extremely attentive in selecting subjects for his symphonic poems. Summarizing his creative achievements, these works represent artistic examples that hold a distinctive place within the rich heritage of national musical culture.

Keywords: *composer; symphonic; poem; genre; form; national; music*

1. Introduction

The symphonic poem occupies a distinctive place in Azerbaijani symphonic music as a genre that unites programmatic content, expressive freedom, and formal flexibility. Within this context, the creative legacy of Ashraf Abbasov holds particular significance. As one of the composers who actively contributed to the formation and development of national symphonic thinking, Abbasov played an important role in adapting the symphonic poem to Azerbaijani musical culture.

His works in this genre are distinguished by the synthesis of national modal–maqam intonations with the formal and dramaturgical principles of European classical music. Through this synthesis, Abbasov

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not only expanded the expressive possibilities of the symphonic poem but also contributed to the establishment of the genre as an important vehicle for conveying national themes, historical memory, and civic ideas. The present article examines the specific genre and formal features of Abbasov's symphonic poems, focusing on their programmatic basis, compositional structure, and stylistic originality within the broader context of Azerbaijani symphonic music.

2. Ashraf Abbasov's Creative Profile and Artistic Orientation

Ashraf Abbasov, one of the composers who stands out in Azerbaijani musical culture for his distinctive artistic manner, pursued a multidirectional creative trajectory. He composed works in a range of musical genres. Correctly determining the functions of formal sections within these genres, he was able to generalize the achievements of his individual compositional style in both large-scale and small-scale works. Possessing a unique symphonic mode of thinking, Abbasov created significant works in the symphonic sphere. Notably, these works differ from one another in their generic characteristics.

The 1940s–1950s represent the stage during which the characteristic traits of Abbasov's creative work took shape and the elements of his compositional style reached full maturation. This period may also be characterized as the time when his professionalism in creative activity was firmly affirmed. In those years, Abbasov achieved results in scholarly work as well: for the first time in Azerbaijani musicology, he presented an analysis of U. Hajibeyli's opera *Koroghlu*. This contributed to new tendencies in his creative path and fostered more professional compositional pursuits within his style. His appointment as Rector of the Azerbaijan State Conservatory (1953–1957) likewise highlights the importance of his work as an educator. While serving as rector and simultaneously teaching composition, Abbasov made a significant contribution to the education of a new, more progressive generation of composers.

3. The Symphonic Poem as a Genre and Its Place in Abbasov's Oeuvre

With his symphonic poem *Shusha* (1946), Abbasov created one of the first national examples of a genre that had been established in the works of the outstanding representative of Romanticism, the Hungarian composer Franz Liszt.

As one of the principal genres of symphonic music, symphonic poems are significant musical interpretations that express a Romantic idea within the synthesis of the arts. Symphonic poems are one-movement orchestral works, and programmatic content plays a crucial role in their conception. Philosophical, historical, literary, natural, and other themes are reflected in their programmatic titles. A free development of musical material is characteristic of the genre. Within symphonic poems, various principles of formal organization—sonata thinking, monothematicism, cyclic principles, and variation—are often integrated into a unified whole.

This genre became a defining stimulus for Abbasov's symphonic thinking. In *Shusha*, one of the first examples of the genre in national music, he shapes the majestic image of his native city through the formal features of the symphonic poem and succeeds in expressing differentiated emotional states through the thematic processes of sonata-allegro form.

4. Stylistic Evolution and Early Symphonic Poems

The experiences Abbasov acquired in the 1950s resulted in the emergence of an original compositional technique and a distinctive style in harmony and orchestration. During this period, he created works

with colorful thematic material and symphonic pieces with an intriguing developmental trajectory. Without resorting to multi-movement monumental genres, Abbasov constructed expressive plot-like lines in one-movement symphonic works through a laconic mode of expression.

In 1951, he dedicated one of his noteworthy symphonic poems to the cherished memory of his teacher U. Hajibeyli. This symphonic poem, written for cello and symphony orchestra, reflects the lyrical thinking characteristic of Abbasov's style and plays an important role in presenting the ideological content of the work.

As Z. Gafarova notes, highly appreciating Abbasov's inclination toward symphonic music, his *Poem* for cello and orchestra and the symphonic piece *Fragments* occupy a special place among the composer's symphonic works.

5. Programmatic Content and Dramaturgy in *The Future Day*

Continuing to regard the symphonic poem as a rich creative laboratory, Abbasov returned to the genre in 1952 and turned to a completely different thematic sphere. In the symphonic poem *The Future Day* (*Gələcək gün*), composed on the basis of M. Ibrahimov's work of the same name, he depicts the life of the people of South Azerbaijan, their struggle, and their aspiration for freedom.

The programmatic title plays a decisive role in revealing the ideological content of the composition. As emphasized by A. Babayeva, programmaticity adapts to the expressive possibilities of each genre and serves as a vital means of conveying musical ideas to the listener.

In *The Future Day*, the sonata-allegro form becomes the principal structural framework. The confrontation of themes reflects the opposing forces within the struggle, while the epic narrative quality of the work is enhanced through expressive orchestral means. National modal-maqam intonations, particularly those of the Shur and Segah modes, serve as the foundation of thematic material, enabling Abbasov to articulate contrasting emotional states—stern resistance, sorrow, hope, and faith in the future—within a coherent dramaturgical arc.

6. One-Movement Form and National Stylistic Features

Within a one-movement structure, Abbasov constructs a coherent and emotionally saturated narrative, demonstrating the expressive potential of this form. His approach aligns with a broader tendency among Azerbaijani composers, whose one-movement symphonic works are distinguished by rich melodic coloration and innovative imagistic spheres.

As Babayeva notes, Azerbaijani composers enrich European genres with new national content, thereby elevating national music to the level of world musical culture. Abbasov's symphonic poems exemplify this synthesis by combining national modal foundations with European formal principles.

7. The *Dramatic Poem*: Culmination of the Genre

After years of creative exploration, Abbasov composed one of his most significant works in the genre—the *Dramatic Poem* (1962), dedicated to his teacher M. Chulaki. In this work, the composer embodies a dramatic panorama of his era, expressing a civic stance through realistic musical imagery.

The piece is unified by a stern introductory theme that recurs throughout the composition in transformed guises. The sonata-allegro processes are treated through Abbasov's distinctive style, enriched by polyphonic techniques and dynamic orchestral coloring. The secondary theme, lyrical and

contrasting in character, further deepens the expressive scope of the work through refined timbral choices.

The development section is marked by intense thematic transformation and increasing dynamic tension, culminating in a majestic conclusion that conveys steadfast determination and optimism.

8. Conclusion

In general, Abbasov's symphonic poems—*Shusha*, *The Future Day*, and *Dramatic Poem*—represent some of the most accomplished examples of the genre in Azerbaijani music. As noted by M. Mirzaliyev, the symphonic poem occupied a central position in the composer's creative legacy.

Through his symphonic poems, Abbasov vividly expressed formal and generic features using the characteristics of his individual style. By combining national modal-*maqam* intonations with European classical forms, he defined the national content of the symphonic poem genre in Azerbaijani music. The originality of his musical language and symphonic thinking underscores the lasting importance of his creative heritage in the history of national musical culture.

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