

**DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v7i4.1861**

**Citation:** Romenskaya, L., Golovin, A., Kurganskiy, S., & Bezuglova, O. (2018). Spiritual Concert “Glory Be to This Day” of S. A. Degtyarev: Compositional and Stylistic Features of Choral Writing. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 7(4), 387-392. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v7i4.1861>

## **Spiritual Concert “Glory Be to This Day” of S. A. Degtyarev: Compositional and Stylistic Features of Choral Writing**

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### **Abstract**

This article analyzes the genre of spiritual concert of S.A. Degtyarev “Glory be to this day” in the context of the style of the Russian choral writing of the late XVIII – early XIX centuries. Compositional, genre, dramatic patterns, the technological specifics of the structure of the choral works presented as elements of meaning of music, by means of which the transition of the language of space the artistic content.

The study of the creative heritage of S.A. Degtyarev as one of the founders of the domestic choral concert seems to be an interest of modern musicology. The category “choral letter” is considered by the authors as a carrier of historical, cultural and ideological traditions. The specificity of the musical stylistics of the analyzed concert is based on the combination of Baroque music traditions (rhetorical writing techniques, imitation polyphony technique), classical style (the use of the principle of “contrast in unity” at the level of architectonics of the artistic space, homophone-harmonic structure of the musical language) and part-time multi-part concert. The principle of functional variability of textural layers is revealed through the differentiation of choral parties, coloring tessitore-tone areas such as media music concept. The analysis of the composition-dramatic structure, sound-acoustic realization of the choral parts of the concert allows to reveal the specifics of the style of S.A. Degtyarev's choral writing.

**Keywords:** Russian choral concert, S.A. Degtyarev, Chulitna the stanza, the choir the letter, Polystructural character, Macrocycle, Timbral coloration.

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## Introduction

The concert "Glory be to this day" of S.A. Degtyarev is one of the most outstanding examples of Russian spiritual choral concert of the Enlightenment - the main direction of the national musical culture of the late XVIII - early XIX century. During this period, there was developed and strengthened the spiritual constant secular choral art, formed originally in the sacred depths of the hooked notation chants. Then these traditions were developed by a part concert of Russian baroque music and bloomed with masterpieces of choral professional art in the works of composers of the national classical school in the following centuries.

The genre of the Russian choral concert of this period had to undergo a difficult way of historical overcoming, undervaluation and small evident preservation. The works of Stepan Degtyarev are the vivid confirmations of this. Despite their apparent popularity and relevance in performing practice,<sup>5</sup> the problem of systematization of his creative heritage, scientific generalization of the composer's creative achievements, remains unresolved. Works of S.A. Degtyarev began to be published almost 100 years after his death. Today, these publications can be attributed to the rarity.

A few researchers of his work state the fact that at the moment they discovered about 60 concerts of the composer from the number of more than 130 works written by him in this genre. A significant contribution to the preservation of the creative heritage of S.A. Degtyarev was made by A.V. Lebedeva-Emelina, whose archival research led to the restoration of the composer's 12 choral concerts, lost after his death.

The absence of a fundamental scientific generalization of the works of S.A. Degtyarev does not cancel the interest in his work of a number of scientists in various fields of humanitarian knowledge. So, for example, his personality, life and creative activity were in the focus of a number of scientific researchers in the field of the history of musical science, including the historiographer and local historian Yu.S. Goryainova. In musicology, the creative work of S.A. Degtyarev has not yet received a full consideration, although it should not be denied that his works were put on the same level as works of D.S. Bortniansky, B.A. Berezovsky, and A.L. Wedel when considering the problems of the evolution of the genre of Russian choral concert (research of M.G. Rytsareva). The stylistic peculiarities of his musical language are analyzed in the publications of V. Popechiteleva, O. Zakharova, and others. However, such a "dot-and-dash" aspect, narrowly aimed at studying of individual elements of creativity, does not give us, in our opinion, a full-fledged cultural evaluation of the works of S.A. Degtyarev and determines the **relevance** of the stated research problems.

The **purpose** of the article is to examine the style features of the choral writing of S.A. Degtyaryov as a performing and a meaning-forming category from the point of view of its compositional-dramaturgical patterns in the context of the analysis of a choral concert "Glory be to this day".

## Literature Review

Study of compositional-dramaturgical patterns of choral writing of creative work of S.A. Degtyarev allows us to identify the specifics of the Russian spiritual concert at the stage of its formation, to identify those stylistic, dramaturgic, genre features that make up the essence of the vocal-choral concert style of the national musical culture. This orientation is carried out on the basis of a complex method that includes consideration of the choral texture in terms of its theoretical specifics, historical projection and immanent

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<sup>5</sup> Degtyarev's concerts have been firmly entrenched in the repertoire of many church choirs for over a century, serving festive divine services, meeting the needs; leading choral groups often include in the concert performances parts of the oratorio, numerous spiritual concerts of this composer.

performing practice. The texture in the choral work must be considered as a synonym for “writing” (Kholopova, 2013, p. 184).

In musicology, the category of “choral writing” reveals the technological specificity of the structure of the choral composition by the composer, who is the bearer of certain historical, cultural and worldview traditions. In the conductor's process, “choral writing” is an expression of rational representations, impressions, ideas, logical and verbal formulations of composer thinking and images of the work. The creation of a musical image arises through the intonation-style expression embodied by the conductor means, and the individualization of the content is expressed through the subjective view of the composer on the surrounding world, that is, the author's concept. Hence the specificity of the writing is delineated into two categories: the fixation of compositional thinking (graphically-symbolic) and “live text”. Thus, the sound realization of a choral writing is a performing category aimed at the transition of linguistic consciousness into the art content of the work.

The composer reflects the thought processes through fixing the intention of the work. According to E.V. Nazaikinsky, the sound of the work is “... a multidimensional, multi-layered, most complete and living map of the work that really flares up in the listener's consciousness, and is the only one among all other forms of fixation that can unite the elements of the artistic whole, scattered in the vast musical universe of culture, history and life” (Nazaikinskii, 1982, p. 39).

In this case, the author distinguishes between two categories: 1) fixation - the recording of notes, where “... the material side of the work is expressed in a more explicit form” (ibid., p. 40); 2) “music-sound text”, which in the audience's perception reflects the ideal model of performing art (in particular, the conductor's interpretation). In other words, the writing is reproduced in a live sound by means of the conductor's activities. If the composer “thinks with music” (the term of M.S. Bonfeld), the conductor owns the technique of his writing as a means of realizing the work.

As the fixation of a work, choral writing is a kind of materialization of the worldview and thinking orientations of the composer and, in this sense, fulfills a meaning-bearing function. As a performing category, according to V.L. Zhivov, choral writing is “materialization in the living sound of the composer's intention”, which gives rise to “influence on the listener, using sound, using changes in its temporal and spatial qualities: tempo-rhythmic, agogic, intonational, timbre, dynamic, articulatory deviations, various modes of reproduction” (2002, p. 20).

## **Results and Discussion**

Let us consider the specifics of choral writing and its role in the context of the composition and dramaturgical regularities of the concert “Glory be to this day”.

The canonical text of the sticheron for the festival of the Holy Trinity, which is the completion of the whole of the Easter cycle and glorifies the greatest event - the descent of the Holy Spirit to the apostles - was laid in the basis of the concert “Glory be to this day”. Images of the great Trinity, filled with a sense of triumphant joy, renewal, life affirmation sate the sound space of the concert. As we know, this holiday is connected with the events of the Holy Pentecost. Two complimentary sticherons were taken by the author from the fourth voice of the all-night festive divine service.

It is interesting that S.A. Degtyarev changes the positions of the parts of the sticheron adopted in the performance of church usage in the following order: the first part of the sticheron is “The Holy Spirit”, the second part of the sticheron is “Glory be to this day”. In the interpretation of the composer, the complimentary sticheron “Glory be to this day” forms the basis of the first three parts of the concert. And

the sticheron “The Holy Spirit” is presented by the author more freely - only separate lines were taken from the canonical text, which formed the basis of the fourth and fifth parts.

For S.A. Degtyarev, free interpretation of liturgical texts was due to the canons of secular culture: genre specificity, the principles of musical logic, the need to create dynamics of the dramatic development of the concert with the final part, in which the main semantic emphasis was the key words of the sticheron, glorifying the idea of the Pentecost: the Holy Spirit, Light and the giver of light, the source of alms.

Traditionally in Orthodoxy, the sticheron is the semantic and dramatic center of festive divine services; a great event is described there. With regard to the subject concert: descent into the apostles of the Holy Spirit-Comforter. Thus, the revelation of God - Trinity about Himself is completed. The second sticheron is the glorification of the Holy Trinity. Therefore the sticheron “Glory be to this day” is performed several times during the festive divine services: it sounds in the Morning Prayer and on the Vespers of the feast before the reading of the kneeling prayers.

The concert consists of five parts, compositionally separated by different tonalities and a contrasting tempo rhythm:

I part – “Glory be to this day” (Allegro moderato, Cdur);

II part – “That is to say: gather the disciples of Christ” (Andante, Fdur);

III part – “And they all started talking” (Moderato, Cdur);

IV part – “The Holy Spirit” (Adagio, Fdur);

V part – “Light and the giver of light” (Allegro, Cdur).

A special kind of plotline determined the principle of organizing an artistic whole:

1. Compositional level: the formation of **polystructurality** (Kholopova, 2013) as the result of interaction and cohesion of the principles of concert multiparty (secular tradition of the concert genre - from the part concert) on the one hand, and the through-composed form, determined by the content of the canonical text (spiritual Byzantine tradition) and the desire for an endless unfolding of melodic-thematic sound formation, on the other hand. In this case, the principle of complementarity of contrasting parts forms a unity of figurative and semantic space.

2. Dramaturgical level: the formation of a **macrocycle** based on the unity of the **spiritual** (through intonation-thematic development, subordinated to the logic of the alignment of the canonical text) and **secular** (harmonic, textural, metrorhythmic contrast-comparison at the level of sections and parts). As a result, a harmonious architectonics of artistic space arises, based on the principle of *contrast in unity*.

	I part	II part	III part	IV part	V part
Motives (through-composed)	A B C	A B C	A B C	A	A B
Texture (mixed)	tutti – group – tutti – group –tutti	tutti – group – tutti– group – tutti	group - tutti	tutti	tutti
Beat (contrasting)	C	3/4	2/4	C	2/4
Form	three-part through- composed	three-part through- composed	three-part through- composed	period of development type	period of development type

From the position of the values of “**spiritual realism**” (Medushevsky, 2014), the dramatic development of the concert's sound space is determined by the interconnection of two ontological spheres (theocentric and anthropocentric), denoted by the methods of writing and the means of musical expressiveness. Thanks to this, the connection of Worldly and Heavenly Genesis is achieved, defining a kind of conceptuality of the time-space of this work.

The peculiarities of the structure of the choral texture of the concert “Glory be to this day” are determined by the tradition of secular concerts, manifested in the use of homophonic-harmonious and polyphonic writing facilities, the techniques of timbre coloring (alternation and opposition of groups of voices), the rhetorical interpretation of tessitura-timbre zones (the bass part is a sign of spiritual depth, the party of sopranos, or more precisely - of discant, is a sign of a heavenly, spiritual height, marked with a high register, a torsion seal *divisi* and its sound is likened to an angelic chant).

Harmonic logic of development forms the entire international-themed complex of the concert. For example, the bass line has a clear functional interpretation: broad leaps, cadence clarity is designed to give weight to voicing. The harmonic nature of the structure of the thematic and other parties is clearly expressed: the movements in the sounds of chords, syllabic (syllable-sound), recitation, the international moves, melismatics are dominant. Thus, the interconnection and combination of the lateral tonal centralization determines the harmonic nature of the thematicism at the level of all the choral parts and is manifested in the abundance of international phrases by the sounds of chords, a strict choral vertical, subordinating all the voices of choral writing in many sections of the concert parts.

On the other hand, the development of the texture lays in combination of two writing facilities (homophonic and polyphonic). The composer uses the imitation and canonical modes of polyphonic techniques in the climax as a sign of dramatization and dynamization. At the same time, the rhetorical principles of sound formation are quite clearly expressed in the intonation-melodic complex. It is significant in this respect that the use of canonical imitation in the third part as a mode of timbre coloring and a vivid sound image of a picture of a suddenly started national dialect (“And they all started talking” - and all people began to speak different languages). Such a method for the sound representation of the descent of the Holy Spirit is applied in the second section of the first part (“in tongues of fire”), where the thematic seed of imitation, performed alternately in all voices (Bass: Soprano: Alto: Tenor) is built on the rhetorical figure of the *circle*: the choral unison of the basses, soaring upwards to the quart, descending on the sounds of the triad and rounding upward towards the dominant tone. The logic of the entry of the choral parts, of course, creates the metaphysical depth of this fragment of the sticheron.

Spatiality of the musical material of the concert is embodied, first of all, at the level of sound-acoustic realization of choral parts: images of glory, joy, triumph (“Glory be to this day”, “Holy Trinity”, “Holy Spirit”, “Source of alms”) are voiced with dense vertical texture; images of action, movement, processuality (“And they all started talking”, “In tongues of fire”) are voiced by the alternate sound of choral parts, juxtaposing the solo parts and choral tutti, or *divisi* of individual choral groups.

Summarizing the foregoing, let us note that in the concert “Glory be to this day” it is the texture that forms the “international reservoir” (Kholopova, 2013, p. 348), which “absorbs” both harmony and polyphony into a kind of all-encompassing polyphony. In choral writing of the concert is clearly visible functional variability of texture layers (from heterophony - to polyphony):

- The differentiation of choral parts, beginning with the alternation of the timbre of voices (for example, imitational rolls of female and male timbres) to the timbre coloration of layers in the sounds of themes;
- The gradual connection of counterpointing voices in different parts (from 2-voices to 4-voices) is a typical example of a choral polyphony.

In general, in choral writing of the concert of S.A. Degtyarev "Glory be to this day" there is often used episodic principle of the alternation of the groups of the choir – "tutti-soli", which certainly affects the specifics of dramatic development. The tessitura-timbre zones are clearly differentiated; their alternation creates the effect of a deep spatial perspective. The alternation of choir groups - soprano, tenors, less often - alto and basses - lies at the heart of the plot-narrative line. It comes at the beginning and key words of the text lines, where more and less stable thematic impulses pervade the whole composition of the concert - one of the brightest and most representative sample of the style of the choral writing of the late XVIII and early XIX century.

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