

## PERFORMANCE TRANSCRIPTION AS A VARIETY OF MUSICAL INTERPRETATION: AN EXAMPLE OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH'S *PRELUDE AND FUGUE IN C MINOR BWV 549* ARRANGED FOR BUTTON ACCORDION

KATERYNA CHEREVKO<sup>1</sup>, OKSANA PYSMENNA<sup>2</sup>

**SUMMARY.** The article is devoted to consideration of the specifics of performance transcriptions as one of the varieties of musical interpretation, focusing on the development of accordion repertoire, particularly the transcription of baroque polyphonic compositions. The aim is to explore the interpretative aspects of J.S. Bach's *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor BWV 549* adapted for accordion, considering the instrument's technical and acoustic characteristics, as well as playing techniques. Through a comprehensive analysis, it demonstrates the importance of transforming the timbre of the organ piece to suit the accordion's sound while capturing its figurative and ideological essence through diverse technical approaches to button accordion performance. Considering the textural intricacies of polyphonic compositions, their transcriptions for accordion are regarded as interpretive "renditions." The performance interpretation of such pieces involves not only the faithful reproduction of the musical score but also the utilization of a range of technical playing techniques specific to the accordion. The proficient amalgamation of these techniques' hinges on a deep understanding of various musical and expressive devices, the nuances of musical language, and the structural organization essential for the professional transcription of an organ composition for accordion.

**Keywords:** transcription, interpretation, Baroque music, polyphonic composition, Johann Sebastian Bach, performance, button accordion

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ph.D. in Art criticism, Professor of The Theory of Music Department, Lviv National Music Academy named after Mykola Lysenko, Lviv, Ukraine. Email: kcherev@gmail.com*

<sup>2</sup> *Ph.D. in Art criticism, Professor, Head of The Theory of Music Department, Lviv National Music Academy named after Mykola Lysenko, Lviv, Ukraine. Email: oksanapysmenna@gmail.com*



## Introduction

Button accordion art is a unique phenomenon in the world musical culture. Its rapid development has led to the emergence of many outstanding button accordion performers. Considering the short history of the development of the instrument, the peculiarity of the formation of the accordion repertoire remains a problematic issue. After all, it is known that the process of formation and enrichment of the repertoire relates to the improvement of the design of the instrument, which leads to the expansion of technical capabilities for performers. The gradual increase in the level of performing skill led to a change in the role of the instrument in musical art. Accordingly, the popularity of the accordion grew, which contributed to the formation of its repertoire. However, to this day, a significant part of the button accordion repertoire consists of adaptations of classical samples of music from previous eras, the study of which is aimed at the formation of the musical and aesthetic taste of the accordion performers and the development of their artistic thinking. It is known that transcriptions have always been part of the repertoire of pianists and violinists, but they are of special importance for accordionists. These works not only expand the accordion repertoire, but also give performers the opportunity to master the technique of performing works written for other instruments. Thus, in this process, the dynamization of creative searches in solving artistic, technical, stylistic, and interpretive tasks while preserving the artistic aesthetics of the composer's original text becomes important in this process.

The inclusion of transcriptions in the button accordion repertoire is primarily due to the limited number of original works written specifically for the instrument. Therefore, transcriptions hold an important place, as they broaden and enrich the repertoire, enhance the technical possibilities of the instrument, and foster the development of button accordionists' performance skills. Significant among these transcriptions are those of works by prominent composers of the 17th-19th centuries, particularly the polyphonic compositions of the Baroque era, with J. S. Bach at the forefront. Bach's works, characterized by a multifaceted palette of imagery and a rich genre spectrum, have inspired a wide range of transcriptions and adaptations.

Bach's *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C Minor* is an excellent example of Baroque polyphonic music. The popularity of this piece among accordionists stems from performer-created transcriptions. This article aims to identify the distinctive features of performing a transcription of Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in C Minor* on the accordion, focusing on the instrument's technical-structural characteristics, its timbral and acoustic qualities, and the specific playing techniques required.

## **Methods and methodology of scientific research**

The problems of this article led to the use of a wide methodological base of research, which consists of a complex of scientific methods: source studies - when studying scientific works devoted to the consideration of transcriptions in musical art, problems of musical interpretation; historical - when outlining the specifics of the interpretation of the works of J.S. Bach; of a musicologist - when considering the specifics of transcriptions as a component of the repertoire of button accordion players. When considering the transcription of the *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor BWV 549* by J.S. Bach, for a multi-timbral button accordion with ready-made chords, it is necessary to use various methods of musicological analysis: methodical-performance (playing techniques, performance technique, timbre-acoustic features) and musical-theoretical (for outlining the form, dramatic development of the work, expressive means, etc.). In the performance analysis, attention is focused on the choice of performance techniques, tempos, dynamic shades, and registers; melismatic, phrasing, application and articulation are analyzed.

## **Literature review**

The question of performance interpretation of musical compositions is highlighted in numerous works by musicologists and performers in general. The complexity of the interpretation process is due to the reproduction of not only the figurative and ideological content of the work, stylistic features, but also considering the individual skill of the performer - all this constitutes a complex, multi-level approach to the sound realization of a musical work. The essence of performing interpretation is the individualization of approaches to the performance of works. However, a fixed version of the interpretation of a musical work is translation or transcription, which captures the moment of interpretation by transforming the musical text into accordance with the technical and constructive features of the musical instrument.

The specificity of the topic of the article encourages the involvement of a wide range of scientific works related to the history of the development of accordion art in general, namely, attention is focused on the ways of creating a repertoire for the accordion M. Davydov (2000), I. Yergiev (2004), the specifics of the formation of professional technical performance skills of accordionists M. Davydov (1983, 2004), V. Knyazev (2004), A. Semeshko (2002). A separate group consists of scientific works that highlight the problems of interpretation of works in musical art and consider the transcription and translation of musical works as a musical genre: M. Oberyukhtin (1973), N. Ryzhkova (2006). The central place in our research is occupied by the works devoted to the features of transcriptions and translations of the works of J.S. Bach for button accordion.

In his work, "Theory of translation. Status, problems, aspects", when researching translation problems, A. Schweitzer<sup>3</sup> develops categories of equivalence and adequacy, highlighting their common and distinctive properties: for adequacy - process, for equivalence - result. The author writes: "... the content of the category "adequacy" is correspondence to the communicative situation, and the content of equivalence consists in the correlation of texts."

The importance of transcriptions in the history of the development of musical art is considered in a few scientific works. F. Busoni notes that despite the existence of a few unsuccessful processing of the original works, the transcription "...does not destroy the original version and the latter does not suffer any losses due to the first... Good, majestic "universal" music remains the same no matter what instrument it sounds on."<sup>4</sup>

L. Godovsky<sup>5</sup> believes that transcriptions do not diminish the value of the original work, but sometimes "transcriptions, treatments, paraphrases, if they are conceived in a creative way, are something that really exists, which in terms of value can be a masterpiece and even surpass the original composer's work".

The main task of the authors of translations is to preserve the main ideological direction, dramatic and compositional idea of the work. However, at the same time, a new work appears from the translator's pen. Based on this, V. Moskalenko<sup>6</sup>, studying the issue of the original work and the new work as a result of translation or transcription, introduces the concepts of "composer's work" and "performer's work". The author considers translation as a phenomenon of musical interpretation. Transcription is always associated with a change in the timbre-register plane of the sound of a musical piece, therefore it is important in the process of instrumental translation to reflect the emotional-intellectual atmosphere, the spirit of the era as the most important component. This can be achieved with a deep understanding and as close as possible to the signs of the corresponding style period. The main task of the transcription of the work, as well as its musical interpretation in general, consists in "aesthetic renewal, revealing the expressive possibilities of the object of interpretation, in its adaptation to new life needs"<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> Schweitzer, Albert. *J. S. Bach*. Warszawa, 2009, p. 99

<sup>4</sup> Cited by Rudenko, Volodymyr. "Concert violin transcription of the 20th century and problems of interpretation". In *Musical performance*, Issue 10, 1979, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Godowski, Leopold. "About transcriptions, arrangements, and paraphrases". *School of piano transcription*. Moscow, 1961. p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Moskalenko, Victor. *Lectures on musical interpretation: Teaching manual*, Kyiv, 2013. URL: <https://knmau.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/V.-Moskalenko-Lektsiyi-z-muzichnoyi-interpretatsiyi-Navchalnij-posibnik.pdf>, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

Therefore, transcriptions of musical works can be considered in the context of musical interpretation, as one of the varieties of interpretation of the original text by the translator and performer. In accordion performance, the practice of combining the interpreter and the performer in one person is common. The timbre specificity of the chosen accordion and the peculiarities of the performance technique on the instrument play an important role in the creation of the interpretation of the work by the accordion performer, the reproduction of those visual and sound characteristics that the composer's work contains. Therefore, in the proposed article we will use the concepts of performing transcription, musicological and composer interpretation<sup>8</sup>.

### Theoretical framework

Transcriptions, arrangements, translations or adaptations, processing and their classification require terminological clarification, because the specifics of the appearance of these types of works in musical art cause a certain terminological ambiguity. All these terms come from different languages, so they are sometimes used as synonyms. The common characteristics of these musical works is that in their content they imitate original musical compositions, however, they are aimed at transforming the original musical material.

Let's turn to the definition of terms in encyclopedic editions. "A transcription is essentially the adaptation of a composition for an instrument or instruments other than those for which it was originally written. An arrangement is a similar procedure, although the arranger often feels free to take musical liberties with elements of the original score"<sup>9</sup>. The American Federation of Musicians defines arranging as "the art of preparing and adapting an already written composition for presentation in other than its original form. An arrangement may include reharmonization, paraphrasing, and/or development of a composition, so that it fully represents the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic structure"<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>8</sup> Performance transcription is a type of interpretation that involves the translation of a musical work (original source) for performance on another instrument or group of instruments.

Musicological interpretation is a type of interpretation based on a complex analysis in musical-theoretical and historical-stylistic aspects. In such an analysis, the musicologist tries to follow the logic of construction and dramaturgy of the piece. The composer's interpretation is expressed by genres of musical transcription: paraphrases (suites or fantasies on themes from other works), etc.

<sup>9</sup> Arrangement and transcription. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/art/instrumentation-music/Arrangement-and-transcription#ref530216>

<sup>10</sup> Arrangement. URL: <https://www.classiccat.net/dictionary/arrangement.php>

Today, there is enough works dedicated to the study of this problem, however, in them, the authors use different interpretations of terms. N. Ryzhkova defines transcriptions as "...a special kind of music, which differs significantly from the composer's creativity in terms of its origin, status, functioning, which should be considered as a special genre variety"<sup>11</sup>. Thus, transcriptions occupy a separate place in the system of genres of musical art and are included in the category of derived genres according to the specifics of their origin.

Based on the comparison of the musical texts of the original work and the derivative (transcriptions) and determination of the level of their similarity, three categories of transcriptions are distinguished. The first includes arrangements of musical works in which the author's text and the text of the interpretation are practically identical, that is, contain a small number of differences. The main indicators of the ratio of the text of the arrangement and the original text are the preservation of the form of the work, the texture of the presentation, melody, etc. The differences may relate to the timbre palette of the musical piece in accordance with the specifics of the sound of the instrument. Instead, the greater distance of the interpretation text to the original source characterizes the second group of transcriptions. In these works, the interpretation becomes a variant of the original work with the obligatory preservation of the figurative content of the composition. This group includes works that transform the original text – arrangements, and works on "themes": capriccios, divertissements, dances, variations, etc. The third group of derivative genres includes works in which the text of the original source is modified to the extent that it changes its meaning, melodic, harmonic, and compositional aspects of the composition. This group includes fantasies and paraphrases.

The classification of transcriptions by M. Yu. Borysenko<sup>12</sup> is based on the timbre component, on the so-called "two-author transcription". Accordingly, the author divides transcriptions into transcriptions- and transcriptions of processing. The heterogeneity of the genre of transcriptions is revealed in the heterogeneity of stylistic synthesis, the interaction of the "original system" and the "version system". "... in "strict" transcriptions, textural and intonation changes do not violate the initial thematic structure, compositional and dramaturgical logic and form. In contrast to them, in "free transcriptions" a significant modification of the textural-intonation side of the work leads to changes in thematic structures, up to the appearance of new ones, which leads to significant changes at the compositional and dramaturgical level"<sup>13</sup>.

---

<sup>11</sup> Ryzhkova, Natalia. Transcription: theoretical aspects of the genre. Petrov O. (ed.) *In memory of M. Etinger*. Astrakhan: Institute of Advanced Training for Teachers, vol. 1. 2006, p. 70.

<sup>12</sup> Borysenko, Maria. *Genre of transcription in the system of individual compositional style* (Thesis PhD). Kharkiv, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Cited by Ryzhkova, op.cit., p. 73.

B. Borodin considers transcriptions as a method of transforming the works of previous eras into the musical space of today<sup>14</sup>. The researcher singles out two methods of transformation of the musical text, namely the technical one - the exact reproduction of the text in "another system", and the interpretive one, which is "not only a phenomenon of performing art or a composer's form of work with the original text, but also as a "fixation of artistic values"<sup>15</sup>.

The transcription of a musical work can be considered in a broader way because it is connected not only with a change in the tonal component of the work, but also with the appearance of new interpretations of the composer's work in the work of instrumentalists. Therefore, transcriptions as a special genre of musical art can be considered from the point of view of performing interpretation and considered as one of the varieties of interpretation of the work. Considering the differences that exist when considering the parameters of interpretive versions, in our opinion, the classification offered by the Ukrainian researcher of new methods of understanding the artistic meaning of a musical work, Viktor Moskalenko, seems logical: "... let's distinguish the following types of interpretation: listening, editorial, performing, composer directorial, technological and musicological"<sup>16</sup>.

Undoubtedly, the circle of musical interpreters includes musicians-performers. The result of the sound of the musical text depends entirely on the performer-interpreter, who acts as an intermediary between the creator of the music and the listener. But, as noted by V. Moskalenko, expanding this concept, in addition to performing musicians, musicologists, music directors, music teachers, this circle can also include "those composers who in their music turn to the transformation of artistic material from the works of other authors or from their own works"<sup>17</sup>. That is, authors of translations, transcriptions, arrangements, etc. can be considered musical interpreters. "Varieties of musical interpretation also include performing translation."<sup>18</sup>

As you know, the realization of a musical work as an original example of musical art takes the following path: composer-interpreter-listener. So, the composer and the performer are the main ones in this triad. The activity of a composer-interpreter, i.e., the process of interpreting the original source combines several factors: highly artistic musical material, that is, the properties of the material, the goals, and tasks of the artist, as well as the talent, artistic taste, professionalism, and personal characteristics of the interpreter. In this

---

<sup>14</sup> Borodin, Boris. *The phenomenon of piano transcription: the experience of complex research* (Thesis of Doctor of Arts). Moscow, 2006, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Cited by Ryzhkova, op.cit., p. 71.

<sup>16</sup> Moskalenko, op.cit., p.8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

context, the term “musical interpreters” is often used - people engaged in interpreting activities<sup>19</sup>. Since the circle of musical interpreters includes not only performing musicians, but also musicologists - theorists, historians and critics, a comprehensive analysis of musical expressive means complements the component of “musical interpretation”.

### **Specifics of Transcribing Bach’s Polyphonic Works for Button Accordion**

Translations and transcriptions, as one of the phenomena of musical interpretation, acquired the meaning of an independent genre even in the time of J. S. Bach. The composer created about five hundred new versions of his own and other people’s works. His pen includes translations of concerts by A. Vivaldi, G. Ph. Telemann, B. Marcello, J. A. Reinken. Turning to the genre of translations, J.S. Bach “boldly introduces elements of organ, vocal, and orchestral writing into piano music. Unconcerned about the limited possibilities of the harpsichord, J.S. Bach considers it either as a singing instrument, or as a whole orchestra in miniature, which includes both soloists and orchestral accompaniment.”<sup>20</sup>

F. Busoni, researching the genre of transcriptions, in the work of J.S. Bach, notes the specifics and features of the sound of a musical piece when it is transferred from one instrument to another: “In order to bring the essence of “processing” into the role of an artistic phenomenon in the reader’s assessment with one decisive blow, it is enough to name J.S. Bach. He was one of the most prolific transcribers of his own and others’ pieces, especially as an organist. From him, I learned to recognize the truth that good, great, “universal music” remains the same, no matter what instrument it sounds on. However, I also learned another truth - that different instruments have different (their own) language, in which they convey this music always in a slightly different way”<sup>21</sup>.

A. Schweitzer wrote in his monograph about the great composer: “Bach, having a certain passion for translations, would have approved of pianists who promote his organ work”<sup>22</sup>. One of the famous accordionists, F. Lips, expressed an interesting opinion on this matter “... Bach would not be against the fact that his music was promoted by accordionists as well. If the accordion

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Alekseev, Aleksandr. *History of piano art. Part 1, 2*. Moscow: Music, 1988, p. 63.

<sup>21</sup> Busoni, Ferruccio. *The first appendix to the first volume of J.S. Bach's "Piano of Good Tune"*. Leningrad. Moscow: Music, 1941, p. 141.

<sup>22</sup> Schweitzer, op.cit., p. 233.



had existed in the time of French harpsichordists, who knows, maybe many works in the original would not have been written for the organ, violin or harpsichord, but for the accordion"<sup>23</sup>.

A few specific and original aspects can be found in the translations for button accordion of organ works. The use of a button accordion with free-bass system opened the opportunity for accordionists to perform polyphonic compositions. Among them are the works of ancient masters, modern foreign and Ukrainian composers, which previously could not be performed on the button accordion with ready-made chords. The peculiarity of the sound of polyphony on the chosen button accordion is determined by its characteristic features: natural singing, the possibility of polyphonic sound, the ability to sustain long sounds with a wide range of dynamic shades. All this allows you to preserve the "fluidity" inherent in polyphonic music in the movement of voices, the relief of their sound. This is facilitated by the small scale of the right and left keyboards, which allows you to cover a wide range of voices in simultaneous sounding. Preservation of the semantic load of horizontal lines is facilitated by the possibility of their full execution on one of the keyboards. The full-fledged sounding of organ works on the button accordion is also explained by the fact that the organ and accordion share the same principles of sound creation.

### **Performance Analysis of J.S. Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in C Minor* in Transcription for Button Accordion**

The cycle *Organ prelude and fugue in C minor* belongs to the early samples of the composer's organ works. It is known to have been written before 1723 and exists in two editions, BWV 549 (in the key in *C minor*) and BWV 549a (in the key of D minor) and was notated in the soprano key. "The ambiguous title "Pr Praeludium o Fantasia Pedaliter ex Db" that appears in Moller Handschrift copy of Prelude & Fugue in d, BWV 549a..."<sup>24</sup>. The composer himself changed the tonality of the work with a certain goal - avoiding D4 in the pedal part. In the process of improving contrapuntal writing, J.S. Bach often made changes to his own works. Among them, the change of the melodic lines of the middle voices, their ratio in the bass. Preludes contain the most corrections, because the nature of their thematic material and a "freer" construction made it possible to make corrections.

---

<sup>23</sup> Lips, Fridrih. "About transpositions and transcriptions". In *Bayan and accordionists*, vol. 3, 1977, p. 87.

<sup>24</sup> Stauffer, George. *The organ preludes of Johann Sebastian Bach*. Umi Research press, 1980, p. 19.

The whole cycle has a rather modest scale - only 88 bars (*Prelude* - 29 bars, *Fugue* - 59 bars). The commonality of figurative and thematic content, which unites the prelude and the fugue, can be traced in intonation connections, which is rarely found in Bach cycles. It is not difficult to detect the proximity of intonation turns, their similarity in character and types of melodic movement. This is a different expression of one leading dominant thought, which in the prelude is reflected detachedly and contemplatively, and in the fugue - more emotionally and dramatically. Thus, the thematic material exposed in the prelude is more deeply and concentratedly reproduced in the fugue. In this sense, the prelude fulfills its role — it introduces the main moods and thoughts of the entire cycle.

The prelude is written in The Thought-Composed, Sectional Form. It begins with a strict exposition of the thematic material (passagework) in the low register of the pedal part. The opening material contains the thematic grain of the prelude, a short four-note motif with a characteristic ascending fourth (V-I-VII#-I) and a mordent on the last note. The rhythmic organization of the motif is preserved in each subsequent performance. The thematic material of the prelude is an instrumental type of melodic line, which is built on the repetition of the motif at a different pitch with slight intonation changes. In bars 1-2, the melodic line rises sharply from C3 to C4, maintaining a characteristic rhythmic organization (three sixteenths and a quarter) and a mordent. Each stop is highlighted with a mordent on I-III-V-I degrees of tonality. In this way, the tonality of the work is confirmed and fixed. In bars 3-8 there is a downward movement of the melodic line with broken chordal passages of sixteenth durations, with a short-term modulation in E-flat major (in bars 5, 6 and the first part of bar 7), which is carried out as a continuation of the previous movement, a descending diatonic sequence with broken adjacent degree consonances : D-S-III-II-T with a conclusion in SII<sub>4/3</sub>, which moves to D<sub>4/3</sub> in C minor with a return to the low register and an emphatic cadential ending.

It should be noted that the organ pedal sounds quite loud and massive in the low register, so in the translation for the button accordion, octave duplication of two hands is used to reproduce the appropriate timbre of the sound. Thus, the sound of the low register of the left keyboard is combined with the sound of the “bassoon + clarinet” registers an octave higher in the right keyboard, which is accordingly reflected in the notation of the piece (bars 1-8) for the accordion (Example 1).

**J. S. Bach. *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor, Prelude* (bars 1-4)**

When processing the musical text of the initial construction and when adapting it for performance on the button accordion, special attention should be paid to the execution of cross-out mordents, which are performed due to the duration of the main note with a mandatory attack on the first sound. If this rule is ignored, the semantic accent will mechanically shift to the last note of the mordent. As a recommendation, it is possible to consider performing mordents using the *leggiero* technique, which involves playing with finger strokes with arbitrary movements from the brush. M. Davydov recommends practicing this technique as follows: "To master the *leggiero* technique, you should practice the strokes of each finger from the swing for a long time. It is necessary to avoid straining or shaking the hand. Overcoming the resistance of the keyboard here is achieved by the weight of the fingers through a blow from above."<sup>25</sup>

After a detailed introduction, the first section of the *Prelude* begins (bars 9-18), which is characterized by a developmental type of exposition. Against the background of sustained bass, in a polyphonic and imitative texture, the main motif is performed, which alternately sounds in each voice. Each repetition of the motif undergoes variant-melodic changes; however, its rhythmic organization is preserved. The texture of the prelude resembles a

<sup>25</sup> Davydov, Mykola. *Fundamentals of formation of performance skills of a button accordionist*. Kyiv: Music Ukraine, 1983, p. 10.

fugato, with an imitative introduction of the voices and a gradual thickening of the sound. Therefore, when performing the theme of the prelude on the button accordion, it is appropriate to change the register to “organ” — “bassoon + piccolo” (Example 2).

E. g. 2



**J. S. Bach. *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor, Prelude* (bars 9-10)**

The specificity of the texture of the prelude can cause certain performance difficulties for the accordionist when simultaneously playing a sustained bass on a ready-made keyboard and undertones on an optional keyboard in the left-hand part. In part, performers solve this problem with the help of the “sticky bass” function, which is equipped with modern instruments of the brands “PIGINI” (models: Super Bayan Sirius, Sirius Kuma, Nova) and “BUGARI” (model series “Conservatory”). This function helps to solve the problem of many physiological difficulties when performing on the button accordion wide textured layers of organ work, especially with polyphony in the left-hand part. This technical and constructive improvement of the instrument involves the fixation of a certain button in the bass keyboard (withstand the required duration of the sound), which allows you to simultaneously perform the organ section and the parallel textural exposition of the material, regardless of the range.

The first section of the form is modulating and ends in G minor (the key of the natural dominant). The general imitative movement of the voices continues; however, characteristic cadence features appear in the bass voice—sustained sounds D3-D2- F#2-G2. The extended cadence is harmonized by the side dominant consonances of the introductory seventh degree and the diatonic sequence that sounds on the sustained tonic organ point – G major (bars 14-18.):

$$VII_{6/5} \rightarrow D (D) \mid VII_7 -- \mid \rightarrow t - s_{6/4} (g) \mid t - D_{4/3} - t \mid t - II_{6/4} - t_{6/4} - VII_{6/4} - t \parallel$$

A characteristic feature of this construction is tonal and tonal variability: F minor – C minor – F minor – C minor – F minor – C major. In bars 20 and 24, the fluid nature of the prelude is interrupted by decisive chords in the homophonic harmonic exposition in tonality C minor:  $D_2 - t_6$  (bar 20) and  $D - D_{6/5} \rightarrow s$  (F minor, bar 24). On the button accordion, these chords should be performed with *marcato* stroke in combination with smooth blowing of the bellows, emphasized by a firm attack and dynamics *forte*. The *Prelude* ends with a light Picardy Third – cadence in C major, which suggests the lofty and heroic mood of the fugue.

The performance of organ works on the button accordion, and particularly the Bach's cycles proposed for consideration in this work, requires the performer to possess melodic technique, which involves the performance of the musical canvas with *legato* and *legatissimo* strokes. The use of these articulations enhances sound quality and contributes to the integrity of the melodic structures. M. Davydov's recommendations are important in the work on improving the melodic technique: "In the melodic technique, it is especially important to subtly feel the tips of the fingers. *Legatissimo* is literally "sculpted" with light, flexible and, if necessary, powerful movements. It is necessary to avoid excessive pressure on the keyboard, striving for the freedom of the wrist joint in combination with expediently active work of the fingers..."<sup>26</sup>.

When performing the *Prelude*, it is necessary to focus attention on a clear change of the bellows, which would correspond to the end or beginning of musical phrases. The difficulty of changing the bellows in the *Prelude* is caused by the texture of the presentation, in which short melodic sequential constructions sound on the organ section. The additional load in the process of conducting the bellows corresponds to the dynamic plan of the *Prelude*, which involves a gradual increase in volume from *mf* in the 9th bar to *f* in the second half of the 20th bar, with the subsequent preservation of the dynamics until the last bar. Considering the above, changes of the bellows should be made in accordance with the bass line of the organ section, guided by the individual physiological capabilities of the performer and the individual technical and structural capabilities of the instrument.

The three-voice fugue is based on a uniform subject, in which we find three phases. According to structural features, the topic belongs to the "i-m-t" formula: initium-movere-terminus (beginning-development-completion). So, the initial phase (bars 1-2) is built from two phrases in a variant arrangement; the development phase consists of a developed two-beat phrase based on the initial motive; the conclusion (terminus) modulates to the key of the minor dominant – G minor. The ending of the theme (G2) coincides with the beginning

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

of the response (G3, at the beginning of the 5th bar). The subject of the fugue sounds eager and energetic, it is presented in sixteenth durations in combination with fourth and eighth durations (Example 3).

## E. g. 3

Moderato

**J. S. Bach. *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor*,  
subject of the *Fugue* (bars 1-4)**

The tonal answer (*risposta*) to the modulating subject (bars 5-8) undergoes changes only in the terminus phase, it is transposed in such a way as to return to the main tonality – C minor. The answers enter one by one, conquering the register space. The order of entry of voices: bass – alto – soprano. The second answer sounds in the version given in the subject, but a perfect octave higher.

In general, the fugue is arranged in a three-part form with expositional, middle, and final parts. The exposition of the fugue, which consists of three main movements of subject (C minor – G minor – C minor, bars 1-12), is performed with a gradual increase in dynamics from *mf* to *f*. Such a dynamic solution stems from the sublime-heroic nature of the thematic material and is achieved by the gradual expansion of the texture by including new voices.

With each subsequent conduction of subject, it rises in intervals of pure fifths — from the first conduction in the small octave to the third - in the three-lined octave. It should also be noted that the first three performances of the subject are quite bright because the remaining voices of the fugue do not create “opposition” to them. A partially restrained counter subject is added to the uniform and motor subject, laid out in sixteenth notes, which is built on

contrasting material to the subject, mainly in eighth and quarter notes. The second counter subject is freely composed. This free counterpoint built on a material like the first counter subject and sounds more like a harmonic addition to it, often duplicating individual motifs in parallel thirds and sixths.

The development section does not contain contrasts, but it sounds a bit detached. The tonic-dominant tonal plan is preserved — the subject follows five times in the keys G minor – C minor - C minor - G minor -C minor, each performance of which is separated by episodes (interludes). The subject and its motifs are performed simultaneously in different voices and are often duplicated by parallel sixths and tenths.

The basis of the construction of the middle section is not the tonal principle of development, but the variant-developmental one. Episodes (interludes) are based on the first two phases of the subject. The motive of the melodic cadence is cut off, and in its place a further variant development is given, mainly with the help of sequential movement.

The development section is separated from the following by a cadence laid out by rhythmically increased durations: quarter notes in II-V-I-I degrees (39 bar), preceded by a series of deviations through lateral dominants to the keys of C minor, G minor, E-flat major and a descending diatonic sequence with parallel triads in 1<sup>st</sup> inversion:

*VI<sub>6</sub> - V<sub>6</sub> - IV<sub>6</sub> - III<sub>6</sub> - II<sub>6</sub> - I<sub>6</sub> in C minor (bars 37-38)*

In the final section, the subject is not presented in the original presentation. Its motif appears once at the beginning of the section in an intermedial unfinished version in the lower voice with homophonic accompaniment in the upper voices and establishes the main tonality. The sound of the active and moving subject is “accompanied” by the measured movement of the voices, which forms a harmonic progression with clearly defined functional relationships:

*t | sII<sub>7</sub> - D<sub>7</sub> - t - D<sub>43</sub> | t<sub>6</sub> - D<sub>65</sub> - t - D<sub>65</sub> - t - s | D<sub>7</sub> etc. (bars 40-43)*

The fugue ends, traditional for baroque works, with a stop on a tonic with a Picardy third. Against its background, a virtuoso fantasy-recitative additional plagal cadence of T-s-T, which is built up by wave-like movements of the thirty-second. The last sustained tonic chord (with duplications) leaves a sense of the solemnity of the sound from the rather stormy variant development of the fugue.

When performing a fugue on the button accordion, you should pay attention to the clarity of the performance of each theme introduction and its execution. This especially applies to moments when the theme sounds in the left-hand part. Due to the structural features of the instrument, namely the

absence of timbre registers (this applies to older models of ready-to-choose accordions, in particular the “Ukraine” model), the sound of the musical material in the left-hand part may be somewhat dull and indistinct. The main strokes for the performance of this fugue are *legato*, *non-legato* and *marcato*, which are combined with active and maximally even blowing of the bellows.

The *legato* stroke implies a clean relationship of adjacent sounds, which is achieved by hitting, pushing or pressing a key as quickly as possible and simultaneously removing the finger from the previous one. At the same time, there should not be any caesuras and gaps in the sound. Insufficient auditory-motor control on the part of the performer in working on this stroke often leads to the influx and merging of neighboring sounds. M. Davydov describes the basic conditions for correct *legato* performance as follows: “Independence of fingers and their timely readiness to press the key, coordination with a free but ready-to-act brush of the hand; muscle rest between strokes; the constant pursuit of ever greater speed, economy of swing, and power of the fingers; continuous activation of auditory attention aimed at optimal accuracy...”<sup>27</sup>. The main part of the musical material of the fugue, which includes the sixteenth-note motifs of the theme, the development section and the final section with a virtuosic additional cadence, is performed with a *legato* touch.

The *non-legato* stroke is close to the *legato* stroke, but it differs from the previous one by the presence of a caesura before the appearance of each subsequent sound. The duration of notes and caesuras can be different depending on the artistic intentions of the performer. This stroke is used in works of an energetic and assertive nature, it is well suited to the execution of the motifs of the theme, which are presented in octave and quarter durations, and is also the main stroke of the countersubject or free counterpoint in the exposition and development (mid-entry) sections of the fugue.

The *marcato* stroke involves an emphatic, firm attack using directed some energy combined with smooth movement of the bellows. It should be used when playing the chords in the final section that accompany the theme. The use of a *marcato* touch in the final section gives the sound a courageous and active character. For an emphasized performance of three chords:  $t_6 - II_6 - D_7$  with duplications (45 bars) in the intermediate unfinished version of the theme, you can use one of the types of playing with a *marcato* stroke – *portamento-marcato*. The essence of performing with this method consists in actively pushing the bellows and maintaining the dynamic tension of each sound, interval or chord at the level of the initial attack with the maximum endurance of their durations.

---

<sup>27</sup> Davydov, *op.cit.*, p. 38.



The performance of the fugue theme is also complicated by the presence of two trills (Example 3) at the end, which require separate processing by the performer. The trill is an element of skill, and its speed and evenness of performance are determined by the orderliness of movements, constant and continuous contact of the fingers with the surface of the keyboard. When mastering the trill game, it is necessary to ensure that the hand is as close as possible to the keyboard, and the speed of finger movements does not clamp the executive apparatus. To improve the performance of the trill, which in this case consists of six notes, you can resort to playing with odd rhythmic groups, that is, dividing it into two triplets. Such practice of the trill with the addition of another accent and displacement of the rhythmic support will be useful for increasing the accuracy of the strike of each finger, reactivity and rhythmicity of movements.

The timbre-dynamic plan of the fugue is not too diverse. The dynamic gradations in the exposition and development sections are between *mf* and *f*, only in the final section the dynamization occurs on a wider scale and passes through the *f*, *sp*, *f*, *pp* and *ff* levels. Considering such a dynamic plan and the small size of the fugue (59 bars), the main timbre register for its performance is "bassoon + piccolo", which has a very similar sound to the organ. In the context of the interpretation of this work, this register is well combined with the sound of the left keyboard of the accordion. The change of timbre register can be used only to perform the cadence of the fugue. To do this, you need to turn on the "tutti", which will give the cadence more brightness and sound power on *ff*.

When choosing the tempo of the fugue, the editor's recommendations should be considered, since tempo instructions are extremely rare in Bach's works. Moderato tempo is indicated in the *Fugue* c-moll. But, as a rule, slower tempos are preferred. "Performing Bach's organ works for a long time; you begin to prefer slower and slower tempos. ... The outline of the piece should appear before the listener in a calm plasticity. He must also have time to imagine the internal connection and proportion of the parts. If the impression of vagueness and vagueness remains, the work cannot affect the listener"<sup>28</sup>.

The slow temp of performance gives the performer the opportunity to understand the logic of the construction of parts and their comparison, the peculiarities of the expressive means of each of them. The prelude has an improvisational-fantasy character; therefore, it is performed freely, without haste measured and moving with an emphasis on the recitative-dramatic content; the fugue is more organized, it preserves uniform movement and complementarity of rhythm, which results from its constructively clear and strict structural structure.

---

<sup>28</sup> Schweitzer, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

The performance of polyphonic compositions on the accordion involves the process of setting up a convenient and logical fingering. The main burden falls on the right hand, which is tasked with performing two, and sometimes three, horizontal melodic lines. For each line to be drawn in relief, it is clearly necessary to expose the correct fingering. The expediency of fingering is evaluated from the point of view of ensuring the smoothness and naturalness of the unfolding of the music. It is necessary to analyze the melodic lines, strokes in all voices, and, accordingly, set the fingering. It should be noted that the fingering is not permanent for all performers, as it depends on many components: the individual performer's apparatus, the system and design of the instrument (including additional rows of the keyboard); the strokes of each and all voices of a polyphonic composition are of great importance.

In the considered polyphonic cycle, the section (18-21 bars) from the development section of the *Fugue* (Example 4) is the most complex from the point of view of fingering.

E. g. 4

**J. S. Bach. *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor*,  
subject of the *Fugue* (bars 18-21)**

In this fragment, the main difficulty is the combination of *legato* and *non-legato* strokes in the right-hand part. The solution to this problem is provided by the fingering strategy, which involves using fingers (5th, 1st) on the buttons located next to each other, as well as changing fingers when

moving from one row to another. In this way, the resources of the executive apparatus are saved for the clear presentation of the subject and the preservation of the coherence of the *legato* performance.

A clear plan for changing the bellows should also be added to the fingering strategy, without which all previous recommendations may lose their proper meaning. Since all instruments differ in their design, as well as the hermetic qualities and structure of the bellows chamber, accordingly, the map of changes in bellows (stretching and compression) for performers will be different. It also depends on the register, dynamics, strokes. Therefore, each performer independently sets places for changing the direction of the bellows movement. At the same time, it is necessary to consider generally accepted rules. The appearance of each new voice should be emphasized by changing the bellows (*Fugue* bars 5, 9, 13, 17, etc.); and a change of harmony (*Prelude* – bars 12, 14, 16). It is important to consider the strength and activity of the bellows. Even with the sound of the dynamic *p*, the bellows should be tight and assertive.

## Conclusions

The *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor BWV 549* J. S. Bach belongs to the bright examples of polyphonic music of the Baroque era. This piece entered the repertoire of accordionists in the form of a transcription.

A detailed examination and comprehensive analysis of the work demonstrate that a key aspect of transcribing an organ piece for the multi-timbral button accordion is the transformation of its timbre to suit the specific sound characteristics of the instrument. The interpretative reproduction of the figurative and ideological content of the work is achieved through various accordion techniques, aimed at closely approximating the sound of the original organ compositions.

Given the textural features of polyphonic works, their transcriptions for accordion should be viewed as interpretive “versions.” Performance interpretation in such works goes beyond merely reproducing the musical text; it also involves the application of a wide range of technical performance techniques specific to the button accordion. Mastering these techniques relies on understanding several musical and expressive tools, the nuances of the musical language, and the structural elements that are essential for a professional transcription of an organ work to the button accordion.

Methodical recommendations for the performance of polyphonic works on the multi-timbral button accordion are based on the specifics of the performance techniques revealed in the analyzed work:

1. The specifics of the performance of the theme in polyphonic work. To preserve the semantic and tonal unity of the thematic material, it is necessary to adhere to the principle of its complete presentation in one keyboard. In some cases, when transferring a theme from one part to another, you should use the tool “combination” of unison sounds on different buttons.

2. Distribution of voices of the polyphonic texture according to the performing techniques of playing the button accordion. The main load during the distribution of voices in polyphony should fall on the performer’s right hand (tremble button), which can cover a larger number of voices. Conducting thematic material on the bass button should not contain many voices, and if possible, the topic should be presented unanimously, which gives greater freedom and dynamic “flexibility” of performance.

3. Strokes. Transcribing a musical work for the button accordion requires consideration of the instrument’s technical and structural features. This includes how strokes are applied, how they are notated in the musical text, and how these factors influence the overall sound character of the performance.

Therefore, the fullest and most vivid rendition of Baroque organ works can only be achieved when performed on multi-timbre button accordions. Both the organ and the accordion share common principles of sound production—they belong to the keyboard-wind family of instruments, feature tempered tuning, produce sustained tones, and offer registers that allow for changes in timbre and dynamic of sounding. These capabilities enable the button accordion to significantly expand its range, thereby enhancing the artistic potential for the performance.

## REFERENCES

- Alekseev, Aleksandr. *History of piano art. Part 1, 2*. Moscow: Music, 1988.
- Arrangement and transcription. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/art/instrumentation-music/Arrangement-and-transcription#ref530216>
- Arrangement. URL: <https://www.classiccat.net/dictionary/arrangement.php>
- Borodin, Boris. *The phenomenon of piano transcription: the experience of complex research* (Thesis of Doctor of Arts). Moscow, 2006.
- Borysenko, Maria. *Genre of transcription in the system of individual compositional style* (Thesis PhD). Kharkiv, 2005.
- Busoni, Ferruccio. *The first appendix to the first volume of J.S. Bach’s “Piano of Good Tune”*. Leningrad. Moscow: Music, 1941.
- Davydov, Mykola. *Fundamentals of formation of performance skills of a button accordionist*. Kyiv: Music Ukraine, 1983.

- Davydov, Mykola. *Mastery of the button accordionist: (Theory and practice)*. Kyiv: KGK named after P. I. Tchaikovsky, 1992.
- Godowski, Leopold. "About transcriptions, arrangements, and paraphrases". *School of piano transcription*. Moscow, 1961. pp. 6–7.
- Knyazev, Vladyslaw. "Improvement of the expressive capabilities of the accordion as a stimulus to the development of performance technique". In *Scientific Bulletin of P. I. Tchaikovsky National Musical Academy: Musical performance*, issue 40, vol.10, 2004, p. 17–27.
- Lips, Fridrih. "About transpositions and transcriptions". In *Bayan and accordionists*, vol. 3, 1977, pp. 86–108.
- Moskalenko, Victor. *Lectures on musical interpretation: Teaching manual*, Kyiv, 2013. URL: <https://knmau.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/V.-Moskalenko-Lektsiyi-z-muzichnoyi-interpretatsiyi-Navchalnij-posibnik.pdf>
- Oberyukhtin, Mykhailo. *Performance of J.S. Bach's organ pieces on the button accordion*. Kyiv: Musical Ukraine, 1973.
- Rudenko, Volodymyr. "Concert violin transcription of the 20th century and problems of interpretation". In *Musical performance*, Issue 10, 1979, pp. 22–56.
- Ryzhkova, Natalia. "Transcription: theoretical aspects of the genre". Petrov O. (ed.) *In memory of M. Etinger*. Astrakhan': Institute of Advanced Training for Teachers, vol. 1. 2006, pp. 70–77.
- Schweitzer, Albert. *J. S. Bach*. Warszawa, 2009.
- Semeshko, Anatoliy. *Performance skills of the accordionist. Methodological foundations. Study guide*. Ternopil, 2009.
- Stauffer, George. *The organ preludes of Johann Sebastian Bach*. Umi Research Press, 1980.
- Yergiev, Ivan. European and domestic stylistic factors of accordion creativity. *East - West: Culture and civilization: materials of the international. musicological seminar and scientific-practical of the 2003 conference*, Odessa: Astroprint, 2004, pp. 126–127.

