

# **THE TIME-BINDING THREAD...**

## **ABOUT THE ROLE OF ARTS IN THE DIALOGUE OF CULTURES**

The real history of our civilization is, first of all, the history of arts. Scientific discoveries, even the greatest of them, are sometimes overshadowed and even cancelled by the following discoveries and inventions. Periods, social, political and economic systems of the societies and states change, wars and destructions are replaced by peace and construction, countries and people are getting either rich or poor. Only arts in their variety and richness perform as the carrier of human memory and are not subjected to inflation and oblivion.

The great and common manifestations of artistic creativity from cave drawings to today's graffiti, from Ancient Greek, Ancient Roman and Judean music, the evidences of which have been miraculously preserved, from the Znamenny (plain) chant to electronic experiments by Karlheinz Stockhausen, uncountable paintings, poems, musical opuses make the priceless treasury of our civilization.

The Arts have been the invariable thread connecting times and generations through wars and revolutions, changes of periods and beliefs. Neither production relations, nor economy, nor politics but exactly the arts and culture provide sustainable evolutionary existence of the humankind. The classical thesis about "the basis and the superstructure" interprets the so-called superstructure too vulgarly, referring such important aspects of the society as the systems of law, the forms of state systems, religion and, most important, arts and literature to it as "secondary".

Everything is transient in our world: kingdoms and realms, empires and republics... Common people, great rulers, whole nations come to this world and leave for the eternity, one generation is replaced by another. But, creations of artists (often unknown) that lived and worked near them, stay as evidences of their being on the Earth. Isn't this richness the real basis of the society in all times and eras?

The nature of unbending creative spirit of great masters is incognizable and unexplainable as well as long-suffering and perseverance of common servants of the Muses. Neither poverty, nor humiliations by the powerful could make them leave the

chosen way of creativity. Surely, there were examples in history and not once, when influential rulers and patrons created working conditions for artists and musicians that lived at the same time with them. But, we remember even the majestic Medici family mostly because Michelangelo, Botticelli, Benvenuto Cellini, Rafael, Tiziano Vecellio created “for them”... And who remembers the name of the Kurfürst, to whom the great Bach, caring for his choristers, humbly presented his genius work – the Mass in B minor – accompanied by the letter with the following text: “Your Highness the Kurfürst, the most gracious master! I present your Royal Highness this humble work in my deep respect to you, it was created with my skills attained by me in music. I ask you as your loyal subject to look at it with your benevolent eyes not because of the poor composition but because of your world-known mercy and take me under your Highness’ protection...”? Joseph Haydn in his “Farewell” Symphony tried to bring about the patron Prince Esterházy’s compassion or at least pity to the musicians of his Chapel... The Count of Colloredo kicked Mozart downstairs only because he handed in his resignation wishing to leave the service that was a burden for him... Many artists lived and died in poverty, fully dependent on favour or disfavour of rulers – but their pictures in our times are sold at auctions for millions of dollars... The history of arts is rich in such examples.

But the most important thing is that the spiritual storehouse of the humankind is steadily filled in with new and new chef d’oeuvres. Notwithstanding the illusiveness of life prospects, artistic professions inevitably attract numerous detachments of amazing individuals, wishing to dedicate their lives to serving the creativity.

Arts do not know chronology. They are always contemporary if we perceive them today and now. One unimportant moment separates us in the history of the world from the finished *Madonna* by Raphael or *La Gioconda* by Leonardo, Symphony No. 40 by Mozart or *The Rite of Spring* by Stravinsky, *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare or *The Master and Margarita* by Bulgakov... The great creations of human genius are always actual and up-to-date.

Arts keep memories: memories of various periods, various nations, and various traditions. All of them appear in front of us clearly visible, in a live dialogue, in direct interconnection and never-fading relevance via great creations.

However, there are times when some or the other chef d'oeuvres are forgotten and not acknowledged as numerous achievements of ancient masters were not in demand in the diversified and outstanding culture of the Middle Ages, later their discovery brought about a humanistic outburst in the Renaissance. There are times when some or the other chef d'oeuvres are inaccessible because they are located far, it is difficult to lay the road to other lands, other nations. Thus, achievements of Eastern masters were for a long time unknown and alien to Western connoisseurs, and Western achievements were unknown and incomprehensible for Eastern people.

And only now, in today's globalized world, we finally and fully acquire the universal timeless community that arts keep in their real essence. Now, we are able to appreciate the arts' uniting, preserving potential, giving the humankind the actual cognition of the eternal value of its own achievements in the aggregate.

The today's pluralistic and dialogue-focused consciousness allows us to encompass all the variety of artistic traditions and achievements by our eyes. At the same time, modern achievements of science and technologies eliminate the problem of distance – both historical and spatial. Now, the story of young Bach, who travelled for hundreds of kilometers to listen to famous organist Dieterich Buxtehude, seems a curious incident: now one click of the computer mouse is enough to find yourself in a concert hall or an opera theatre, in any city of the world, to listen, watch and enjoy the arts of great actors. The information being of interest to us, the results of historical research, with numerous illustrations creating the feeling of real presence, are becoming accessible to us within several seconds.

But there are not only limitless fruitful opportunities and prospects opening for us now, when we entered the digital technologies era, but also numerous dangers and problems. These dangers affect the very development of arts, their actual movement especially strong. They present us rich materials from the past, but aren't they fraught

with negative impact on the arts' moving to the future? Shouldn't we pay special attention to these dangers in order to avoid suspension of the artistic process?

Score editors helped a lot in the work on musical scores, the work of sound engineers has been visualized (now, we do not just hear but also "see" sounds). When composers and arrangers got virtual tools, they acquired an opportunity to listen to the score in all its orchestral colours. Animated cartoon designers acquired an operating tool for creation of their moving pictures. A new profession of multimedia director appeared. It is impossible to list even one hundredth of all advantages provided to us by digital technologies ...

The backside of this inspiring picture is the danger of sliding down to dilettantism in the worst sense of the idea by representatives of a number of professions. The likeness of a musical or visual product made with the help of computer and a real work of art generates an illusion of skills and mastering the profession in case of its creator. People having no ideas about elementary music basics (to say nothing about numerous specific professional disciplines such as harmony, polyphony, musical form, science of instruments and instrumentation, history of music, etc.) are now "making" (a widespread expression!) music for movies and theatre and arrogantly calling themselves composers.

The development of technologies, making achievements of arts and culture of various nations and periods so easily accessible for the first time, and so strongly enriching and simplifying the creative process, unexpectedly turns into loss of interest to this easily accessible material, even negation of its value as if exactly the simplicity is the obstacle for high evaluation. Modern young people referring themselves to creative professions underrate achievements of the past and are fixed upon the future. However, fixing upon the future, not established in the past, they may deprive themselves of this future in essence. That is how another side of the fact that arts are "the time-binding thread" is revealed: the future is impossible without the past.

The reason of such ungrounded self-conceit of many young people in our country, pursuing an occupation in the field of arts, is troubled times in the 1990s, when this "time-binding thread" was actually torn for reasons independent of them. One of

the fundamental principles of the cultural society was lost – the principle of succession of generations. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when the new state system was looked for, the life experience of the older generation, accumulated in the course of decades of fruitful work, turned out to be not required. The younger generation mostly focused on Western cultural values (and often more likely “pseudo-values”) began negating everything that was “before them”.

But the idea of succession is inalienably connected with the idea of culture, and each new generation just has to learn the experience of the generations that are already gone and leaving in order to have prospects for further development and renewal basing on traditions.

I am looking into the future with optimism as I am sure that self-conceit related to development of technologies, simplicity of communications as well as gaps of the 1990s will be overcome sooner or later, “the time-binding thread” will be restored, creative people, really interested in their artistic development will preserve their high professionalism, and Arts and Culture will be rightfully the “basis” of our society.