

THE HISTORY OF ORIGIN, FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ZITHER AS A PROFESSIONAL INSTRUMENT

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Abstract. The article considers the history of the origin, formation and development of the zither as a professional musical instrument. The authors describe some analogues of zithers among other peoples of the world.

Keywords: zither, dulcimer, gusli, guzheng, history of development and formation, musical culture.

ИСТОРИЯ ВОЗНИКНОВЕНИЯ, СТАНОВЛЕНИЯ И РАЗВИТИЯ ЦИТРЫ КАК ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОГО ИНСТРУМЕНТА

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается история возникновения, становления и развития цитры как профессионального музыкального инструмента. Авторами описываются некоторые аналоги цитр у других народов мира.

Ключевые слова: цитра, цимбалы, гусли, гучжэн, история развития и становления, музыкальная культура.

The musical culture is a unique phenomenon in the treasury of universal cultural values. It stands out for its bright originality and uniqueness, expressed in national color. The musical culture is a kind of achromat, which is based on musical values – works of musical art, representing, on the one hand, the metaphysical essence of music, on the other, a variety of national musical instruments, and on the third, a way of aesthetically valuable human interaction with the world. It represents a concentration of national, historical and cultural experience and has one of the rich and long-term development histories. The originality of musical culture is also manifested in the availability and variety of musical instruments. Our article is devoted to the history of the development of the zither, its analogues among various nations.

It is believed that the history of the zither as a European musical instrument originates in Germany. Its ancestor was the “sheitholt”, which was a wooden instrument

with an elongated body and a neck with one string and two bourdon (free) strings. There were two options to playing: with a mediator or using sticks. Musical instruments of this type became popular and have survived to this day in both Europe and America. For example, the Norwegians have cetera, the Swedes have gummel, the Icelanders have fiddle, the Hungarians have cetera, the Americans have dulcimer and other varieties.

It should be noted that the word «zither» appeared in ancient times among different peoples of the world and was used in everyday life to refer to all stringed musical instruments. After several centuries, only those stringed instruments that were in a horizontal position when sounds were extracted from them began to be called zithers. An analysis of research devoted to the history of the formation and development of stringed instruments of various peoples of the world indicates that scientists classify most stringed instruments as zither-shaped. Among them are the gusli, kanun, dulcimer, kantele, koto and many others.

The researchers note that the heyday of the zither as a mass instrument occurred in the 2nd half of the 19th century. It becomes a concert musical instrument. Its design is changing. There are 4 strings on the neck, and more than 20 bass and accompanying strings on the body. The zither “is actively penetrating into the central countries of Europe - the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Switzerland and other neighboring countries, as well as into the USA, where a period of rapid and mass production of zithers and their modernization began, taking into account American rationalism. The so-called chord zither of the American system, neckless, appears. At the same time, to simplify both learning and the process of playing on it, special backing cards-cheat sheets were developed” [1].

During the same period, the zither rapidly spread in Russia. The zither usually had a flat, irregularly shaped body and 13 to 50 strings (larger than, for example, the Chinese Guzheng, usually 21 strings). However, the gusli can be considered the ancestor of the Russian zither. Thus, it is considered the oldest representative of the lyre-shaped gusli – the archaeological gusli “Slovisha”, which was created in the 11th century. They were hollowed out of spruce in the shape of a trough and had a playing hole, a soundboard and an “ear-shaped” tailpiece made of oak. They had 5 horsehair strings, which were secured with wooden pegs. There is an assumption that a gusli of this design could be played with a bow (pic.1) [1]. Over the centuries (until to the present day), the gusli, as a musical instrument, has evolved: from lyre-shaped gusli to ringing gusli.



Pic.1 – the archaeological gusli “Slovisha”

The Belarusian analogue of the zither is the dulcimer, the history of which dates back to ancient times. It is believed that this instrument has existed for three thousand years. However, it appeared in Belarus only 400-500 years ago and came from Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic thanks to the nomadic gypsies and Jews. Most often, dulcimer was played in Jewish orchestras that were typically “Balkan” in composition. And only at the beginning of the twentieth century, dulcimer began to be promoted as a Belarusian national musical instrument and gradually entered into the folk and professional musical environment. This musical instrument became especially popular thanks to I. Zhinovich, the founder of the national school of playing the dulcimer.



Pic.2 – modern Belarusian dulcimer

One of the types of Chinese zither there is guzheng as an ancient instrument of China with a total of 10 levels. During the Warring States period, it was prevalent in the Qin and has a history of over 2500 years. There is a saying that the Zheng was a type of weapon used during the Warring States period, which was used to swing vertically to fight against enemies. There is also other an ancient saying that goes, “Zheng horizontal is music, standing on the ground becomes a soldier”. Later, by adding strings to it, it was found to be pleasant and melodious when played, and thus developed into an instrument. As time passed, weapons became lighter and lighter, and Zheng, a large and weight weapon, was abandoned. So nowadays, people see zithers in the form of musical instruments, with beautiful shapes and decorations.

According to the traditional classification, which arose during the Zhou era in 1045-221. BC. like the “bayin” (八音, bain) system – “eight timbres”, the guzheng refers to silk instruments. In ancient times, it had a rectangular shape and 25 strings (later - only 13) and special saddles, with the help of which the tuning of the instrument was changed. The Chinese guzheng itself became popular back in the Chunqiu era. Then this instrument accompanied the dance. If we talk about modern guzheng, today it has a semicircular shape; the sound of this instrument is carried out using 21 metal strings.

The body is often decorated. Decorations include drawings, cutouts, glued pearls and precious stones. Musicians play the guzheng with a pick and fingers. Modern players

put 4 picks on the fingers of each hand. The right hand plays notes, the left hand adjusts the pitch. Modern playing techniques have been influenced by Western music. Modern musicians use the left hand to produce bass notes and harmony, expanding the standard range of sound.



Pic.3 – the modern guzheng

“There are two types of guzheng playing styles – Northern and Southern schools. They are divided into regional ones, such as Henan, Hakka, Shandong. Nowadays, performers often mix techniques from both schools, essentially creating new styles” [2]. Guzheng is increasingly used in other genres of music such as jazz and rock.

Thus, the zither became a professional instrument at the end of the 19th century – at the beginning of the 20th century. Many composers wrote both chamber and concert works for this musical instrument. Various schools of zither playing were created. By 1914, the zither was especially popular in Germany, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Russia. However, today the zither has lost its mass popularity in all European countries, Russia and America. However, analogues of musical instruments, which scientists classify as zither-shaped, continue to exist and are one of the cultural heritage of modern society.

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