

Selected Preludes for Piano by Vera Milanković in Music Choreographies

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Summary

This article deals with the music choreographies of the six piano preludes op. 27 by Vera Milanković number 23, 17, 24, 6, 8, and 10. Some information about the composer and sources of the composer's inspiration, primarily the feeling of a timbre that was important for the composer, are included in the article. Fox's theory of lightness and darkness is cited, as well as the ability of color hearing, important for both the composer and the music choreographer. In the central part of the article, the music choreographies of the six piano preludes were described – initial inspiration, color hearing, and musical elements that provoke the movement interpretation and props colors.

Keywords: Vera Milanković, preludes, music choreography, color hearing, timbre

Introduction

Vera Milanković is a multi-talented Serbian composer, pianist, pedagogue, producer, and organizer. She graduated from the Composition and Piano Department at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, where she obtained an MA in Composition and Music Education. MA in Composition she took from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. Her music, and especially piano preludes which contain elements of Serbian culture and folklore, become a great inspiration for my music choreographies. In this article, I will present the process of creating music choreographies for Vera Milanković's six piano preludes, which I presented at the 26th International Pedagogical Forum of Performing Arts in Belgrade in 2023.

While composing piano preludes, Vera Milanković had a special feeling of timbre, which she underlined with the harmonic structure. This type of color hearing – the ability to associate sounds with colors – was the starting point for my choreographies. Vera Milanković was also interested in Fox's article about the perception of lightness and darkness of pitches, chords, scales, harmony, but also timbre (Fox, 2018). Following the impression of perceiving the timbre of music and associating it with different colors, I took into account the issue of lighter/darker timbre of particular preludes. The impression of the color of a given prelude influenced the selection of movement ideas, the character of the movement, shapes in the space, and the choice of color of costumes and props.

Movement interpretation or music choreography is the kind of visualization of the music. The aim is to represent all elements of music through the body movements,

which move in the space creating various shapes. This kind of artistic work is specific to Eurhythmics – the method of music and movement education, which was created by Emil-Jaques-Dalcroze (1865–1950), Swiss pedagogue, conductor, composer, and improviser (Dalcroze, 1992; Brzozowska-Kucziweicz, 1991).

The essence of the music choreography is to show all shades of music in movement, which means:

- all elements of music, the way they are organized, and musical narrative influence the creation of a movement idea and its development during the process of creating music choreography;
- the character of music is reflected in movement ideas;
- the musical style is reflected in the style of movement;
- the formal structure is transferred in drawing in space;
- the emotional layer of music is shown in the movement expression of the performers.

Every aspect of music elements, three layers of music (acoustic, semantic and emotional) and formal structures of musical pieces are taken into account in the artistic work described in this article.

Visual Representations of Vera Milanković's Six Piano Preludes Op. 27

Piano Prelude No. 23 in B major

Tempo is moderately fast, meter double. The music form is AB with Coda. Type of interpretation (tranquillo), piano dynamic, ephemeral and fleeting character, and bright timbre require props – fans in music choreography. Each performer, dressed in black costumes (bodysuits and pants), holds blue, purple and pink fans. Body movements illustrated the transience and lightness of the music, and it was important to show the phrasing (photo 1).



Photo 1. Music choreography of the *Piano Prelude No. 23* by Vera Milanković.

Piano Prelude No. 17 in D major

Tempo is moderate, time signature 5/4. The form is A plus Coda. Aiming to present forte dynamic, restless character and dark timbre, the black material was used as a cover and as a moving shadow – when performer move the material in order to create the impression of unreality (photo 2).



Photo 2. Music choreography of the *Piano Prelude No. 17* by Vera Milanković

Piano Prelude No. 24 in B major

The tempo is calm and the time signature is changing from 2/4 to 6/8. The music form is ABA₁. To underline the mezzo-forte dynamic, unreal interpretation, and bright timbre, three performers were dressed in three colorful dresses (white, blue, and yellow) and moved all around the stage. The first performer, which presents the main voice part, moves around within the larger space, while two others, displaying the accompaniment parts, perform more static movement. Performers get together in the cadences (photo 3).



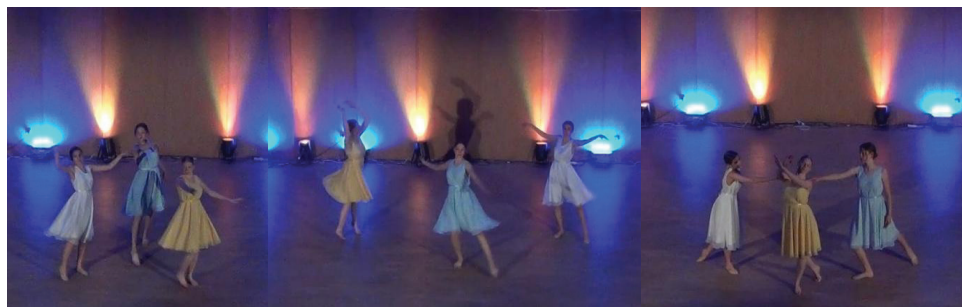


Photo 3. Music choreography of the *Piano Prelude No. 24* by Vera Milanković.

Piano Prelude No. 6 in A-flat major

Tempo is moderately fast, meter double. The music form is $AA_1BA_2B_1$ and Code (as A_3). To visually represent *secchio* (dry) type of interpretation, *mezzo-forte* dynamic, polyrhythmic, animated and motoric character, and bright timbre, I used props – the ribbons. Four performers wear yellow dresses and hold ribbons in four different colors: blue, green, purple, and light pink. Moving ribbons trace various lines and shapes in space and create an expressive performance (photo 4).



Photo 4. Music choreography of the *Piano Prelude No. 6* by Vera Milanković.

Piano Prelude No. 8 in E-flat major

Tempo is fast, meter double. The music form is AA₁ with Coda. Lieto (dear) type of interpretation, restless but cheerful character, both bright and dark timbre, provoked me to use white costumes and four pieces of a blue material. This very light material able performers to make fast movements, which represented fast music patterns and strong accents. The use of various lights caused a subtle change in the material's color, which gives the effect of shimmering light (photo 5).



Photo 5. Music choreography of the *Piano Prelude No. 8* by Vera Milanković.

Piano Prelude No. 10 in B-flat major

The tempo is slow, meter is double. Music form is AA₁AA₁A₂ whit Coda. One performer and fans as props are used to demonstrate misurato (measured) type of interpretation, piano dynamic, one melodic theme underlined with different harmonies, delicate and nostalgic character, and bright timbre. The performer wears a brown costume and holds fans in colors from white to dark brown. Gentle movements of the fans and their non-uniform colors achieved the effect of changing shapes and color transitions (photo 6).



Photo 6. Music choreography of the *Piano Prelude No. 10* by Vera Milanković.

Conclusion

Vera Milanković's six *Piano Preludes op. 27* inspired me to create their visual representations through choreographies, body movements, and props usage. While making visual representations I start with the music character, music structure, type of interpretation, and timbre. These elements inspire me to choose props and colors of costumes, and they, consequently, create the choreography. The timbre especially influenced the choice of movement: light timbre provokes body opening, while dark timbre inspires closed body posture.

When listening to Vera Milanković's piano preludes, their timbre impressions may be different for everyone, but the impression of light and dark colors is rather consistent. It is interesting that all the performers, and participants in the above-mentioned choreographies, had the same impressions regarding colors. The differences are related only to the color shades.

References

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МУЗИЧКЕ КОРЕОГРАФИЈЕ ОДАБРАНИХ КЛАВИРСКИХ ПРЕЛИДА ВЕРЕ МИЛАНКОВИЋ

Рад се бави музичким кореографијама шест клавирских прелида оп. 27 Вере Миланковић – 23, 17, 24, 6, 8 и 10. Приложене су кратке информације о композиторки, те описан извор њене инспирације, пре свега осећај за тембр или боју тона/звука. Наведена је Фоксова теорија о светлој и тамној звучној боји, као и способност да се доживе боје приликом слушања музике. Ова способност важна је подједнако за композиторку Миланковић и музичког кореографа Каминску. Централни део рада доноси опис музичких кореографија шест клавирских прелида – иницијалну инспирацију, доживљај боја, те музичке елементе који су утицали на креирање телесне интерпретације и одабир реквизита и њихових боја.

Кључне речи: Вера Миланковић, прелиди, музичка кореографија, доживљај боја, тембр