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ARTICLE

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF CYCLE INTERPRETATION IN GLOBAL AND KAZAKH PIANO MUSIC FOR CHILDREN

The authors have reviewed and approved the final manuscript and affirm that there is no conflict of interest.

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KEYWORDS cycle interpretation, piano cycle for children, author's cycles, genre reinterpretation, piano music, cultural and intellectual development.

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ABSTRACT. The article focuses on piano cycles for children as a distinctive area of compositional creativity, characterized by its alignment with children's perception and performance abilities. The relevance of this topic stems from the significant role and prevalence of such works in concert and pedagogical practice, alongside the lack of specialized theoretical studies examining composers' approaches to children's cycles within a broad cultural and historical framework. The study examines both well-known piano cycles for children by Robert Schumann, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Franz Liszt, and Sofiya Gubaidulina, as well as lesser-studied works by Kazakhstani composers (Boris Yezakovich, Gaziza Zhubanova, Aida Issakova, Zholan Dastenov, Bakhtiyar Amanzhol, Beibit Daldenbay, Balnur Qydyrbek, Lyazzat Zhumanova, Dmitry Ostantkovich and others).

The authors analyze the interpretation of children's piano cycles using musicological and historical approaches, as well as comparative analysis, which highlight key artistic and structural features of these works. A historical and cultural review of the phenomenon from the Baroque period to the present reveals the pivotal role of Romanticism in the development of the children's piano cycle. During this era, works with distinctive authorial characteristics emerged, which the authors define as "author's cycles." These cycles are marked by a unifying idea, internal semantic connections between parts, and a tendency toward genre reinterpretation. The study demonstrates that the musical practices of the 20th and early 21st centuries have further developed these Romantic traditions, offering diverse "author's" visions of the children's piano cycle as a conceptual whole. At the same time, modern piano music for children has undergone significant changes, incorporating expanded compositional techniques and new semantic functions introduced by composers. These developments reflect a shift in the cycle interpretation, which now often transcend their didactic purpose to address broader educational goals, transforming into a tool for the cultural and intellectual development of younger generations.

The findings emphasize the universality, multifunctionality, and remarkable diversity of children's piano cycles. To deepen the theoretical understanding of this phenomenon and enrich concert and pedagogical repertoires with fresh and engaging works, the authors advocate for further study of this genre, including the exploration of new compositions from various national cultures.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUTHORS

Dinara Tokmurziyeva – literature review, source analysis, data collection, evaluation, and systematization; authorship Historical and Cultural Discourse of the Children's Piano Cycle subsection, and preparation of the article for publication.

Gulnar Abdirakhman – development of direction and methodology of the study; definition of key goals and objectives; authorship of the Abstract and sections including Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion; comprehensive editing of the manuscript throughout all stages.

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МАҚАЛА

БАЛАЛАРҒА АРНАЛҒАН ӘЛЕМДІК ЖӘНЕ ҚАЗАҚСТАНДЫҚ ФОРТЕПИАНО МУЗЫКАСЫНДАҒЫ ЦИКЛДІ ТҮСІНДІРУ ЕРЕКШЕЛІКТЕРІ

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Дәйексөз үшін

Токмурзиева, Динара, және Гүлнар Әбдірахман. «Балаларға арналған әлемдік және қазақстандық фортепиано музыкасындағы циклді түсіндіру ерекшеліктері». *Saryn*, т. 13, № 1, 2025, 17–36 б. DOI: 10.59850/SARYN.13.1.2025.256. (Ағылшынша)

ТІРЕК СӨЗДЕР

циклді түсіндіру, балаларға арналған фортепиано циклі, «авторлық» циклдер, фортепианолық музыка, жанрлық қайта қарау, идеологиялық тәрбиелеу.

АЛҒЫС

Авторлар анонимді рецензенттерге алғыс білдіреді.

Аңдатпа. Мақалада балаларға арналған фортепиано циклдері балалардың қабылдауы мен орындауына бағытталғандықтан ерекше қасиеттерге ие композиторлық шығармашылық саласы ретінде қарастырылады. Тақырыптың өзектілігі кең мәдени-тарихи дискурста балалар циклдерінің композиторлық өңдеулеріне арнайы теориялық зерттеулер жүргізілмегеніне қарамастан, мұндай циклдік фортепианолық шығармалардың концерттік-педагогикалық тәжірибедегі маңыздылығымен және үлкен үлесімен анықталады. Зерттеу материалы ретінде Роберт Шуман, Петр Чайковский, Ференц Лист, София Губайдулинаның балаларға арналған әлемдік музыкада танымал фортепиано циклдері, сондай-ақ шығармашылықтың осы бағыты кең және әртүрлі ұсынылған қазақстандық композиторлардың зерттелмеген шығармалары тартылды.

Мақалада балалар фортепиано циклін түсіндірудің ерекшеліктерін зерттеу музыкалық-тарихи және музыкалық-теориялық тәсілдерге, салыстырмалы талдауға негізделген, бұл балалар фортепиано циклдерінің көркем тілдегі негізгі ерекшеліктерін және құрылымдық заңдылықтарын анықтауға мүмкіндік берді. Бароккодан бүгінгі күнге дейінгі зерттелген шығармашылық құбылысқа жүргізілген тарихи-мәдени шолу жеке авторлық ерекшеліктерін айқын білдіретін шығармалар дүниеге келген балалар фортепиано циклінің эволюциясындағы романтизм кезеңінің маңыздылығын анықтауға мүмкіндік берді. Әдебиеттанушылық терминологияны қолдана отырып, зерттеу авторлары оларды «авторлық» циклдер ретінде белгілеуді ұсынады, олар үшін түпкілікті идеяның болуы, ішкі семантикалық байланыстар, жанрлық қайта қарау тенденциялары тән. Жұмыста XX – бірінші ширегіндегі XXI ғасырдағы музыкалық тәжірибе осы романтикалық дәстүрді дамытып, балалардың фортепиано циклін тұжырымдамалық тұтастық ретінде қарастырудың әртүрлі «авторлық» нұсқаларын ұсынатындығы көрсетілген. Сонымен қатар, жаңа заман балаларға арналған фортепиано музыкасына композициялық техниканы қайта қарастырумен және кеңейтумен, композиторлар ойластырған қосымша семантикалық функцияларды қосумен байланысты маңызды өзгерістер әкеледі, олар циклді түсіндіруде көрінеді. Қазіргі композиторлық шығармашылықта балалар циклдері дидактикалық бағыттың тар шеңберін еңсереді және жиі жас ұрпақты идеологиялық тәрбиелеу құралына айнала отырып, ағартушылық міндеттерді шешеді.

Жұмыстың нәтижелері балалардың фортепиано циклдерінің әмбебаптығын, көп функционалдығын және алуан түрлілігін, сондай-ақ әртүрлі ұлттық мәдениеттерге жататын жаңа музыкалық композицияларды тарта отырып, оларды одан әрі зерттеу қажеттілігін көрсетеді. Бұл қарастырылып отырған құбылыстың теориялық түсінігін тереңдетіп қана қоймай, концерттік және педагогикалық репертуарды жаңа туындылармен байытуға мүмкіндік береді.

АВТОРЛАРДЫҢ ҮЛЕСІ

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Г. Б. Әбдірахман – зерттеудің бағыты мен әдіснамасын әзірлеу, негізгі мақсаттар мен міндеттерді анықтау, аңдатпаны жазу, сонымен қатар мақаланың Кіріспе, Әдістер, Нәтижелер және талқылау, Қорытынды бөлімдерін жазу, мақаланың мәтінін редакциялау.

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СТАТЬЯ

ОСОБЕННОСТИ ТРАКТОВКИ ЦИКЛА В МИРОВОЙ И КАЗАХСТАНСКОЙ ФОРТЕПИАННОЙ МУЗЫКЕ ДЛЯ ДЕТЕЙ

Авторы прочитали и одобрили окончательный вариант рукописи и заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

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Токмурзиева, Динара, и Гульнар Абдрахман. «Особенности трактовки цикла в мировой и казахстанской фортепианной музыке для детей». *Saryn*, т. 13, № 1, 2025, с. 17–36. DOI: 10.59850/SARYN.13.1.2025.256. (На английском)

Ключевые слова

трактовка цикла, фортепианный цикл для детей, «авторские» циклы, фортепианная музыка, жанровое переосмысление, идеологическое воспитание.

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Аннотация. В центре внимания статьи – фортепианные циклы для детей как область композиторского творчества, обладающая специфическими свойствами, обусловленными направленностью на детское восприятие и исполнение. Актуальность темы определяется значимостью и большим удельным весом таких циклических фортепианных произведений в концертно-педагогической практике при том, что специальные теоретические исследования, рассматривающие особенности композиторской трактовки детских циклов в широком культурно-историческом дискурсе, до сих пор не предпринимались. В качестве материала исследования привлечены как известные в мировой музыке фортепианные циклы для детей Роберта Шумана, Петра Чайковского, Ференца Листа, Софии Губайдулиной, так и неизучавшиеся произведения казахстанских композиторов, в творчестве которых это направление представлено достаточно широко и разнообразно.

Изучение специфики трактовки детского фортепианного цикла в статье основывается на музыкально-историческом и музыкально-теоретическом подходах, сравнительном анализе, позволивших выявить ключевые особенности художественного выражения и структурные закономерности детских фортепианных циклов. Предпринятый историко-культурный обзор изучаемого творческого явления от барокко до наших дней позволил выявить важность периода романтизма в эволюции детского фортепианного цикла, когда рождаются произведения, обладающие ярко выраженными индивидуально-авторскими чертами. Используя литературоведческую терминологию, авторы исследования предлагают обозначать их «авторскими» циклами, для которых свойственны наличие сквозной идеи, внутренние смысловые связи между частями, тенденции к жанровому переосмыслению. В работе показано, что музыкальная практика XX – первой четверти XXI столетия развивает эту романтическую традицию и предлагает многообразие «авторских» вариантов видения детского фортепианного цикла как концептуального целого. Наряду с этим новое время приносит в фортепианную музыку для детей важные изменения, связанные с переосмыслением и расширением композиционных техник, включением дополнительных, вкладываемых композиторами смысловых функций, отражающихся на трактовке цикла. В современном композиторском творчестве детские циклы преодолевают узкие рамки дидактической направленности и нередко решают просветительские задачи, трансформируясь в средство идеологического воспитания подрастающего поколения.

Результаты работы подчеркивают универсальность, многофункциональность и большое разнообразие детских фортепианных циклов, а также необходимость дальнейшего их изучения с привлечением новых музыкальных композиций, принадлежащих разным национальным культурам. Это позволит не только углубить теоретическое понимание рассматриваемого феномена, но и обогатить концертный и педагогический репертуар новыми произведениями.

Вклад авторов

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Г. Б. Абдрахман – разработка направления и методологии исследования, определение ключевых целей и задач, написание аннотации, разделов «Введение», «Методы», «Результаты и обсуждение», «Заключение», комплексная редакция текста статьи на всех этапах.

INTRODUCTION

Academic piano music encompasses a vast range of genres and musical styles, among which cyclic works of a non-sonata type hold a special place. These works are often associated with children's themes or designed for inclusion in the pedagogical and concert repertoire for children and young performers. Children's cycles have been composed by both international and Kazakh composers throughout the development of piano music. Johann Sebastian Bach, Robert Schumann, Franz Liszt, Claude Debussy, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Sofiya Gubaidulina, and many other composers have contributed to this tradition. In Kazakhstan, cyclic opuses were created by composers such as Bazarbai Jumaniyazov (piano suite *Children*, 1959), Aleksandr Romanov (*Children's Album of Ten Pieces*, 1974), Bakhtiyar Amanzhol (*Boz Ingen*, 1987), Dmitriy Ostankovich (*Little Brother at the Piano*, 1997), Aida Issakova (*Orchestral Voices, Tales*, 12 polyphonic pieces *Khorovods*, 1998), Daniyar Berzhaprakov (*Winnie-the-Pooh and His Friends*, 2011), Lyazzat Zhumanova (*In the Summer Pasture*, 2019), and numerous other Kazakh composers. These works, diverse in musical content and stylistic features, represent a unique category of piano literature by combining artistic and aesthetic goals with pedagogical objectives, thus achieving multifunctionality.

The purpose of this study is to examine the specific features of interpreting piano cycles for children, considering the cultural and historical context of their origin and the evolution of artistic means of expression.

The relevance of this topic is determined by two factors. On the one hand, cyclic piano works hold significant weight and importance in the concert and pedagogical repertoire. On the other hand, there is a scarcity of studies dedicated to understanding their structural and stylistic specificities within a broader cultural and historical context. Addressing this topic is essential both for the advancement of musicology and for meeting the needs of performers and educators in creating meaningful interpretations of original cyclic works. Equally important is the incorporation of previously unstudied works by Kazakh composers into the realm of musicological analysis. This provides an opportunity to explore the specifics of interpreting children's cycles within the framework of various national cultures, deepen knowledge of their creators' artistic contributions, and enrich the concert and pedagogical repertoire of pianists with vivid and engaging musical pieces. Furthermore, focusing on the specifics of cycle formation offers new factual and theoretical material to advance the theory of cyclicity in music and other art forms¹.

METHODS

The methodological framework for this study is determined by the specific characteristics of the subject matter and its objectives. The *historical-musicological method* is used to examine the evolution of children's piano music, particularly piano cycles, within the context of global musical practice. The *literature review method* served as a basis for establishing and advancing the theoretical framework of the study,

1 For more on this issue, see Tokmurziyeva and Abdirakhman, "The Phenomenon of Cyclicity and Its Expressions in Music." *Central Asian Journal of Art Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2024, pp. 95–118. DOI: 10.47940/cajas.v9i2.879.2024.

as well as substantiating the author's conclusions and propositions based on existing works. *Music theory methods*, coupled with the comparative analysis

method, enabled the identification of the structural and stylistic features of cyclic form in the studied works and expanded the understanding of how composers' use of musical expression techniques.

The methodological framework of the study is based on works dedicated to the typology of children's music (Lesovichenko; Mouritsen; Vestad), as well as on the interpretation of cycles across various forms of art (Kadatskaya; Fomenko).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Children's piano cycles represent an independent, diverse, and extensive domain within the global landscape of piano music. To a certain extent, they can be considered universal, as they are a notable feature in the creative outputs of most international compositional schools. A deeper exploration of the existing studies on children's music, including cyclic works, reveals a wide range of approaches and perspectives. An analytical review of these studies is crucial for understanding the focus of scholarly interest in children's piano music and serves as a starting point for further exploration of various types of music for children, including cyclic compositions.

The analysis of sources reveals a limited number of scholarly works that examine the organizational and musical-stylistic features of children's piano cycles as a distinct phenomenon within academic piano music. At the same time, several recurring issues emerge in the study of children's music as a whole and of cycles for children as an integral part of it. For example, in international scholarly literature, significant attention is given to the typology of children's music and the identification of its "directions" (Lesovichenko; Mouritsen; Vestad). Musicologist Andrey Lesovichenko, for instance, identifies seven directions in children's music. Analyzing these directions based on the criteria used in the typology reveals that the author approaches children's music from a sociomusical perspective, employing multiple classification criteria (Lesovichenko 101). Based on the performer's status, Lesovichenko distinguishes between "music for children performed by adults," "music for children performed jointly with adults," and "music created by children." Focusing on the audience's status, the author differentiates between "music for children's performance and listening" and "music about children for adults." The form of existence leads to the identification of "music that became children's music through its cultural adaptation." The category of "instructional music" – music designed to facilitate the educational process by developing students' performance skills – is highlighted using a functional criterion (Lesovichenko 102).

While the mixed criteria in Lesovichenko's typology prevent it from being classified as strictly academic, the author's approach underscores the complexity of the phenomenon and the numerous nuances that must be considered when studying children's music. In contrast, the typology proposed by Flemming Mouritsen and later expanded by Ingeborg Lunde Vestad appears more consistent, though its relevance to our subject is somewhat indirect. Their systematization is based on the type of interaction between music and children, encompassing three aspects: music created by adults specifically for children (culture for children), music and musical practices shared between adults and children (culture with children), and music created by children or encountered within their social environment (culture created by children) (Vestad 1). Applying

this framework to academic children's piano cycles reveals that these works predominantly belong to the first group.

An interesting contribution to the field is Aleksandr Yermakov's work *On the Interpretation of the Concept of "Children's Music" in Russian Musicology*, which aims to summarize current trends in this area of study. Discussing composers' music for children, Yermakov highlights two key aspects that require consideration when creating such works: first, the alignment of the chosen musical material with the performer's capabilities, and second, the specificity of children's perception. These two factors directly influence the creative tasks faced by composers of children's piano cycles, shaping the content, form, and musical style of their works. This perspective is essential for understanding the challenges faced by authors of children's cycles, as it determines the logic of cycle formation and other principles of musical composition. Illustrating these points through the example of the children's piano cycles by Schumann (*Album for the Young*) and Tchaikovsky (*Children's Album*), Yermakov writes: "In both cases, alongside a distinctly didactic element (texture adapted for small hands, simple genre models, elementary forms understandable to a child's logic), one can also note the authors' characteristic selection of imagery that corresponds to children's perception ('Ded Moroz' ['Santa Claus'], 'The Happy Farmer', 'First Sorrow', 'Hobby Horse', 'March of the Wooden Soldiers', 'Baba Yaga')" (138).

The conducted review of these and other scholarly sources reveals that while studies of piano cycles intended for adult audiences tend to emphasize the artistic and structural aspects of cyclic works, research on children's piano cycles often leans towards pedagogy. This includes attempts to systematize children's music using music-sociological and instructional-methodological criteria, such as technical complexity, specific technical challenges, and imagery.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL DISCOURSE OF THE CHILDREN'S PIANO CYCLE

The theme of childhood is deeply treasured in culture and art. Its artistic representation has varied across eras, influenced by the philosophical ideas of the time and general views on education and personal development. In the Middle Ages, children were perceived as small adults and depicted in paintings "without regard for the physiological and psychological characteristics of their age" (Chernyak 97). By the 15th century, however, this trend shifted. The Renaissance, with its commitment to realism, recognized childhood as an independent and valuable stage of life. This recognition culminated in the emergence of children's portraiture, characterized by the use of more sophisticated and advanced artistic means (Chernyak 97).

In Western Europe, interest in children's music can be traced to the works of Johann Sebastian Bach, whose legacy includes several collections intended for domestic music-making and pedagogical purposes. These works, such as the *Notebook for Wilhelm Friedemann Bach* (1720), *Inventions and Sinfonias* (1723), and the *Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach* (1725), are still important in education today and remain fundamental to the repertoire of young musicians. The content and purpose of the pieces in these collections reflect Bach's "intention to teach his students the fundamentals of composition, transposition, improvisation, and ornamentation" (Ryzhkova), instilling the essential performance skills required by the Baroque era, with its emphasis

on polyphonic writing and improvisation. Continuously supplemented with new pieces over time to meet the educational needs of Bach's family, these notebooks can be regarded as "proto-cycles," uniting diverse keyboard works for pedagogical purposes. Bach's keyboard dance suites, such as the *Six French Suites*, *Six English Suites*, and *Partitas*, represent true cycles of the suite type created for pedagogical purposes. Their stable sequence of dances, realized in an individual manner and contrasting in emotional expression, imbues the ceremonial dances and traditional cycle with a new quality. Over time, these works lose their direct ties to the original dance genres and acquire concert-like characteristics.

The theme of childhood truly came into its own in the piano music of the 19th century, particularly in the works of Romantic composers. The aesthetic principles of Romanticism, with its focus on the inner world of the individual, highlighted childhood as a unique period of life – a time of emotional purity, sincerity, and unfiltered emotions (Ganina 128). Romantic composers started to focus on childhood as a primary theme in their compositions, with the piano cycle emerging as one of the key forms for its expression. The piano cycle became a meaningful variation of the programmatic piano cycle, aligning seamlessly with the artistic paradigm and aesthetic aspirations of the composers.

Another significant factor behind the proliferation of children's music during the Romantic era was composers' acknowledgment of the shortage of high-quality educational music. They believed that children's musical education should be based on highly artistic works rather than on "craft-like" music (Ganina 128). Clara Schumann's diary shows her clear opinion on why Robert Schumann wrote *Album for the Young* (1848): "The pieces typically practiced by children during piano lessons are so poor that Robert had the idea of composing and publishing a notebook (a sort of album) consisting entirely of children's pieces" (Zhitomirskiy 376).

As a result, Romantic art combined two motivational lines in the creation of children's piano cycles: the artistic, shaped by the aesthetic principles of Romanticism, and the pedagogical, driven by the need for high-quality educational repertoire for children. Composers aimed to create music that reflected the emotional and psychological world of children while also serving pedagogical goals. This dual focus set the stage for the future development of this musical form. In addition to Schumann's *Album for the Young*, other examples include Schumann's *Scenes from Childhood* (1838), a series of miniatures conveying the naivety and carefreeness of childhood through nostalgic memories. In this work, Schumann deliberately avoids complex musical forms and technical challenges to ensure that the music is accessible and understandable for children (Zhitomirskiy 376–378). Another Romantic cycle, Franz Liszt's *Christmas Tree* (1876), was conceived for performance "in the family circle during festive gatherings and implied collective participation" (Titova, *The Piano Cycle of F. Liszt* 351). Dedicated to Liszt's daughter, the cycle features a clear programmatic and narrative structure. Notably, Liszt avoids his characteristic virtuosity and complex textures: "...from lavishness and grandeur, he turns here to an economy of technical material, fully exploiting its latent possibilities. He strives to express his thoughts clearly, convincingly, and accessibly for others, finding imagery and means of expression that ensure harmony between the idea and its realization" (Milstein 218).

Another illustrative example of artistic intent and its realization is Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Children's Album* (1878). As a composer with a natural lyrical and psychological inclination, Tchaikovsky delves into the child's inner world through music. The cycle captures everyday moments of children's lives and employs simple yet vivid melodies, easily perceived by both children and adults. The recognizability of the imagery is achieved through a high degree of typification and reliance on familiar musical genres.

An analysis of Romantic-era children's piano cycles reveals the emergence of the main thematic lines of children's music, drawn from the childhood experiences (Lebedeva 181). These include reading fairy tales and stories, imaginary journeys, games, and children's perception of the surrounding world – nature, animals, birds, and so forth. Significant attention is given to various forms of song, dance, and marches, reflecting children's energy and activity. For example, Liszt's *Christmas Tree* includes a lullaby, an old Provençal tune, a Hungarian march, and a polonaise. The tendency to use genre-specific details and "generalization through genre" (a term by Arnold Alsvang) proved enduring and continued in the works of 20th-century composers. For instance, most pieces in Claude Debussy's *Children's Corner* (1908) are presented as variations of song (lullaby, serenade) and dance genres (lyrical and lively dances). Similarly, Sergei Prokofiev's *Children's Music*, Op. 65 (1935), comprising 12 accessible piano pieces, employs genres such as tarantella, waltz, and march. Dmitri Shostakovich's cycle *Doll's Dances* (1952) consists of seven pieces, five of which explicitly indicate their dance nature in the title: *Lyrical Waltz*, *Gavotte*, *Polka*, *Waltz-Joke*, and *Dance*. In her *Twelve Pieces for Children and Youth* (1990), Gaziza Zhubanova combines musical genres (march, kui, humoresque, toccata) with literary ones (legend, epic tale).

The thematic originality of Romantic children's cycles demonstrates a departure from the "genre" cycles of dances and inventions that dominated earlier eras. Romantic composers introduced the children's piano cycle as a distinct form imbued with vivid individual traits. Analogous to literary cycles, these works can be termed "authorial cycles." Scholar Darya Kadatskaya, building on Igor Fomenko's concept, defines authorial cycles as: "1) a cycle formed as a multi-genre structure, a secondary genre formation relative to the primary genre characteristics of its individual pieces; 2) the interaction of texts generates new meanings unavailable in the perception of individual works within the cycle; 3) the author has the opportunity to realize their artistic concept" (475). These features fully align with the concept of Romantic cycles, characterized by a unifying idea, internal semantic connections between parts, diverse genre content, and genre reinterpretation. For example, Robert Schumann's cycle *Carnaval* (1835) is built around a unifying intonational idea – his musical monogram *EsCHA*, which follows its own "lifeline," seamlessly woven into the lively masquerade ball of the commedia dell'arte (Genebart 5). Similarly, Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* was inspired by a posthumous exhibition of artist Viktor Hartmann's works, with the composer offering a "musical interpretation" of the paintings.

This approach to the cycle was further developed in the musical practice of the 20th and early 21st centuries, leading in numerous "authorial" interpretations of the children's piano cycle as a conceptual whole with a specific narrative or extra-musical idea, realized through the interplay of its components. Furthermore, the 20th century saw significant

changes to children's piano music, driven by the reevaluation and expansion of compositional techniques and the inclusion of additional layers of meaning. Children's cycles transcended the narrow confines of didacticism to address educational and even ideological objectives, often serving as tools for the ideological upbringing of younger generations.

The established national compositional schools of the time introduced specific interpretations of the children's piano cycle, blending European expressive means with elements of national musical language and imagery. The previous focus on simplicity of musical expression was balanced by the incorporation of contemporary compositional techniques such as atonality, dodecaphony, extended tonality, and clusters. These works prioritized sonority, imagery, theatricality, and contrasts. The preserved connection to musical traditions of earlier eras – from Baroque rhetoric to Romantic and Impressionist techniques – was conceptual, fully determined by the composer's intent. The interpretation of the cycle emphasized programmatic and conceptual unity, expressed through a coherent theme or idea supported by structural and musical material.

A striking example of 20th-century children's cycles is Sofiya Gubaidulina's *Musical Toys* (1969). The programmatic and conceptual coherence of this work lies in its portrayal of the contrast between the child's and adult's perceptions of the world. The child's world is interpreted as a "microcosm" (innocence, imagination, play, emotions) interacting with the "macrocosm" (the adult interpretation of the child's world, marked by philosophical depth and reflections on life, harmony, and universal laws) (Titova, *The Piano Cycle for Children* 353). Each piece in the cycle explores a specific aspect of childhood perception, yet they are unified by a philosophical understanding of childhood as a whole. Gubaidulina's concept illustrates the inseparability of the child's and adult's worlds, with the imagery bridging philosophical and artistic realms. The cycle has a universal character, designed not only for pedagogical purposes but also as a model of mature concert music "for adults."

Piano cycles by Kazakh composers Bakhtiyar Amanzhol and Lyazzat Zhumanova exemplify unique approaches to cyclic forms rooted in the traditions of national composition schools. In Amanzhol's cycle of seven pieces, *Boz Ingen* (1987)², the compositional process is shaped by the idea of introducing contemporary children to the foundational values of Kazakh traditional culture.

This is achieved through references to ancient ritual song genres, considered the "cultural-genetic code" of the nation. Scholars have identified this piano cycle as a manifestation of neo-folklorism in Kazakh music, a movement that emerged after 1985 amidst societal liberalization and artists' quest for national identity as a counterbalance to the Soviet-era promotion of internationalism (Nedlina 30). The work conveys a strong educational message, aiming to instill national values and foster cultural identity in children³.

2 Cycle structure: No. 1 – *Toi Bastar* (Opening of the Celebration), No. 2 – *Syńsu* (Bride's Farewell Lament), No. 3 – *Saryn* (Motif), No. 4 – *Aqsaq Qozy* (Lame Lamb), No. 5 – *Qońyr* (Velvety), No. 6 – *Boz Ingen* (White Camel), No. 7 – *Zhar-Zhar* (Husband and Wife).

3 Bakhtiyar Amanzhol's musical and aesthetic principles are largely characterized by his view of Kazakh traditional culture as an essential channel of spiritual information, crucial for individuals in developing their identity. He dedicated a number of his scholarly articles to this subject, including:

- Amanzhol, Bakhtiyar. "Osnovy prepodavaniya muzykalnykh predmetov v aspekte estetiki kazakhskoy kultury." [Fundamentals of Teaching Music Disciplines in the Context of the Aesthetics of Kazakh Culture.], 1989.

- Amanzhol, Bakhtiyar. "Yazyk kazakhskoy muzyki – kanal dukhovnoy informatsii i sovremennyye problemy razvitiya otechestvennogo obrazovaniya." [Language of Kazakh Music as a Channel of Spiritual Information and Contemporary Issues in the Development of National Education.], 2002.

An analysis of *Boz Ingen* through the principles of unifying individual texts into a “cohesive artistic space” (Kapustina 649) reveals a core theme (Tokmurziyeva and Abdirakhman 98) rooted in the ancient Kazakh wedding cycle. This traditional cycle, known for its complex system of rituals and ceremonies imbued with stable semantics and rich imagery, also held significant pedagogical potential. The Kazakh wedding ritual consisted of distinct stages (matchmaking, the wedding in the bride’s village, and the wedding in the groom’s village), each accompanied by specific ceremonial songs. These stages were temporally and spatially dispersed rather than forming a single cohesive event. This key characteristic of the traditional wedding cycle informed Amanzhol’s interpretation: the wedding fragments in the children’s cycle are similarly dispersed, forming a macrocycle that integrates the multi-part structure into a unified musical composition. The composer organizes the children’s cycle according to the traditional wedding logic, transitioning methodically from one ritual to the next.

The cycle opens with *Toi Bastar*, a ceremonial song symbolizing the beginning of the celebration, followed by *Syńsu*, a farewell song-lament performed traditionally in the bride’s village. *Saryn* is also tied to Kazakh wedding traditions⁴. Three interspersed numbers (4. *Aqsaq Qozy*, 5. *Qońyr*, and 6. *Boz Ingen*) separate the wedding celebrations in the bride’s village from those in the groom’s village, mirroring real-life customs. The cycle concludes with *Zhar-Zhar*, a ceremonial song performed by young men from the groom’s side to greet the bride in the groom’s village.

The three middle pieces, which are not directly related to the wedding, maintain traditional imagery and are linked to ancient Kazakh beliefs: the deification of lame animals (*Aqsaq Qozy*) and the maternal camel symbol (*Boz Ingen*). The piece *Qońyr* refers to a symbolic concept in Kazakh folk culture associated with the quality of sound – velvety, soft, and rich in overtones. This sound is characteristic of national instruments like the *qyl-kobyz* and the *dombra*. By incorporating this concept, the composer acts as a conduit for national cultural values, striving to convey these auditory experiences to younger generations.

To ensure the authenticity of the musical expression, Amanzhol incorporates quotations from Kazakh ritual folklore, presenting them with meticulous respect. For example, in the first piece, *Toi Bastar*, a full quotation of a folk prototype is presented, with a piano texture that is remarkably concise (ex 1, 2):

Той бас-таң-дар кү-да-лар, той бас-таң-дар, оу, той-ың құт-ты
Кө-ңіл е-тіп бұл жер-ге кел-ген кү-да, оу, тау-да жүр-ген

бол-сын деп дей бас-таң-дар, ақ жай-лау, ақ жай-лау-дай жер қай-д(а)у.
бө-кен-дей ой-қос-таң-дар,

Ex. 1: Kazakh folk song *Toi Bastar*

4 The bride’s farewell songs could have various titles, such as *syńsu*, *qoştasu*, *saryn*, and others.

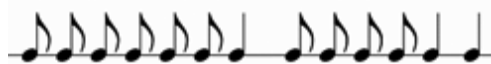
Source: *Kazakh Musical Folklore: Musical-Ethnographic Collection*. Alma-Ata, Nauka, 1982, p. 49, musical example 10.



Ex. 2: B. Amanzhol. Cycle *Boz Ingen*, No. 1 *Toi Bastar*

Source: Amanzhol, Bakhtiyar. 'Boz Ingen'. *Piano Pieces*. Tchaikovsky Almaty Musical College, 2022.

This approach is particularly fitting for a children's cycle, as folk melodies are characterized by melodic simplicity, narrow range, and diatonic structure, making them easily accessible for children's perception. At the same time, the principles of musical development compel the composer to move beyond literal citation. From piece to piece, Amanzhol increasingly transforms the folk material. In the final piece, *Zhar-Zhar*, the folk prototype undergoes significant intonational transformation while retaining its song form and the rhythmic framework characteristic of the men's *zhar-zhar* (Kuzbakova 85) (ex 3, 4):



Ex. 3: Rhythmosyntactic Structure of the Men's *Zhar-Zhar*

Source: Kuzbakova, Gulnara. *Kazakh Ritual Song. Rhythmic Structure and Semantics*. Astana, MasterPO, 2012.



Ex. 4: B. Amanzhol. Cycle *Boz Ingen*, No. 7 *Zhar-Zhar*

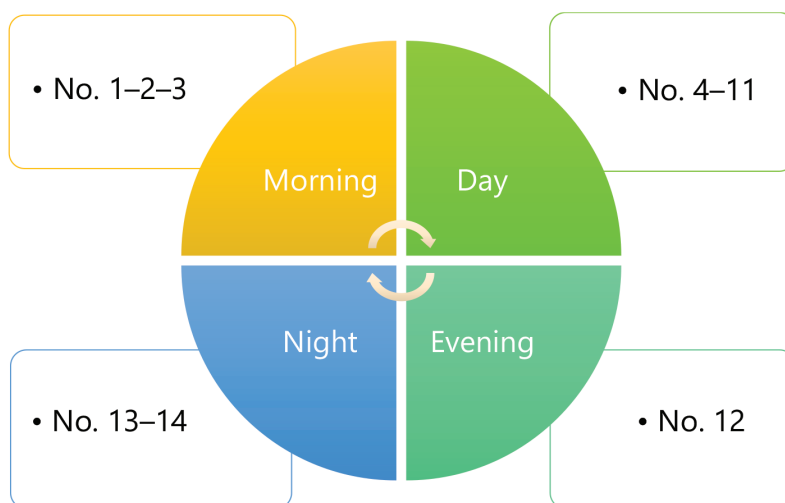
Source: Amanzhol, Bakhtiyar. 'Boz Ingen'. *Piano Pieces*. Tchaikovsky Almaty Musical College, 2022.

Thus, the dramaturgy of the cycle is characterized by multi-level development in both content and melody. The progression reflects the stages of the wedding ritual and the evolution from literal citation to the creation of original thematic material, representing a creative reinterpretation of traditional sources.

In Lyazzat Zhumanova's piano cycle *Zhailauda (In the Summer Pasture, 2019)*, which also explores national imagery, the cyclic prototype is based on a temporal (daily) cycle. The alternation of the fourteen pieces in the opus clearly reflects the passage of time throughout the day – morning, afternoon, evening, and night – drawing parallels with European macrocycles of “morning,” “evening,” and “table” music, culminating in the unique composition by Paul Hindemith, *Day of Music in Plön* (Sun Kengliang 301). On the other hand, the internal structure of Zhumanova's cycle follows the semantic logic of poetic epigraphs that precede each piece, forming an independent “poetic cycle” composed of children's verses by contemporary Kazakh poet Yernur Seidakhmet. These poems feature vivid imagery and a structure characteristic of traditional Kazakh folk syllabic poetry. In all pieces except No. 9, *Balapan* (Chick), the epigraphs are written in a seven-syllable meter. Most of them employ a rhyme scheme typical of Kazakh folk children's and ritual songs: *AABA*.

The poetic cycle establishes clear semantic boundaries for each piece in the piano cycle, facilitating the perception of its multi-layered cyclical form and ensuring internal coherence⁵. Notably, the content of the times of day is not evenly distributed; it follows the natural logic of daily events, where a child's daytime is filled with more activities and impressions, while evening brings a decline in energy (see [Diagram 1](#)).

Diagram 1. The Daily Cycle in the Children's Piano Cycle *Zhailauda* by Lyazzat Zhumanova.



Source: Zhumanova, Lyazzat. *Piano Pieces*. Semey, Tulebayev Musical College, 2019.

5 Cycle structure: No. 1 *Jailau tarıy (Meadow Morning)*, No. 2 *Núrşuaq (Ray of Light)*, No. 3 *Äjemmen ängime (Conversation with Grandmother)*, No. 4 *Torğai (Sparrow)*, No. 5 *Búzau (Calf)*, No. 6 *Mazasyz dop (Restless Ball)*, No. 7 *Äje (Grandmother)*, No. 8 *Jarıbyrdan sorı (After the Rain)*, No. 9 *Balapan (Chick)*, No. 10 *Laq (Lamb)*, No. 11 *Möldir búlaq (Clear Spring)*, No. 12 *Dombra*, No. 13 *Ertegi (Fairy Tale)*, No. 14 *Besik jıry (Lullaby)*.

In addition to the child, whose impressions are tied to games, interactions with domestic animals, and observations of nature, the central character of the cycle is the grandmother (*ázhe*). Around her figure, the work develops an educational

concept realized through forms such as dialogue-based moral instruction (No. 3) and storytelling (No. 13). The centerpiece of the “grandmother’s storyline” (No. 7) portrays this vital figure through the eyes of the child as “loving,” “always ready to help,” and “generous with treats.”

It is evident that the storyline chosen by Lyazzat Zhumanova echoes Pyotr Tchaikovsky’s *Children’s Album* and other children’s cycles that depict impressions of childhood through small and simple pieces accessible to young performers. However, Zhumanova’s work, which adopts a “daily cycle” as its framework, stands out for the originality of its concept and its innovative realization of the synthesis of arts. The vivid imagery of the musical material in the cycle’s pieces is achieved through diverse textural solutions.

For instance, in the pieces *Torǵai (Sparrow)* and *Balapan (Chick)*, composed in the high register, the composer makes extensive use of staccato articulation and specific types of ornamentation, such as acciaccaturas (short grace notes). These techniques evoke specific artistic associations for the child, creating playful images of the mischievous sparrow and the lively chick (ex 5):



Ex. 5: L. Zhumanova. Children’s Piano Cycle *Zhailauda*, No. 4 *Torǵai*

Source: Zhumanova, Lyazzat. *Piano Pieces*. Semey, Tulebayev Musical College, 2019.

Focusing on the performance capabilities of a child, the composer avoids complex key signatures with numerous accidentals. Instead, the cycle features three pairs of the simplest parallel keys: C major – A minor, G major – E minor, and F major – D minor. This choice allows the composer to achieve the necessary contrast between the pieces, enhancing the narrative progression of the cyclical work (see Table 1). The alternation of major and minor, interpreted in the conventional semantic sense (major – “joyful,” minor – “sad”), creates an expressive contrast that aligns with the cycle’s narrative, reflecting the child’s shifting moods throughout the day. The child’s morning begins with bright, major-key tones in *Zhailau Tańy* and *Núrşuaq*, while a “serious” conversation with the grandmother (No. 3 *Äzhemmen äńgime*) is marked by the introduction of minor. The “lighthearted” image of a sparrow in *Torǵai* returns to major, whereas the scene of a lost calf’s return in *Búzau* shifts back to minor, and so on. This approach to mode shifts enables the necessary movement of images, ensuring the development of the narrative line within the cyclic composition and creating a natural and expressive musical storytelling.

In addition to tonality, an important dramaturgical role in the cycle is played by tempo relationships and contrasts, reflecting the rhythm of events and moods throughout

Table 1. The Tonal Plan of the Children's Piano Cycle *Zhailauda* by Lyazzat Zhumanova.

<p>C major</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zhailau tañy (No. 1) • Torğai (No. 4) • Mazasyz dop (No. 6) 	<p>G major</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Núrşuaq (No. 2) • Möldir búlaq (No. 11) • Dombra (No. 12) 	<p>F major</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Äzhe (No. 7) • Laq (No. 10) • Besik jyry (No. 14)
<p>A minor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balapan (No. 9) • Ertegi (No. 13) 	<p>E minor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zhañbyrdan soñ (No. 8) 	<p>D minor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Äzhemmen äñgime (No. 3) • Búzau (No. 5)

Source: Zhumanova, Lyazzat. *Piano Pieces*. Semey, Tulebayev Musical College, 2019.

the day. Pieces No. 1–3, associated with the child's awakening, are set in a moderate *Moderato* tempo, evoking a sense of calm and an unhurried start to the day. In pieces No. 4–6, the tempo shifts to *Allegro*, reflecting the active phase of the day, filled with energy and movement. A return to the tranquil image of the grandmother occurs in piece No. 7, where the composer again employs *Moderato*, creating the effect of a brief daytime respite imbued with warmth and comfort. Pieces No. 8–12 bring back the lively atmosphere of the child's active play (*Allegro*). The conclusion of the cycle is accompanied by a gradual slowing of tempo: in pieces No. 13 and No. 14, written in *Moderato* and *Adagio*, the evening mood and preparations for sleep are vividly recreated. The final piece, *Besik jyry* (*Lullaby*), holds particular significance, closing the piano cycle on a calm and serene note, symbolizing the completion of the daily cycle.

CONCLUSION

The development of children's piano cycles represents a progressive evolutionary process, transitioning from the didactic collections of the Baroque era to the artistically independent, conceptually rich cyclic works of the modern period. Romanticism emerged as one of the most productive cultural and historical epochs for the growth of children's piano cycles, marking the birth of the "authorial" children's piano cycle. This new form, a multi-genre structure, embodied original artistic concepts through the interaction of diverse and contrasting pieces.

The musical practices of the 20th and early 21st centuries continued this trajectory, offering numerous "authorial" interpretations of children's piano cycles. These works, often rooted in national musical cultures, enriched cyclic compositions with distinct ethnic content, unique dramaturgical approaches, structural interpretations, and principles of unity and development. Here, the interpretation of the cyclic composition is enriched with new, ethnically distinctive musical content, a unique approach to dramaturgy and structure, as well as principles of unity and development. In shaping an authorial cycle, the leading role is given to programmatic and conceptual integrity, realized through an original artistic vision. For example, in Sofiya Gubaidulina's *Musical Toys*, this is achieved through a philosophical reflection on the world of childhood. Bakhtiyar

Amanzhol's *Boz Ingen* introduces children to the cultural-genetic code of the nation, and in Lyazzat Zhumanova's *Zhailauda*, the composer attempts to find a musical equivalent to the daily cycle.

Modern approaches to interpreting childhood themes in composition are highly diverse. However, an in-depth examination of the musical material reveals that composers traditionally align their works with the skill level of the intended performer, selecting appropriate musical expressive tools. In other words, by addressing themes and imagery familiar and relatable to children, composers consider the performer's abilities, whether they are students at music schools, conservatories, or advanced concert pianists. The performer's status (age, level of technical proficiency) serves as a critical indicator shaping the cycle's concept, methods of its realization, and choices between simplified imagery or psychologically complex expressions. This status also determines other musical characteristics, such as style and language.

While retaining the fundamental features of cyclicity found in adult cycles, children's piano cycles possess distinct traits shaped by their function and target audience. The most significant of these traits is their pronounced educational, developmental, or enlightening purpose, fostering artistic thinking and cultivates skills in music perception and performance. This functionality influences the content and stylistic characteristics of children's cycles, including programmatic intent, references to folk music genres, simplicity in melody and rhythm, playful motifs, and elements tied to children's daily lives. Composers deliberately utilize simple musical means, easily recognizable melodies, and rhythms, allowing children to intuitively engage with the music. For this reason, the thematic material of children's cycles often draws on folk motifs. These are not only easily comprehensible to children but also serve as a means of connecting them to cultural traditions in the modern age of globalization. The musical texture in children's cycles is typically transparent and minimalist, avoiding complex polyphonic structures⁶ while maintaining clear voice-leading. This ensures that the musical content of such works is accessible and understandable to young performers, effectively bridging the gap between educational value and artistic expression.

6 An exception is made for the baroque suite cycles of Johann Sebastian Bach, aimed at developing polyphonic mastery in both composition and performance.

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