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Sight & Sound Rendezvous

A.S. Dybovsky

Introduction

Several decades ago a Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) started media research and established the media discourse.¹ And nowadays with the global spread of the Internet and the tremendous development of SNS, the variety of online music resources became a boundless field for different kinds of research. Here we analyse several YouTube video clips in order to observe some new trends in combining musical masterpieces with photo and video materials. First, we will discuss some of the changes in the classical music scene, and then we will look at several new trends in popular music presentations on Internet resources such as YouTube and others.

1. Metamorphosis in music presentations

Visualization is a very common tendency observed in the presentations of masterpieces of classical and popular music. Now we can enjoy on YouTube video clips of *Let's Twist Again* by Chubby Checker, *Hit the Road Jack* by Ray Charles, *Love Me Tender* by Elvis Presley, and a many other famous classics of American and European popular music of 1950-60s, which previous generations used to listen to on records or tapes. The simplest way to create an illustration for a musical piece is to combine it with thematically appropriate pictures or videos. On YouTube, we can observe a lot of examples of such combinations. For example, F. Chopin's *Spring Waltz* is accompanied by photographs showing dramatic antagonism between spring flowers and snow.² *Winter* from A. Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* is illustrated with appropriate photos of winter nature.³ And it is only natural that the song *Autumn Sadness* composed by M. Legrand for the French film *Les Parapluie de Cherbourg* (1964; dir. Jacques Demy) is illustrated with fallen leaves and autumn photos of Paris.⁴ It goes without saying that the presentation of photos is rhythmically consistent with the music. These visualizations breathe a new life into popular compositions by Paul



Mauriat or James Last and other popular music arrangers.

In Japan, popular songs from the period of the decades following the World War II became the object of visualisation. For example the song *Red Lantern* [赤ちょうちん] by Kaguyahime (a popular group of the 1970-s) is illustrated with the video precisely reflecting the living conditions of young Japanese people in the mentioned period.⁵ Another popular song of the group leader Minami Kosetsu [南こうせつ], *One Night Dream* [夢一夜] contains a video with a professional model Yuki Morisaki [森崎友紀], who personifies the object of the painful love depicted in the song.⁶

Music production companies and official sights of singers and musical groups spend a lot of money on the production of videos for new songs and compositions. Simultaneously, a lot of video clips uploaded to YouTube are made by non-professional musical video clip creators. A new trend of classical music presentations on the Internet is what David Garrett called a Rock Revolution.⁷ In order to make classical music appealing to a mass audience, classical music masterpieces are arranged according to the standards of popular music compositions. The typical example of such adaptation is the video clip of David Garrett's *The 5-th* with the duration of 3, 35 minutes based on *The Symphony No. 5 in C minor* by Ludwig van Beethoven, whose original duration is longer than 30 minutes. In the David Garrett's video clip, the violin player is chased by daunting and mysterious strangers in Venetian masks, and the central musical element of the composition is the most effective musical motif "four-note "short-short-short-long""⁸ symbolizing "fate knocking at the door," which is repeated time and again. In order to expand the circle of listeners, classical music performers, as a rule, use various non-conventional techniques such as game elements and playfulness in performance, virtuoso competitions and even the elements of eroticism and seduction at concerts. They refuse to follow conservative strict dress codes and abandon the traditional rituals prescribed for classical music concerts (for example, the appearance of a master of ceremonies); finally, they tend to use unconventional musical instruments and experiment with the blending of genres. But the most effective recent method of attracting mass audience has been the growing exploitation of erotic elements at music concerts. Striking examples of exploitation of sexuality during concerts are the performances by Lola Astanova and Stjepan Hauser.



As they play classical and popular masterpieces, they attract the public not only with virtuosic playing of musical

instruments (piano and cello, respectively), but also with external attractiveness and sexual appeal, manifested in the performance of music.⁹ S. Hauser and Caroline Campbell also display elements of eroticism in their joint concerts, but it is more like a form of a virtuoso competition.¹⁰ Similar strategies of competition can be observed in the joint concerts of S. Hauser with Petrit Çeku¹¹ or Luca Sulic.¹² Human sexuality is a gift of nature, but modern popular culture industry immensely enhances and uses it in the entertainment business, including the presentation of musical compositions.

2. Encounters between singing and movies

Attaching a video to a popular song is a kind of a fun creative activity for the Internet users. Some video clips created by the Internet users have a very strange origin. For example, one of the popular videos for a Mexican song *Historia de un Amor* composed by Carlos Almaran,¹³ beautifully performed by Guadalupe Pineda, was extracted from a commercial advertisement of the Dolce & Gabbana's fragrance "Dolce"¹⁴ by Tamer Sharaf.¹⁵ The song, filled with the boundless tragedy of human life, transformed a cute but rather frivolous advertising video and ascribed it a deep existential meaning. At the same time, the sweet participation of the children in the love game of the adults in the video mitigated the tragedy of the song and gave the whole music-video combination a special charm and a sense of hope.

Popular movies are also commonly used for the video clips' creation. A Chris Rea's masterpiece of the 1990-s, *You My Love*, is effectively illustrated with some scenes from the film *Pretty Woman* (1990; dir. Garry Marshall; R. Gere and J. Roberts are starring) by Cvetana Djeneva.¹⁶ An extremely attractive source of video clip resources for the Internet public is the Italian film *Malèna* (2008; dir. Giuseppe Tornatore; starring Monica Bellucci and Giuseppe Sulfaro). The movie plot depicts a dramatic love of a teenager for an extremely attractive woman in her 30-s (See the photo). The drama and the eroticism of the relationship of the film's characters provide great opportunities for intensifying the emotional impact of the song used in the video clip. The striking internal contradiction of the Monica



Bellucci's character in *Malèna* is her perfect beauty combined with deep unhappiness, reinforced by the cruelty of the people around her. F. Dostoevsky once said that beauty will save the world, but the film tells us that beauty is very fragile and it depends on the world's care and kindness for its survival.

Some scenes of the film, reflecting the striking contrast between the beauty of the woman and the hostile world around her, are used in the video clip for the Leonard Cohen's song, *I Tried to Leave You*. The combination of sight and sound performed by Zelenyak Ladislau¹⁷ evidently enhances the emotional impact of the song.

The most impressive scenes of the film *Malèna* arranged by the YouTube user "kolombina55"¹⁸ are also available in a video clip for the Julio Iglesias' song *Esta Cobardia*. The scenes of the film are presented in slow motion, and the character portrayed by Monica Bellucci becomes the symbol of eternal beauty, to which the hero of the song lyrics does not dare to approach and speak.¹⁹ The tragic scenes of the film are also used in the video clip created by the person with the net name Faik. K. He applied them to the above mentioned *Historia de un Amore* sang by Guadelupa Peneda. Unhappiness and utter loneliness of the heroine of the film organically complements the theme of the irrevocable departure of a lover described in the song by Karlos Almaran.

In another impressive video clip the same song (sang by Mario Frangoulis) is combined with the fragment of the British romantic comedy film *Easy Virtue* (2008; dir. Stephan Elliott) where the heroin (Jessica Biel) dances tango with the father of her boyfriend (Colin Firth) before living the inhospitable boyfriend's house forever (See the photo). In this way, new video clips are produced and distributed on YouTube. Sometimes different clips applied to the same song compete with each other – and the Internet users can enjoy different versions of visual representations of the same song according to their tastes. The combination of a song with an impressive video material is a great opportunity to create new meanings and ideas in musical culture.



3. Paintings as a visual resource for video clips

Another simple method of new video clips' creation is combining the songs with

photos or videos of paintings. Thanks to the free access to art galleries through online resources, video clip creators have a huge selection of illustrative materials. Paintings provide a lot of possibilities to the video clip makers: paintings are very expressive and can be arranged thematically; they have nearly unlimited style diversity and can be presented both in photos and videos, both fully and in fragments. A video camera also allows to accentuate the rhythm of the song by changing the images at the "right" moments. Not all amateur video clips found on the Internet are good. However, some seem to be of a rather high quality of production.

Let's start with the song *Petite Fleur*, which was written as an instrumental and recorded by Sidney Bechet in January 1952.²⁰ The piece enjoyed remarkable success and became a standard jazz number all over the world. French lyrics were added by Fernand Bonifay and Mario Bua in 1959.²¹ In Japan, that same year, the newly lyricized version of the song was used as a debut number by the Japanese vocal group *The Peanuts*.²² Now on YouTube this world-famous song is presented in a dozen different versions.

Several years ago the song was performed by an American jazz band Hot Sardines and there are several versions of this song's video clips on YouTube. The first version is ironical and it is based on the only one original photo of a middle-aged woman;²³ the second one is combined with an impressive video of a modern ballet dance;²⁴ the third video illustrates the song with the perfect love story of a happy young couple.²⁵ In its love idyll it goes far beyond the romantic image of the girl presented in the song.

And in the last video, signed by the net name "nnigani," the song is mixed with a video of Oscar Alvarez Pardo²⁶ paintings (See the photo), depicting attractive young women in dramatic situations of the city life and perfectly matching with the sentimental tone of the song.

In another video of a song by a French singer-songwriter Jehro (real



name is Jérôme Cotta)²⁷ *Continuando*, nnigani uses erotic pictures of Viktor Sheleg²⁸ (Latvia), presented on the net as Saatchi Art (See the photo).²⁹ The provocative sense of Viktor Sheleg's art contradicts the totally innocent content of the song's text. At the same time, the mixture creates a new original effect on the perception of the song, quite consistent with the above mentioned trend in the development of modern mass musical culture – the expansion of eroticism.

Erotic paintings are also effectively used in several video clips by a person with the net name Marie Maurice. For example, *Misty Blue* by Etta James is most naturally combined with the erotic images of Alexander Monnoi's art.³⁰ *Losing my Religion* in Jacqui Naylor's dramatic intonations nicely match the drama of the sexual life of people in Arthur Braginsky's paintings.³¹ Ralph E. McCarthy and Fernando Garibay's blues *Over and Over Again* sang by Rachael Yamagata and combined with Trudy Good's paintings, becomes an expression of an endless love story causing women's existential drama.³²

A YouTube video creator with the net name MariMari142 have presented a lot of video clips using different painters' art works. To illustrate *A Song for V* performed by Dr. Project Point Blank the paintings of Jack Vettriano were selected (See the photo).³³ The video clip presents images of *femmes fatales* and their chosen ones, ready for a self-sacrifice (as the song goes).

For a blues *The Last Tango on the 16th Street* sang by Boz Scaggs the paintings



of Pierre Farel were used, depicting people with blank faces.^{3 4} This turns the story of the song into a universal narrative, and with the effect of estrangement emphasizes the originality of the singer's voice.

The above examples give us enough reason to say that visual images such as pictures and paintings provide powerful and inexhaustible resources for creating new video clips.

Conclusion

Visual representation of information is a very effective tool of human communication. This is also true for classical and popular musical works, which are increasingly more often accompanied by visual materials with the use of a wide variety of sources. The rapid development of Internet technologies makes it possible to create video clips of both modern and old songs. The combination of music and imagery in video clips is very diverse and goes far beyond the scope of the present paper. Here we briefly analyzed several types of video production techniques, such as using movie scenes as well as photographs and videos of paintings.

Finally, it is possible to assume that the visualization of all spheres of life and human activity, including the field of mass popular culture, will increase in the future.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshall_McLuhan (accessed 11.04.2019)

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0hFZPvanMs&t=59s> (accessed 19.04.2019)

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPA5YBm6PeI&t=157s> (accessed 19.04.2019)

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHEZAzntgK8> (accessed 11.04.2019)

The photos are a courtesy of:

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https://www.google.com/search?q=paintings+of+Jack+Vettriano&client=firefox-b-d&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi_bmlptnhAhUE5aYKHUBOCHQQ_AUIDigB&biw=1269&bih=678&dpr=1.25#imgrc=N4aQZbQ2NBgmzM: (accessed 18.04.2019)

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRKFzuC7hXg> (accessed 11.04.2019)

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrtC1kqgyjI> (accessed 11.04.2019)

⁷ Dybovsky A.S. David Garrett's "Revolutions" : A Sociocultural Interpretation // 表象と文化 XV, 言語文化共同研究プロジェクト 2017, 大阪大学言語文化研究科, 2018. Pp. 1-8.

⁸ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._5_\(Beethoven\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._5_(Beethoven)) (accessed 11.04.2019)

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzWDs26YL9Y> (accessed 11.04.2019)

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sk2yoOY8CTU> (accessed 11.04.2019)

¹¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ilx_Fi5qD0k (accessed 11.04.2019)

¹² <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehro> (accessed 18.04.2019)

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¹³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzjE33U_gy8 (accessed 11.04.2019)

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtS7oIlky5lk> (accessed 11.04.2019)

¹⁵ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCH_KC4RI77Oa0QhkyOurza (accessed 21.04.2019)

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCC3cUA3hjho4GKjSIeE8QxA> (accessed 21.04.2019)

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocUnLAWgofw> (accessed 11.04.2019)

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCADKMIOagaIuYxn2UFkt5zg> (accessed 11.04.2019)

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqdo9b-oXXg> (accessed 11.04.2019)

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petite_Fleur (accessed 14.04.2019)

²¹ https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petite_Fleur (accessed 14.04.2019)

²² <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/可愛い花> (accessed 14.04.2019)

²³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rlluu2G_eWg (accessed 19.04.2019)

²⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bz0NbGpV_nQ (accessed 19.04.2019)

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqFB2ubx4VQ> (accessed 11.04.2019)

²⁶ <https://www.tuttartpitturasulturapoesiamusica.com/2016/11/Oscar-Pardo.html> (accessed 18.04.2019)

²⁷ <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehro> (accessed 18.04.2019)

²⁸ <https://www.saatchiart.com/account/profile/1037085> (accessed 19.04.2019)

²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saatchi_Art (accessed 18.04.2019)

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5Jf2fXdkF8&list=PLPF-444z28KShH7GPVbAPqHaPFg52U0dS&index=3> (accessed 18.04.2019)

³¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1JUO6ir-NU> (accessed 18.04.2019)

³² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dIVwU3a8bI (accessed 18.04.2019)

³³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Vettriano (accessed 18.04.2019)

³⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCkqpDgRLic> (accessed 23.04.2019)