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GENRE AND STYLE FEATURES OF COMPOSER KAMAL AHMEDOV'S "REQUIEM"

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The aim of this study is to examine the genre and stylistic features of composer Kamal Ahmadov's Requiem, focusing on its modal-harmonic structure, melodic-rhythmic development, and individual compositional style through a theoretical and analytical approach. The work is dedicated to the memory of the victims of the January 20, 1990 tragedy, and its poetic text is based on bayati, one of the oldest genres of Azerbaijani folk poetry. The dramaturgical development of the composition is shaped by two principal thematic sources: a four-voice lament theme derived from Zabul-Segah intonations and a mugham-based theme constructed from the melodic elements of the Humayun mode.

The analysis demonstrates that the synthesis of vocal and symphonic expression forms the core emotional content of the work, conveying collective national grief and spiritual devotion to the martyrs. From a textural perspective, free imitative polyphony alternates with homophonic-harmonic writing, while chromatic development plays a significant role in intensifying the dramatic tension. The research methodology is grounded in music theory and contemporary musicological approaches; the empirical basis of the study includes the notated score, relevant scholarly literature, and interviews conducted with the composer.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in the first systematic scholarly analysis of Ahmadov's Requiem within Azerbaijani musicology. The practical significance of the study consists in the applicability of its findings to musicological research, higher music education, and the analytical study of contemporary vocal-symphonic works.

Keywords: vocal-symphonic composition, mugham intonation, modal-harmonic structure, polyphonic texture, memorial music.

INTRODUCTION

The requiem originated within the Western musical tradition as an integral component of Roman Catholic liturgical practice. In Christian doctrine, the requiem is defined as a sacred vocal-instrumental composition based on a fixed religious text and intended for performance during funeral rites or memorial services for the deceased. As a genre, it is traditionally grounded in the Latin liturgical text of the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead. The dramatic and expressive potential inherent in the requiem has historically encouraged composers to reflect the aesthetic principles of their respective stylistic periods, resulting in works characterized by complex formal organization and richly developed polyphonic textures [8].

In contrast, Azerbaijani composers have approached the requiem not as a strictly liturgical form, but rather as a genre capable of conveying memorial, ethical, and philosophical ideas. As emphasized in musicological scholarship, the adaptation of Western sacred genres such as the requiem within Azerbaijani professional music has contributed to the emergence of new compositional models grounded in national modal and intonational thinking [7]. From the second half of the twentieth century onward, Azerbaijani composers increasingly turned to monumental vocal-symphonic forms, incorporating requiem-like structures enriched with elements of national musical language, thereby redefining the genre within a distinct cultural and aesthetic context.

Although compositions explicitly titled Requiem are relatively rare in Azerbaijani music, a substantial body of works with a pronounced memorial orientation can be identified. In the creative practice



of Azerbaijani composers, requiem-related imagery and expressive features do not perform a liturgical function; instead, they are primarily directed toward the commemoration of martyrs, war victims, and national heroes, thereby reinforcing collective historical memory. Within such compositions, individual grief is transformed into a symbol of shared national sorrow, while music functions both as a medium for artistic reflection on historical tragedy and as a means of addressing fundamental philosophical concepts such as death and immortality, destruction and eternity. As noted by art historian and musicologist Leyla Mammadova, contemporary Azerbaijani vocal–symphonic works often incorporate emotional intensity, dramaturgical development, and structural principles characteristic of the requiem genre, even when not explicitly labeled as such [3]. This tendency reflects a broader compositional approach in which Western genre models are reinterpreted through national aesthetic values and expressive priorities, resulting in original memorial forms embedded within the Azerbaijani musical tradition.

The requiem spirit can be discerned in works such as Fikrat Amirov's *Martyrs*, in certain monumental compositions by Arif Melikov, and in other memorial works by Azerbaijani composers. One of the most significant examples of this tradition is Kamal Ahmadov's *Requiem*, dedicated to the memory of fallen martyrs. In this composition, structural elements of the Western requiem tradition are combined with melodic means characteristic of Azerbaijani music, resulting in an original work with a distinctive sonic identity.

The central research problem of this study concerns the scholarly examination of the genre and stylistic features of Kamal Ahmadov's *Requiem*, with particular emphasis on the characteristic elements of its musical language. The study aims to analyze the work's modal–harmonic structure, melodic development, and rhythmic organization, while simultaneously identifying the composer's individual stylistic traits as manifested within the composition.

The relevance of this article primarily derives from its research object. Kamal Ahmadov's *Requiem* is examined here for the first time as a subject of scholarly and analytical inquiry within Azerbaijani musicology, a fact that underscores both the novelty and necessity of the topic. The investigation of the work's genre and stylistic characteristics contributes to a clearer understanding of the position of the requiem genre within national musical culture, while also offering deeper insight into contemporary developmental trends in Azerbaijani composition.

Furthermore, the study is presented for the first time in the format of an academic article, thereby facilitating a systematic theoretical examination of the composer's creative output. Beyond establishing a theoretical foundation for future research, the article also serves to promote a more comprehensive recognition of Azerbaijani compositional practices within both local and international musicological communities.

Research Methods

In order to investigate the musical language of Kamal Ahmadov's *Requiem*, methods of music theory and analytical analysis were employed, alongside comparative analytical approaches. The study systematically examines the work's modal–harmonic structure, melodic and rhythmic characteristics, as well as the composer's individual stylistic features. In addition, interviews and archival materials were consulted to obtain supplementary information, thereby enabling a more comprehensive and multidimensional presentation of the musical analysis. This methodological framework makes it possible to identify the musical structure and creative stylistic principles underlying Ahmadov's *Requiem*.

MAIN PART

General Overview of the Work

The theme of mourning occupies a distinctive place in Kamal Ahmadov's compositional output. His *Requiem* for choir and symphonic orchestra represents one of the most significant works in which this theme is developed. The composition is dedicated to the cherished memory of the vic-



tims of the January 1990 tragedy, who sacrificed their lives for their homeland, and its text is based on bayati, a genre of Azerbaijani folk poetry. The tragic fate of the martyrs, the profound pain and suffering of the people, and an atmosphere of mourning form the central imagery of the work, imparting a deep sense of sorrow and grief throughout the composition.

During the 1990s, while working at the Philharmonic in his native city of Nakhchivan, Ahmadov initially composed Requiem for an orchestra of folk instruments. The work was performed at the Heydar Aliyev Palace, one of Nakhchivan's principal cultural centers, where it achieved considerable success. During this performance, a reciter was added to the composition, delivering bayati verses in a recitative manner, which was met with strong audience approval. In the same period, the work was repeatedly broadcast on Nakhchivan State Television under the title Martyrs Symphony. Subsequently, Ahmadov invited his close friend, Professor Elbeyi Maqsudov—Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences and a member of the Azerbaijan Writers' Union—to compose bayati texts specifically for this work. After the texts were written, the composer added a choral part, later reworking the Requiem first for chamber orchestra and ultimately for large symphonic orchestra. In its final symphonic version, the work was further enriched through the inclusion of a solo tenor part based on the bayati texts. The present study examines this final version for soloist, choir, and symphonic orchestra.

One of the defining features of Requiem is that its entire development is structured around two principal themes. The first, which constitutes the core of the work's dramaturgy, is a four-note "lament" theme derived from the intonations of the Zabul-Segah mugham. The second is a mugham-based theme constructed from elements of the Humayun mode. In a previous study on Ahmadov's Cavid Symphony, it was noted that during his student years the composer developed a creative style that would play a significant role throughout his oeuvre, particularly in fostering polyphonic development, and that a four-note intonational cell emerged as a distinctive personal invention [1]. Ahmadov employs this same intonational cell in Requiem, where it becomes the principal thematic material and acquires the expressive character of a lament.

Within the orchestral palette, the lament theme is primarily carried by the string section, while the mugham theme is predominantly assigned to the woodwind instruments. The lament theme is presented mainly in half-note values, whereas the second theme appears in eighth notes and, at times, in quintuplet figures articulated through sixteenth-note durations. As both themes undergo transposition across different pitch levels, the composer frequently employs the principle of resonance, which contributes to a sense of unity and structural coherence within the composition.

Requiem constitutes a work of unified emotional content, in which the people's anguish over the martyrs and the expression of these emotions as well as the generalized image of martyrdom are conveyed through the synthesis of vocal performance and symphonic musical language. Rather than adhering to a classical formal structure, the composer employs a free imitative form. Throughout the work, polyphonic and homophonic-harmonic textures are integrated in close interaction. Among the various types of polyphonic writing, the composer most frequently utilizes imitative techniques during thematic transitions, thereby generating heightened dramatic development.

As in many of Ahmadov's works, the use of key signatures in Requiem is largely conventional. Drawing upon the freedoms of modern musical language, the composer intensifies chromatic development to such an extent that tonal ambiguity and departure from a fixed tonal center become characteristic features of the work. The modal foundation of the entire composition is dominated by the Humayun mugham. Among Azerbaijani mugham modes, Humayun is recognized as the mode that most profoundly conveys feelings of sorrow and grief. As the eminent composer Uzeyir Hajibeyli observes in *The Fundamentals of Azerbaijani Folk Music*, "Humayun, in terms of its artistic and spiritual impact, evokes a relatively deeper sense of sadness in the listener" [2]. For this reason, the composer deliberately chose this mode as the primary modal basis of the work.



The transitions between thematic materials are presented in the form of waves or phases. Following an initial wave that depicts a mournful and hopeless atmosphere, the composer applies a stylistic approach characteristic of his creative language: within each phase, dynamics are continuously intensified, the orchestral palette is gradually enriched through the inclusion of additional instrumental timbres, the dramatic character is heightened, and the texture is progressively expanded toward the climax. Despite these transformations, the overall atmosphere of mourning remains intact throughout the composition. Between these waves, very brief symphonic transitions—often consisting of only two measures—are inserted. Although limited in duration, these transitions play a significant role in enhancing the overall dynamic momentum of the work.

Ahmadov consistently places strong emphasis on the harmonic background of the orchestra, presenting it with particular richness. In *Requiem*, special attention should be drawn to the ostinato accompaniment provided by the piano and harp. The piano performs harmonically functional chords in a steady rhythmic pattern, continuing throughout the composition and forming an ostinato foundation. The harp supports this texture through continuous arpeggiated chords, another type of ostinato. Together, these rhythmic patterns evoke the heavy, measured footsteps of the people accompanying the martyrs on their final journey.

The choral part, which occupies a central role in the composition, is presented through several compositional techniques. These include the gradual entrance and withdrawal of voices, the doubling of soprano and alto as well as tenor and baritone parts, the assignment of the mugham theme to female voices and the lament theme to male voices in the form of vocalises, among others. The frequent recurrence of the word “martyrs” in the bayati texts sung by the choir serves to emphasize the work’s central narrative. The solo tenor part is narrative in character and is based on a recitative style of singing; the bayati texts are performed primarily through declamation, resembling the traditional lament (*ağrı*) vocal manner.

Analytical Analysis of the Work by Sections

Requiem opens in an *Adagio* tempo with an extremely somber atmosphere, featuring unison passages in the cello and double bass (at the octave), a heavy rhythmic ostinato in the piano, and arpeggiated chords in the harp. This sonic texture immediately evokes a sense of despair in the listener and establishes the leading expressive image of the work from its very first measures.

The image shows a musical score for the introductory section of a work, marked 'Adagio'. It features two staves: the top staff is for the Harp and the bottom staff is for the Piano. The Harp part consists of a series of arpeggiated chords, while the Piano part features a heavy, rhythmic ostinato pattern. The tempo is indicated as 'Adagio' at the beginning of each staff.

Sample 1. Introductory section-Adagio [9]

In this passage, the composer employs the principle of gradual textural and timbral intensification, introducing different orchestral timbres in a sequential manner. While the accompanying background continues, the principal thematic material—the lament theme—is introduced after two measures in the viola section. In the final measure of the theme, an imitative response a perfect fourth higher is presented in the second violins. In the concluding measure of this imitation, the theme is transferred to the viola and cello. At the same point, the choir makes its first entrance into the composition: the soprano and alto voices perform the theme as a vocalise, set at the interval of a perfect fourth.

Sample 2. Lament theme [9]

Beginning from measure 15, noticeable changes in the musical texture emerge. The choral part comes to a halt, and a mugham-based theme constructed on Humayun intonations (Theme II) is introduced in the English horn and first clarinet in the form of a quintuplet figure. Accompanied by this material, the solo tenor enters for the first time with its thematic line.

Sample 3. Theme of solo tenor [9]

The tenor's theme represents an entirely new melodic idea and is not derived from the intonational material of any previously stated theme in the composition. Two measures later, the quintuplet motif is slightly expanded and transferred to the bass clarinet. Subsequently, the same quintuplet figure reappears in the original instruments following the same principle. This method of presentation creates the impression of a thematic relay, in which the material is passed successively from one instrumental voice to another.

When the intonation is introduced in the bass clarinet, the same thematic material is simultaneously presented in its entirety in the first violins at the same pitch level. The cello and double bass perform the lament theme in unison octaves. To conclude the first wave, a two-measure orchestral transition is introduced. Within this brief passage, the composer achieves a rich developmental effect through the principle of resonance: while the mugham theme is articulated by the bass clarinet, contrabassoon, first trumpet, tuba, and first violins, chordal accompaniment is provided by the viola, second trumpet, and trombone. This is followed by a polyphonic transformation of the mugham theme in the English horn and first clarinet. As a result, the leitmotif evoking the memory of the fallen martyrs briefly intensifies and then subsides.

The second wave begins with the thematic material of the solo tenor. In the accompaniment, the primary role is assumed by the first violins, which present the mugham theme, and by the flutes sounding an octave higher, followed by the oboe and second clarinet. The quintuplet figure reappears, progressing chromatically within the intervallic framework of a perfect fourth at its original



pitch level. At the conclusion of this section, another two-measure orchestral transition is introduced.

From measure 30 onward, the initial elements of intensified dramatic development become perceptible. The third wave opens with the lament theme in the cello and double bass, performed in unison. The solo tenor presents its theme once again, this time beginning on the pitch A, accompanied by the mugham theme in the English horn and first clarinet.

From rehearsal number 7 onward, the lament theme in the string section continues through stepwise chromatic ascent by semitone, articulated in parallel chords (four–six chords).

This gradual ascent is also observed in the thematic material of the solo tenor. The musical content of this theme is recitative in character, as if the soloist were delivering a lament (*ağı*) against the orchestral background. Following the unison presentation of the mugham theme in the oboe and second clarinet, a chromatic quintuplet figure is articulated in two consecutive measures.

The chords presented in A minor in the first and second violins undergo modulation to F minor beginning in measure 39. Three measures later, the dynamic tension intensifies. Both principal themes are distributed across different instrumental and vocal parts, generating an increasingly dense polyphonic texture. At this point, the choir enters: the soprano and alto voices are doubled at the interval of a third and derive their material from the mugham theme, while the tenor and baritone voices are likewise doubled at the interval of a fifth, deriving their material from the lament theme. The soprano and alto function in a recitative, narrative role, whereas the tenor and baritone serve a background function through vocalise. The bassoons replicate the choir's recitative material in unison, further reinforcing the thematic texture.

Sample 4. The choir part [9]

From rehearsal number 11 onward, the dramatic tension intensifies further and the score begins to increase in complexity. In the choral texture, the soprano voices and violas perform the mugham theme at the interval of a sixth, while the tenor and baritone voices present the lament theme at the interval of a fifth. The viola, divided (*divisi*), doubles the tenor and baritone theme at the same pitch level. The first and second violins, also divided, repeat the same chordal thematic material together with the French horn. In the woodwind section, the mugham theme is treated imitatively.

From rehearsal number 12 onward, the development moves increasingly toward the climax. The cello and double bass join the viola in presenting the lament theme. Overall, the first and second thematic materials are continuously articulated across a variety of timbres. This sonic texture rises and subsides in a manner reminiscent of ocean waves.

In order to create the dissolution of the melodic flow, the composer employs the principle of gradual diminuendo, reducing the number of timbres, lowering the dynamic level to piano, and significantly simplifying the score. The choral texture is replaced by the solo tenor's recitative passages, while the mugham-derived figures that had previously expanded into melodic material are once



again presented as brief phrases. Accompanied by an organ-point texture in the first flute and first clarinet, the lament theme appears for the final time in the second violin and cello. In the closing measures of the work, the sound gradually fades through diminuendo until it becomes almost imperceptible. The complete exhaustion of melodic energy evokes a symbolic farewell to the martyrs.

CONCLUSION

The conducted research demonstrates that Kamal Ahmadov's Requiem has been examined for the first time as an object of scholarly analysis within Azerbaijani musicology, thereby enabling an in-depth investigation of the work's genre, stylistic, modal-harmonic, and melodic-rhythmic characteristics.

1. The analysis reveals that the developmental trajectory of the composition is constructed around two principal thematic sources: a four-voice "lament" theme based on the intonations of the Zabul-Segah mode, and a mugham-based theme grounded in the elements of the Humayun mode.
2. These themes convey the emotional content of the work, expressing the people's spiritual attachment to the martyrs and their collective grief through the synthesis of vocal and symphonic means of expression.
3. Textural analysis indicates that the composition predominantly employs a free imitative form, in which polyphonic and homophonic-harmonic writing are applied alternately or in parallel, while chromatic development serves to intensify musical tension.
4. The thematic materials are developed according to a "wave-phase" principle, culminating in a climax through the gradual enrichment of orchestral timbres. Within the orchestral texture, the piano's chordal ostinato and the harp's arpeggiated ostinato provide rhythmic support. The choral part is structured through the gradual entrance and withdrawal of voices and is unified by the recurring leitmotif of the word "martyrs."
5. Kamal Ahmadov's Requiem integrates Western requiem structures with national intonational and modal traditions, functioning as a memorial vocal-symphonic work that transforms the idea of martyrdom into an artistic symbol.
6. The composition not only reflects the composer's individual stylistic identity but also serves as an important medium for presenting the richness and diversity of Azerbaijani musical culture at the international level.

In conclusion, Kamal Ahmadov's Requiem constitutes a significant theoretical contribution to Azerbaijani musicology while simultaneously providing a practical foundation for future research. The analysis systematically reveals the work's artistic and emotional value and clarifies the position of the requiem genre within national musical culture.

Recommendations

1. The present study, based on a systematic analysis of the Requiem, provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for future research in the fields of musicology and composition. The findings enable comparative analyses between this work and other national and international requiem compositions.
2. The results of the research may be utilized to promote the work at the international level and to enhance the visibility of Azerbaijani compositional art within global musical culture. To this end, it is recommended that the work be disseminated through performances, concert programs, and scholarly publications.
3. The music-theoretical and analytical methods, as well as contemporary musicological approaches applied in the analysis of the Requiem, may contribute to the development of more complex and innovative analytical frameworks in future studies.
4. A detailed examination of the orchestral and choral scores of the Requiem is of significant importance for music education and the enrichment of performers' repertoires. Such study supports



both the preservation of national musical traditions and the development of students' musical expression and technical skills.

5. The scholarly analysis of Kamal Ahmadov's Requiem may serve as an important teaching resource for students pursuing education in the field of music.

6. This research creates opportunities for more comprehensive future analyses of the composer's works across various musical genres.

7. The knowledge obtained through this study constitutes a valuable resource for future researchers and practitioners, who may draw upon its findings in academic articles, diploma theses, and doctoral dissertations.

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BƏSTƏKAR KAMAL ƏHMƏDOVUN "REKVİYEM" ƏSƏRİNİN JANR VƏ ÜSLUB XÜSUSİYYƏTLƏRİ

R.Y. Məmmədova

Tədqiqatın məqsədi bəstəkar Kamal Əhmədovun "Rekviyem" əsərinin janr və üslub xüsusiyyətlərini, lad–harmonik quruluşunu, melodik–ritmik inkişaf prinsiplərini və müəllifin fərdi yaradıcılıq üslubunu nəzəri-analitik baxımdan araşdırmaqdır. Əsər 1990-cı il 20 Yanvar faciəsi qurbanlarının xatirəsinə həsr olunmuşdur və poetik mətn Azərbaycan xalq poeziyasının ən qədim janrlarından biri olan bayatıya əsaslanır. Kompozisiyanın dramaturji inkişafı iki aparıcı tematik mənbə üzərində qurulur: Zabul-Segah intonasiyalarından yaranan dörd səslə "ağı" teması və Humayun ladinin melodik elementlərinə söykənən muğam tipli tema.

Təhlil göstərir ki, vokal və simfonik ifadənin sintezi əsərin əsas emosional məzmununu ümummilli hüznü və şəhidlərə mənəvi bağlılığı formalaşdırır. Faktura baxımından sərbəst imitasiyalı polifoniya homofon-harmonik yazı ilə növbələşir, xromatik inkişaf isə dramatik gərginliyi gücləndirir. Tədqiqat musiqi nəzəriyyəsi və müasir musiqişünaslıq metodlarına əsaslanır; empirik baza kimi partitura materialı, elmi ədəbiyyat və bəstəkarla aparılmış müsahibələrdən istifadə olunmuşdur.

Tədqiqatın elmi yeniliyi Kamal Əhmədovun "Rekviyem"-inin Azərbaycan musiqişünaslığında ilk dəfə sistemli şəkildə elmi obyekt kimi təhlil edilməsidir. İşin tətbiqi əhəmiyyəti nəticələrin musi-



qişünaslıq tədqiqatlarında, ali musiqi təhsilində və müasir vokal-simfonik əsərlərin analitik öyrənilməsində istifadə oluna bilməsindən ibarətdir.

Açar sözlər: *vokal-simfonik yaradıcılıq, muğam intonasiyası, lad-harmonik quruluş, polifonik faktura, memorial musiqi.*

ЖАНРОВО-СТИЛЕВЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ «РЕКВИЕМА» КОМПОЗИТОРА КАМАЛА АХМЕДОВА

Р.Я. Мамедова

Целью настоящего исследования является теоретико-аналитическое изучение жанрово-стилистических особенностей *Реквиема* композитора Камала Ахмедова с акцентом на его ладо-гармоническую структуру, мелодико-ритмическое развитие и индивидуальные черты авторского стиля. Произведение посвящено памяти жертв трагических событий 20 января 1990 года, а его поэтический текст основан на *баяты* одном из древнейших жанров азербайджанской народной поэзии. Драматургическое развитие композиции формируется на основе двух ведущих тематических источников: четырёхголосной «плачевой» темы, восходящей к интонациям Забил–Сегях, и мугамной темы, построенной на мелодических элементах лада Хумаюн.

Анализ показывает, что синтез вокального и симфонического начал определяет основное эмоционально-смысловое содержание произведения, передавая коллективную национальную скорбь и духовную преданность памяти шахидов. С фактурной точки зрения в сочинении чередуются свободная имитационная полифония и гомофонно-гармоническое письмо, тогда как хроматическое развитие играет существенную роль в усилении драматического напряжения. Методологическая основа исследования опирается на музыкально-теоретические положения и современные музыковедческие подходы; эмпирическую базу составляют нотный текст произведения, профильная научная литература и интервью с композитором.

Научная новизна исследования заключается в том, что *Реквием* Камала Ахмедова впервые рассматривается как объект системного научного анализа в азербайджанском музыковедении. Практическая значимость работы состоит в возможности использования её результатов в музыковедческих исследованиях, системе высшего музыкального образования и аналитическом изучении современных вокально-симфонических произведений.

Ключевые слова: *вокально-симфоническое творчество, мугамная интонация, ладо-гармоническая структура, полифоническая фактура; мемориальная музыка.*