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Technique of Musical Composition

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Operatic forms of Mikhail Glinka in the context of Western European theory and practice

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Abstract. The article focuses on the musical forms in Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka's operas *A Life for the Tsar* and *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, examined from the standpoint of their relation to the theoretical views and operatic practice of the 19th century. Particular attention is paid to comparing the views on the nature of musical form held by Glinka and his teacher Siegfried Dehn, as well as Adolf Bernhard Marx, the author of fundamental works on composition theory.

Translated by Thomas A. Beavitt

A detailed analysis of the rondo form in Glinka's arias revealed a connection with its treatment in Marx's *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition, praktisch-theoretisch* and Reicha/Czerny's *Traité de haute composition musicale*, demonstrating its influence on variations with a soprano ostinato. The relation of large-scale vocal forms to the theory of the Italian *la solita forma* is equally thoroughly investigated; tables are provided illustrating the precise adherence to typical models of this structure in Glinka's arias. As a result, it is concluded that Glinka assimilated and adapted European compositional experience, introducing significant individual accents: the complication of structural models, and a special role for architectonic proportionality and symmetry of form. The results of the analytical study allow for new emphases in understanding Glinka's style.

Keywords: Mikhail I. Glinka, Adolf B. Marx, Siegfried Dehn, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, *A Life for the Tsar*, rondo form, soprano ostinato variations, *la solita forma*, musical form, symmetries in musical form, proportions in musical form

Acknowledgments: The author expresses gratitude to Dr. Sci. Svetlana Konstantinovna Lashchenko for the opportunity to participate in the International Conference *Mikhail Glinka and Russian Artistic Culture of the 19th–21st Centuries: The Experience of Performing, Critical, and Scholarly Interpretation* (October 16–17, 2024, State Institute for Art Studies), where the ideas presented in the article were tested.

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Техника музыкальной композиции

Научная статья

Оперные формы М. И. Глинки в контексте западноевропейской теории и практики

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена музыкальным формам в операх Михаила Ивановича Глинки «Жизнь за царя» и «Руслан и Людмила», рассмотренным с точки зрения их отношения к теоретическим воззрениям и оперной практике XIX века. Особое внимание уделено сопоставлению воззрений на природу музыкальной формы Глинки и его учителя Зигфрида Дена, а также Адольфа Бернгарда Маркса, автора фундаментальных трудов по теории композиции.

Детальный анализ формы рондо в ариях Глинки позволил выявить тесную связь с ее трактовкой в работе Маркса *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition, praktisch-theoretisch* и Антонина Рейхи *Vollständiges Lehrbuch der musikalischen Compozition. Aus Französischen ins Deutsch übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Carl Czerny*, влияние принципов организации рондо на вариации на сопрано *ostinato*. Столь же основательно исследовано отношение крупных вокальных форм и теории итальянской *la solita forma*, приведены таблицы, иллюстрирующие точное следование типичным образцам этой структуры в ариях Глинких. В результате сделан вывод, что Глинка усвоил и адаптировал европейский опыт композиции, сделав существенные индивидуальные акценты: усложнение структурных образцов, особая роль архитектонической соразмерности и симметричности формы. Результаты аналитического исследования позволили внести новые нюансы в понимание глинкинского стиля.

Ключевые слова: Михаил Иванович Глинка, Адольф Бернхард Маркс, Зигфрид Ден, «Руслан и Людмила», «Жизнь за царя», форма рондо, вариации на сопрано-остинато, *la solita forma*, музыкальная форма, симметрии и пропорции в музыкальной форме

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Introduction

Over the last three decades, a major trend in Russian studies into the composer Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka (1804–1857) involves a consideration of his work through the prism of Western European music of his time. This approach undermines the firmly rooted assessment of Glinka as a composer whose achievements are associated more with overcoming the European experience than with its acceptance and adaptation. For a long time, musicological studies of his work neglected any serious comparison with examples of Western music, above which, as Anatoly Tsuker writes, "he towered like a majestic Mont Blanc, and certainly did not permit the very thought of his inheritance of Western European traditions" [1, p. 15]. This interpretation was dominant not only in popular Russian discourses but also in the scholarly literature. Tsuker defined the critical analysis of this and other well-established assessments as demythologisation, which, in relation to the personality and music of Glinka, became almost the main tendency in Russian musicology of the first quarter of the 21st century [1, p. 12].

In a two-volume collection of articles based on materials from international conferences held at the Moscow and St. Petersburg conservatories to mark the 200th anniversary of the composer's birth (2004), this tendency was fully evident [2]. The formula "Glinka and…" has acquired a tendency to be applied to a wide range of musical phenomena: from opera plots to orchestral writing.

Among the latest works of this kind, published in the year of the 220th anniversary of the composer's birth (2024), we note the article by Nina Pilipenko, which compared musical interpretations of Franz Schubert and Glinka of the text of the aria Pietro Metastasio *Mio ben ricordati* from the opera *Alessandro nell' Indie* [3]. Glinka's perception of Italian opera is examined in the article by Alexander Filippov [4]. Svetlana Lashchenko, in her analysis of Lyudmila Shestakova's memoir essay *The Last Years of the Life and Death of Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka*,[1] repeatedly touches upon the issue of the composer's diverse Western European contacts [5]. Alla Korobova's article, which presents a comparison of Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar*

[1] Shestakova, L. I. (1870). Poslednie gody zhizni i konchina M. I. Ginki (Vospominanie L. I. Shestakovoj) [The Last Years of the Life and Death of Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka (Memories of L. I. Shestakova)]. 1854–1857. *Russkaya starina* [*Russian antiquity*], *2*, 610–632.

and Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* [6], is one of the latest in a series of studies of parallels and intersections in 19th-century musical theatre, a problem that is attracting much scholarly attention in the 21st century.[2]

However, among such comparative studies, it seems that the least fortunate are questions of operatic form—and, more broadly, musical form in general. This served as the impetus for an attempt, as far as possible, to reconstruct Glinka's attitude to Western European theory and practice of musical form in the first half of the 19th century.

Glinka and Siegfried Dehn

Studies addressing the composer's relationship to German theoretical thought generally begin with the name of Siegfried Wilhelm Dehn. (1799–1858, *Illustration 1*).

Dehn, a highly educated and authoritative musician who held the post of keeper of the Royal Library in Berlin, took part in the publication of the *Collected Works* of Johann Sebastian Bach in the Leipzig publishing house Peters and is known as a specialist in early music. He is the author of two works: *Theoretisch-praktische Harmonielehre mit angefügten Generalbaßbeispielen* (1840) and *Lehre vom Contrapunkt, Canon und Fuge* (1859).[3] Glinka studied with Dehn during his stay in Berlin in 1833–1834 and 1856–1857 (*Illustration 2*). His well-known attitude towards these activities is the subject of a much-quoted fragment from the *Notes*:

> ...I studied with him for about 5 months [...] He put my theoretical knowledge in order...
>
> [...] There is no doubt that I am more indebted to D e h n than to any of my other maestros; as a r e v i e w e r for the Leipzig music newspaper, he not only brought my knowledge into order, but also my ideas about art in general, and from his lectures I began to work not by touch, but with consciousness. Moreover, he did not torment me in a school-like and systematic way; on the contrary, almost every lesson revealed something new and interesting to me.[4]

[2] Such intersections in Glinka's operatic works are specially examined in the dissertation: Nagin, R. A. (2011). *Opernoe tvorchestvo M. I. Glinki v kontekste zapadnoevropeiskogo muzykal'nogo teatra XVIII – pervoi poloviny XIX vekov* [Mikhail Glinka's Operatic Works in the Context of the Western European Musical Theatre of the 18th and the First Half of the 19th Centuries]. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Gnesin Russian Academy of Music. (In Russ.).

[3] Dehn, S. W. (1840). *Theoretisch-praktische Harmonielehre mit angefügten Generalbaßbeispielen*. Verlag von Wilhelm Thone; Dehn, S. W. (1859). *Lehre vom Contrapunkt, Canon und Fuge*. Schneider.

[4] Glinka, M. I. (1988). *Zapiski* [Notes]. Muzyka, p. 60.

Illustration 1. Siegfried Wilhelm Dehn. Portrait by Adolph Menzel (1854)
Retrieved November 20, 2025, from
https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siegfried_Wilhelm_Dehn#/media/Datei:Siegfried_Wilhelm_Dehn.jpg

In the margins of the same manuscript, Glinka wrote the aphoristic assessment of the teacher's personality—"And undoubtedly the first musical healer in Europe".[5] He would repeat this comment in a letter to Konstantin Alexandrovich Bulgakov.[6]

[5] Glinka (1988), p. 60. (The original punctuation has been preserved.)

[6] "…Despite the severe fatigue, I am already working diligently with my teacher, Professor Dehn—the first healer in the world." Letter dated May 25/June 6, 1856 (Bogdanov-Berezovsky, V. M. (Ed.). (1953). *Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka. Literaturnoe nasledie* [Literary Heritage]: *Vol. 2: Pis'ma i dokumenty* [*Letters and Documents*]. USSR Acad. Sci. Publ., p. 588).

Illustration 2. Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka. Portrait of Yakov F. Yanenko, 1840s
Retrieved November 20, 2025, from
https://history.ru/read/articles/kratkii-kurs-istorii-mikhail-glinka

A whole series of publications, based to varying degrees on the text of the *Notes*, have been devoted to Glinka's studies with Dehn, and the composer's opinion has given rise to far from unambiguous comments. The discussion, spread out over time, spanned almost a century and a half—from the composer's death until the end of the 20th century. For the most part, the comments were critical. Boris Vladimirovich Asafyev repeatedly returned to this episode of Glinka's biography. In a 1942 pamphlet, while recognising Dehn's status as "one of the most advanced music teachers"[7]

[7] Asafyev, B. V. (1952). M. I. Glinka. In B. V. Asafiev. *Izbrannye trudy* [*Selected Works*]: *Vol. 1: Izbrannye raboty o Glinke* [*Selected Works on Glinka*]. USSR Acad. Sci. Publ., p. 45.

of his time and citing Glinka's characterisation, he nevertheless does everything to downplay Dehn's importance, if not disavow it altogether. The German scholar was accorded a largely formal function: "Glinka had to appear in St. Petersburg with a sort of 'diploma from a German'—otherwise he would have been considered an ignoramus and would not have been given any chance at all".[8] Five years later, in 1947, in his classic monograph, Asafiev spoke more cautiously, but even this time he was not inclined to extol the merits of the German theorist, recognising him only as the "intelligent organiser" of Glinka's already existing compositional knowledge.[9]

Among the works touching on this topic and appearing in recent times, the article by Vera Aleksandrovna Savintseva, which is based on a thorough study of various sources, seems to me to be particularly significant [7]. Its pathos lies precisely in drawing a line between such characteristics and the real state of affairs, which can only be judged after a meticulous study of all the documentary material related to Dehn's lessons. This material gives us every right to trust the assessment of Glinka himself, who treated his teacher with great respect.

Glinka briefly outlined the content of his studies with Dehn in his Notes: "the science of harmony, or *basso continuo*, the science of melody, or counterpoint and orchestration".[10] As can be seen, questions of musical form theory are not mentioned here; therefore, it can be assumed that, if they were discussed, it was only in passing. However, indirect evidence of Dehn's attitude to musical form is found in his 1854 letter to Glinka, where he praises the works of his Russian student and colleague:

> ...sie sich durch die glücklichste Wahl und Erfindung originellen Themas, durch saubere und effektvolle Ausführung des ganzen und endlich auch durch geniale Oekonomie in Anwendung der Mittel zur Ausführung wie auch durch die vollendete Abrundung der Form der einzelnen Teile und durch Klarheit des ganzen auf eine hohe Kunststufe gestellt haben.[11]

[8] Asafyev (1952), p. 49.
[9] Asafyev (1952), p. 78.
[10] Glinka (1988), p. 60.
[11] Letter from S. Dehn to M. I. Glinka dated September 2, 1854. As cite in: Kiselev, V. A., Livanova, T. N., & Protopopov, V. V. (1958). *Pamyati Glinki (1857–1957). Issledovaniya i materialy* [*In Memory of Glinka (1857–1957). Materials and Methods*]. USSR Acad. Sci. Publ., pp. 478, 480.

In addition to its characterisation of Glinka's music, this quote is also important because it allows us to gain some insight into Dehn's priorities in matters of musical form. In his judgment, he outlined the various aspects of a musical composition—thematic material, texture, performance instructions, and, finally, the most important aspect, viz. its structure as an organised whole. This interpretation refers to the understanding of musical form in its classical, exemplary sense, which was widespread in Germany at that time and, of course, particularly intelligible to the people of Berlin, where in the 1820s at the University of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel gave his famous lectures on aesthetics, published in the 1830s–1840s. Dehn's wariness of new ("romantic") trends in art is well known. "…Die sogenannte Zukuftsmusik von Wagner und von unserem Pianisten di primo rango, Franz Liszt hier in Berlin vollständig fiasco gemacht hat, was ich den Leuten im Voraus gesagt habe", he reported to Glinka on 3 April 1856.[12] Contrasting them with Gluck, Mozart and Cherubini, he reminded his student of his own words: "*L'Allemagne c'est le pays Classique!…*"[13]

The closeness of Dehn's formulations to another document seems obvious: a letter, written by Glinka to Vladimir Kashperov (1826–1894) in 1856, two years after Dehn's correspondence. A particularly telling fragment from this letter could be called "Glinka's Theses on Composition":

> 1) *Feelings* (L'art c'est le sentiment)—it originates in inspiration from above.
>
> 2) *Forms*. *Forme* means *beauty*, that is, the proportionality of parts to constitute a *harmonious* whole.
>
> Feeling creates—gives the main idea, *form*—clothes the idea in decent, *suitable* garments.
>
> *Conventional forms*, such as canons, fugues, waltzes, quadrilles, etc., all have a *historical* basis.

[12] As cited in: Kiselev, Livanova, & Protopopov (1958), pp. 490, 492. The legacy of Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842) today loses out in its historical significance and popularity to the masterpieces of Gluck and Mozart. But for Dehn he was an undoubted authority, if only because Dehn himself studied with Bernhard Klein (1793–1832), who in turn was a student of Luigi Cherubini.

[13] As cited in: Kiselev, Livanova, & Protopopov (1958), pp. 490, 492.

> *Feeling and form* are soul and body. The first is a gift of the highest grace, the second is acquired through labour—and an experienced and intelligent advisor is not at all a superfluous person.[14]

In his second thesis, Glinka, in asserting that "*Forme* means *beauty*, that is, the proportionality of parts to constitute a *harmonious* whole", actually repeated Dehn's formulation. The feelings given by inspiration and divine grace that he mentions are nothing more than an impulse to invent original thematic ideas, about which Dehn also wrote. Here they are in close contact.

But Glinka does not stop there. The letter contains three more statements: about the relationship between feeling and form—in other words, about content and form, about certain "conventional" forms, and about the role of the teacher in studying the art of composition. These conclusions were apparently drawn by Glinka largely on the basis of his own experience. At the same time, they resonate with other ideas that had become widespread in Berlin musical circles during the years of his visits.

Glinka and Adolf Bernhard Marx

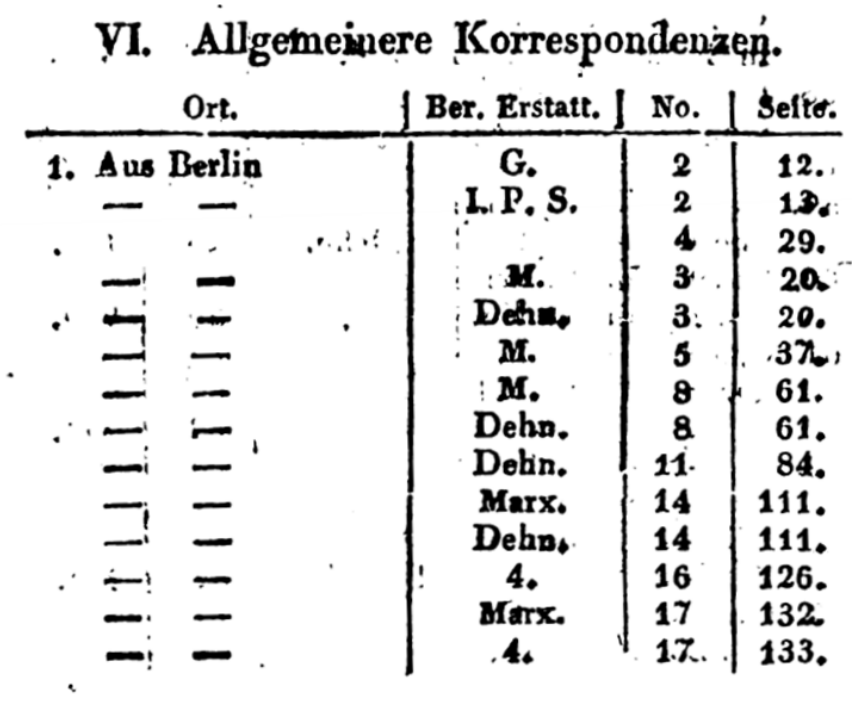
There are no obvious reasons or any documentary evidence to justifiably place the two names of Glinka and Adolf Bernhard Marx (1795–1866) side by side. We do not know whether Glinka was personally acquainted with Marx; there is not a single mention of this in his letters or in his Notes. But it is highly probable that he would have heard of the German scholar and teacher. Marx lived and worked in Berlin and played a very significant role in the musical life of the Prussian capital: in 1832, shortly before the arrival of the Russian composer, he took the post of musical director at the University of Berlin on the recommendation of Felix Mendelssohn (*Illustration 3*).

It is reasonable to assume that Dehn could have introduced Glinka to Marx. The two Berlin theorists certainly moved in the same professional circles. It is known, for example, that for four years (1825–1828) Dehn wrote regularly for *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, which was headed by Marx; indeed, their names stand next to each other in the index of articles (*Illustration 4*). However, it should be emphasised that there is no evidence to suggest that

[14] Letter to V. N. Kashperov dated 10/22 July 1856. See Bogdanov-Berezovsky (1953), pp. 602–603.

Glinka made Marx' acquaintance. Indeed, the radically different views on music, composition theory and music pedagogy articulated by the two German theorists would hardly have contributed to their close personal communication and would have provided no obvious reason for introducing Marx to a Russian composer taking counterpoint lessons in Berlin.

Illustration 3. Adolf Bernhard Marx. Lithographie von Georg Engelbach, gedruckt vom Königl. Lithograph. Institut Berlin, erschienen bei Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1848



VI. Allgemeinere Korrespondenzen.

Ort.	Ber. Erstatt.	No.	Seite.
1. Aus Berlin	G.	2	12.
— —	L. P. S.	2	13.
		4	29.
— —	M.	3	20.
— —	Dehn.	3	20.
— —	M.	5	37.
— —	M.	8	61.
— —	Dehn.	8	61.
— —	Dehn.	11	84.
— —	Marx.	14	111.
— —	Dehn.	14	111.
— —	4.	16	126.
— —	Marx.	17	132.
— —	4.	17	133.

Illustration 4. Fragment of the articles index in the *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* for 1826

In 1841, after the publication of the first two volumes of his textbook on composition,[15] Marx published a sharp polemical pamphlet, *Die alte Musiklehre im Streit mit unserer Zeit*.[16] The main thrust of the work lay in its criticism of the existing "teachings" for their guild narrow-mindedness, isolation from real compositional practice, and orientation towards old, ossified rules, with Marx choosing Dehn as his main opponent, whose work *Theoretisch-praktische Harmonielehre mit angefügten Generalbaßbeispielen* had just appeared the year before, in 1840. The 170-page pamphlet, not so much theoretical as musical-publicistic, arose as a response to the apology for the technique of basso continuo by Dehn, the "freshest" of a number of such conservative works from Marx's point of view. The establishment of *basso continuo* as the basis of the composition of a musical work provoked a fierce critical reaction [8, p. 51].

[15] Marx, A. B. (1837, 1838, 1845, 1847). *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Composition, praktisch-theoretisch* (In 4 Teilen). Breitkopf & Härtel.

[16] Marx, A. B. (1841). *Die alte Musiklehre im Streit mit unserer Zeit*. Breitkopf und Härtel.

Moreover, Marx categorically objected to Dehn's position, which left the mastery of musical form to the independent work of the student. He quoted a fragment from his *Theoretisch-praktische Harmonielehre mit angefügten Generalbaßbeispielen*: "[An diese] muss sich die weitere Kompositionslehre anschliessen, welche jedoch zum grossen Theil der bereits in der Lehre des Kontrapunkts und der Fuge vollkommen ausgebildete angehende Komponist besser durch eigne Anschauung und analytische Zergliederung anerkannter Kunstwerke älterer und neuerer Zeit, als aus einem Lehrbuche lernen kann".[17] Challenging this assertion, Marx formulated a statement about the importance of studying musical forms and genres, which is, in fact, the cornerstone of his fundamental work, *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*. In other words, the controversy that arose apparently in connection with a purely narrow professional question about the role of *basso continuo*, ultimately led to the problem of composer education in general and the confrontation between the "old" and the "new," "tradition" and "progress" in musical art. In this controversy, Dehn was assigned the role of a retrograde, while Marx represented the "avant-garde."

If we take into account that in Marx's life and work the professional was closely intertwined with the personal (the history of his relationship with Mendelssohn is evidence of this) then it is clear that his contacts with Dehn could not have been particularly close, not only in the 1840s, after the differences had already become clearly evident, but even earlier, in the 1830s. Dehn, in turn, certainly adhered to his own position in his studies with Glinka.

All the more remarkable is the coincidence of three of the five theses on composition that were set out by Glinka in a letter to Kashperov with Marx's ideas. One of them is the question of the relationship between content and form in a musical work. Glinka designates content with the word "feeling" ("chuvstvo"), while Marx specifies it precisely as *der Inhalt*, but in fact they are writing about the same thing albeit the German scholar in detail and verbosely, while the Russian composer is more aphoristic:

[17] Dehn, S. W. (1840). *Theoretisch-praktische Harmonielehre mit angefügten Generalbaßbeispielen*. Verlag von Wilhelm Thone, p. 308. As cited in: Marx, A. B. (1841). *Die alte Musiklehre im Streit mit unserer Zeit*. Breitkopf und Härtel, p. 22.

Marx	Glinka
Form ist die Weise, wie der Inhalt des Werks—die Empfindung, Vorstellung, Idee des Komponisten—äusserlich, Gestalt worden ist, und man hat die Form des Kunstwerks näher und bestimmer als Aeusserung, … Gestaltwerden seines Inhalts zu bezeichen.[18]	Feeling creates—gives the main idea, *form*—clothes the idea in a decent, *suitable* garments.[19]

The points of contact are equally obvious in the attitude towards musical form as an independent phenomenon requiring special training—and, importantly, under the guidance of an experienced mentor.

Marx	Glinka
Die Bildung für Kunst beruht wesentlich und zum grossen Theil auf Entführung und feststellung in den Formen und ihrem Geist; ohne Formerkentniss bleibt jedes Werk […] ein unbestimmt Etwas…[20]	*Feeling and form* are soul and body. The first is a gift of the highest grace, the second is acquired through labour—and an experienced and intelligent advisor is not at all a superfluous person.[21]

Finally, the "conventional forms" mentioned by Glinka in his letter to Kashperov (canons, fugues, waltzes and quadrilles) are nothing more than the "applied forms" in Marx's Theory of Composition, which are intended to put the principles of the general theory into practical use. Thus, there is no basis for any claim that these similarities demonstrate a direct influence of German theory, specifically Marx's views, on Glinka. Nevertheless, the similarities are still significant, as are some of the ideas concerning other aspects of musical art, such as the composer's relationship to folk song and the necessity of a national opera, which are shared by both. Glinka's operatic forms, which are the primary focus of our article, suggest that the composer was well aware of contemporaneous German ideas about compositional structures.

[18] Marx, A. B. (1847). *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Composition, praktisch-theoretisch* (Vol. 2, 3rd ed.). Breitkopf und Härtel, p. 5.
[19] Letter to V. N. Kashperov dated 10/22 July 1856. See Bogdanov-Berezovsky (1953), p. 603.
[20] Marx, A. B. (1868). *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition, praktisch-theoretisch*. (Vol. 3. 4th ed.). Breitkopf und Härtel, p. 605.
[21] Letter to V. N. Kashperov dated 10/22 July 1856. See Bogdanov-Berezovsky (1953), p. 603.

Rondo

Glinka's rondos bear a clear imprint of Western European theory and practice.[22] Considering vocal arias, the first two that come to mind are Antonida's from *A Life for the Tsar* and Farlaf's from *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. Glinka himself called them "rondo," apparently referring to the genre rather than the actual form—that is, he did the same as, for example, Ludwig van Beethoven in his piano sonatas.[23] The fast part of Antonida's aria (Act I) has a structure that in the Russian theory of musical form is usually defined somewhat vaguely (rondo-like form with the scheme *a - passage - a' - passage - a"*) due to the discrepancy between its thematic plan and the scheme of a typical rondo with two contrasting episodes (*abaca*) (*Table 1*):

Table 1. Antonida's rondo:

1)	A-flat major modulation E-flat major	E-flat major modulation C minor	A-flat major	D-flat major modulation F minor	A-flat major	A-flat major
2)	MT	passage	MT	passage	MT	Coda
3)	27	16	27	10+7	29	15

1) key; 2) form (MT — main theme); 3) number of bars

The tonal and functional plans of Antonida's rondo completely coincide with the description that Marx gave of the first of the five rondo forms that make up his system. Refrain (Marx prefers the term *der Hauptsatz*), sounding in A-flat major, alternates with the tonally unstable passages of *der Gang*, plural *die Gänge*.[24] According to Marx, this form, like other types of rondo, is more suitable for instrumental music, "denn der Vokalsatz unterliegt … ganz andern Erwährungen."[25]

[22] Tatyana Yu. Chernova writes about the use of German rondo forms in Glinka's romances [9].

[23] Beethoven often described as rondo not only the movements written in this form (e.g., the finale of the sonata op. 53), but also those that in the modern sense are considered "rondo-sonatas" (finales of op. 2 no. 2, op. 7, op. 10 no. 3); sometimes movements in the form of a rondo (*abaca*) did not receive such a designation (e.g., the finale of the sonata op. 14 no. 2).

[24] The first form of rondo in Marx's interpretation, as a rule, has three parts. Its five-part structure is also acceptable as a variant of the basic structure. Marx, A. B. (1868) *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition* (Vol. 3), pp. 573–576.

[25] Marx (1868), p. 129.

This verdict is refuted by Glinka's aria, an example which Marx logically could not have known, as well as by examples from the music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, which he certainly knew—Figaro's aria *Non più andrai farfallone amoroso* and Don Giovanni's aria "with champagne" *Fin c'han dal vino calda la testa*. However, as has already been remarked, Glinka, in turn, was unlikely to have been intimately familiar with Marx's theory, but at the same time, he undoubtedly knew the examples given from Mozart's operas. In other words, quite in the spirit of Dehn's recommendations and 18th-century practice, he apparently drew information about musical forms directly from the experience of other masters.

Thus, while it is difficult to speak of the existence of any specific model for Antonida's *Rondo*, it is also impossible to ignore a certain similarity with Mozart's arias. In *Non più andrai farfallone amoroso*, the presence, as in the Rondo of Antonida, of identical material in the episodes—a kind of "chorus"—is noteworthy.[26] The same technique makes Antonida's *Rondo* related to Don Giovanni's aria, and in this case the same material is presented in different keys (keys of mediant and submediant in Glinka; dominant and tonic in Mozart). It can be stated with great confidence that all these arias implement a similar compositional principle.

Farlaf's *Rondo* from Ruslan and Lyudmila has a more complex structure. To use Marx's terminology, its basis is The third rondo form, which belongs to the so-called "higher forms of rondo" and has, in addition to the *Hauptsatz*, two more *Seitensätze* (secondary themes) (*Table 2*). This structure is traditionally considered fundamental to the rondo genre, where the refrain (according to Marx, the main theme) alternates with various, non-recurring episodes (*a b a c a)*.

Table 2. Farlaf's *Rondo*:

1)	F	d	F	B-flat	F	D→b	d	F	F
2)	MT	1 ST	MT	2 ST	MT	passage	1 ST	MT	Coda
3)	*a*	*b*	*a*	*c*	*a*	*b*+*c*	*b*	*a*	
4)	16	16	16	48	16	46	16	16	114

1) key; 2) form (MT — main theme , ST—secondary theme); 3) theme; 4) number of bars (uppercase letters—major key, lowercase letters—minor key)

[26] This example was appropriately noted by St. Petersburg authors: Afonina, N. I., Goryachikh, V. V., & Kulmina, N. I. (Eds.). (2022). *Forms of Vocal Music: A Textbook on Analysis*. Compozitor Publ. House • Saint-Petersburg, p. 248.

However, if we consider the composition as a whole, and not just its structural basis, then Farlaf's aria noticeably deviates from Marx's description. There are many differences. After the third refrain, a large developmental section follows (46 bars), then the first episode (the first secondary theme) is repeated along with the refrain. Even if we do not take into account the enormous coda, the scheme of both Marx's rondo and typical examples of this form among composers of the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries is violated in Farlaf's aria. The actual "rondo scheme", which takes up 112 bars, a little more than a third of the total length, is dominated by the pulsation of uniform sixteen-bars, the remaining two-thirds being additions, including more subdivided and less symmetrical chains of motifs.

The search for a model from which Glinka could draw inspiration, whether in contemporary opera or in earlier vocal and instrumental music, proves to be as difficult as in the case of Antonida's rondo. In terms of style, the swirling flow of Farlaf's patter, driven mad by the anticipation of his triumph, undoubtedly evokes associations with similar ostinato build-ups in the comic operas of Gioachino Rossini. A tempting—and, in our view, even provocative—parallel arises with the already mentioned aria of Don Giovanni. In this case, Farlaf turns out to be a parodic, even farcical version of the famous lover, singing his monstrous Russian "champagne aria" with exaggerated force and scope. However, it is not possible to find any obvious analogues of a similarly developed rondo form among other masters.

Except for one sample. This was, however, not revealed in a musical composition, but in a theoretical treatise.

Anton Reicha's Rondo

The Czech composer Anton Reicha (1770–1836), who worked in both Paris and Vienna, gained fame primarily as a teacher (*Illustration 5*). Among his students were Hector Berlioz, Franz Liszt, Charles Gounod, and César Franck. The appearance of his theoretical works, including *Traité de haute composition musicale* (*The Study of Musical Composition*), was also connected with teaching. The two-volume work, including 10 chapters, was published in France (Zetter, 1824–1826), then translated

by Carl Czerny and published in Vienna with parallel texts in French and German (Diabelli, 1832).[27]

Illustration 5. Anton Reicha. Portrait by Eleonore A. von Steuben
Retrieved November 20, 2025, from
https://collectionsdumusee.philharmoniedeparis.fr/doc/MUSEE/0157073

[27] Reiha, A. (n.d.). *Vollständiges Lehrbuch der musikalischen Composition. Aus Französischen ins Deutsch übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Carl Czerny*. Ant. Diabelli und Comp.

Even a cursory glance at this treatise convinces us of its fundamental nature and, at the same time, its practical orientation. The chapters devoted to harmony, counterpoint and fugue are most thoroughly developed. Musical forms are discussed in the concluding tenth chapter. Its relatively small size does not prevent Reicha from demonstrating his characteristic originality in the interpretation of the phenomena of musical composition, including the rondo form (*Illustration 6*).

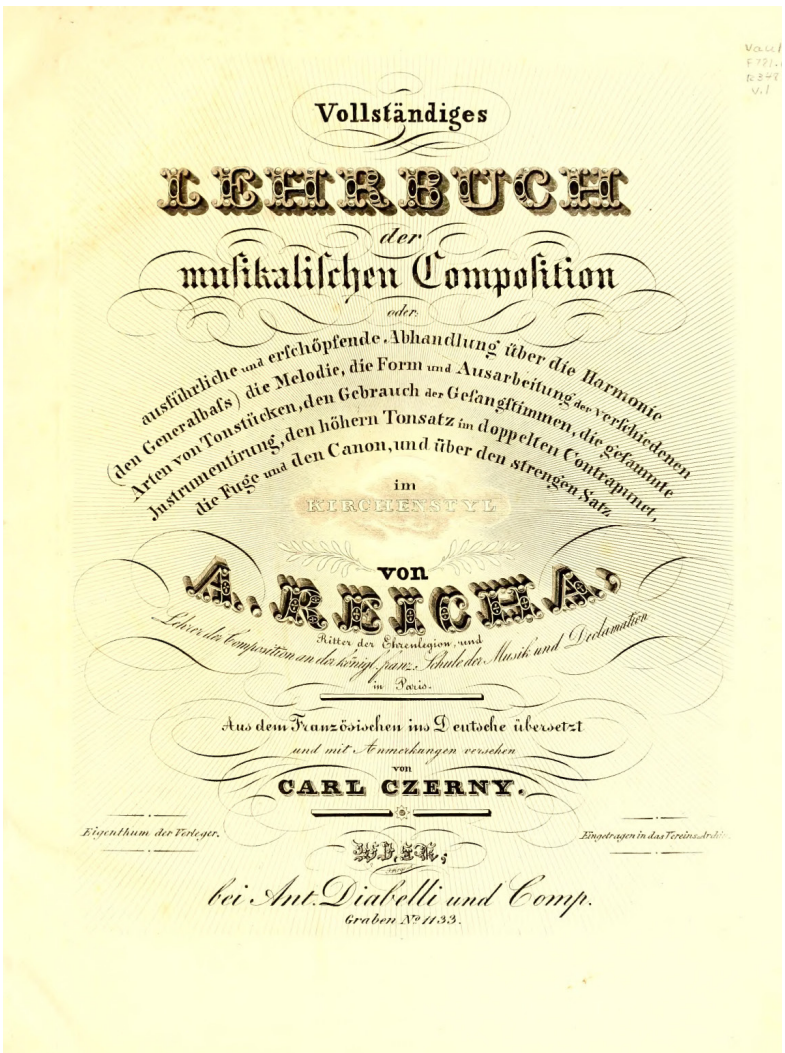

Vollständiges
LEHRBUCH
der
musikalischen Composition
oder
ausführliche und erschöpfende Abhandlung über die Harmonie (den Generalbass) die Melodie, die Form und Ausarbeitung der verschiedenen Arten von Tonstücken, den Gebrauch der Gesangstimmen, die gesammte Instrumentirung, den höhern Tonsatz im doppelten Contrapunct, die Fuge und den Canon, und über den strengen Satz
im
KIRCHENSTYL
von
A. REICHA
Ritter der Ehrenlegion, und Lehrer der Composition an der königl. franz. Schule der Musik und Declamation in Paris.
Aus dem Französischen ins Deutsche übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen
von
CARL CZERNY.
Eigenthum der Verleger.
Eingetragen in das Vereins-Archiv
bei Ant. Diabelli und Comp.
Graben № 1133.

Illustration 6. Title page of Anton Reich's treatise with translation by Karl Czerny. Vienna: Ant. Diabelli, 1832

The rondo "according to Reicha" consists of four sections, each of which begins with the main theme, which plays a fundamental role in the form.[28] The theme usually has a two-part structure with or without a reprise—Marx classifies this structure as a song form (*Liedformen*). Further, in three of the four parts, the main theme, repeated *da capo* exactly or in a varied form, is followed by constructions that Reicha—and after him Czerny—calls new "ideas" (*idées*, *Ideen*). As a result, the following thematic plan is formed: *a* + *b*, *a* + *c*, *a* + *d*.

If completed with a repetition of the refrain, the three designated parts do not contradict the structure of Marx's third form of rondo; however, Reicha has not two, as Marx did, but three secondary themes (in Russian terminology—episodes). This scheme also corresponds to the Viennese classical composition practice, where multi-themed rondos are found—for example, Mozart's A minor Rondo KV 511 (its scheme is *a b a c a d a*). To present "new ideas," Reicha proposes the key of the sixth degree or the dominant key (first episode), the subdominant key (second episode), and the parallel key (third), which also fully corresponds to generally accepted norms.

However, the fourth part of the rondo in Reicha's treatise is something quite unusual:

> Diese Abtheilung ist die wichtigste und zugleich die längste. […] Man beginnt wieder mit dem Hauptthema, und diesmal kann man es vollständig, mit oder ohne Veränderungen wiederhohlen, nur dass man die Repetitionen unterdrückt. Die Grundtonart … muss in dieser Section vorherrschen. Die ENTWICKLUNG ist hier notwendig. Man führt hier wieder die anziehendsten, in den drei vorigen Sectionen exponierten Ideen vor; man versetzt sie […] und entwickelt sie mehr oder weniger. Das Ganze geschieht mit leichten Modulationen, und immer an die Haupttonart erinnernd.[29]

In fact, here we are talking about including a kind of development in the rondo, as if added to the typical scheme. However, although the author insists on development as such, highlighting this word in large font, this part lacks the active tonal movement characteristic of developments. Modulations are permitted, but only "light" ones that do not lead far away from the main key. The general structure of the rondo in Reicha's treatise appears as follows (*Table 3*):

[28] Reiha (n.d.), pp. 1167–1170.
[29] Reiha (n.d.), p. 1168.

Table 3. The structure of the rondo in Reicha's treatise

1	2	3	4
a + *b*	*a* + *c*	*a* + *d*	*a* + development, Coda

In Glinka, Farlaf's rondo seems to have been written directly according to this scheme, with one deviation: the third section (*a*+*d*) is omitted. However, the unusual fourth section, which appears to have been invented by Reicha, is present, as is the coda, which is given a significant amount of time and space in the score. In development the vocal part is built on material from episode *b*, while the orchestral part contains motifs from episode *c*. The unusual configuration of the rondo form in Glinka's aria thus finds its theoretical justification. The striking coincidence of the compositional solution in the aria and Reicha's theoretical innovation leads to the question of the reasons and circumstances of its appearance.

It is not possible to give a definite answer to this question due to the shaky nature of the assumptions. It is very tempting to imagine that Glinka became acquainted with Reicha's work in Austria, where he stopped on his way from Italy to Berlin. Judging by the *Notes*, the composer spent the summer and early autumn of 1833 in Vienna and its environs; shortly before this, Reicha's treatise was published in Vienna. While the place and time coincide in an auspicious way, such a coincidence cannot justify the assumption that Glinka became acquainted with Reicha's book, and moreover, acquired it, studied it, remembered such a detail as the description of the rondo form, and reproduced it in Farlaf's aria ten years later. His brief reports in the *Notes* and letters are full of complaints about poor health and continuous treatments. There could have been no time for independent theoretical studies, especially since Dehn's lessons lay in the future. Thus, the question about the nature of the coincidence in the form of Farlaf's aria and Reicha's "rondo" remains open.

Rondo and "Glinka variations"

One of the main qualities of the rondo "according to Marx" was the differentiation of the role of a stable, complete theme and an unstable passage—a theoretical thesis that laid the foundation for a functional approach to musical form. In the preface to the second volume of *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*, Marx writes that any musical work has a beginning and an end, and therefore a volume

consisting of parts united in a special way.[30] This "special way" is precisely what constitutes an alternation of structurally complete constructions and unstable transitions. Marx developed this understanding based on an analysis of the Viennese classical musical heritage. Anton Reicha also refers readers of his work to the works of the Viennese classics, advising them to master various methods of developing musical ideas using the works of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven as examples.[31]

Quite a few pages of his *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition* are devoted to the relationship between this development and exposition, which again—although not as clearly and definitely as in Marx—testifies to his attention to the functional differentiation of parts in musical form.

A similar attitude, not in theory but in practice, is found in Glinka: the phenomenon of "passage," involving the appearance of a zone of instability in his operatic forms, can introduce dynamics into the most static structures, including variations on soprano ostinato. This type of variation, which was rare in instrumental music, only occasionally crops up among the Viennese classics. Composers of the Romantic era paid it more significant attention, mainly in opera. One of the early examples, perhaps the earliest, is Adolard's Romance in Carl Maria von Weber's *Euryanthe* (1823). In chamber vocal music, an even earlier example is the song that opens Beethoven's cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* (1815–1816). Quite often, such strophic forms with variated accompanement are found in Russian operas of the 19th century, including for the first time in Glinka, which led to the name "Glinka variations," which became established in Russian theory.

This form can come very close to its song basis—as, for example, in the Persian chorus from *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (Act III), where exposition dominates: from one verse to the next, only the orchestration, texture and details of harmony change. It seems that the Head's Tale from the finale of Act II is constructed in a similar manner. However, here, two recitative lines from Ruslan intervene in the measured flow of the verses. They are very important, they are essentially "passages"—both in dramatic and musical terms. The lines contain questions that are key to resolving the conflict: "who is the villain" (Chernomor) and "how to defeat him" (the sword must cut off Chernomor's beard); they coincide with the modulation links that connect the variation stanzas (B-flat major → G minor).

[30] Marx (1847), p. 4.
[31] Reiha (n.d.), p. 1130.

The “passages” in Finn’s Ballad are even more dynamic. They actually transform the ostinato soprano variations into a kind of rondo with transition sections between varied repetitions of the main theme (*Table 4*). The variation, as in the Head’s Tale, primarily affects the orchestral texture. The 38-bar passage is actually a development with a very intense tonal-harmonic transformations. It includes Finn’s story about how he mastered the secrets of magic in order to conquer the unyielding Naina.

Table 4. Structure of Finn’s Ballad:

1)	A	A1	passage	A2	A3	passage	A4	passage	A5	A6	A7	Coda
2)	16	10	12	16	16	4	14	38	16	22	25	27
3)	A	a, A	E, fis, gis	A	A	A → C	C, a	F, Ges, G, B-flat	A	A, a	A	A

1) thematic and functional plan; 2) number of bars; 3) keys (uppercase letters—major key, lowercase letters—minor key)

The very phenomenon of Glinka’s variations in *Ruslan* thus demonstrates a wide range of possibilities. In other words, ostinato soprano variations, which are static in nature, were enriched with components of effective development, which can be considered Glinka’s invention.

La solita forma

Glinka’s attitude towards Italian opera is very well documented by the composer himself in his literary and epistolary legacy, examined in the monograph by Elena Petrushanskaya [10], as well as in a number of scientific articles by domestic and foreign researchers. Among the Italian composers who attracted Glinka’s attention and aroused his genuine interest, the most prominent were the 19th-century bel canto masters: Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini and Gaetano Donizetti. A trip to Italy provided the opportunity to see their compositions on stage more than once. During the 1830 carnival season in Milan, Glinka attended two major premieres at the Teatro Carcano: Donizetti’s *Anna Bolena* and Bellini’s *La Sonnambula*. He not only lost his head over Bellini’s cantilenas, but also studied them, which resulted in a desire to remember and thoroughly incorporate their features into his auditory experience:

> To open the theatre, the first performance of Donizetti's opera *Anna Bolena* was given. I found the performance magical; Rubini, Pasta (who really did a great job of playing Anna Bolena throughout, especially the last scene), Galli, Orlandi, etc. [...] From other operas I recall: *La Semiramide* by Rossini, *Romeo e Giulietta* by Zingarelli, *Gianni di Calais* by Donizetti. At the end of the carnival, Bellini's long-awaited *Sonnambula* finally appeared. Despite the fact that it appeared late, and despite certain envious people and ill-wishers, this opera had a huge impact. In the few days before the theatres closed, Pasta and Rubini, in order to support their beloved maestro, sang with the liveliest delight: in the second act, they themselves cried and forced the audience to imitate them, so that during the merry days of the carnival one could see how people in the boxes and chairs were constantly wiping away tears. We, embracing Shterich in the ambassador's box, also shed a copious stream of tears of emotion and delight. After each opera, returning home, we selected sounds to remember the favourite places we had heard.[32]

Glinka's initial enthusiasm, as is well known, was replaced after some time by a more critical attitude, even irritation, a desire to mark his own isolation, a distance from Italian opera as such—not least because of its dominance in the St. Petersburg imperial theatre. Of course, artistic reasons also played a role—the desire to "write in Russian" a Russian opera—such statements by the composer are well known.

The search for points of contact between Glinka's musical language, primarily melodic, and the music of his Italian contemporaries has already become a "common place" in musicology. While the debates that began during the composer's lifetime continue into the 21st century, the "Italian trace" is in any case obvious to both Russian and foreign scholars, regardless of how it is assessed. This problem is covered in detail in the already mentioned dissertation of Roman Nagin and the article by Rutger Helmers, dedicated to *A Life for the Tsar* [11].

The compositional solutions of the Italian masters also could not help but influence Glinka—if only because the Italian operatic tradition retained its leading role in European musical theatre during the first half of the 19th century. Helmers drew attention to the fact that even the genre designations in the autograph of *A Life for the Tsar* revealed Glinka's "Italian orientation," which correlated some of the numbers and scenes of his opera with the compositional

[32] Glinka (1988), pp. 42–43.

structures accepted in Italy—*Scena*, *Terzetto e Coro*, *Recitativo e Duetto*, *Romanza* [11, p. 27]. He did the same in the "Original Plan" of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*,[33] where there are also designations in Italian—and sometimes even Italian words written in Russian: Ludmila's Cavatina after *Ritornelli*, *Stretta*, *Duetto*, *Duettino*. It is noteworthy that in the layout of the dance scene in Naina's magical garden, Glinka used French terms—*Entrée*, *Variation*—along with Italian ones (*Adagio*, *Coda*).

Among the large vocal operatic forms that corresponded to Glinka's ideas *la solita forma* stands out. During the 19th century it replaced the previously widespread form in the *da capo* aria. In the theoretical sources of Glinka's time, the term *la solita forma* was not used. German musicology was, in principle, quite indifferent to operatic forms: the only work that Marx mentions in his *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*—and even then in connection with recitative, and not with aria—is *Iphigenia in Aulis* by Christoph Willibald Gluck.[34]

The first person to write about *la solita forma* during the mid-19th century was Abramo Basevi (1818–1885), an Italian composer and critic. His book on the operas of Giuseppe Verdi was published in 1859, two years after Glinka's death.[35] The monograph was then forgotten, but in the second half of the 20th century, on the wave of interest in musicology for historically authentic terminology, it was noticed among others by Russian musicologists, who began to actively use this definition in works devoted to Italian opera of the 19th century.[36] Among the latest publications in Russian, dedicated in particular to *la solita forma*, I may note

[33] Aranovsky, M. G. (2004). *Mikhail Glinka's "Initial Plan" of the opera "Ruslan and Lydmila"* Kompozitor Publ.

[34] Marx (1847), pp. 412–416.

[35] Basevi, A. (1859). *Studio sulle Opere di G. Verdi*. Tofani.

[36] Here we may cite a number of dissertations in Russian: Korovina, A. F. (2017). *Opera semiseria v evropejskom muzykal'nom teatre pervoj poloviny XIX veka: genezis i poetika zhanra* [Opera semiseria in the European Musical Theatre in the First Half of the 19th Century: The Genesis and Poetics of the Genre] [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Gnesin Russian Academy of Music; Logunova, A. A. (2017). *Muzykal'no-dramaturgicheskaya forma finalov v operakh Dzhuzeppe Verdi* [Musical and Dramatic Form of Finales in the Operas of Giuseppe Verdi] [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Saint Petersburg Rimsky-Korsakov State Conservatory; Sadykova, L. A. (2016). *Opery seria Dzhoakkino Rossini: vokal'noe iskusstvo i osobennosti dramaturgii* [Operas seria Gioachino Rossini: Vocal Art and Features of Dramaturgy] [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Zhiganov Kazan State Conservatory.

the articles by Nina V. Pilipenko [12] and Alexander A. Filippov [4]: the first focuses on the issue of the formation of this structure and the second notes a number of similar forms in Glinka's operas.

Numerous examples of such compositions can easily be found in the operas of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti, who were well known to Glinka. The solo and ensemble scene (primarily the duet) is usually built on the principle of tempo and thematic contrast. As a rule, it includes four sections—*recitative*, slow *cantabile*, *tempo di mezzo* (a connecting section, usually of a *recitative*), and a fast *cabaletta*, which is sometimes called *stretta* (that is, the aria itself, without recitative, consisted of three sections). There are also more compact two-part versions—without *tempo di mezzo*. In all sections, a choir may join the soloists. *The Cambridge Companion to Verdi* contains a scheme of a solo scene typical of Rossini's operas (*Table 5*) [13, p. 50].

Examples of Glinka's use of *la solita forma* in solo numbers are quite numerous: Cavatina and rondo of Antonida, Recitative and aria of Vanya with chorus (*A Life for the Tsar*), Arias of Ruslan and Ratmir, Cavatina as well as Scene and aria of Lyudmila (*Ruslan and Lyudmila*). It is this term that should apparently replace the generally accepted designation in Russian theory "kontrastno-sostavnaya forma" ("contrasting-composite form"), which has vague boundaries. A direct comparison of Glinka with Italian models shows how accurately and completely he mastered the principles of organising the great Italian vocal form. In Lyudmila's Cavatina, one can recognise not only the general outlines, but also all the stages of the development of the form of Rosina's Cavatina from Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*—right down to the syntactic structure and the expected similarity of a number of melodic turns. It also recalls Amina's Cavatina from Bellini's *La Sonnambula*—especially since the plot and stage situation are very similar: the brides are on the eve of the wedding, surrounded by friends, Lyudmila turns to her father, Amina to her mother. Comparing the *la solita forma* diagram from *The Cambridge Companion to Verdi* and Lyudmila's Cavatina, it is easy to find an exact match (*Tables 5*, *6*). Ruslan's Aria from Act II (*Table 7*) and Vanya's Aria with the chorus from *A Life for the Tsar* (*Table 8*) have a similar structure.

Table 5. Scheme of the Nineteenth-century Italian aria form (Rossini) from *The Cambridge Companion to Verdi* (Figure 4.1a) [13, p. 50]:

1)	*Scena*	Aria		
		Movement 1	Movement 2	Movement 3
		Primo tempo/ Cantabile	*Tempo di mezzo*	*Cabaletta*
2)	Recitative; may be preceded by a chorus or orchestral introduction	Open melody Closed melody	Dialogue; may include chorus and/or secondary characters	Theme Transition Theme' Coda
3)	Modulation V/I	I I or V/I (modulation) V/?	(I) modulation V/I	I
4)	Interaction	Reflection/reaction	Interaction/reappraisal	Reflection/ reaction
5)	Recitative verse	Lyric verse		

1) section; 2) style and internal form; 3) key; 4) action; 5) poetry

Table 6. Scheme of Lyudmila's Cavatina from *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, Act I:

1)	*Introduction*	Lyudmila's Cavatina		
		Movement 1	Movement 2	Movement 3
		Cantabile	*Tempo di mezzo*	*Cabaletta*
2)	Preceded by a chorus	Ternary form with open reprise	Chorus	Ternary form A B A Coda
3)		I modulation III	III modulation V	I – VI – I
4)		An appeal to a father: "Грустно мне, родитель дорогой"	Reappraisal: "Не тужи, дитя родимое"	Reaction: «Не гневись, знатный гость»
5)		Lyric verse		

1) section; 2) style and internal form; 3) key; 4) action; 5) poetry

Table 7. Scheme of Ruslan's Aria from *Ruslan and Lyudmila,* Act II:

1)	*Scena*	Ruslan's Aria		
		Movement 1	Movement 2	Movement 3
		Cantabile	*Tempo di mezzo*	*Cabaletta*
2)	Recitative	Ternary form	Recitative	Sonata form *Coda*
3)		i (e)	Modulation	I (E – H – D – E – G – E)
4)	Interaction: "О поле, поле, кто тебя усеял мертвыми костями?"	Reflection: "Времен от вечной темноты, быть может, нет и мне спасенья"	Reappraisal: "Но добрый меч и щит мне нужен"	Reaction: "Дай, Перун, булатный меч мне по руке"
5)	Lyric verse			

1) section; 2) style and internal form; 3) key (parenthetical: capital letters—major key, lowercase letters—minor key); 4) action; 5) poetry

Table 8. Scheme of Vanya's Aria with the chorus from *A Life for the Tsar*, Act IV:

1)	*Scena*	Vanya's Aria with the chorus		
		Movement 1	Movement 2	Movement 3
		Cantabile	*Tempo di mezzo*	*Cabaletta*
2)	Recitative	Strophic form (AA1)	Solo with choir	Lyric form, Coda
3)		I (B-flat)	Modulation (g → F)	V (F)
4)	Interaction: "Бедный конь в поле пал"	Reflection: "Ты не плачь, не плачь, сиротинушка"	Reappraisal: "То не вьюга, метель окликается"	Reaction: "Зажигайте огни, вы седлайте коней"
5)	Recitative verse	Lyric verse		

1) section; 2) style and internal form; 3) key (parenthetical: uppercase letters—major key, lowercase letters—minor key); 4) action; 5) poetry

However, rather than limiting ourselves to simply stating the closeness of Glinka's forms to Italian models, it is important to understand whether there are any differences in their interpretation beyond the natural differences in themes.

The form of the fast section in Vanya's Aria—the *cabaletta*—most closely corresponds to the Italian model. In Russian terminology, this form is defined as a binary with reprise (simple end-rhyming binary form) with the pattern *a a' b a"*. Most English-language sources call it a *lyric form*,[37] referring to its closeness to simple song and dance patterns. Both definitions imply the clarity and proportionality of the eight-bar structure (4+4+2+2+4). In Vanya's Aria, the metro-rhythmic and syntactic division is a variant of this structure: *a* (2+2+4) *a'* (2+2+4), *b* (1+1+1+1+1+1+2), *a"* (2+2+4). The syntax in part *b* is more fractional, which, together with the sequential development, gives the composition greater dynamics. Binary *lyric forms* can also be found in the Trio *Don't languish, dear*, in the Duet of Vanya and Susanin—these examples are also pointed out by Rutger Helmers [11, pp. 31, 37].

A feature that complicates the structure of Lyudmila's Cavatina is the inclusion of addresses to three suitors: Farlaf, Ratmir and Ruslan. Such lines, addressed to characters present on stage, were found in Italian arias *d'azione* as early as the 18th century, but Glinka presents the technique differently, in a "broad stroke": Lyudmila's addresses occupy the entire section of a composite ternary form with a contrasting middle section (the words intended for Ratmir, with their oriental flavour, sharply differ from the rest of the Thematic material). Thus, the *cabaletta* actually includes stage action; it outlines the mise-en-scène—an original and unusual solution.

An even more complex *cabaletta* appears in Ruslan's aria: it is written in sonata form, including a development section that is extremely rare in vocal music. The secondary theme from the aria appears earlier in the opera's Overture, giving the number additional weight and significance. Sonata logic, by its very nature, contradicts the final function of the rapid *cabaletta*, imparting to it a special internal tension and thereby taking Ruslan's aria very far from its Italian prototypes.

In general, it can be said that, despite Glinka's undoubted reliance on the generally accepted structural prototypes of contemporary Italian opera, his practical experiments reveal a noticeable desire to complicate compositional solutions, their closer interaction with specific stage situations and the characters' reactions to them. An analysis of ensembles and finales leads to the same conclusions.

[37] The term was proposed by Joseph Kerman [14].

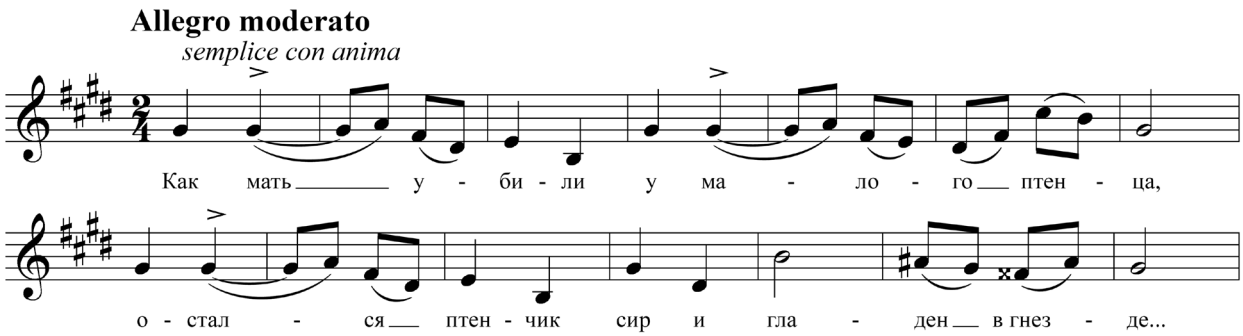
The scheme of the duet, based on *la solita forma*, does not differ significantly from the aria; the structure of the scene and the duet of Vanya and Susanin (*A Life for the Tsar*, Act III), Ratmir and Finn (*Ruslan and Lyudmila*, Act V) almost exactly coincides with this model. The finales of Acts I and III of *A Life for the Tsar* and Act IV of *Ruslan and Lyudmila* were also made according to the Italian models.

"Forme means *beauty"*

"Beauty" is a category for which it is difficult to find objective criteria in the field of musical form or for that matter in musical composition in general. However, in his above-mentioned "Theses on Composition," Glinka provides a hint, explaining the beauty of form by the harmony of the whole and the proportionality of its parts. In other words, number, equality, symmetry and proportion are the elements by which, if not to unravel the mysteries of musical thinking, then at least to pay attention to the patterns of composition, to that quality that so delighted Dehn, who noted in Glinka's music the complete roundness of the parts of the form and the clarity of the whole.

The architectonic harmony of Glinka's operatic forms can be felt even without analysing the scores and counting the bars. It is revealed in a special quality—the equal length of sections, which apparently comes from the strophic organisation of the poetic text, often from the eight-bar constructions of the Russian song of the late (urban) period, on the one hand, and the Italian *lyric form* on the other. In the trio "Don't torment my dear", which is included as *Largo concertato* in the Italian in its genesis scene of the finale of the Act I of *A Life for the Tsar*, there are five such parts: three 16-bar verses and a 24-bar coda (8 + 16). The measured rhythm of the "Russian barcarolle," which has gained popularity both in Russia and among European audiences, is not disrupted by the second and third verses being performed in the form of a canon by a pair of voices, nor by the inclusion of a choir in the coda.

The combination of almost deliberate simplicity and learned technical wisdom is one of the most characteristic qualities of Glinka's composition. It manifests itself even when the composer himself, in Vanya's Song, the most famous vocal number of *A Life for the Tsar* (*Example 1*), directly designates this unpretentious genre.



Example 1. Vanya's Song (*A Life for the Tsar*, Act III)

The verse form consists of a series of melodic units of almost equal length. Most of them are eight-bars typical of urban song. The proviso "practically" is due to the exquisite detail that Glinka introduced into the metrical homogeneity: he compressed the first two phrases to 7 bars, which became an example of Glinka's *organicheskaya nekvadratnost'* ("*organic non-squareness*"), which in Russian theory usually serves as an argument for the closeness of his thematic material to Slavic folk song sources.[38] However, in the seven-bars of Vanya's song one can still sense a derivative of the normative eight-bar phrases, when the first three-bar is perceived as a compression of the four-bar—a technique that is also found in Mozart. But the reason for the non-squareness in Glinka's case is not of fundamental importance; what is truly important is that the two seven-bar sentences of the theme sound fresh and original, breaking the inertia lyric form perception.

The feeling of proportionality may also arise when the length of the parts of the form is different, but the symmetry is created by their combination. In Lyudmila's Cavatina (*Ruslan and Lyudmila*, Act I) a structure of precisely this kind is formed (*Table 9*).

[38] The term was introduced to denote the non-square structure of the period, which arose not due to a violation of squareness, but as an independent phenomenon. Mazel, L. A., & Zukkerman, V. A. (1967). *Analiz muzykal'nykh proizvedenij. Elementy muzyki i metodika analiza malykh form* [*Analysis of Musical Works. Elements of Music and Methods of Analysis of Small Forms*]. Musyka, p. 605.

Table 9. Scheme of Lyudmila's Cavatina (movement 1—*cantabile*) from *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, Act I:

1)	Introdaction	Exposition A section	Middle B section		Non-tonal recapitulation	Recapitulation	Coda
2)	G	G–D	A	G	B-flat	G–D	b
3)	a	a	B	C	A	a	c
4)	8	11 (3+3+5)	8	4	2	7	11
5)	—	"Грустно мне, родитель дорогой"	"Разгони тоску мою"	"В терему моем высоком"	"Запою"	"Запою"	"Про любовь мою"

1) section; 2) key (uppercase letters—major key, lowercase letters—minor key); 3) theme; 4) number of bars; 5) lyrics

The cantabile (*Andante capriccioso*), written in ternary form with addition typical of Italian aria, is distinguished by subtle tonal and modal *chiaroscuro*; there are no exact repetitions, but there is an abundance of melismata, reminiscent of Rossini's coloraturas. The perfect structure of this part can be seen from the scheme. The introduction together with the exposition of the theme (19 [8+11]) are balanced by the reprise together with the coda (20 [9+11]); the reprise "rhymes" with the introduction (9 and 8)—and the exposition with the coda (11 and 11). In addition to this kind of balance, the cavatina very clearly emphasises the golden section point of the entire composition. It comes at the beginning of the non-tonal reprise: the first motive of the cavatina sounds brightly at the climax not in the main key of G major, but in B-flat major.

The proportions of the *Allegro moderato* section of Lyudmila's Cavatina are also impressive. The golden section point in it coincides with the beginning of the coda, where Lyudmila's voice intertwines with the sound of the choir; here, the phrases of her melody refer not so much to the thematical material of the *Allegro* section, but to the initial turns of the *Cantabile* section. Proportionality and symmetry are attributes of many forms in Glinka's arias in both his operas.

Analytical observations allow us, to use the famous words of Alexander Pushkin from his *Mozart and Salieri*, "to verify harmony with algebra." Comparing Glinka with Mozart, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov wrote that "both of them were born with that wonderful natural architectonic ear and that natural logic of thought that does not require school study, but develops and strengthens in life's musical

practice."[39] This quote is given by Alexander Ya. Selitsky in his article "Was Glinka a Mozartian?" [15], noting that the parallel "Glinka—Mozart" has a very solid track record in musicology [15, p. 180]. A gravitation towards symmetrical proportional correspondences is one of the qualities that unites the attitude towards form of these two composers. Moreover, in both cases, proportionality and symmetry are not primitive; they are not revealed in a straightforward manner, which becomes obvious, for example, if we compare Lyudmila's Cavatina and Amina's Cavatina from *La Sonnambula*, where balance is achieved in the simplest way—the equality of exposition and reprise in both *cantabile* and *cabaletta*. As has already been noted, Glinka's solutions are almost always more complex and refined than those of his Italian "teachers," as strange as it may seem to give such a characterisation to a composer whose music is usually associated with ideas of simplicity and economy of means. The structural organisation of his operatic forms is highly consistent with Dehn's assessment—a complete roundness of parts and clarity of the whole, but at the same time concealing an internal dynamic and purposefulness.

Conclusion

A discussion of Glinka's operatic forms has shown that in this area, as in many others, his thinking was closely linked to the implementation of Western European experience. The feeling of proportionality also arises when the length of the parts of the form is different, and symmetry is created by their combination. The exchange of musical ideas was not the exception, but rather the rule—not only in the 18th century, but also in Glinka's time. Discussions about the "plagiarism" of George Frideric Handel and Christoph Willibald Gluck, which were carried on in musicology in the first half of the last century, were replaced at the end of the century by a total search for intertextual connections, including in the music of Romantic composers. However, it would be completely wrong to ignore the issue of parallels and intersections. Numerous examples of commonality that emerge when comparing Glinka's musical forms with German and Italian theory and practice are proof of this.

[39] Rimsky-Korsakov, N. A. (1963). Teoriya i praktika [i] Obyazatel'naya teoriya muzyki v russkoj konservatorii [Theory and Practice [and] Compulsory Music Theory in the Russian Conservatory]. In Rimsky-Korsakov N. A. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij. Literaturnye proizvedeniya i perepiska* [*Complete Works. Literary Works and Correspondence*]. (Vol. 2, pp. 188–212). USSR Acad. Sci. Publ., p. 189.

Glinka's genius consisted primarily in the fact that his compositional solutions were new for Russian music. Drawing on rich traditions, he placed Russian opera on a par with European opera for the first time. In his works, the form received an infusion of Western European professionalism, giving impetus to the development of Russian musical theatre in the 19th century, not on the sidelines, but in line with pan-European processes. But in Glinka's operas, the European musical theatre received the first example of a grand opera created outside the borders of the main operatic metropolises, an opera in which the national plot, imagery and intonation basis were combined with complex and developed principles of musical composition.

The reliance on the Italian operatic tradition and the assimilation of German compositional theory, about which scholars of the past and present have spoken at length and in varying tones, particularly acutely highlight the problem of the national and the international in Glinka's music—and, more generally, in 19th-century Russian opera. Strictly speaking, the statuses of "the first Russian classic" and "national genius", with which Glinka was accorded and which are difficult to dispute, contradict each other to some extent, since "classic" presupposes a certain universality, syntheticity, a fusion of various stylistic and linguistic qualities into a coherent whole, while "national" is inseparable from the specific. Evidently, Glinka managed to become a national opera classic due to the exceptionally organic approach according to which he was able to fit together very diverse sources. And "Russian" is only one of a series, albeit a very important component of his style. The characteristic features of his music often escape the European ear, since it is pan-European vocabulary and compositional logic that come to the fore. On the contrary, the Russian ear, without special tuning, often finds it difficult to catch references to German, Italian, and French operatic experiences. This subtlety in turn creates extra scope for new analytical interpretations of Glinka's rich legacy.

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La finta giardiniera by Pasquale Anfossi and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Versions of two opera capitals (Rome and Munich)

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Abstract. The article considers issues that arise when comparing Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera *La finta giardiniera* (Munich, 1775) and the opera of the same name by Pasquale Anfossi (Rome, 1774), which appeared a year before Mozart's. This kind of comparison, which is a traditional subject for Mozart studies, has been undertaken repeatedly. However, almost 40 years have passed since the publication of Volker Mattern's most extensive study on this topic (1989). During this time, views on the musical context of the 1770s, as well as ideas about the specifics of the operatic genres of that era and the norms of their poetics, have changed noticeably. The article re-formulates the features

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of the sentimentalist variety of opera buffa, clarifies the extent to which the anonymous libretto *La finta giardiniera* corresponds to them, and, using the example of a comparison of the music of several key numbers, demonstrates the extent to which Anfossi and Mozart followed the genre canon or the dramatic innovations proposed by the librettist. As a result, Mattern's main conclusion about the "individual style" that first clearly manifested itself in this Mozart opera is supplemented by significant comments and subject to critical revision.

Keywords: *La finta giardiniera*, Pasquale Anfossi, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Niccolò Piccinni, Carlo Goldoni, Italian opera buffa, sentimentalism, poetics of opera libretto

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Музыкальный театр

Научная статья

«Мнимая садовница» П. Анфосси и В. А. Моцарта: версии двух оперных столиц (Рима и Мюнхена)

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Аннотация. Проблематика статьи фокусируется на вопросах, возникающих при сопоставлении оперы В. А. Моцарта «Мнимая садовница» (Мюнхен, 1775) и одноименной оперы П. Анфосси (Рим, 1774), написанной за год до моцартовской. Такого рода сравнения — предмет, традиционный для моцартоведения, они предпринимались неоднократно. Однако с момента публикации последнего самого обширного исследования Ф. Маттерна на эту тему (1989) прошло почти 40 лет, и взгляды на музыкальный контекст 1770-х годов, представления о специфике оперных жанров той эпохи и нормах их поэтики заметно изменились. В статье заново формулируются особенности

сентименталистской разновидности оперы *buffa*, выясняется, насколько соответствует им анонимное либретто «Мнимой садовницы», и на примере сопоставления музыки нескольких ключевых номеров демонстрируется, в какой степени Анфосси и Моцарт следовали жанровому канону или драматургическим новациям, предложенным либреттистом. В итоге основной вывод Маттерна об «индивидуальном стиле», впервые явственно заявившем о себе в этой опере Моцарта, дополняются существенными комментариями и в чем-то подвергаются критическому пересмотру.

Ключевые слова: «Мнимая садовница», Паскуале Анфосси, Вольфганг Амадей Моцарт, Никколо Пиччинни, Карло Гольдони, итальянская опера *buffa*, сентиментализм, поэтика оперного либретто

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Introduction

The opera buffa *La finta giardiniera* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) retains an unclear status in modern musicology and performance practice.[1] Premiered in Munich on 13 January 1775, when the composer was not yet 19 years old, it was written to a libretto that had already served as the basis for Pasquale Anfossi's opera, staged in Rome in 1774. These works were compared in musicology more than once. In Mozart's operatic legacy, *La finta giardiniera* stands at the border between adolescence and maturity. Some researchers consider it one of Mozart's successful early experiences as an opera composer, not least because he turned again to the comic genre,[2] in which his achievements were universally recognised. Hermann Abert, for instance, stresses the opera's greater independence and considers it Mozart's first, though not flawless, attempt to master Italian buffoonery [1, p. 463].[3] Alfred Einstein, however, expresses a more cautious opinion: in his view, *La finta giardiniera* stands closer to *La finta semplice*, written at the age of twelve, than to *Le nozze di Figaro*; he describes it as created "still in a state of utter innocence, so to speak" [2, p. 413].

The most recent and extensive information and opinions about this opera are presented in the Volker Mattern's book [3], a publication of a doctoral dissertation defended at the University of Heidelberg. However, almost 40 years have passed since its publication. During this time no fundamentally new sources have been discovered that directly relate to Mozart's opera or to its Italian prototype by Anfossi. However,

[1] In the original libretto for the production of Anfossi's opera in Rome (carnival 1773–1774), the genre is designated as *dramma giocoso*. No printed or handwritten libretto for the Munich production of Mozart's opera has yet been discovered. The same notation appears on one of the surviving copies of the score (*Kopie Naměšt* from the Moravian Regional Museum in Brno A 17 036a-c). In Mozart's correspondence, in letters from contemporaries, and also in another surviving handwritten copy of the score, the designation *opera buffa* appears both as a synonym and simultaneously (*Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien*, Q 1663 [alt: IV 18916]).

[2] Mozart's earlier opera buffa *La finta semplice* was written in 1768 for a Viennese production, but was rejected by the theatre management. The performance took place in Salzburg on May 1 (?) 1769.

[3] Abert considered it likely that Mozart was familiar with Anfossi's score — an assumption that today seems unlikely [1, p. 463].

information about the history of Italian opera of this period has become significantly more accessible and diverse, as a result of which views on the musical context of the 1770s have noticeably changed, allowing to introduce a new emphases on the interpretation of both Mozart's operas and the relationship between the musical and theatrical traditions of the two operatic capitals of the second half of the 18th century — Munich and Rome.[4]

Libretto

For a long time, most researchers attributed all the shortcomings of Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* to the weakness of its libretto.[5] The tradition of critical perception of this text goes back to Abert, who considered the opera part of the sentimentalist fashion that flourished in the 1760s and 1770s thanks to the unprecedented success of Niccolò Piccinni's *La buona figliuola*, set to a libretto by Carlo Goldoni (Rome, *Teatro Delle Dame*, 1760). However, Abert assessed the libretto of *La finta giardiniera* in comparison with its prototype in a sharply negative way, believing that the clear and dramatically well-motivated action of Piccinni's opera "ist hier durch allerhand Zutaten, die ihr mehr sensationelle Würze geben sollte, verdunkelt und oft geradezu ins Geschmacklose verzerrt worden" [1, p. 460–461]. Mattern softens Abert's reproaches: in general, he tries to follow a more objective position, avoiding his own verdicts and, whenever possible, focusing on the realities of Mozart's era (or trying to reconstruct them). He proceeds from the assumption that, at least, Anfossi's *La finta giardiniera* was considered to be a great success, and therefore corresponded to the tastes of the 1770s. Consequently, the modern researcher should accept their evaluation. However, Mattern's study lacks any comprehensive comparative analysis of of the libretto itself.

In general, the problems of the libretto *La finta giardiniera* are concentrated around two main questions. The first one concerns its authorship, which is still a subject of debate. Since the 19th century, the text has often been attributed, without strong evidence, to Ranieri de' Calzabigi. However, in 1976, while preparing the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe* (NMA) edition of *La finta giardiniera*, the Austrian musicologist Rudolph Angermüller carefully re-examined the anonymous

[4] The phrase "music and theatre capital" has recently become a common descriptor for European centers with a significant operatic tradition. See, for example, [4].

[5] Stefan Kunze adheres to this point of view in a relatively recent work [5, p. 56].

libretto published for Anfossi's premiere in Rome (1774) and suggested that its author was the librettist Giuseppe Petrosellini [6, p. 1 ff.]. Angermüller drew attention to the dedication of the opera, addressed to the public: "*La protezzione, che vi degnaste accordare l'anno scorso all' Incognità perseguitata, ci muove Nobelissime Dame, ad offrirvi il presente Dramma giocoso della FINTA GIARDINIERA*."[6] Angermüller regarded the mention of *L'incognità perseguitata* (*The Pursued Stranger*) by Anfossi in the libretto by Petrosellini (1773) as an indirect reference to the authors of the current comedy; this assumption was considered plausible, and since the late 1970s, Petrosellini has generally been considered as the probable author of the libretto *La finta giardiniera*.[7]

It is worth mentioning, however, that the Dedication in the Roman edition of the libretto was signed *Gli Interessanti* (*The Interested Party*), which is associated not only with the authors, but primarily with the impresario and his entourage. Moreover, although Anfossi's music, written for the carnival of 1773, was most likely new,[8] the libretto of *L'incognità perseguitata* was created by Petrosellini a decade earlier for the Venetian *Teatro San Samuele*, where it was first staged with music by Piccinni. Moreover, Petrosellini wrote many librettos especially for Rome, but collaborated mainly with the *Teatro Valle* (owned by the Capranica family), and there was intense competition at that time between this theatre and the *Teatro Delle Dame* (the place of *La finta giardiniera's* premiere). Thus, it is far from certain that the same librettist was involved in both productions (*L'incognità perseguitata* in 1773 and *La finta giardiniera* a year later). Many Italian scholars remain sceptical, and the question of authorship is still open.[9]

[6] [s. A.] *La finta giardiniera. Dramma giocoso da rappresentarsi nel teatro Delle Dame nel Carnevale 1774*. [1774]. In Roma, per Giovanni Bartolomichi, p. 3.

[7] In the book *Mozart and His Time* (2008, 2015) [7] we also adhered to this assumption, but at present is inclined to consider it not entirely reliable.

[8] While copies of this libretto as set to music by Anfossi for an earlier production in Barcelona in 1770 are extant (see Sartori, C. (1991). *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800. Catalogo analitico con 16 indici: Vol. III, E–K*. Bertola & Locatelli, p. 428), little is known about this opera. In any case, it did not have the resonance that accompanied the Roman production of 1774.

[9] See, for example, the article by Lorenzo Mattei from the *Dizionario Biografico degli italiani* (Vol. 82, 2015), reproduced in the online encyclopedia Treccani: https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppe-petrosellini_(Dizionario-Biografico)/?search=PETROSELLINI%2C%20Giuseppe%2F (date of access 05/11/2025).

It is also worth taking into account some stylistic arguments that arise from the comparison of *La finta giardiniera* and *L'incognità perseguitata*. Both librettos follow a dramatic structure that goes back to the already mentioned *La buona figliuola* by Goldoni. The action revolves around a central female character who appears to occupy a fairly lowly position in the social hierarchy. However, despite this, the heroine attracts admirers of various social ranks, from peasants or servants to aristocrats.[10] However, there is a significant difference. In Petrosellini, as in Goldoni, the class barrier between the girl and the gentlemen in love with her initially seems insurmountable and disappears only when it suddenly becomes clear that the orphan has noble roots. Nevertheless, both the characters themselves and the audience remain in the dark about them right up until the moment of the denouement. In *La finta giardiniera*, the gardener Sandrina is in love with Podestà Don Anchise (the owner of the estate where she works) and Contino Belfiore, the fiancé of Arminda, a noble Milanese lady and niece of Don Anchise. However, in this case, the audience already knows from the very beginning that Sandrina is in disguise the Marchesa Violante, the former fiancée of the hot-tempered and fickle Belfiore, who went to look for him after he wounded her in a fit of jealousy and disappeared.

This difference leads to significant contradictions in the dramaturgy of *La finta giardiniera*. In the preceding librettos, the logically constructed plot line is aimed first at revealing the severity of the class conflict, and then, after clarifying the true origin of the main character, at resolving all misunderstandings. Here it loses its clarity and consistency. Don Anchise's courtship, not of a modest and pretty servant girl, but of a marchioness standing several steps above him on the social ladder, humiliates her dignity. The obstacle to reuniting with the flighty Belfiore, who already at the end of the first act recognises Violante in Sandrina and tries to beg for forgiveness throughout the subsequent action, is not the danger of violating class norms, but the resentment and offended mistrust of the amorous aristocratic damsel. As a result, instead of acute socially motivated dramatic or comedic situations the action gravitates toward melodramatic turns imbued with a spirit of pathetic exaltation.

[10] In Goldoni's classic libretto, the worker Mengotto and the Marchese Conchiglia compete for the attention and hand of Cecchina; in *L'incognità perseguitata* Petrosellini, the old Baron Tarpano, his son Count Asdrubal, and the estate manager Fabrizio seek the favour of the orphan Gianetta.

Mattern may be right in disagreeing with Abert's reproach that the librettist mixes "touching" and "comic" motifs, and in pointing out that Goldoni does the same in the classic *La buona figliuola* [3, p. 33]. However, the main problem with *La finta giardiniera* is not so much this mixture, but rather the weight and the degree of pathos in which the melodramatic component[11] is reached, when both central characters lose their minds from an excess of feelings at the climax scene. One can, of course, refer to the fact that in the 18th century the custom of perceiving episodes of madness from a comical side had not yet disappeared, and characters (mostly heroic-comic) seized by "noble madness" appeared on the stage from time to time, mostly depicted in a parodic manner.[12] But such a comedic perspective on the perception of madness seemed natural when it arose from the rational delusions of the characters, involving an inadequate assessment of themselves and the world around them due to aberrations of their own imagination or due to external influences (instilled prejudices, beliefs or the effects of witchcraft). However, it is a completely different matter when crazy impulses or mental disorder were the result of emotional overstrain, the intensity of feelings. In Goldoni's *La buona figliuola*, the worker Mengotto, who is in love with Cecchina, decides to commit suicide in despair following her banishment. This scene does not invite a comical treatment. However, when the brave soldier Tagliaferro, like a skilled recruiter, talks Mengotto down — why take your own life for no reason, if you can do it profitably by becoming a soldier? — Goldoni demonstrates a virtuoso comic way out of a melodramatic situation. Clearly, in 18th-century comedy, such a solution is only possible

[11] Of course, there is no connection here with melodrama as a stage device of "speech against the background of music," which arose and became noticeably widespread at the same time, and even became the basis for a special musical-dramatic genre (for example, Georg Anton Benda's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, 1775). In sentimental comic opera, melodramatic situations are intended to provoke a strong emotional reaction in the characters.

[12] Particularly well-known examples include the comic opera adaptations of the stories of Don Quixote (Giovanni Paisiello's *Don Chisciotte della Mancia*, libr. Giovanni Battista Lorenzi) or the knight errant Guido (Tommaso Traetta's *Il cavaliere errante*, libr. Giovanni Bertati), where the motif of madness is played out in a parodic manner. Traits of a similar interpretation can also be traced in *La finta giardiniera*, when in the scene of madness Sandrina and Belfiore represent each other as Thyrsis and Clori, then as Medusa (Sandrina) and Alcides (Belfiore).

for low-ranking characters. In a sentimental opera, portraying love madness comically — especially when it concerns aristocrats – implies ambiguity in relation to *sensibility*, which is the basis of its poetics.

Here we encounter the second problem concerning the libretto of *La finta giardiniera*. It has features that go beyond the typical range of motifs and situations of sentimentalist opera and give it a somewhat experimental character: the main character, who is supposed to make a leap, a flight from ordinary obscurity into the circle of high society and who must confirm her moral right to this, going through the path of "testing virtue," turns out to be knowingly beyond the conflict. The trials that befall her ultimately appear not as a moral justification for her rise, but as an excess of fate and a way to regain the attention of her frivolous lover by teaching him a lesson in gallant ethics. Therefore, albeit with reservations, it seems we should agree with Abert's critical assessment of the libretto and treat it not as a model that fully complies with the genre norms of its time, but to a certain extent as an eccentric experiment.

Sentimentalist opera as a type of musical comedy arose in the wake of the librettist Goldoni's experiments in creating of a "middle genre" — a search, relevant to the Age of Enlightenment, for ways beyond the classical norms of theatrical poetics (with its clear division into tragedy and comedy) toward greater verisimilitude. There was also a related incentive: the rapid growth of public interest in opera buffa and the genre's promotion to the stages of major Venetian theatres. Goldoni obviously considered that one of the means to enhance the scale of the spectacle was to include among the performers the stars of the great, heroic opera seria — castrati and prima donnas. The poetics of comic opera itself gave rise to the potential for genre blending, since singers of this profile were usually associated with roles of high social rank. Their appearance became one of the indicators of a certain type of "middle genre," in which the comic and the sublime-ethical spheres are fundamentally separated and have little intersection in the action. Most of his librettos of the 1750s already reflect this structural differentiation: in the list of the dramatis personae he frequently marks certain roles as *parti serie* and others as *parti buffe*. Between these poles, however, he identifies

an intermediate zone — *mezzo carattere* — a region where individual characters from both groups may enter.[13] These characters are often confidants close to the aristocrats (sometimes even servants), since the aristocrat himself cannot allow behaviour that threaten his dignity. At the same time, it is possible for some aristocratic characters to "descend" into this intermediate zone, usually incognito under someone else's guise (as, for example, in the libretto *Il conte Caramella*[14]) or because of admiration for female beauty, breadth of character and a peculiar understanding of knightly duty (as Il Marchese della Conchiglia in *La buona figliuola*). However, a significant limitation is that such liberty to disregard (usually temporarily) one's own status is permissible and acceptable only for male characters, but it is extremely undesirable for aristocratic women. Therefore, the very image of the Marchesa Violanta, who turned into the gardener Sandrina in *La finta giardiniera* is a step away from the concept of the "middle genre" in the poetics of the comic performance of the second half of the 18th century.[15]

However, the observance of all these norms specific to the operatic "middle genre" does not automatically lead to the emergence of a sentimentalist genre variety. A sentimental conflict arises when the group of *mezzi caratteri* includes a female character of low or unclear origin, who claims to move into the upper class. Of course,

[13] The peculiarities of dramatic solutions in comic opera with *mezzi caratteri* attracted attention long ago, even in the works of Wolfgang Osthoff — Osthoff, W. (1973). Die Opera buffa. In W. Arlt, E. Lichtenhahn, H. Oesch, & M. Haas (Eds.), *Gattungen der Musik in Einzeldarstellungen: Gedenkschrift Leo Schrade* (pp. 678–743). Francke Verlag. Recent researchers have also shown close attention to these peculiarities, as well as to the associated norms of the poetics of Goldoni's librettos [8, pp. 74–82]. The main angle from which these features are usually interpreted is the strengthening of realism in comic opera under the influence of the ideas of the Enlightenment and in line with Goldoni's experiments in his literary comedy. In the present work, we will try to focus more on how new dramatic patterns emerge or how familiar ones are transformed in opera compositions.

[14] For an analysis of the dramatic approach in the libretto *Il conte Caramella*, see my article *Gomer, Addison, Gol'doni — o syuzhetnykh istokakh libretto "Graf Karamella"* [*Homer, Addison, Goldoni: On the Plot Sources of the Libretto 'Il conte Caramella'*] [9].

[15] Indeed, in the dramatic structure of *La finta giardiniera* one can quite clearly see traces of the adventurous-adventurous concept of the Neapolitan musical comedy of the first half of the 18th century, where the motif of "incognito" was not yet correlated so clearly with the principles of social hierarchy as in the mature opera buffa. In this sense, the libretto of *Giardiniera* does not so much continue Goldoni's line as contradict it. For more information see [7, p. 248].

the only real grounds for this could be undoubtedly established aristocratic roots, which became clear at the turning point of the action. But the question of the moral grounds for such a leap, as well as the whole series of tests designed to demonstrate them, becomes the impetus and basis for the development of a precisely sentimentalist storyline. In Goldoni himself, a playwright who has managed to put the concept of the "middle opera genre" into practice more than once (and quite convincingly at that), his truly sentimentalist solution is a great rarity. In fact, the only exemplary case is his *La Cecchina, ossia La buona figliuola*.[16]

Parti serie and mezzi caratteri

The relationships in the sentimentalist opera between characters of different ranks and between the class spheres they represent create a certain balance of stylistic musical devices and techniques. Since the predominance of any one sphere can theoretically shift the work toward either comedy or melodrama,[17] it is quite reasonable that the analysis of *La finta giardiniera* by Mozart and its comparison with the opera by Anfossi become, in essence, the identification of the proportion between different musical stylistic components. While it is not possible in this article to make such a comparison as exhaustively as in Mattern's dissertation, it is sufficient — in order to establish the principal tendencies — to focus on the most relevant examples.

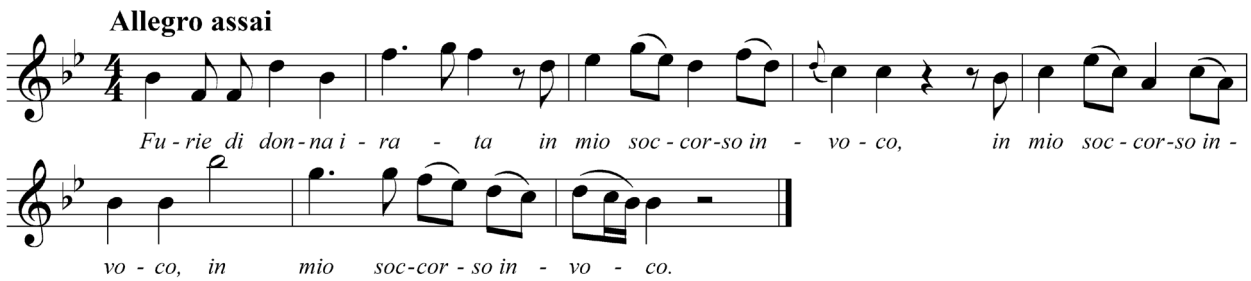
The obvious differences between Mozart and Anfossi are already evident in the interpretation of the style associated with the parts of noble characters – or *parti serie*. In *La finta giardiniera* these include the niece of the Podestà Arminda and the cavalier Ramiro, who is in love with her but remains rejected until the denouement in the finale of the opera. Particularly illustrative is Ramiro's "aria of jealousy" *Và pure ad altri in braccio* from Act III (No. 26). There is every reason to compare its interpretation by both authors with the aria of Piccinni's La Marchesa Lucinda from *La buona figliuola*. Although Piccinni's aria is sung by an angry woman (also a character from the *parti serie*)

[16] It is followed by its continuation — *La buona figliuola maritata*, which follows in the same vein, but, of course, is no longer considered a model.

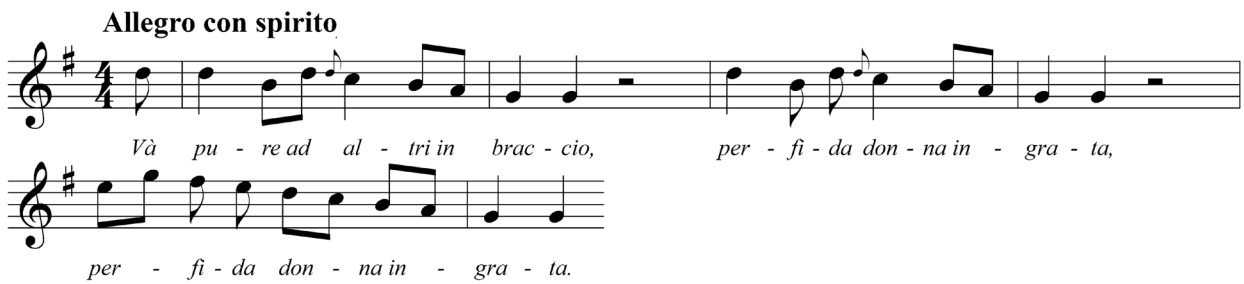
[17] This line of possibilities in genre history was further developed and led to the emergence of the so-called opera semiseria or "opera of salvation" at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries during the French Revolution.

and addressed to her brother, whose behaviour jeopardises her matrimonial plans, it may be regarded as exemplary in terms of its dramatic position, figurative structure, and even literary style. In both texts, the mention of the Furies becomes key, and "love's despair" (*un disperato amor*) is directly named as the source of the Marchesa's anger, as well as being implied from the stage situation in Ramiro's aria. Both offenders are also accused of ingratitude (*ingrata*): in Ramiro's aria towards Arminda, and in Lucinda's one towards Cecchina.

When comparing the music in the arias, it is impossible not to notice how closely Anfossi follows Piccini's prototype (*Examples 1* and *2*).



Example 1. N. Piccinni. *La buona figliuola*. Lucinda's Aria (I, 14)[18]

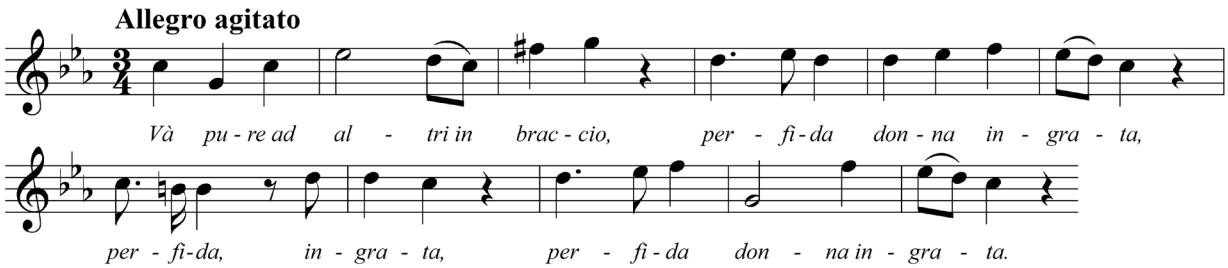


Example 2. P. Anfossi. *La finta giardiniera*. Aria Ramiro (III, 6)

[18] The musical examples from Piccinni's *La buona figliuola* are taken from the manuscript held in the Saxon State and University Library Dresden (Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Dresden, D-Dl: Mus.3264-F-502). Those from Anfossi's *La finta giardiniera* are based on the manuscript from the National Library of France (Bibliothèque nationale de France, F-Pn: D-120, D-121). The examples from the opera by Mozart are cited from the score in the new edition of the Complete Works (NMA, Ser. II, Wg. 5, Vol. 8; in addition to the act and scene, the musical number assigned in this edition is also provided). Here and below, the act and scene numbers are provided in parentheses

In both cases, the poetic form is typical of the exposition sections of Italian arias: a couplet with a repetition of the second line. Similar musical features include a fast tempo and a quadruple meter with pulsation (◡) | — ◡ ◡ — ◡ ◡ | — —. There is also a similarity in the arrangement of phrases in the theme — *abb'c* in Piccinni's aria and *aab* in Anfossi's one. In the latter, it sounds simpler and more laconic due to the exact repetition of the first musical phrase (*a*) with a new text, while in Piccinni everything is more varied and richer due to the triple (not double) presentation of the second verse, each time with a varied musical arrangement. Finally, both arias are written in a major key, which emphasises the *cold rage* in their expression.

Mozart's interpretation of the aria, although using some common features, is fundamentally clearly different (*Example 3*).



Example 3. W. A. Mozart. *La finta giardiniera*. Aria Ramiro (III, 6, № 26)

This difference is already noticeable in the tempo marks, where the clarification *agitato* ("excitedly") appears. The triple meter and beginning of the melody on a strong beat give the opening phrase more purposefulness; its rhythm is more flexible than the precise rhythmic periodicity of Anfossi's theme. The structure of the theme is also more complex and sophisticated. Repeating, like Piccinni, the second poetic line twice, in bars 7–8 he omits the word "*donna*" — *perfida*, [...] *ingrata* — thereby disrupting the unity of the verse in terms of its metrical structure. As a result, this phrase falls out of the coherent melodic line; it appears as if recitative lines have been introduced into it. The melody seems to be interrupted by a surge of feelings. The descending second intonations add a touch of complaint to the expression of burning reproach. In addition, the C minor key of the aria carries an element of pathos,

which further emphasises the line separating it from the major arias of Anfossi and Piccinni. In addition to indignation, Mozart also emphasises the feeling of pain, which makes the effect more complex and dynamic, evoking a more vivid emotional response from the listener.

Exactly the same difference can be found in Arminda's "revenge aria" *Vorrei punirti indegno* (II, 2 in Anfossi, II and No. 13 in Mozart). Anfossi writes a completely traditional full-length opening act solo number adorned with abundant virtuoso coloraturas in an energetic B major, while Mozart writes an aria in G minor, filled with confused syncopations and mood swings between forte and piano.

Since both numbers under consideration are taken from the parts of characters who, despite their high rank, act rather in the background in the overall development of the opera, the expressive means in their arias should not particularly stand out to attract attention. Piccinni in his *La buona figliuola* follows exactly this principle, and is followed by Anfossi in this regard. As for Mozart, in his opera the musical and dramatic accents in these parts are so strong that the essentially background figures are brought to the forefront, implying that we are talking not about noble yet secondary characters of a comedy, but rather about the main characters of the opera seria.

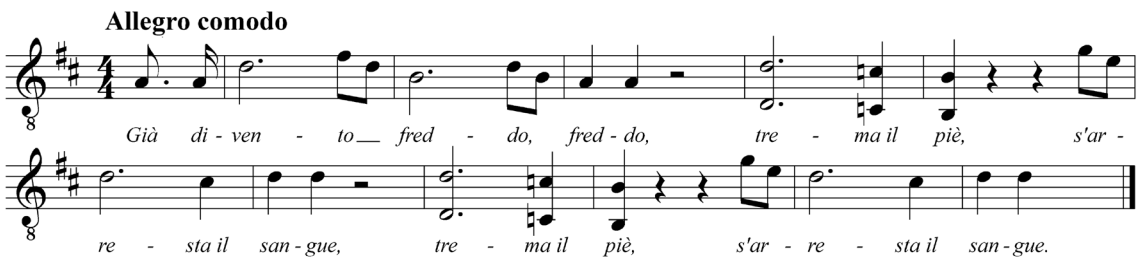
Even more important is the maintenance of figurative and musical-stylistic balance in the sphere of *parti di mezzo carattere*. Mattern believes that Anfossi's arias are "weisen bestimmte gemeinsame stilistische Merkmale auf. Sie sind weder dem Seria- noch Buffa-Stil zuzuordnen, sondern es handelt sich vielmehr um 'Mezzo carattere-Arien'" [3, p. 38]. In our opinion, it is not entirely justified to single out *mezzo carattere* as a separate, stylistically homogeneous layer. When the characters in a comedy of the "middle genre" are divided into groups, they are, of course, associated with a certain expressive registers — sublime and noble on the one hand, or down-to-earth and everyday on the other. However, this register does not represent any stylistic unity (seria or buffa style). The protagonists of seria can burn with anger or, on the contrary, languish with love, and these affects are expressed so differently that they have very little in common. Moreover, in the role of the comic shepherdess one can find a pastoral aria, which is quite capable of embellishing the role of the sublime heroine. This means that in some areas these registers may overlap. Therefore, it seems more

appropriate and correct, when discussing serious, comic or *mezzo carattere* parts to speak of certain ranges of stylistic means. While in some areas they may overlap, at the same time each of them has a clearly defined centre and its own boundaries, resulting in internal balance.

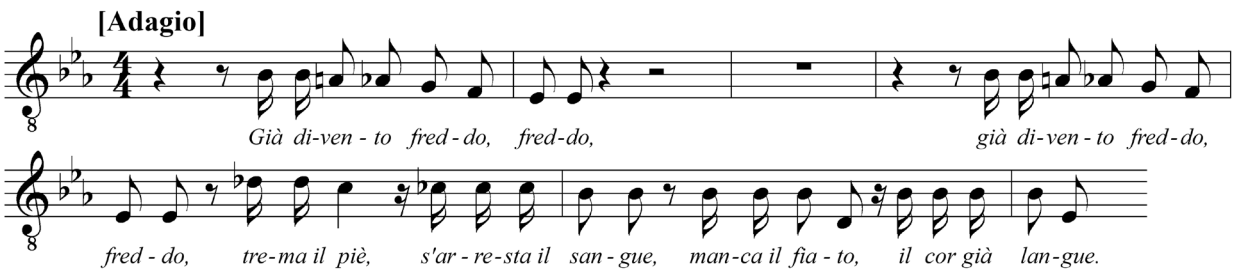
In *La finta giardiniera*, the group of *mezzo carattere* parts includes the gardener Sandrina herself (the Marchesa Violanta in disguise) and her fickle lover Contino Belfiore — a disposition that practically repeats the one found in Piccinni/Goldoni's *La buona figliuola*, where this group includes the gardener Cecchina and the Marchese Conchiglia, who is not indifferent to her. Both Conchiglia and Belfiore represent the already mentioned type of noble characters for whom the limits of their class ethics prove to be too narrow. However, Belfiore's reason for going beyond its limits is not chivalrous gallantry and broad-mindedness, like the Marchese, but excessive ardour and eccentricity of nature. It is worth recognising, however, that Belfiore's status in *La finta giardiniera* as *mezzo carattere* is motivated much less convincingly than Conchiglia's in Goldoni's libretto. When Belfiore begins to court Sandrina, he hardly compromises his class honour, since he immediately recognises his beloved Marchesa in the unknown gardener. Therefore, Belfiore's "lowering" is carried out rather through indirect and not incontrovertible methods to emphasise the eccentric traits of his character, including immaturity or even infantilism.

His first long aria, *Da Scirocco al Tramontana* (I, 8), is indicative, in which he unfolds before the astonished Don Anchise a picture of his genealogy, going back to Cato, Mucius Scaevola, Tiberius, Caracalla, Scipio, Marcus Aurelius — a whole host of ancient and later heroes, rulers and influential nobles. "You're laughing! Don't you see?" Belfiore's line, right in the text of the aria, gives all this pompous grandeur an extremely comical, parodic meaning. Of course, in the entire part of the Marchese Conchiglia, Piccinni does not express such a degree of burlesque in any number. In both Anfossi and Mozart, this text gives rise to arias of grand scale (208 and 168 bars, respectively, with the use of pairs of oboes, French horns, and even trumpets in the orchestra), in which the parodic comic intensity almost upsets the balance acceptable for the *mezzo carattere* character.

The other pole in Belfiore's part is marked by the scene of Act II, consisting of the accompanied recitative *Ah, non partite* and the aria *Già divento freddo, freddo* (II, 12). After Sandrina-Violante rejects him and orders him to give his hand and heart to Arminda, the Countino is overcome with great excitement and his mind becomes clouded. He feels like he is losing his mind, complains of icy sweat running down his face, the breath of wind makes him think of the "fields of Elysium" — it seems to him that his soul has already crossed the brink of death. While these details in the text could also give rise to a grotesque or parodic interpretation, neither Anfossi nor Mozart introduce bright comic accents here (however, in some places during the course of the music they are allowed in the performance). Both composers interpret the scene as a whole in a spirit of high pathos, although the degree and nature of expressiveness in both again differ noticeably. It is enough to compare how the opening phrase is presented musically: *Già divento freddo, freddo* (*I am getting colder and colder*) (*Examples 4* and *5*).



Example 4. P. Anfossi. *La finta giardiniera*. Aria Belfiore (II, 12)



Example 5. W. A. Mozart. *La finta giardiniera*. Aria Belfiore (II, 12, № 19)

This time, both Anfossi and Mozart choose the major key, but the tempo and character are very different. In Anfossi, an energetic *allegro* is combined with a cantilena-like opening that epresses elevated, but rather generalised, affect. No more obvious specification of the emotional state emerges; such intonation can equally well represent either restrained joy or restrained indignation. Anfossi offers for the words "*trema il piè*" (*trembling in the legs*) a variant of the phrase an octave lower — a colourful register contrast that allows for a comic highlighting of the "trembling" of the voice, since the lower limit of the tenor's range is used. He further enhances this effect by singing the phrase twice (typical '*abb*' structure). Nevertheless, the singer may instead choose another option in the middle register, and in this case any potential comic overtone disappears.

The melody in Mozart's aria is of a completely different nature. At a slower tempo, it is dominated by speech-like prosody typical of the agitated *parlando* arias in opera seria. Its emotional colouring is revealed much more clearly — both by the somewhat hectic rhythm and the expressive "sliding" over small seconds, so that the feeling of uncertainty and fear takes on a very distinct musical shape. Mozart repeats precisely this first phrase of the text, which determines the general character of the aria; moreover, the "trembling in the legs" and other signs of malaise receive no special musical emphasis. The performer is, of course, free to exaggerate certain details for comic effect, but there are no indications of this in Mozart's score.

In general, it can be stated that Anfossi does not highlight the affected, melodramatic component in this aria (even allowing for slight caricature), while Mozart, on the contrary, does not ignore it. As a result, the very boundaries that outline the stylistic range of this *mezzo carattere* figure turn out to be different for the two composers. Anfossi strives to maintain a "middle" balance; the exaggerated comic-burlesque side is balanced by a sphere of moderate, generalised pathos. In Mozart, the range is clearly wider, again, even within the "middle" part, capturing areas of melodramatic intensity and thereby shifting the balance in that direction.

Sandrina's Part

Of fundamental importance is the way in which the central character from the *mezzo carattere* group, Sandrina-Violanta, is treated in *La finta giardiniera*. The peculiarities of this interpretation are also most clearly revealed by comparison with the figure of Cecchina from *La buona figliuola* by Piccinni/Goldoni.

Cecchina's Cavatina *Che piacer, che bel diletto* (I, 1) opens the opera by Piccinni. Its idyllic, pastoral character depicts the heroine in her native element, tending to flowers. *La finta giardiniera*, however, is constructed quite differently at the level of the libretto: it begins with an ensemble introduction in which all the characters (except Belfiore, who has not yet arrived) praise the wonderful day. However, in her short solo sentence, Sandrina appears not so much in harmony and peace with herself and her surroundings, but in emotional dissonance: *Sono infelice, son sventurata, mi vuol oppressa la sorte ingrata* (*Oh, I am unhappy, I am oppressed by an unmerciful fate*). Here, a fundamental difference between the two heroines is already outlined: Cecchina still has to pass through a sequence of dramatic turns that will radically change her situation, while Sandrina-Violante has already experienced the main blow in the backstory, and only one turn awaits her — the restoration of her lost well-being.

The first extended number in Sandrina's part, *Noi donne poverine* (I, 4), apparently continues the line of complaints, but both Anfossi and Mozart resolve set it in a rather gallant and playful tone. Sandrina's lamentations about the universal fate of women forced to endure the suffering of love have nothing to do with the turbulent events of her past, but they are caused by the irrepressible courtship of old Don Anchise. This number clearly outlines the boundaries of the heroine's "middle" position, endowing her character even with humorous features, since it latently contains a hint of gallant pretence. A number of similar character and function in Cecchina's role is the Cavatina *Poverina tutto il dì* (I, 5), although it looks different in appearance, it also outlines with great clarity the "middle" boundaries in the stylistic range of the means that characterise it. In her heartfelt *siciliana*, Cecchina also complains about the fate that condemned her, such a fragile girl, to the arduous work of a gardener. But even in this number there is a hint of gallant cunning, since Cecchina strives to impress the Marchese Conchiglia with her grace and at the same time hide her embarrassment at his overly frank signs of attention.

The next aria in Cecchina's part, *Una povera ragazza* (I, 12), is the central number of the entire opera and, overall, one of the most famous — one might even say iconic — arias of its time. Piccinni succeeded in concentrating here the most characteristic features of the sentimentalist trend in the opera genre. Its weight and significance are primarily determined by its place in the development of the plot, it marks the beginning of those very "tests of virtue," when, on the unfair slander of envious maids, the mistress decides to remove the girl from the castle.[19] In *La finta giardiniera* there are no prerequisites for such a plot twist. Sandrina's next aria is not so much a reaction to the dramatic event as anticipating it; almost immediately after it, fate brings the disguised Marchesa face to face with her runaway fiancé Belfiore, thus beginning the Finale of Act I. Of course, in the overall dramatic logic of the opera, this aria of Sandrina also plays an important role: it closes the rather peaceful stage of the exposition and, like a meaningful caesura, hangs before the beginning of the stormy development of events. But there is no plot motive for its appearance, and the librettist, apparently without much thought, chose a completely conventional and rather formulaic "bird metaphor" as the main theme for its text: *Geme la Tortorella* (I, 10) — a dove, separated from her mate, moans and complains about her fate. Such a text could hardly inspire any composer to create a significant number, let alone one comparable to Cecchina's aria. Both Anfossi and Mozart, acutely aware of the dramatic situation, wrote the best possible cavatinas under such circumstances, touchingly idyllic and very similar in mood and expressive means; in Mozart's case, it also proved to be marked by a special, outstanding compositional mastery. However, neither aria produced any resonance in the development of the genre comparable to that which accompanied the famous aria of Cecchina.

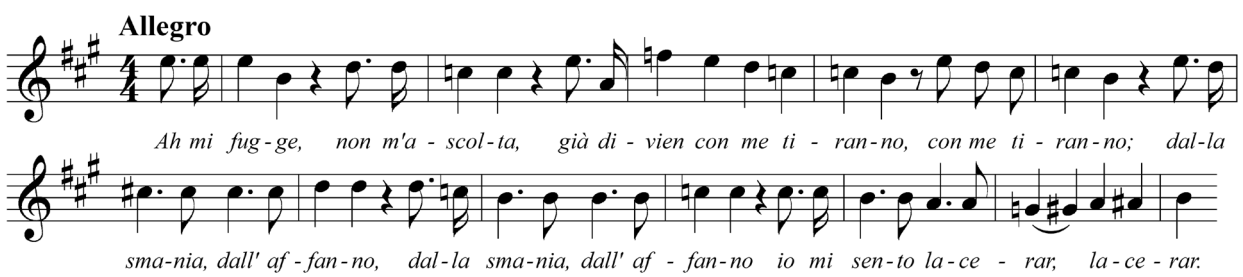
However, arias like *Una povera ragazza*, where the heroine is overcome by conflicting feelings, doubt and despair, were already considered an integral attribute of the central figure of sentimentalist opera. That is why in *La finta giardiniera* there is a place for it — although quite far from the beginning of the action, in the middle of Act II. A delicate moment was chosen for its appearance, when Podestà witnesses the heated explanations between Sandrina-

[19] This aria has already been analysed in detail by the present author in an earlier work [10, pp. 8–15].

Violanta and Contino Belfiore and, overcome with jealousy, showers the "gardener" with reproaches. The situation turns out to be ambiguous, since Sandrina, although slipping for a moment in her recitative into an indignant rebuke, cannot yet reveal her incognito to her master and is forced to play the role of a servant flattered by his attention. As in *La buona figliuola*, the librettist proposed an extended text of the aria consisting of several stanzas, in which some moods and images in the heroine's soul are replaced by others. In Goldoni, Cecchina first complains about the injustice done to a poor orphan, then asks her owners to let her leave the house where they don't believe her, then a picture arises in her mind of kind people giving her alms, and finally, she is overcome with the certainty that heaven will not leave without protection those who are innocent and purehearted. In the aria from *La finta giardiniera* the motifs are similar, but their order is mirror-opposite: Sandrina first expresses hope that the master's heart is full of kindness, then that his eyes only look angry, but pity shines through them; then, however, the girl is seized by panic, and it seems to her that the master does not listen to her and leaves, abandoning her to the mercy of fate; and, finally, she turns to the young ladies in the audience, calling on them to sympathise with her grief and console her.

La buona figliuola (I, 12)	*La finta giardiniera* (II, 6)
Una povera ragazza, padre e madre che non ha, si maltratta, si strapazza, questa è troppa crudeltà.	Una voce sento in core, Che mi dice pian pianino: Il tuo caro padroncino Tutto è pieno di bontà.
Sì signora, sì padrone, che con vostra permissione voglio andarmene di qua.	E in quel volto, in quegl'occhietti Che pur sembran sdegnosetti Vi si sorge la pietà.
Partirò, me ne andrò a cercar la carità, poverina la Cecchina qualche cosa troverà.	Ah, mi fugge, non m'ascolta, Gia divien con me tiranno; Dalla smania, dall'affanno Io mi sento lacirar.
Sì signore, sì padrona, so che il ciel non abbandona l'innocenza e l'onestà.	Fanciulette che m'udite, Se pietà di me sentite, Una figlia sventurata Infelice, abbandonata, Deh venite a consolar.

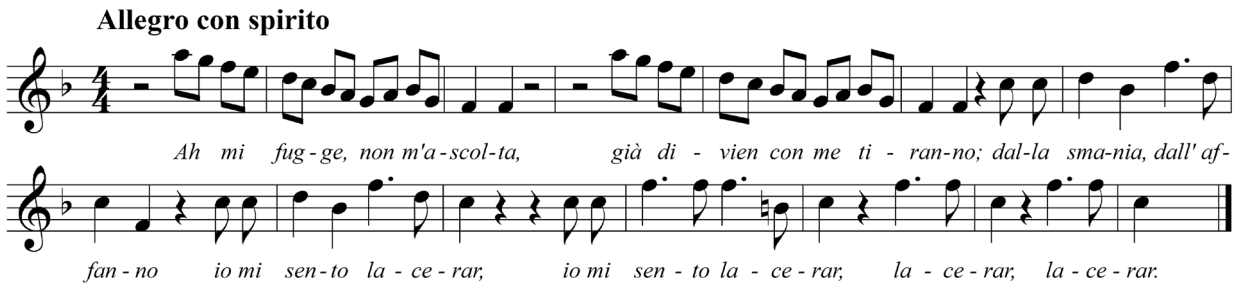
Once again, Anfossi and Mozart approached the musical realisation of this text in different ways. The difference in length is indicative: Anfossi's aria lasts only about two minutes, which is noticeably shorter than the aria from Piccinni's *La buona figliuola*, while Mozart's is comparable in scale and lasts about five minutes. Anfossi musically divides the text into two sections: a calm, cantabile *Andante* for the first two stanzas and a lively, stormy *Allegro con spirito* for the final two. Anfossi clearly understands that this number in Sandrina's part has a special significance, since in the first section he uses solo parts for oboe, bassoon — and even, at one point, French horn in the manner of a *sinfonia concertante*. In Mozart's aria, the orchestration is simple, with only a string section, which is evidence that the composer did not specifically single her out in Sandrina's part. Mozart's number is made up of several separate contrasting sections: *Grazioso* (two stanzas) — *Allegro* (third stanza) — *Grazioso* (first stanza) — *Andante con moto* (the last fourth stanza). As can be seen, the initial "gallant" section is repeated, and the stormy third stanza and the fourth with its appeal to the audience are set apart into separate constructions. Overall, the aria appears less organic and firmly composed than Anfossi's – not to mention Piccinni's – prototype.[20] Mozart's main emphasis is on the sharp contrast in the third stanza, marked not only by the change of tempo, but also by the change of key (the juxtaposition of A major and A minor). At the same time, the groaning seconds (on the word *tiranno*) and the affected chromatic move at the end are again clearly highlighted (*Example 6*).



Example 6. W. A. Mozart. *La finta giardiniera*. Sandrina's aria (II, 6, № 16)

[20] Piccinni's aria *Una povera ragazza* is a rare example of unity and organic structure, where all four stanzas are combined into a single composition with clearly defined features of sonata form.

Anfossi also played on the contrast of tempos, but retained the major key; in the character of the melody for the same text, he did not highlight the details, limiting himself instead to a general expression of agitation (*Example 7*).



Example 7. P. Anfossi. *La finta giardiniera*. Sandrina's aria (II, 6)

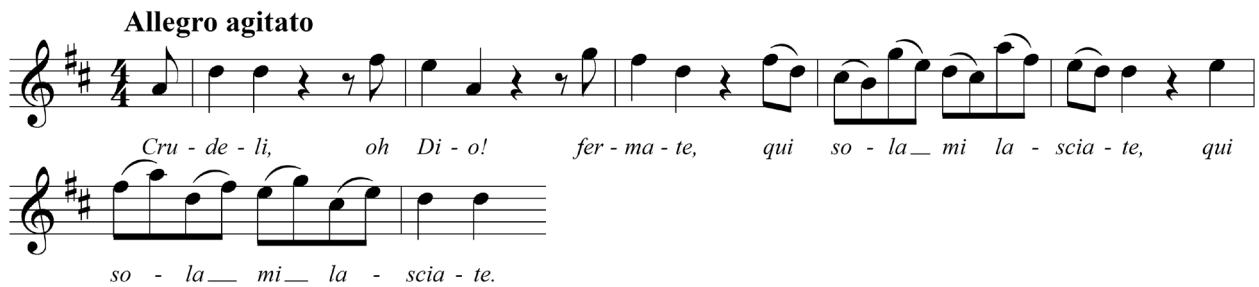
The final solo number in Sandrina's part goes quite far beyond the stereotypes accepted not only in comic opera, but also in 18th-century opera in general. The librettist largely encouraged this by constructing her solo scene on the eve of the Finale of Act II in a rather unusual way. The servants of the angry Podestà escort the hapless gardener to a wild, deserted place and leave her alone. The scene opens with her aria, filled with prayer, despair and fear of the approaching darkness. This is followed by a recitative in which Sandrina tries to decide where to go to seek shelter. Then comes a short Cavatina — the girl complains that she has no strength left from tears and sobs, followed by a final recitative. A composition like this — an opening aria, interrupted by a recitative, then moving into a cavatina — is a great rarity.

Both Anfossi and Mozart responded to the librettist's original idea, and both took another, equally innovative step. They did not interrupt the orchestral accompaniment between the aria and the cavatina, but preserved it in the recitative fragment turning this recitative into *accompagnato*. Mozart went even further, orchestrating the recitative at the end of the scene, as a result of which it directly transitioned into the ensemble Finale. There was nothing like it in opera buffa of the 1770s, either before or after the both *Giardiniere*. As a distant analogue, but only in the Italian opera seria, one can mention Niccolò Jommelli's *Armida abbandonata*, which was staged shortly before (May 30, 1770) on the stage of the Neapolitan *Teatro San Carlo*.

It is difficult to say whether it could have served as a model for Anfossi (after all, he did separate Sandrina's scene and the Finale with a short *secco recitative*), but Mozart is known to have witnessed the Neapolitan premiere of Jommelli's opera and, judging from his letters, it made a strong impression on him.

In Goldoni's libretto, the main character did not experience such extreme trials, although it is quite possible that the novel by Samuel Richardson could have provided reasons for them. Thus, Sandrina's scene — not only because of its unusual composition, but also in terms of plot motifs and dramatic situation — deviates significantly from the canons of sentimentalist opera, thus particularly vividly demonstrating the extraordinary features of its poetics.

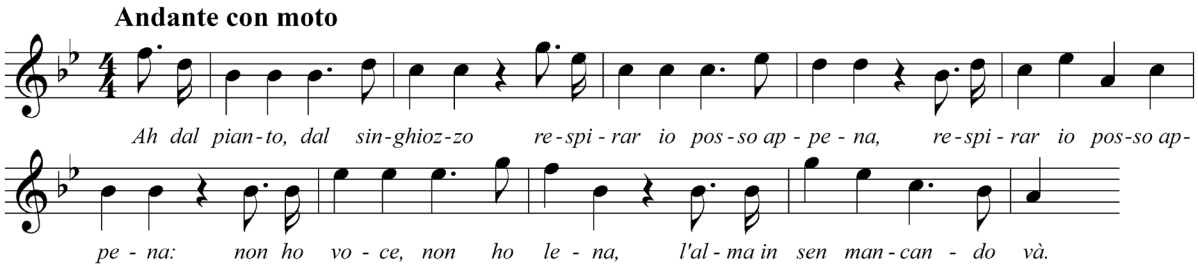
Evidently, it will no longer be a surprise that Anfossi and Mozart have different solutions for this scene. Anfossi, although pushing off in the aria from the initial angry cries, very soon subordinates the presentation to a rounded cantabile metric and song structure (abb), as well as preferring to remain in the major mode again (*Example 8*).



Example 8. P. Anfossi. *La finta giardiniera*. Sandrina's aria (II, 15)

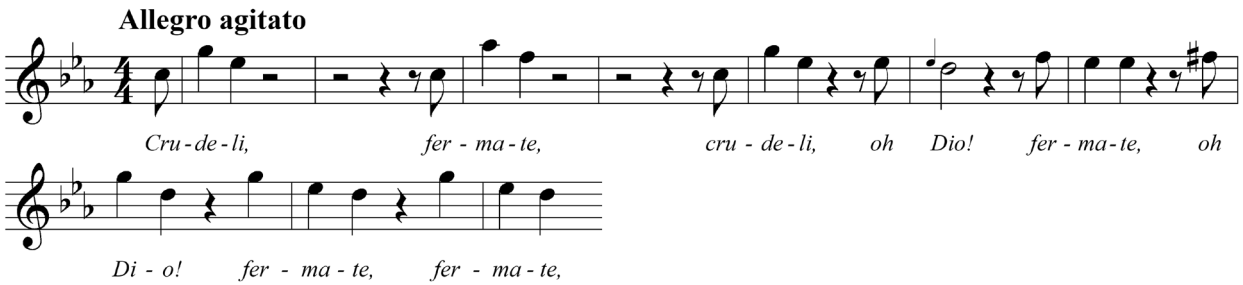
As for the cavatina, these qualities even increase there. Neglecting the references in the text to "tears" and "sobs,"[21] Anfossi constructs two-bar rounded phrases on the intonations of agitated request and entreaty, which are very close in style to the melody of Cecchina's aria *Una povera ragazza* (*Example 9*).

[21] Literally — throat spasms, *singhiozzo*.



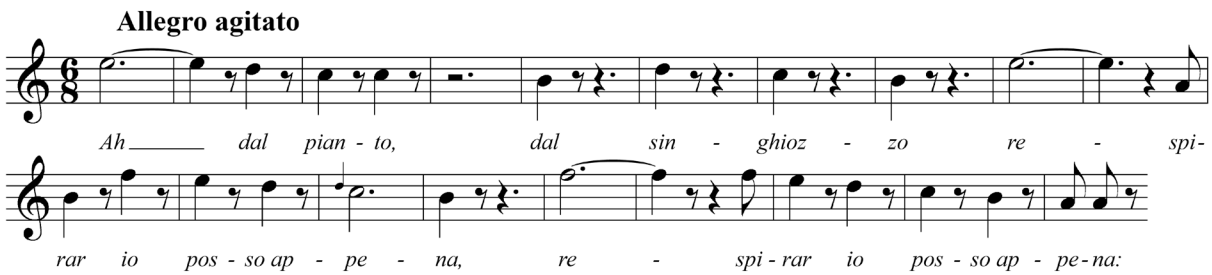
Example 9. P. Anfossi. *La finta giardiniera*. Sandrina's Cavatina (II, 15)

Mozart, on the contrary, in both cases again prefers the minor mode and a circle of emphatically pathetic intonations. The vocal part consists of a series of excited exclamations, almost on the verge of screaming (*Example 10*).



Example 10. W. A. Mozart. *La finta giardiniera*. Sandrina's aria (II, 15, № 21)

In the cavatina, in contrast to Anfossi, he concentrates attention precisely on the intermittent speech, the stifled breathing, which destroys not only the coherence of sounds in the melody, but also transforms the metric periodicity and symmetry (*Example 11*).



Example 11. W. A. Mozart. *La finta giardiniera*. Sandrina's Cavatina (II, 15, № 22)

Ensembles

In addition to solo numbers, ensemble scenes also make a significant contribution to the general appearance of the genre and the interpretation of individual characters; however, a detailed analysis of them is hardly possible in this article. Let us mention just a few particularly eloquent points. For example, in the Finale of the first act, the librettist brings together two couples for the first time — and in a situation of dramatic discord: Sandrina and Belfiore, Arminda and Ramiro. The second pair belongs to the group of *parti serie*, and the first to *mezzi caratteri*, but in fact at this moment all their actions and reactions are transferred to the highest dramatic register. Anfossi predictably tones down the pathos in both, giving the music an impersonally effective character that describes the overall dynamics and unexpectedness of the situation. Mozart, on the contrary, does not shy away from pathetic accents, while clearly emphasising the parallelism of reactions: surprise and confusion in the men and excitement and even fear in the women. Thus, Sandrina's and Belfiore's involvement in the world of hot and sublime passions is revealed with full force, and the boundaries of the "middle" register are once again expanded uncontrollably.

In the interpretation of the second Finale, the strategy is largely repeated. Let us recall that, according to the librettist's plan, the emotional intensity by the end of the act reaches its extreme point when the main characters lose their minds. The dramatic tension builds in several stages. The action moves from a moment of comic confusion, when in pitch darkness the characters are divided into strange pairs (Belfiore with the maid Serpetta, assuming that it is Sandrina, and the Podestà with Arminda, also assuming that it is the gardener), to a situation of general confusion, when everyone realizes that Belfiore and Sandrina are in the grip of madness.

Anfossi approaches the decision as if from the position of an outside observer. His main guideline is the general characteristics of the events and the gradual increase of tension, which he expresses with the help of a chain of musical episodes with a change of tempo and dynamics: *Comodo* (at the beginning of the scene) — *Allegro* (from the moment when the confusion is revealed by the light of the torch) — *Allegro con spirito*, 4/4 (when the Podesta and Ramiro, seeing a rival in the Contino, try to challenge him to a duel) — *Allegro con spirito*, 3/4 (when the insanity of the main characters becomes obvious to everyone). To maintain the overall rising tide, Anfossi

cuts some passages in the text that don't quite fit into this rhythm — in particular, the scene where the heroes imagine themselves as Chloe and Thyrsis, enchanted by the singing of the sirens and Orpheus's lyre, and then Belfiore proclaims himself the fearless Alcides.

Mozart's Finale also consists of several episodes; however, his attention is drawn not so much to the general escalation of movement as to the clash of contrasting dramatic situations and their more detailed depiction. Therefore, he does not hesitate to preserve details that demonstrate clear signs of the characters' madness — despite the possibility that they can bring the whole situation to the brink of the grotesque, which Anfossi clearly avoids.

Another important ensemble in the opera is the duet of the main characters in the last act. Its prototype can again be found in Goldoni's and Piccinni's *La buona figliuola*. However, in *La finta giardiniera* its place and meaning were significantly transformed. The duet between Cecchina and the Marchese Conchiglia in the third act is one of the central numbers in the opera: the heroine first learns of her origins and gradually comes to terms with the idea that a happy change has occurred in her destiny. In the duet of the third act *La finta giardiniera* everything is different: a quarrel flares up between the lovers again, and Violanta insists on separation, but gradually the couple comes to reconciliation. Unlike the duet from *La buona figliuola*, there is little that is new in this plot structure; it reproduces the stereotypical "quarrel-reconciliation" situation that is widespread in both serious and comic opera. The most important plot point for a sentimental opera — involving the rise of a lowly gardener to aristocratic rank — cannot be realised here; for this reason, everything turns out to be only the end of a serious misunderstanding and the reunion of the lovers.

The duet is preceded by a short recitative, in which the heroes, finding themselves in a calm environment in the bosom of nature, gradually unburden themselves of their mental disorder and come to their senses. While both Anfossi and Mozart chose orchestral accompaniment, their decisions again differ markedly. Anfossi thematically designed only the beginning of the scene, subsequently accompanying the characters' lines with rather typical passages of the string section. Mozart wrote a *ritornello* with gentle phrases of oboes and gentle line of French horns, which sounds throughout the dialogue. The stage is entirely decorated with orchestral accompaniment and coloured with exquisite sound painting, thereby losing the character of a transition

between musical numbers — and, on the contrary, acquiring the integrity and weight of a separate number. This short recitative fragment in Mozart recalls the magical pastoral scene from Jommelli's *Armida abbandonata*, where the knights, having escaped from the power of the sorceress, make their way through the enchanted forest. It is especially symptomatic that Mozart, as a prototype, focused on the newest and very "progressive" for its time version of opera seria.

Conclusion

Summarising the analysis and returning to the question of possible ways of interpreting the controversial plot of *La finta giardiniera*, we come to the conclusion that each of the composers chose his own way of interpreting it. Anfossi remained true to the general idea of a stylistically balanced sentimental opera and tried not to exaggerate excessively melodramatic details, while Mozart did the opposite, not missing the opportunity for sharp pathetic accents. Mattern, who also considered this point to be fundamental in his work, defined the difference between the methods of Anfossi and Mozart as the difference between "Gattungsstil" (in the former) and "Personalstil" (in the latter) [3, pp. 524–546]. While this formula captures important aspects, it still requires significant clarification.

In Mattern's view, all the main prerequisites for revealing the genre poetics of *La finta giardiniera* were already contained in the libretto, which he considered to be traditional and typical, since Anfossi's opera was generally well received by the public. It seems to us that this understanding is not entirely correct, since a comparison with the exemplary work for the genre — Goldoni's *La buona figliuola* — shows that the libretto actually deviates quite noticeably from the accepted conventions of sentimentalist opera. In this regard, Anfossi's position should be assessed not as an obedient — and, to a certain extent, passive — following of the line already laid down in the libretto, but, on the contrary, as a very active correction of its features. The Italian composer, of course, had a certain relevant genre model, but he was guided not by how this genre was realised in the libretto, but by certain conventional norms of comic sentimentalist opera. Moreover, since he regarded these norms as a kind of musical–compositional ideal, he does not stop

at transforming the libretto in the direction of this ideal through smoothing and balancing. Mozart, by contrast, follows the intentions of the libretto creator much more consistently, responding vividly to all of his innovations. However, in following the librettist, he brought the stylistic and compositional unity of the sentimentalist opera to the dangerous brink of destruction.

Since the question of the reasons for such differences is very complex, it is hardly possible to claim a definitive solution. Nevertheless, we are prepared to agree with Mattern — at least with regard to Anfossi — that the conventional "Gattungsstil" (taking into account the above clarifications) basically determined his approach to creating the opera. As for Mozart, the assertion of the German researcher about "Personalstil" as constituting the decisive factor that determined his method [3, p. 524], in relation to *La finta giardiniera*, does not seem entirely convincing. While Mozart undoubtedly displays a special and highly individualised musical-dramatic sense in his mature and late works, it can hardly be extended to this early opera. As mentioned, Mozart's solutions here in most cases are directly based on the positions and situations proposed by the librettist. Unlike Anfossi, he did not feel the need to make any changes to the text, although later, beginning with *Idomeneo* (1781), this became one of the most obvious indicators of that very specific Mozartian dramatic flair. In our opinion, Mozart's uncritical acceptance of the libretto *La finta giardiniera* rather indicates that by that time he was not yet deeply immersed in the development of the comic opera tradition and did not have sufficient experience to clearly understand the essence of its poetics. At that time, opera buffa probably still seemed to him a genre that did not deserve much attention. "Es gibt auch … im Frühling, Sommer und Herbst da und dort eine opera buffa, die man zur Übung, und um nicht müssig zu gehen, schreiben kann. Es ist wahr, man bekömmt nicht viell, aber doch etwas…" he wrote to his father from Munich just two years later.[22] And shortly afterwards he admits that the unconditional priority in his interests is for serious opera, not the buffoonish variety — "serios nicht Buffa."[23] It should therefore come as no surprise that

[22] Letter dated October 11, 1777. Bauer, W. A., Deutsch, O. E., Eibl J. H., & Konrad, U. (Eds.). (2005). *Mozart W. A. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen: Gesamtausgabe: In 8 Vols. Vol. 2: 1777–1779*. Bärenreiter; DTV, pp. 45–46.

[23] Letter dated February 4, 1778. Bauer, W. A., Deutsch, O. E., Eibl J. H., & Konrad, U. (Eds.). (2005). *Mozart W. A. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen: Gesamtausgabe: In 8 Vols. Vol. 2: 1777–1779*. Bärenreiter; DTV, p. 254.

Mozart responded with great enthusiasm to situations and numbers that closely resembled the style of opera seria.

Another reason can be considered the fact that *La finta giardiniera* was composed by Mozart for Munich, not for the main court stage (Cuvilliés-theatre), but for the old theatre on Salvator Square, which was practically no longer intended for opera performances. Opera buffa appeared in Munich only occasionally, perhaps influenced by the fashion for some foreign novelties, was performed by visiting artists only in the court theatre, and did not have a stable tradition on which Mozart could have based his interpretation. The circumstances of his commission remain unclear. And although the already quite old and ailing Bavarian Elector Maximilian III Joseph attended the performance, overall, the appearance of Mozart's opera in the Bavarian capital seems to be a chance event without any significant consequences. After three performances, Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* left the stage.[24] Unlike Mozart, Anfossi already had a decade of active work in the comic opera genre behind him, having collaborated extensively with the Roman *Teatro Delle Dame*, where musical and theatrical life had had flourished since the late 1750s in fierce competition with another Roman theatre — the Capranica. He knew all the established conventions and the latest fashionable tendencies, as well as the tastes of the public, and operated confidently with them, as evidenced by the continuous commissions for new works.

Overall, *La finta giardiniera* was a great success in Anfossi's career, strengthening his authority as a master of the sentimental comic genre and his position as the successor to Piccinni, with whom the young master had entered into competition. His new opera, although it did not surpass the popularity of its predecessor — the acknowledged masterpiece *L'incognità perseguitata* — stood almost on par with it. This can be considered an indirect confirmation that Anfossi was not mistaken in his desire to soften the somewhat extreme experiments undertaken by the librettist. Although Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* occupied a more modest place in the history of the genre, its role in the creative destiny of the author himself is difficult to overestimate. Although its overall musical and dramatic concept may not yet appear fully conscious, logical and proportionate, from a musical and compositional point of view, Mozart demonstrates in it a talent already completely mature,

[24] Mozart's Italian-language opera was not performed anywhere else during the 18th century; however, by the 1780s it had been adapted into a German Singspiel and appeared from time to time in the repertoire of German companies.

full of youthful energy and inexhaustible inventiveness. These qualities prevent the work from being relegated to archive shelves and from time to time bring it onto the stage, to the delight of music lovers and the general public.

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On an unknown draft notebook in the literary heritage of Alexander N. Scriabin

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Abstract. This article presents a draft notebook of literary sketches by Alexander N. Scriabin, associated with the early stages of his work on *Mysterium*. The materials in this notebook, which were not included in the well-known publication of the composer's literary legacy in *Russkie Propilei* (1919), indicate that Scriabin began creating texts for *Mysterium* (which later evolved into the *Preliminary Action*) not in the final years of his life (1913–1915), as previously thought, but much earlier. Based on one of the composer's letters, it can be argued

Translated by Kseniya S. Kulikova

that this process should be correlated with the creation of the *Poem of Ecstasy*, i.e., no later than 1908. During these years, the composer was developing a general philosophical conception of the universe and a system of concepts and categories reflecting their relations and interconnections. This conception, in the *Mysterium* project, was intended a priori to manifest in the action of certain symbolic images, and in this notebook, Scriabin first sketches such leading image-symbols of the mystical action. Their characteristics are interspersed with philosophical texts, helping to clarify the semantic and dramaturgical significance of these symbols

Keywords: Alexander N. Scriabin, composer's literary heritage, *Mysterium*, *Preliminary Action*, textual studies

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Источниковедение

Научная статья

О неизвестной черновой тетради в литературном наследии А. Н. Скрябина

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Аннотация. В статье представлена черновая тетрадь литературных эскизов А. Н. Скрябина, связанная с начальным этапом его работы над Мистерией. Материалы этой тетради, не вошедшей в известную публикацию литературного наследия композитора в «Русских пропилеях» (1919), свидетельствуют о том, что Скрябин приступил к созданию текстов Мистерии (переросших затем в замысел Предварительного Действа) не в последние годы жизни (1913–1915), как это определилось в литературе о нем, а гораздо раньше. На основании одного из писем композитора можно утверждать, что этот процесс должен быть соотнесен со временем создания «Поэмы экстаза», то есть не позже 1908 года. В те годы у композитора происходит формирование общей философской концепции мироустройства и системы понятий и категорий, отражающих их отношения и связи. Эта концепция

в замысле Мистерии должна была *a priori* воплотиться в действие неких образов, и в данной тетради Скрябин впервые обрисовывает такие ведущие образы-символы мистериального действа. Их характеристики перемежаются с философскими текстами, помогающими уяснить смысловые и драматургические значения этих символов.

Ключевые слова: А. Н. Скрябин, литературное наследие, Мистерия, Предварительное Действо, текстология

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Introduction

The literary heritage of Alexander Scriabin is one of the most vivid documents of Russian culture at the turn of the 20th century. Its pages capture the philosophical motives of the era, both eschatological and creative, and the spiritual quests of its most talented and sensitive representative, who developed a unique vision of the world order.

As is well known, this was a time when Russian culture saw a curious intertwining of "spiritual decadence and moral-religious renaissance, philosophical mysticism and historical pragmatism, apocalyptic moods and life-building goals, individualistic demands and dreams of collective unity, universal idealistic utopias and revolutionary projects for the transformation of contemporary Russian reality" [1, p. 125].

Scriabin was deeply concerned with the philosophical problems of spiritual renewal and the reorganization of the contemporary world. He believed in the power of reason and consciousness, which, in his view, encompass the entire universe and, possessing creative power, are capable of renewing and recreating the world. In his early years, the composer had a particularly strong need to put his thoughts on paper, even if he repeatedly returned to the same questions and formulations. He wrote on loose sheets and kept entire notebooks. "Thought lives its own life," noted Aleksandr V. Mikhaylov in an essay on Heidegger, "and the philosopher chooses a special path of reasoning... If the philosopher chooses a familiar logic of reasoning, does logic not then dominate his thought? And once the path is chosen, is the philosopher not at its mercy?"[1] In this respect, the logic of Scriabin's reflections appears remarkably coherent and consistent.[2]

[1] Mikhaylov, A. V. (1990). *Martin Heidegger: Man in the World*. Moskovsky Rabochy, p. 13.
[2] "The power of Scriabin's thought, like that of his musical language, can only be grasped in its dynamic development," notes one of the most recent publications on the composer's work [2, p. 11].

On the Publication of Scriabin's Literary Heritage

Scriabin's philosophical path, which led him to the concept of *Mysterium*, is reflected in the sixth volume of *Materials Relating to the History of Russian Thought and Literature – Russkie Propilei*, prepared for publication in 1919 by the Russian cultural researcher Mikhail O. Gershenzon.[3] This edition generated enormous and lasting interest. Over the years, it has become a cornerstone of scholarship, serving as a source for numerous articles, monographs, and films, both in Russia and abroad (recent works include, e.g., [3; 4; 5]). No serious scholar of the composer's work, or historian of Russian culture, philosophy, and aesthetics at the turn of the 20th century, has overlooked these materials.

A comparison of the *Russkie Propilei* publications with the surviving sources shows that Gershenzon carried out meticulous work with Scriabin's manuscripts, deciphering and systematizing them. Through these materials, one can trace the formation and development of the composer's aesthetic-philosophical views and the creation of literary texts for the *Poem of Ecstasy* and *Preliminary Action*.

However, not all of his manuscripts were included in the edition. When describing the history of *Preliminary Action*, Boris de Schloezer mentions three additional manuscripts besides the published sources. The first is a small pocket memorandum book with brief pencil notes (conventionally labeled index *A*[4]). The other two are draft notebooks; one was started in the summer of 1913, when Scriabin began work on the text of *Mysterium* (notebook *B*[5]). The second notebook (*C*[6]) was started in the summer of 1914, when the *Preliminary Action* project came to the forefront.[7] These notebooks are of unquestionable interest to researchers: some texts are in prose, clarifying the dramaturgical sense of specific situations, while others contain explorations of rhymes and verse forms.

[3] Scriabin, A. N. (1919). Zapisi [Writings], with introduction by B. de Schloezer. In M. Gershenzon (Ed.). *Russkie propilei* [*Russian portals*] (Vol. 6, pp. 97-247). M. & S. Sabashnikov. See also Nicholls, S. & Pushkin, M. (2018). *The Notebooks of Alexander Skryabin*. Oxford University Press.

[4] The location of the document is unknown.

[5] Scriabin, A. N. *Draft notes for the text of Preliminary Action*. Alexander Scriabin Memorial Museum (MMS) MF 1280.

[6] Scriabin, A. N. *Notebook: Notes on Preliminary Action*. MMS MF 1278.

[7] See A Note by Boris de Schloezer on the *Preliminary Action* (1919). In M. Gershenzon (Ed.). *Russkie propilei* [*Russian portals*] (Vol. 6, pp. 99–119). M. & S. Sabashnikov, pp. 102, 114. Also A Note by Boris de Schloezer on the *Preliminary Action* (2018). In S. Nicholls & M. Pushkin (Eds.), *The Notebooks of Alexander Skryabin* (pp. 31–48). Oxford University Press, pp. 32, 43.

The most intriguing fact is that the archive of the A. N. Scriabin Memorial Museum in Moscow contains yet another fairly extensive notebook which Schloezer does not mention. All the manuscripts listed by him are dated 1913–1914, associated with work on *Mysterium* and *Preliminary Action*, whereas this previously unmentioned notebook, containing materials for *Mysterium*, belongs to a much earlier period, approximately no later than 1908, and possibly earlier. This dating is based on a letter from the composer to Margarita K. Morozova, dated 15 (28) June 1908, in which he wrote: "I have advanced the text of *Mysterium* considerably: I am already putting on the finishing touches."[8]

History of the Draft Notebook 'The Gift of Anna Mozer'

A natural question arises: why does Schloezer not mention this notebook? Most likely, he was unaware of its existence, and when Scriabin's manuscripts were sorted after his death, the notebook was missing from the archive. A clue to its fate was found on the frontispiece, where a faint pencil note, clearly written by a museum employee, reads: "*The Gift of Anna Mozer | Lima* (*Peru*)." (*Illustration 1*)

Anna Mozer was the last wife of Alexander E. Mozer, a close acquaintance of the Scriabin family. Mozer, a talented chemist and accomplished photographer, was known for implementing Scriabin's idea of a home color circle and for taking several photographs of the composer, including the famous image capturing Scriabin after completing the score of *Prometheus*. After working in Russia in the early post-revolutionary years in organic chemistry, Mozer moved to Switzerland in the late 1920s and emigrated to Lima (Peru) in 1940, where he died in 1958. When and how Scriabin's notebook came into Mozer's possession is unknown; it is possible that the composer gave it to him personally.[9] In the Museum's accession records, it is documented as being present in 1989.

[8] Kashperov, A. V. (Ed.). (2003). *A. N. Scriabin: Pisma* [*Letters*]. Muzyka, p. 508.

[9] Scriabin generally parted with his manuscripts quite freely and never sought to collect them. For instance, after the publication of the *Poem of Ecstasy* score, the Fifth Sonata, and his piano pieces Op. 56, 57, and 58, he gifted the autographs to his student, the Canadian composer and pianist Alfred La Liberté. La Liberté's widow, Madeleine La Liberté, later donated these manuscripts to the museum in Moscow in 1972.

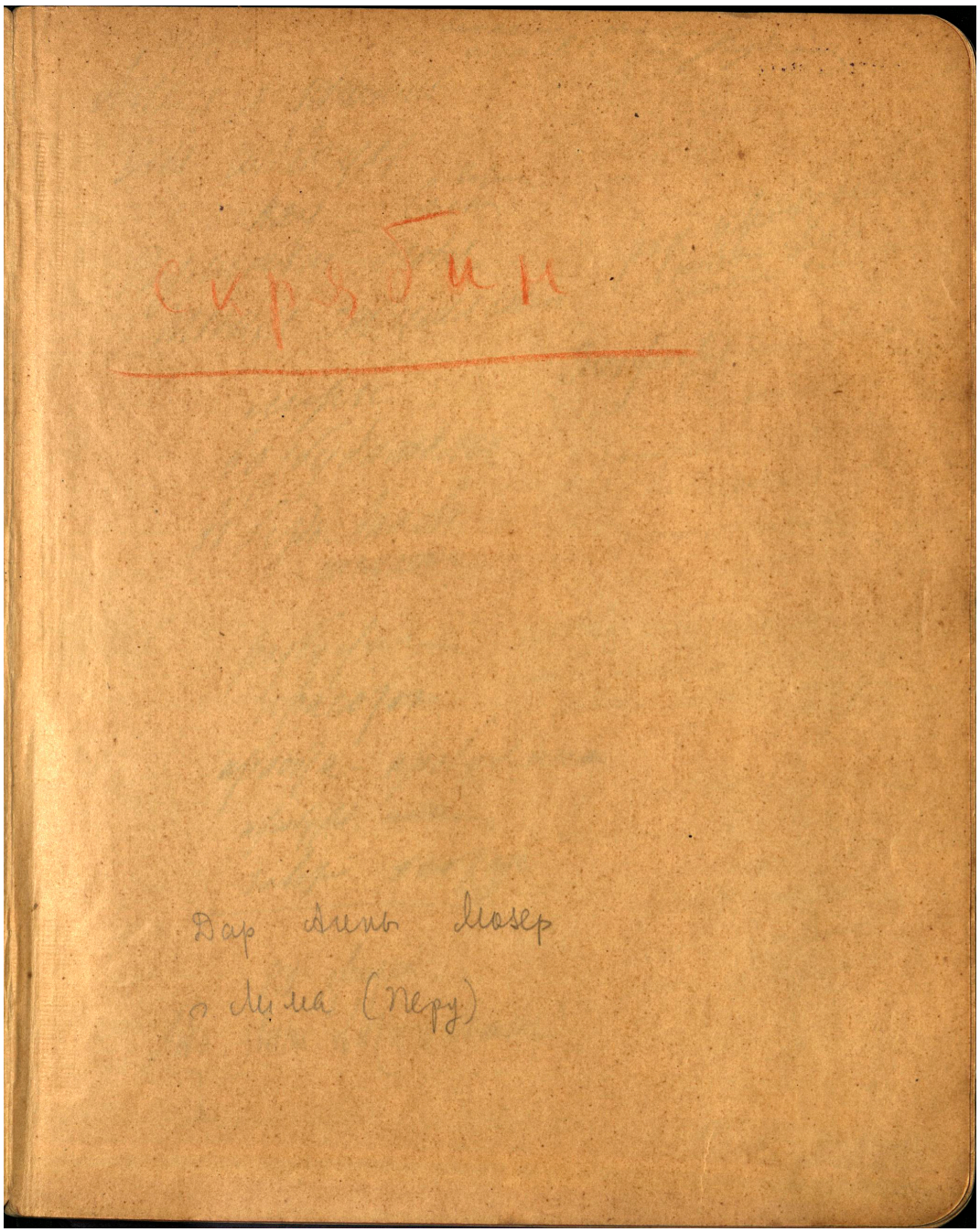

Illustration 1. Alexander Scriabin. *Notebook of Poetic and Philosophical Sketches* ("*The Gift of Anna Moser*"). Alexander Scriabin Memorial Museum MF 1585. Frontispiece

The Scriabin manuscript collection in the archive contains 305 inventory numbers, with this notebook listed as number 304, indicating it was a relatively late acquisition.[10]

Main Themes of the Draft Notebook

This notebook is of particular interest, as its materials allow us to refine our understanding of certain key features of Scriabin's creative process. Recent scholarship, especially the work conducted during the preparation of the new *Complete Works of Scriabin* (completed in 2021 by the Alexander Scriabin Memorial Museum and *Muzyka* Publishing House), has significantly expanded and enriched these insights.[11] In the notebook under study, texts related to *Mysterium* are interspersed with philosophical notes, which imbue the emerging symbols of the work with specific meaning. Anticipating the seven-day cycle of *Mysterium*, Scriabin identifies seven stages in the formation and transformation of the Universe:

Emergence
Division
Proliferation
Synthesis
Intoxication
Transformation
Destruction

Of these seven stages, only three are reflected in the notebook's surviving materials. The stage of *Emergence* is preserved in fragmentary sketches on the first pages, which later evolve into a generalized poetic form:

O life!
O dance of the universe
dance of love
From non-being you arise
by the power
of your emergence
You are born into chaos →

[10] Scriabin, A. N. *Notebook of Poetic and Philosophical Sketches*. MMS MF 1585.
[11] The principal textual problems involved in publishing Scriabin's legacy are outlined in the article [6].

and from its abysses
you soar
to the heights
of all-encompassing consciousness
that radiates peace[12] (*Illustration 2*)

"In this process of becoming, of emergence," Scriabin explains on one page of the notebook, "the opposition is expressed between being and non-being. Activity, ascent – nothingness, rest, indifference. Emergence itself is the link that exists between being and non-being."[13]

It is likely that such a general philosophical proposition could have been poetically articulated in *Mysterium* by an unnamed narrator. The creative imagination of the composer reconstructs the work itself only in its second stage – *Division*. Here, the images of the "acting" symbols begin to take shape, giving rise to the narrative's initial conflict. This is manifested in the dialogue between Light (symbolizing a reflection of divine consciousness) and the realm of White Rays – Death, together reflecting the inseparable dilemma of being and non-being.

This episode represents a crucial stage in the development of the Mysterium concept. In the draft notebook under discussion, it appears in its first outlines, forming the work's central semantic core: the figure of Death emerges as a product of Light's imagination and dream. ("I am born in the rays of your dream," Death tells Light.) To reach this dream, Light must first assume a material form, then overcome the "abysses of life, colorful worlds" which themselves are the product of the hero's creative act. "They are in you, in your power," Death responds to the question of how to find these worlds. "You must create them; you create them by your desire… to unite with me. Look into your own wanting, direct your attention inward, and you will discern these worlds."[14] This episode is repeatedly elaborated and developed in subsequent entries, including in other draft notebooks.

[12] Scriabin's poetic texts, as is customary in the works of Symbolist poets, are cited with all their distinctive features preserved, including the deliberate violation of punctuation and free arrangement of poetic lines.

[13] Scriabin, A. N. *Notebook of Poetic and Philosophical Sketches*. MMS MF 1585, P. 26 rev.

[14] Ibid. P. 11.

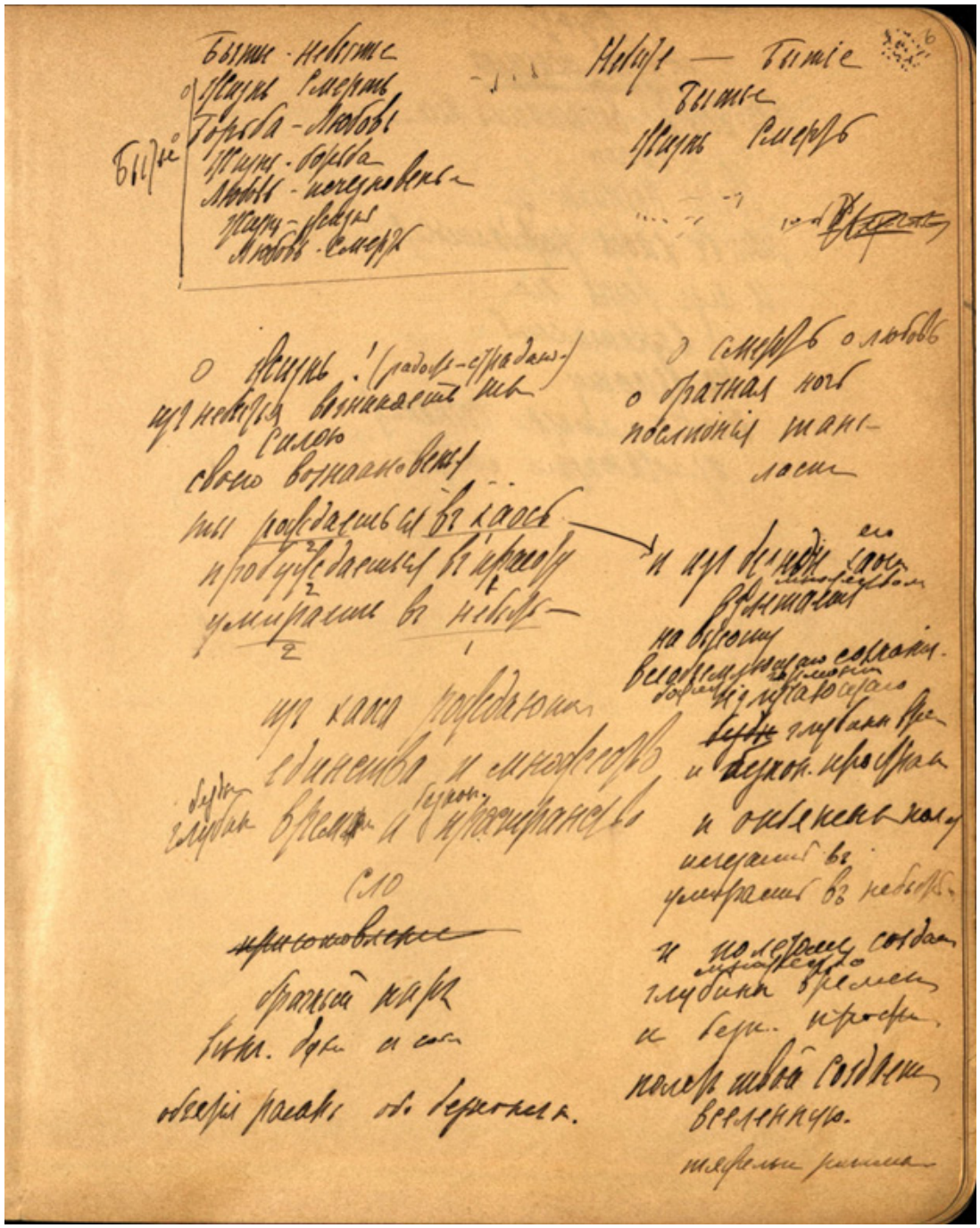

Illustration 2. Alexander Scriabin. *Notebook of Poetic and Philosophical Sketches* ("Gift of Anna Moser"). Alexander Scriabin Memorial Museum MF 1585. L. 6

Finally, yet another key stage of the *Mysterium* action received its initial outline in the draft notebook *The Gift of Anna Moser*: the stage of Multiplication – birth of the multitude, of life, symbolized by waves. In this notebook, the image appears only in sketch form, in several lines of verse (*Illustration 3*):

Transparent waves
Of ethereal caress
You give yourselves to one another
Tenderly in passion
Filling all things
With your love
One upon another
You surge
Now consuming
Now shattering
Aroused by struggle
Enraptured by play
From the divine heights
Into the abyss [falling headlong][15]

In Notebook *B*, where work on *Mysterium* resumed in 1913, the composer sets out in prose a detailed account of the dramaturgical function of the symbol of the waves.[16] This function is explained in the monologue of the One, who foretells the fatal degeneration of the pure souls that arise and plunge from the divine heights into the abysses of life. Notebook *B* differs from the other draft notebooks in that it contains a tentative plan for partially distributing the concrete events of *Mysterium* across the days of its realization (these days are given corresponding headings), and the monologue of the One fits precisely into the sequence of events placed in the section *Third Day*.[17]

At the same time, Scriabin kept notes in Notebook *C*, intended for "polishing the details," for searching for poetic forms. Typically, the initial sketches of texts were written in a quick, hurried, untidy hand, but anything that had passed through a stage of reflection and acquired a more stable verbal form is written out in all the notebooks in large, neat handwriting.

[15] Scriabin, A. N. *Notebook of Poetic and Philosophical Sketches*. MMS MF 1585. P. 19.
[16] Scriabin, A. N. *Notebook: Notes on Preliminary Action*. MMS MF 1278. P. 12.
[17] Ibid. P. 5.

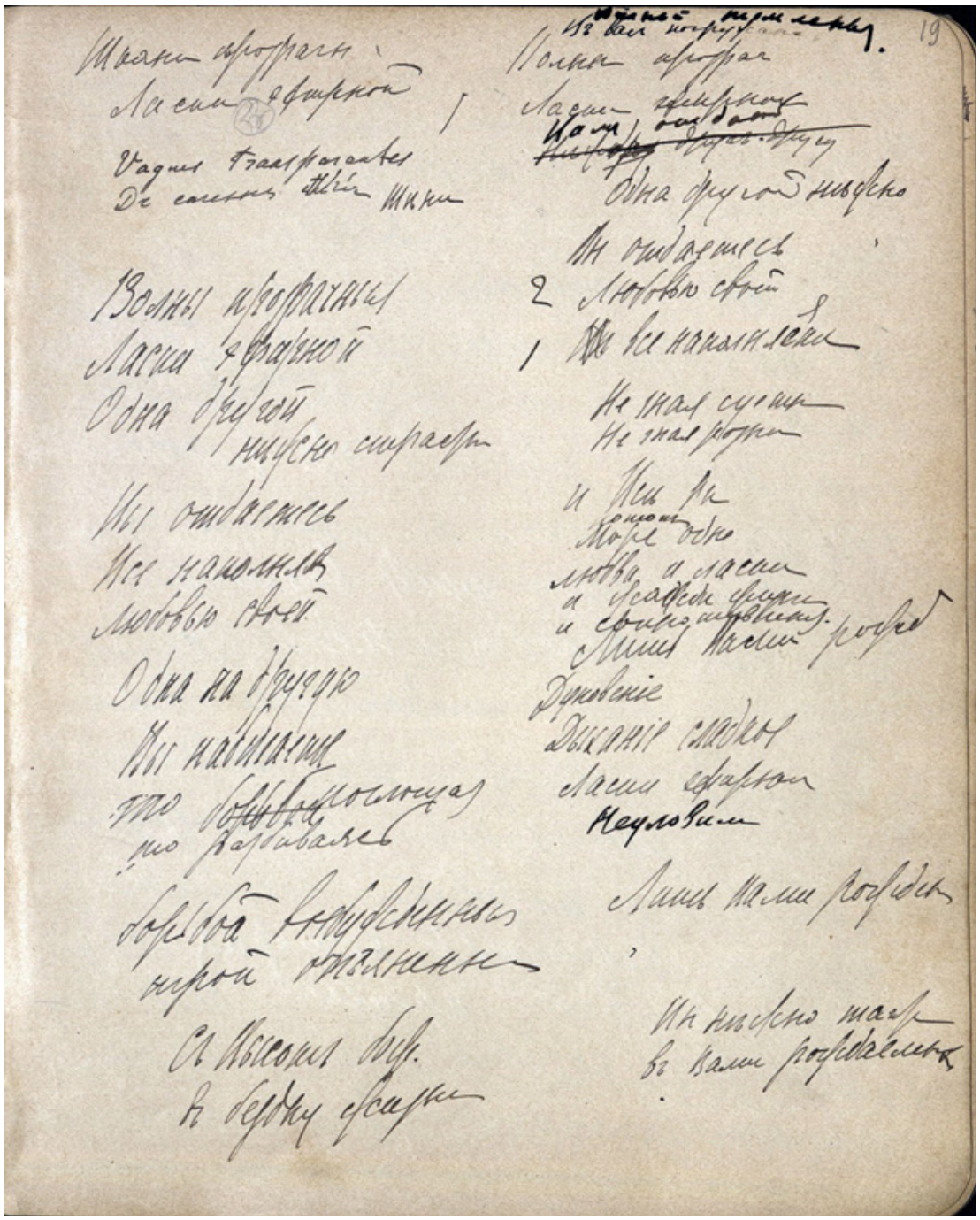

Illustration 3. Alexander Scriabin. *Notebook of Poetic and Philosophical Sketches* ("Gift of Anna Moser"). Alexander Scriabin Memorial Museum MF 1585. L. 19

In Notebook *C*, the version of the wave-text already taking shape in the 1908 sketches is set out exactly in this way: beautifully arranged in a descending visual staircase. It is more poetic and somewhat expanded (*Illustration 4*):

Transparent waves
Caresses of ethereal dream
To one another tenderly
You give yourselves
Filling all things
With your love
One upon another
You surge
Now consuming
Now shattering
For you are a single flow
From those heights
Into the abyss of life
Rushing headlong
From those heights
Where there are no boundaries
No images
No feelings
Where there is only a vague
Presentiment
Of the future universe
A dream of it[18]

In the final completed text of *Preliminary Action*, Scriabin removes the specifying circumstances (the fall from the heights into the abyss of life), and introduces repetitions of words and phrases that paint a dynamically expanding movement – the birth of the multitude, of life (*Illustration 5*).

Thus, Scriabin gives rise to a specific circle of images-symbols, and gradually, this circle expands. A conditional world is created, one that lives its own life; this process is a clear subject of consideration within the framework of synergetics, an interdisciplinary scientific field that studies the patterns and principles of self-organization in nonequilibrium systems – a line of inquiry already undertaken by Andrey I. Bandura using the material of Scriabin's harmony [7].

[18] Ibid. P. 69.

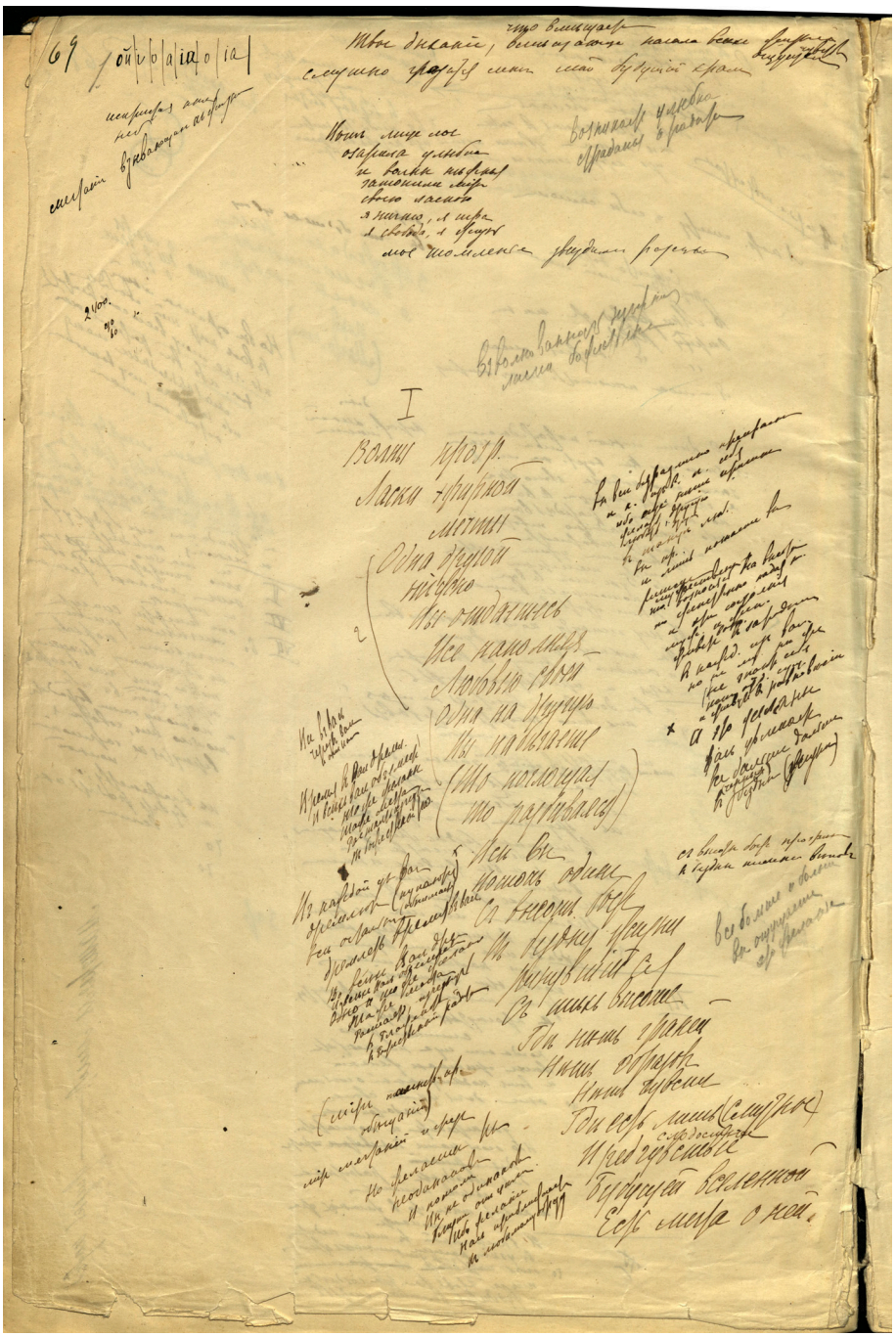

Illustration 4. Alexander Scriabin. *Notebook: Notes on Preliminary Action*. Alexander Scriabin Memorial Museum MF 1278. L. 69

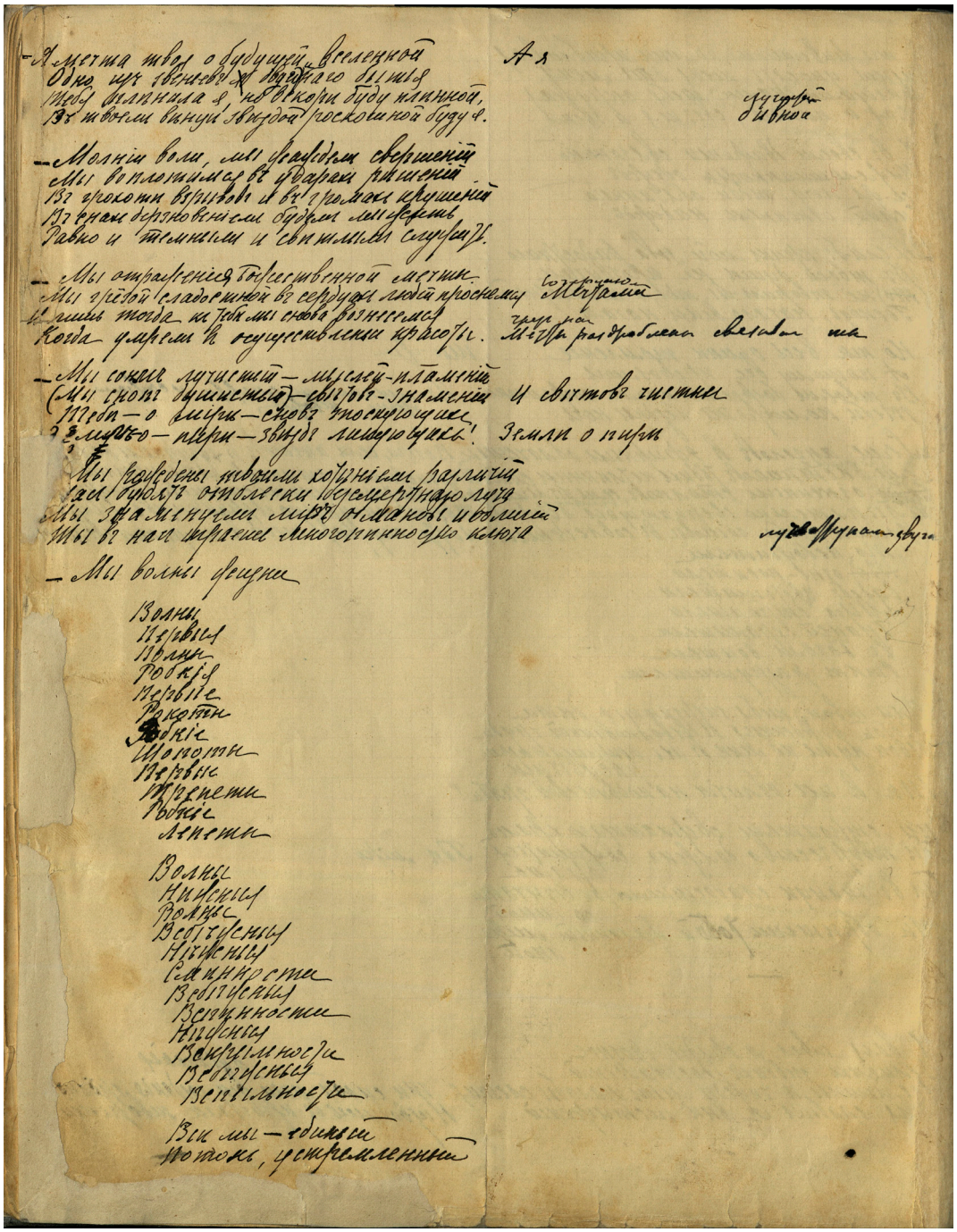

Illustration 5. Alexander Scriabin. *Draft Notebook. Preliminary Action.* Poetic Text. Scriabin Memorial Museum MF 1. P. 56 rev.

Another poetic fragment from the Anna Mozer notebook draws attention, marked by a stamp of intimate, confessional quality:

Night descends
Like a black abyss
Here comes the night.
Have the courage to look into its depths,
to plunge into this abyss of suffering and horror,
have the courage to endure this night.
Master this night, and the monsters
will obediently come to serve you.
Agree with no one, and thus
stir each one, stir yourself!
Be creation through negation
Be struggle!
Create everything by denying everything.[19]

It is difficult to say to what extent this text is directly related to the action of *Mysterium*. Most likely, it is an authorial monologue addressed to himself. Its conclusion (the final three lines) echoes a thought that repeatedly appears in Scriabin's personal reflections on his own purpose. In emotional and psychological tone, the text resembles Scriabin's writings from 1904–1906, a difficult period of mature awareness of his creative and life priorities. "*Sapere aude*! Have courage to make use of your *own* understanding!",[20] Immanuel Kant wrote in 1784, translating the famous maxim of Horace. In the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, having cast aside all doubt, Scriabin affirms his resolute intention to create *Mysterium*. The exultant sound of the *Poem of Ecstasy* proclaims this volitional surge. The notebook in question also concludes with texts written in large, clear handwriting on the final pages, reading like exhortations to himself:

I am nothing
I am only what I create
To live I want
To act and triumph I want[21] (*Illustration 6*)

[19] Scriabin, A. N. *Notebook of Poetic and Philosophical Sketches*. MMS MF 1585. P. 22 rev.–23.

[20] Kant, I., & Wood, A. W. (1996). An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment? (1784). In M. J. Gregor (Ed.), *Practical Philosophy* (pp. 11–22). Chapter, Cambridge University Press, P. 17.

[21] Scriabin, A. N. *Notebook of Poetic and Philosophical Sketches*. MMS MF 1585. P. 50 rev.

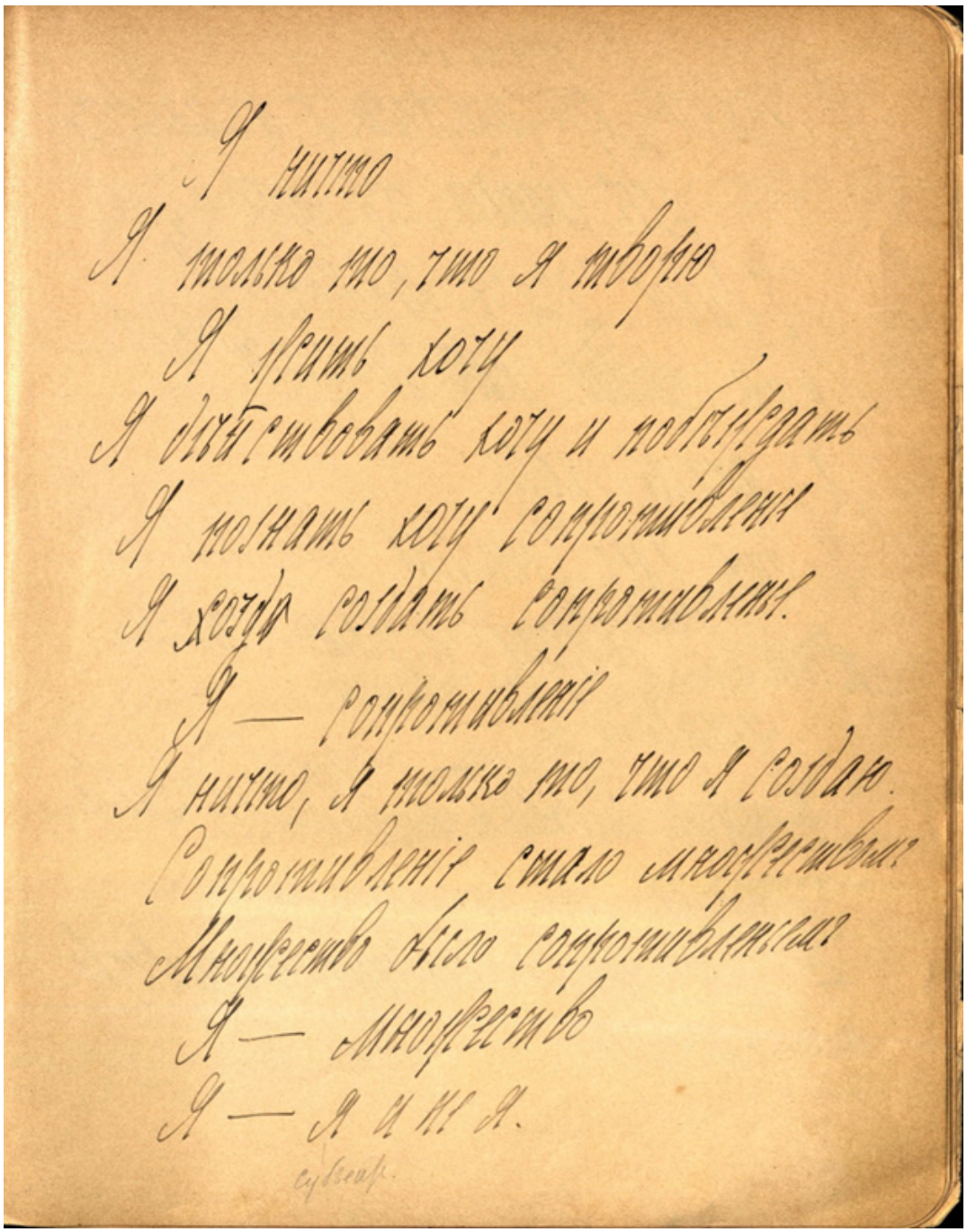

Illustration 6. Alexander Scriabin. *Notebook of Poetic and Philosophical Sketches* ("Gift of Anna Moser"). Alexander Scriabin Memorial Museum MF 1585. P. 50 rev.

Conclusion

Thus, the particular significance of the 1908 notebook lies in the fact that it records the transformation of certain philosophical, purely abstract categories into artistic images-symbols. A natural process occurs, one precisely characterized by Kant: "However exalted the application of our concepts, and however far up from sensibility we may abstract them, still they will always be appended to image representations, a whose proper function b is to make these concepts, which are not otherwise derived from experience, serviceable for experiential use. For how would we procure sense and significance for our concepts if we did not underpin them with some intuition…?"[22] Precisely this process found its first embodiment in the Anna Mozer notebook.

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Folk songs in the organ music of Basque composers

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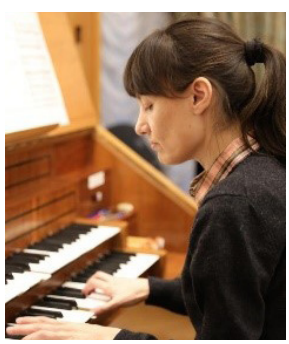

Abstract. The organ culture of the Basque Country and Navarre developed under the influence of European trends, primarily associated with the emergence of Romantic organs and, secondly, with a reassessment of the role of music in Catholic worship. Basque composers who studied in France, Germany, and Belgium played a significant role in disseminating these ideas. Equally important was the strong national character of Basque music, often referred to as *nacionalismo musical*.

Translated by Kseniya S. Kulikova

The acutely perceived national distinctiveness of Basque music, known as musical nationalism, was also of great importance. Folk songs were closely linked to the colour local of Basque organ music; in several works, thematic material was drawn from collections compiled by musicologists Resurrección María de Azkue and José Antonio de Donostia. Padre Donostia was also an organist and composer who incorporated folk material into his organ works. Composer-organist Jesús Guridi similarly drew upon folk sources. This article analyzes organ compositions that incorporate folk songs and identifies principles for their adaptation to professional music genres.

Keywords: organ, organ repertoire, Romantic organ, folk songs, Renaissance, Spain, Basque Country, Navarre

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Из истории национальных композиторских школ

Научная статья

Народные песни в органном творчестве баскских композиторов

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Аннотация. Органная культура Страны Басков и Наварры сложилась под воздействием европейских тенденций, связанных, во-первых, с появлением органов романтического типа и, во-вторых, с пересмотром места музыки в католическом богослужении. Большую роль в распространении этих идей сыграли баскские композиторы, обучавшиеся во Франции, Германии и Бельгии. Важное значение имела также остро осознанная национальная характерность музыки басков, так называемый *nacionalismo musical*. Стремление утвердить национальную идентичность проявилось в работе по восстановлению баскского музыкального наследия. Она началась в первой половине XIX века с систематического сбора народных песен. Именно с песнями связан «местный колорит» баскского органного искусства: в ряде произведений тематический материал был взят из сборников, которые составили музыковеды

Ресуррексьон Мария де Аскуэ и Хосе Антонио де Доностия. Падре Доностия был также органистом и композитором, использовавшим песенный материал в произведениях для органа. Опирался на фольклорные источники и композитор-органист Хесус Гуриди. Статья посвящена анализу органных сочинений, в которых использованы народные песни, выявлению принципов их адаптации к жанрам профессиональной музыки.

Ключевые слова: орган, органный репертуар, романтический орган, народные песни, Ренасимьенто, Испания, Страна Басков и Наварра

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Introduction

Basque organ music from the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century developed under the influence of two very different pan-European trends. The first, known as the Liturgical Movement, spread across France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, and other European countries in the 1830s, aiming to return to the roots of the Christian experience. In the musical sphere, this involved efforts to revive the traditions of Gregorian chant and Renaissance polyphony. The second trend was associated with the emergence of organs designed to reflect the musical ideals of the Romantic era. The main centers of this development were in France and Germany. In Spain, these new trends in foreign organ building were particularly embraced in regions bordering France, especially the Basque Country and Navarre (*Illustration 1*), whose populations were predominantly Basque. In 1854, the first Romantic organ in Spain, built by the firm Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, was installed in the church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in Lekeitio (Biscay). Over time, even the surviving Spanish Baroque organs in Basque territories were "Romanticized" by local craftsmen [1, p. 179].

Equally significant was a third, purely local factor: the awareness of national identity, reinforced by the uniqueness of the Basque language. Sociologist Daniele Conversi described it as a "primordial element and a still-living proof of the survival of Europe's most ancient people" [2, p. 182]. This language has no Indo-European roots; its origins are as mythical and mysterious as those of its speakers. The idea of a Basque nation with a distinct cultural identity, separate from other Spanish provinces and regions, took shape in the late 19th century during the period known as the musical New Renaissance.[1]

[1] As Irina Alekseyevna Kryazheva writes, "The turn of the 19th and 20th centuries marked an important boundary in the history of Spanish music. In contemporary art studies, this period is commonly referred to as the New Renaissance, which signaled a time of intensive aesthetic exploration, culminating in the 20th century in the highest artistic achievements across a wide range of art forms, including literature, poetry, drama, painting, and music" [3, p. 151].

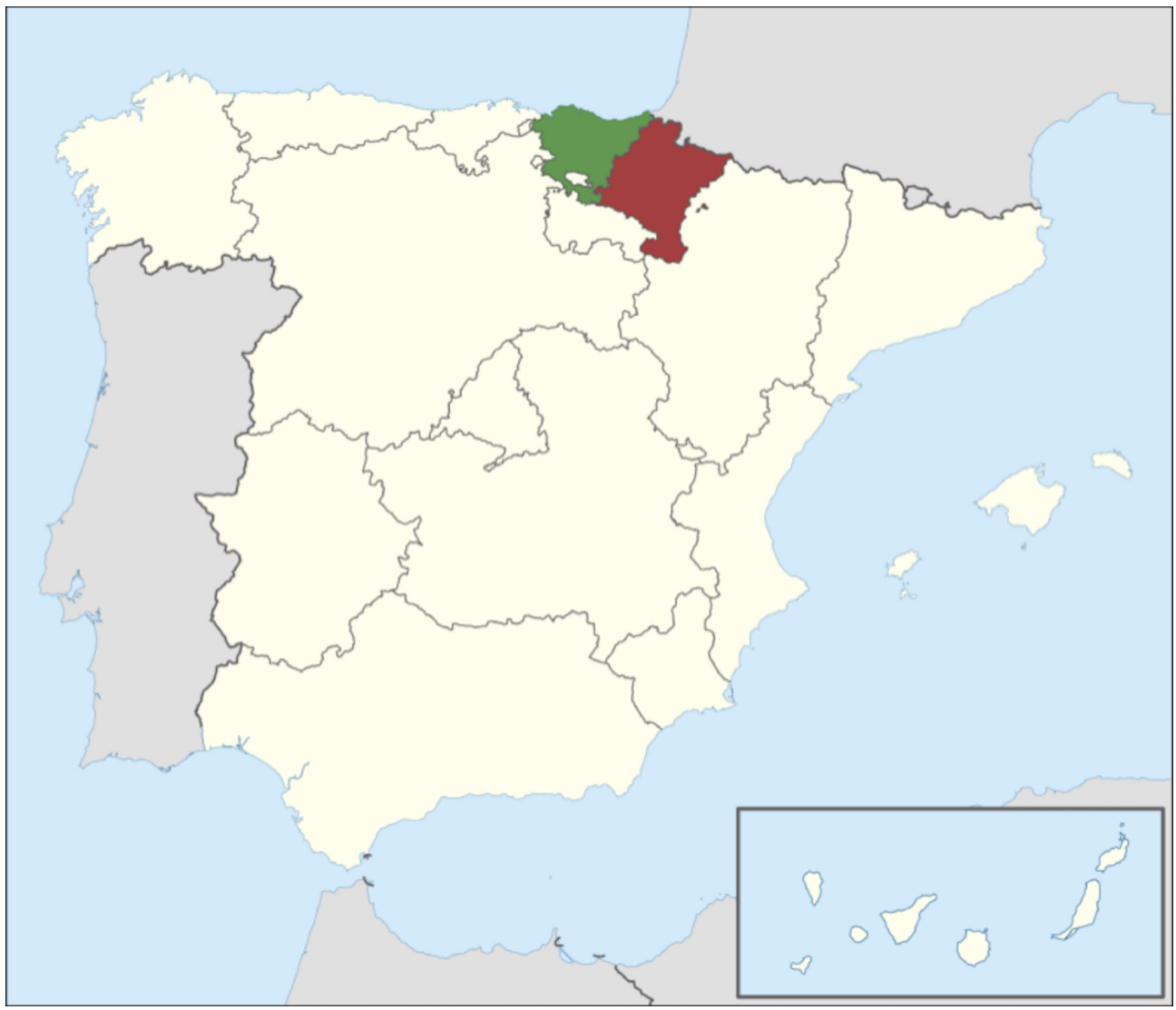


Illustration 1. Basque Territories in Spain[1]

[1] Disposición transitoria cuarta https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disposici%C3%B3n_transitoria_cuarta

The leading figures of Basque musical culture, composers, performers, musicologists, journal editors, and critics, actively supported the restoration and documentation of Basque heritage. One manifestation of this national revival in music was the development of Basque musical theater at the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries [4, p. 511].

Subsequent generations of Basque composers critically evaluated the contributions of each figure from the musical *New Renaissance* period. For instance, Padre Nemesio Otaño believed that, for José María Usandizaga, folk music was a pretext rather than an objective, making him not entirely national, but primarily a theatrical musician: "Usandizaga no era precisamente un músico nacionalista; para él el folk-lore era un pretexto, no un fin. Él se descubría, ante todo, como músico de teatro" [5, p. 36].

Basque Folk Songs

Between 1826 and 1946, the principal collections of Basque folk songs and dances were published for the first time [6]. These orally transmitted songs, passed down from generation to generation, form the foundation of Basque musical folklore. Lullabies and choral songs, which are widely disseminated across the Basque regions, play an especially significant role [7, pp. 70–73]. Folk song fulfilled a reintegrative function aligned with Herder's original concepts of the "natural people" (*Naturvolk*)[2] and the "national spirit" (*Volksgeist*). The natural people inhabit rural areas where, unlike in cities, their essence and collective spirituality, expressed through folk art, remain uncorrupted. The compilers of the earliest collections attempted to establish criteria distinguishing what possessed genuine ethnic value and could be considered authentically Basque,[3] from what could not; these efforts clearly reflected the principles of *nacionalismo musical*.

The first collection of traditional songs from the Basque Country was *Gipuzcoako dantza gogoangarrien kondaira edo historia* by Juan Ignacio de Iztueta, published in 1826. In keeping with the stylistic tendencies of the time, many collections consisted of harmonized melodies arranged for piano,

[2] The concept of the natural people as a pre-industrial ethnic society was introduced in 1774 by the German historian Johann Gottfried Herder.

[3] However, some researchers believe that a consensus has still not been reached regarding the meaning of the term "Basque culture" [8, p. 56].

or for voice with piano accompaniment, and were intended for bourgeois salons. Of particular note is José Antonio Santesteban's periodical *Colección de Aires Vascongados* (from 1862 onward). Several nearly simultaneous French publications also deserve attention: *14 airs basques*, *les plus populaires* by Pascal Lamazou (1869); *Souvenir des Pyrénées* by Madame de la Villéhélio (1869); and *Chants populaires du Pays Basque* by Jean Dominique Julien Sallaberry (1870), which Basque composers valued greatly.

The initiative to preserve national heritage was undertaken not only by enthusiastic musicians but also by official institutions. The French scholar Charles Bordes published the *Archives de la tradition basque*, the first volume of which appeared in 1891. In 1912, the regional government organized a competition for the best collection of Basque melodies. First prize was awarded to Resurrección María de Azkue for his *Cancionero popular vasco* (1921–1924), and second prize to Padre José Antonio de Donostia for *Euskel eres-sorta* (1921). The collections compiled by Bordes, Azkue, and Donostia are distinguished by their systematic approach to the musical material.

Basque musicologists developed various theories about the origins of their region's music, drawing on the work of scholars from other countries while proposing their own ideas. Without attempting to assess the scholarly validity of these theories, we may simply list their principal claims. Azkue adhered to a Basque-Greek theory [9, pp. 27–53]; Francisco Gascue supported a Basque-Celtic one [10, pp. 42–65]; and Padre Donostia approached the question from the perspective of cultural interpenetration, equating ethnic affiliation with cultural identity [11, p. 166]. Charles Bordes, in turn, linked Basque singing to Gregorian chant, basing his view on modal and intonational similarities between Basque and Gregorian monody [12, p. 244]. Finally, the most recent scholar working in this line of inquiry, José Antonio Arana Martija, synthesized all of these ideas, arguing that Basque music was shaped by Celtic and ancient Greek traditions, as well as by the modal system of Gregorian chant [12, p. 244].

Attempts at classification are equally interesting. For Bordes, differences among songs were determined by the themes of their texts. In the sample presentation of his collection, he identified heroic, love, satirical, moral songs, and hymns [13, p. 3]. Azkue divided music into sacred and secular, and further subdivided secular music into songs and dances [14, p. 6]. Notably, the boundary between secular and sacred

folk music was fluid; a change of text often resulted in the creation of a new religious song.

This refers to the principle of *contrafactum*, which may involve elevating or lowering the character of the original through the new text. The mechanisms for creating a new spiritual song varied. As the German composer Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752–1814) observed: "The first hymns of the Christian Church were probably folk hymns: either one gave spiritual words to well-known folk melodies, as was still the case in various separatist Christian congregations, such as the Moravian Brethren, or one invented new melodies with a folk sensibility for the spiritual" (as cited in [15, p. 49]). In the period under discussion, the Mass in Spain was conducted in Latin, so sacred singing in the Basque language served an educational function and was performed in contexts where use of the vernacular was possible, that is, it functioned as paraliturgical music. Spanish music journals that promoted liturgical reform devoted extensive attention to spiritual songs written in Spanish [16, p. 201].

The most consistent findings concern the characteristics of the Basque vocal style. According to Guridi [17, p. 11], Basque folk songs, both solo and choral, are marked by syllabic writing.[4] Bordes, Azkue, and Arana Martija agree with this assessment [12, p. 281], also noting a tendency toward narrow melodic motion, primarily by seconds, with only occasional leaps of a fourth or fifth. Donostia and Francisco de Madina add to these features the absence of chromaticism and a restrained approach to ornamentation [19].

Another persistent trait of the Basque vocal style is its rhythmic flexibility, including asymmetric phrases and, consequently, the lack of a regular meter. This explains the unusual notation modeled on Gregorian chant in Bordes's collection: four-line staves and square neumes without stems. For the song *The Eagles Soar High in the Sky* (*Arranoak bortietan*), Bordes provides two different notated versions along with notable commentary (*Illustration 2*).

"This melody," writes Bordes, "is one of the oldest that has come down to us through tradition, and at the same time one of the most beautiful in Basque music. We have found that Gregorian neumatic notation is the most suitable for transcribing it and preserving its rhythmic freedom" ("Ce thème est on des plus anciens que nous ait transmis la tradition, et en même temps un des plus beaux de la musique basque. Nous n'avons trouvé que la notation neumatique grégorienne pour le transcrire et en conserver la liberté rythmique") [13, p. 10]. Further, regarding the second version of the notation: "We even presume that many

[4] For the role of syllabic structure in the prosody of Basque songs [18, pp. 158, 167].

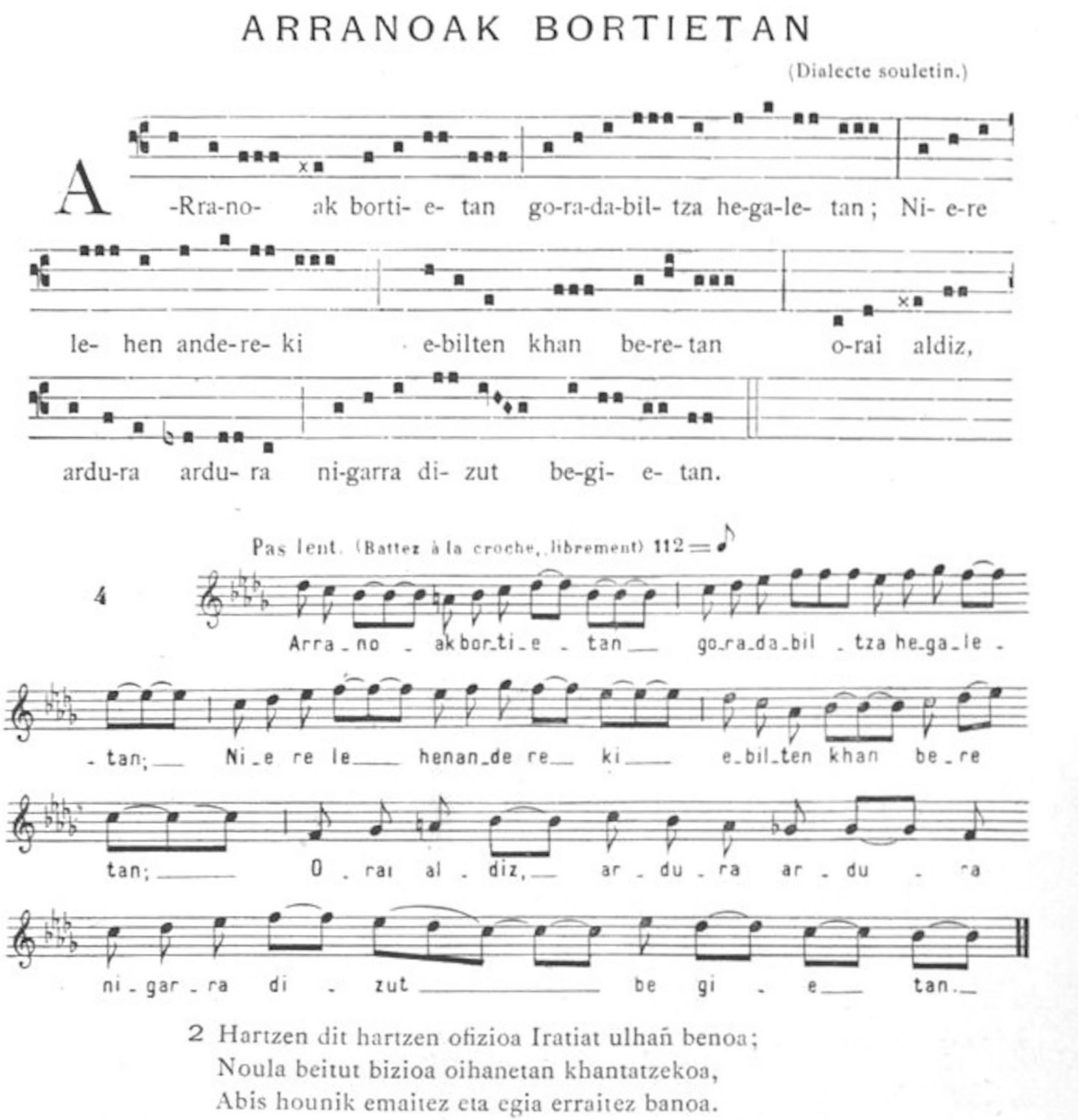


Illustration 2. Bordes C. *Arranoak bortietan* from *Cent chansons populaires basques*[5]

[5] Bordes, C. (189?). *Cent chansons populaires basques* [13, p. 10]

of the neumatic groups were broken apart in order to fit the juxtaposition of the sung text's syllables, which is without question much more modern than the melody itself. The beamed eighth notes are nothing other than a modern-notation transcription of the *pressi* so characteristic of Gregorian chant. They should be given a slight emphasis, as if they carried the entire rhythmic weight of the melodic phrase. The melody belongs to the first Gregorian mode. We possess a great number of versions of this admirable theme" ("Nous presumons mème que bien des groupes neumatiques ont été démembrés pour la juxtaposition des syllabes du texte chanté qui est sans contredit beaucoup plus moderne que le chant. Les croches semblables liées ensemble ne sont autres que la transcription en notation moderne des *pressi*[6] si caractéristiques de la musique grégorienne. Elles doivent être légérement renforcées, comme si elles recevaient tout le poids rythmique de la période mélodique. La mélodie appartient au premier mode grégorien. Nous possédons un grand nombre de versions de cet admirable theme") [13, p. 10].

Basque melodies are marked by their simplicity and intensity, with a gentle and tranquil expressiveness. Numerous melodies or individual phrases can be sung as a canon, though it is also common to harmonize each note, with tonal harmony freely coexisting alongside modality.

Folk Material in Organ Compositions

For a group of composers representing the organ school of the Basque Country and Navarre,[7] examples of folk (and in some cases popular) music served as sources of musical material for their organ works.

Let us turn to several examples. The first is *O, Crucified Jesus* (*O Yesus Gurutzera*, 1912) by the Capuchin monk Padre Donostia. The origin of the melody underlying this organ piece is particularly revealing. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, missionaries often adapted sacred texts to the tunes of romances. They also drew on melodies from operas, and even from lighter comic genres: as Donostia explains, the hymn *O, Crucified Jesus* is a contrafact of the love song *The Shepherdess Whom I Serve* (*La bergère que je sers*) from a French vaudeville. With its newly added sacred text, it appeared in Simon-Joseph Pellegrin's *Spiritual Hymns* (*Cantiques spirituels*, 1811) and in Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort's *Mission Hymns* (*Cantiques des missions*).

[6] Pressi (singular pressus, from the Latin *pressare* 'to press') is a group of three notes in which the first two remain on the same pitch, forming an overall descending motion [20].

[7] See also on this topic [21].

Below are both versions of the song (*Illustrations 3 and 4*).

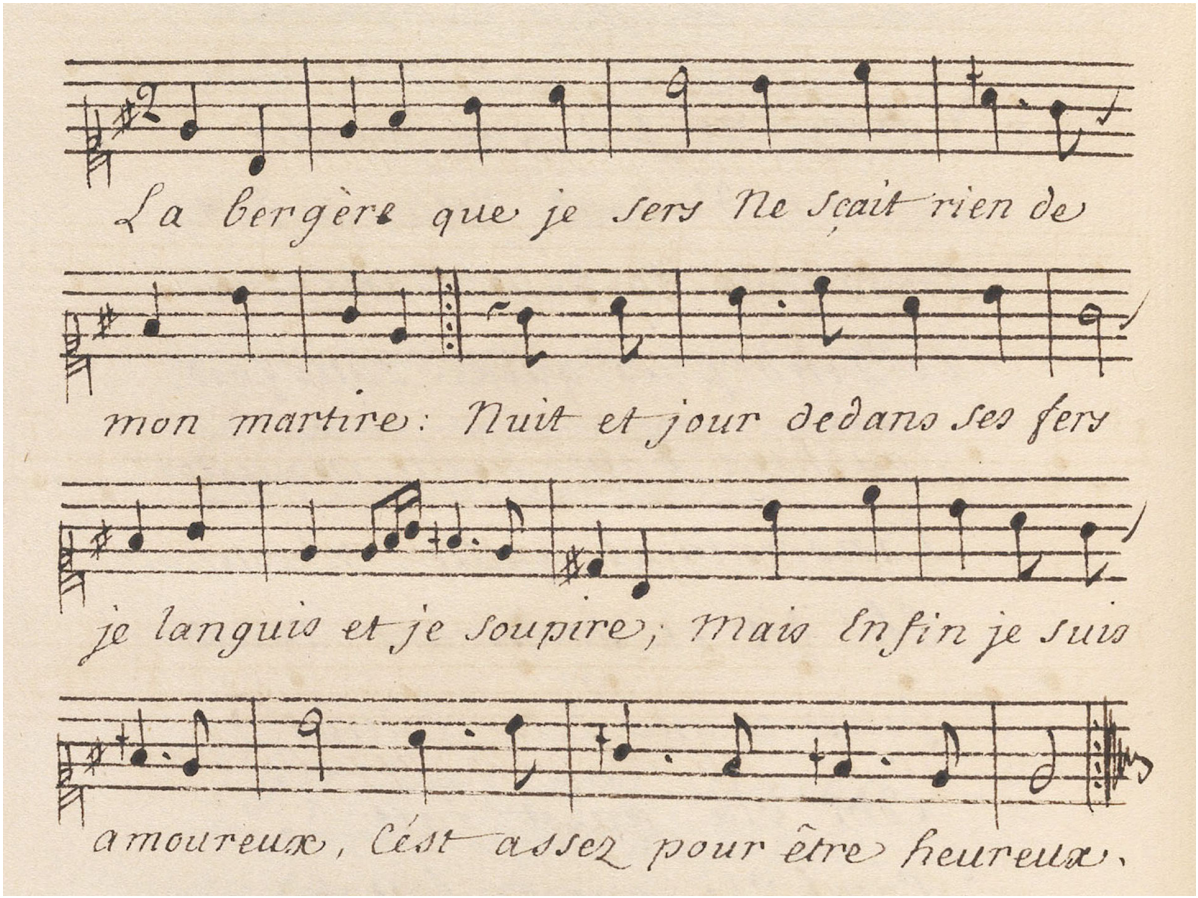


Illustration 3. Anonymous. *The Shepherdess Whom I Serve,* from the collection *French Songs for Solo Voice* (first half of the 18th century). The Morgan Library & Museum, New York[8]

The minor melody with its sorrowful love text was well suited to a new text, this time a sacred one (see *Illustration 4*).

In his 1936 article, Donostia presents two versions of the religious song, in 5/4 and 3/4 [22, pp. 5–6]: as Azkue notes, meter in folk music is "at time contracted, at time expanded" ("a ratos contraída, a ratos dilatada") [14, p. 12]. Donostia

[8] Unknown. French songs for solo voice: manuscript, first half of the 18th century. Retrieved October 22, 2025, from http://www.themorgan.org/music/manuscript/114149.

primarily draws on the 5/4 version but does not follow it strictly in either rhythm or melody, since he takes both versions into account.

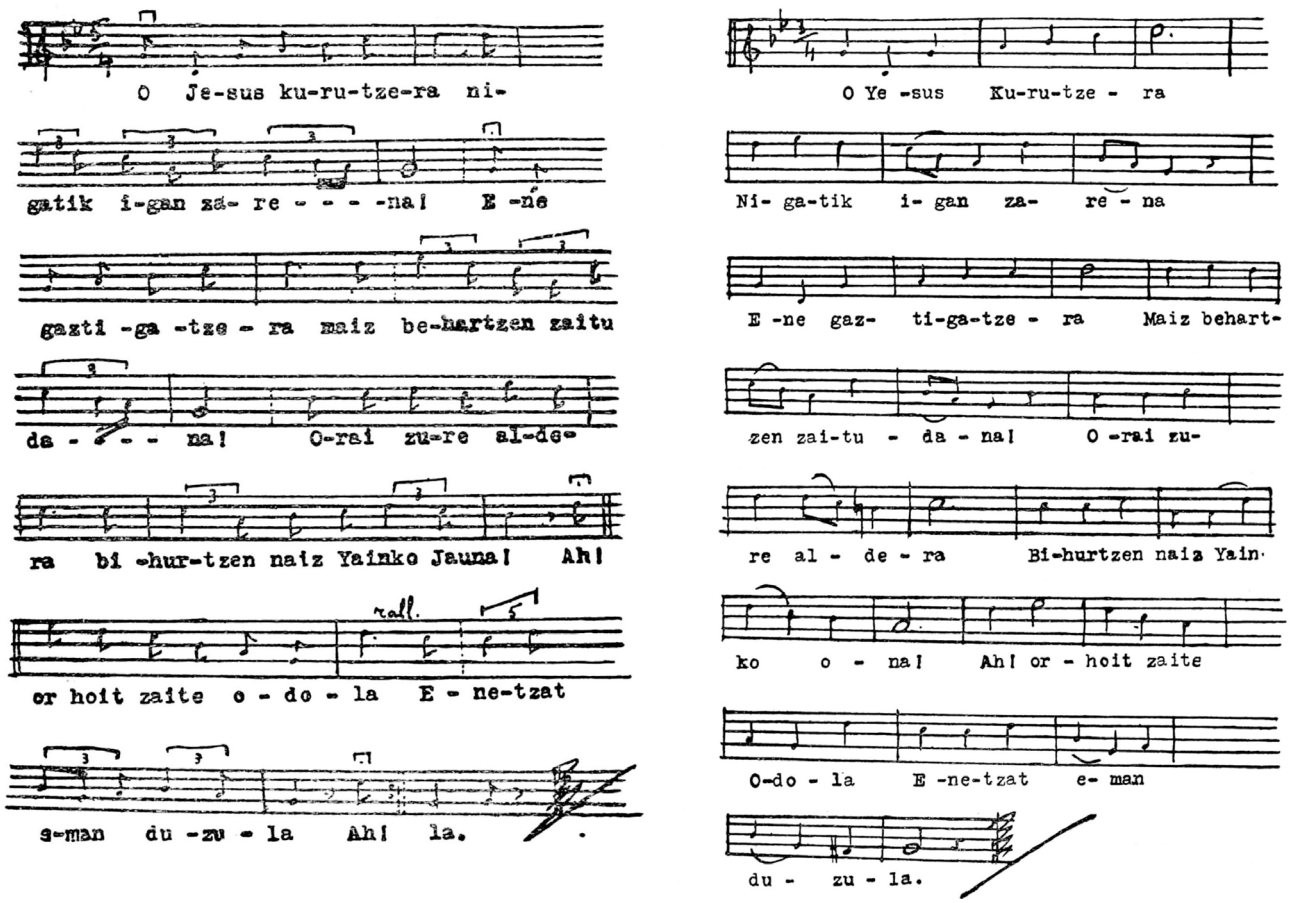
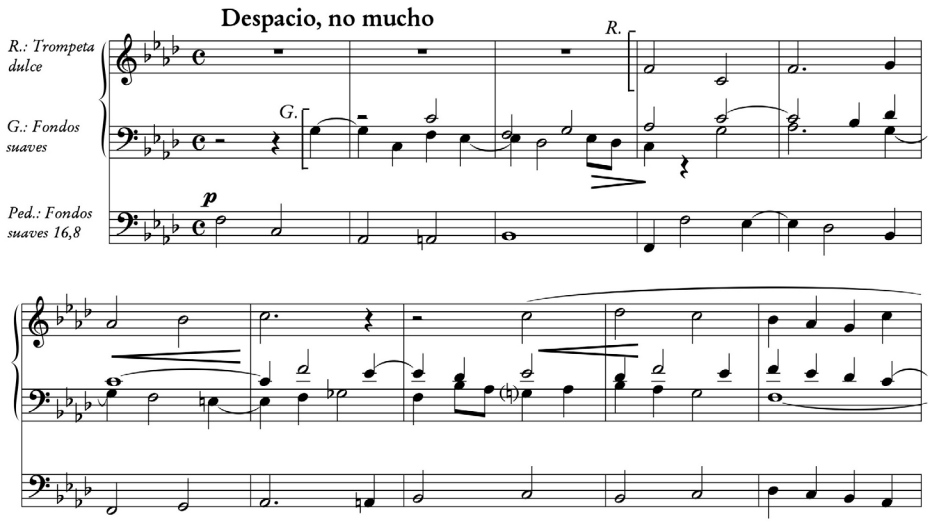


Illustration 4. Religious song *O Yesus Gurutzera*[9]

The next stage of reinterpretation is the organ piece for two manuals and pedal, written in the manner of a chorale setting. The *cantus firmus* is the melody *O, Crucified Jesus*. The piece (let us call it the *F minor* chorale prelude) is written in 4/4 and cast in long note-values; there are no traces of the original 5/4 rhythm. The texture is Baroque in character: the song's melody in the right hand functions like a chorale, while the left hand and pedal form a polyphonic fabric (*Example 1*).

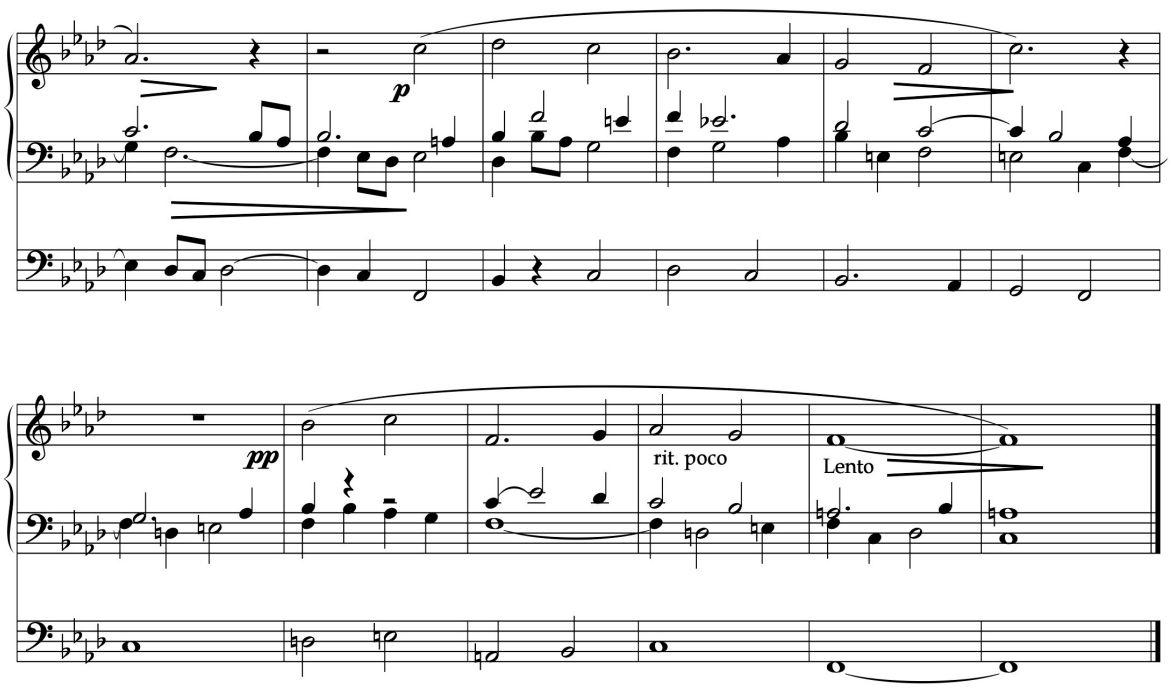
[9] Donostia J. A. de. La canción religiosa *O Yesus Gurutzera* [22, pp. 5–6].



Example 1. Donostia J. A. de. *O, Crucified Jesus*, mm. 1–10

The voices accompanying the melody imitate its initial motif. In the penultimate phrase, the *cantus firmus* forms a canon at the octave between the right hand and the pedal, while in the final phrase, a doubling at the thirteenth occurs between the outer voices (*Example 2*).

Donostia advocated the use of folk songs as material for academic music. In his words, "The problem is therefore this: to frame the Basque melody in such a way that in a salon, in a concert, the Basque nature, the text of the song, are highlighted, leaving us with an impression of beauty" ("le problème est donc là: encadrer lamélodie basque de telle façon que dans un salon, dans un concert, la nature basque, le texte de la chanson soient mis en relief, de manière à nous laisser une impression de beauté") [22, p. 71]. Regarding the audience's perception of music, he added, "It is a matter of taste, of musical culture: on the part of the composer, to succeed in creating a work of art, however brief and small it may be; on the part of the listener, to be in a state of receptivity to these 'short waves' that are the popular songs, so brief, so small. That is everything… to make a beautiful work of art and to be able to appreciate it, to love it. That is the question" ("C'est une affaire de goût, de culture musicale: du compositeur pour réussir à faire une oeuvre d'art, si brève, si petite soit-elle, de l'auditeur pour être en état de réceptivité de ces 'ondes courtes' que sont les chansons populaires si brèves, si petites. Tout est là… faire une belle oeuvre d'art et être capable de la goûter, de l'aimer. That is the question") [22, p. 73]. The expression "short waves" refers to short-range radio waves that travel long distances.



Example 2. Donostia J. A. de. *O, Crucified Jesus*, mm. 32–43

Our next examples continue, in part, the line of "chorale treatments." The piece *Variaciones sobre un tema religioso vasco* by Eduardo Mocoroa (1867–1959) is dedicated to the great organist of the first half of the 20th century, Miguel Echeveste (1893–1962). The work is written in the form of chorale variations, with the theme taken from the religious song *Huna, Jesus, bildots amultsua* (*Here is Jesus, the Gentle Lamb*) from the Basque-French Labourd region (*Illustration 5*).

The cycle does not begin with the theme, as is usual, but with an introduction in the form of a short improvisation on the opening motif of the song. The theme exposition is presented in the style of a harmonized chorale, with chromatized movement in the voices accompanying the melody and expressive pedal connections at cadential points (*Example 3*).

The first three variations are written in the form of chorale-style treatments on the *cantus firmus*. In Variation II, the *cantus firmus* sounds in the tenor, on the pedal played by the right foot, while the left foot plays a "dotted" bass. The harmonic figures on the manuals seem to grow out of the narrow range of the melody *Huna, Jesus, bildots amultsua* (*Example 4*).

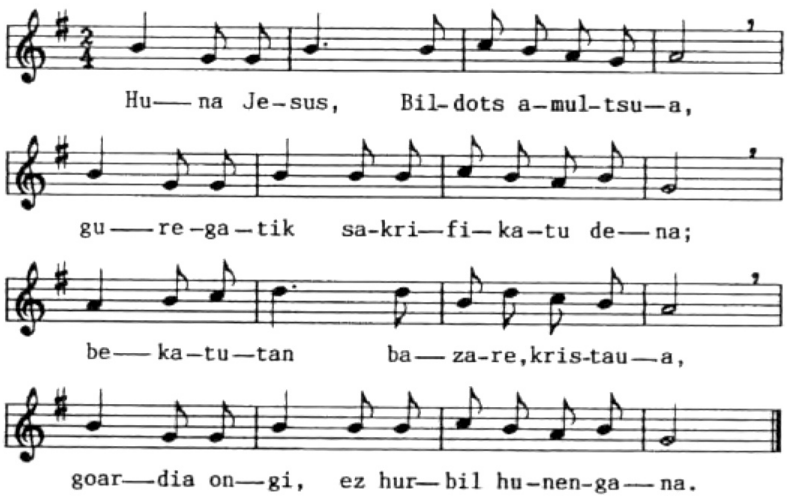


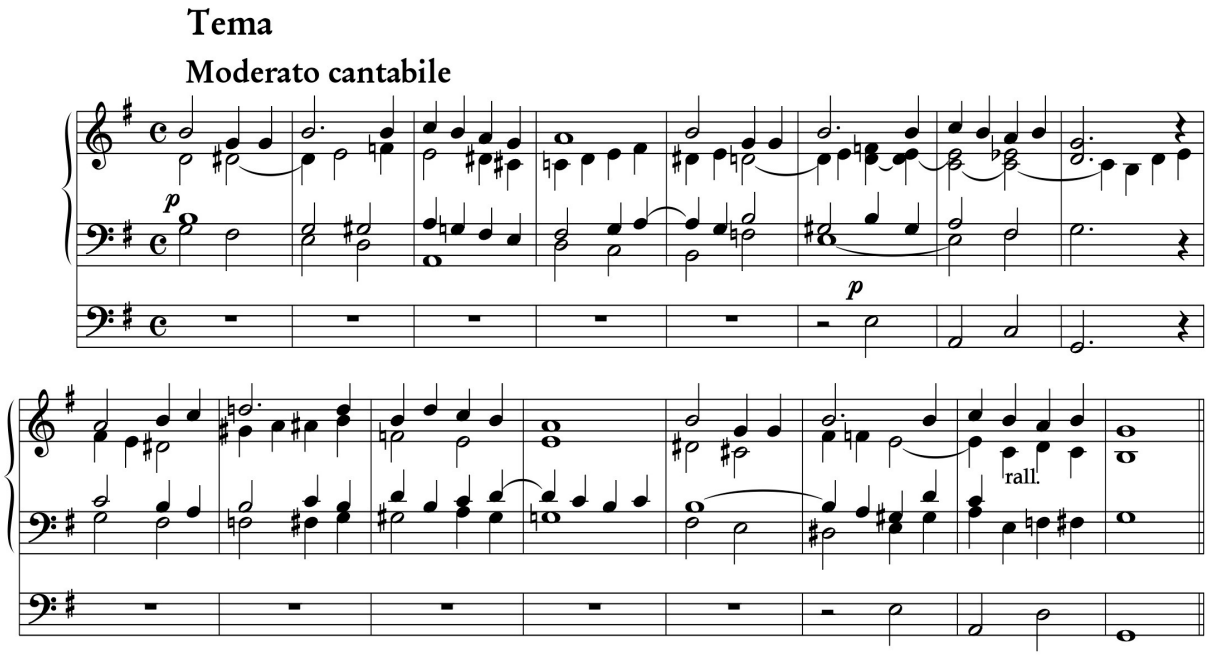
Illustration 5. The song *Here is Jesus, the Gentle Lamb* from: Donostia J. A. de. *Basque Songbook* (1994)[10]

In Variation III, the song's *cantus firmus* is again carried in the tenor, but in the oboe register; the *G minor* of this variation has a Brahms-like sound. A two-measure introduction, added to the melody (a rare feature in both chorale treatments and variations), becomes a new beginning for the *cantus firmus*, while the melody itself serves as a continuation. The dialogue of the upper voices forms a counterpoint to the *cantus firmus*. The resemblance to chorale accompaniment in German chorale preludes is particularly noticeable here. Mocoroa even inserts two-measure rests in the song to allow for interludes between the phrases of the *cantus firmus*, using the typical rhythmic formulas of Baroque chorale treatments (*Examples 5 a, b*).

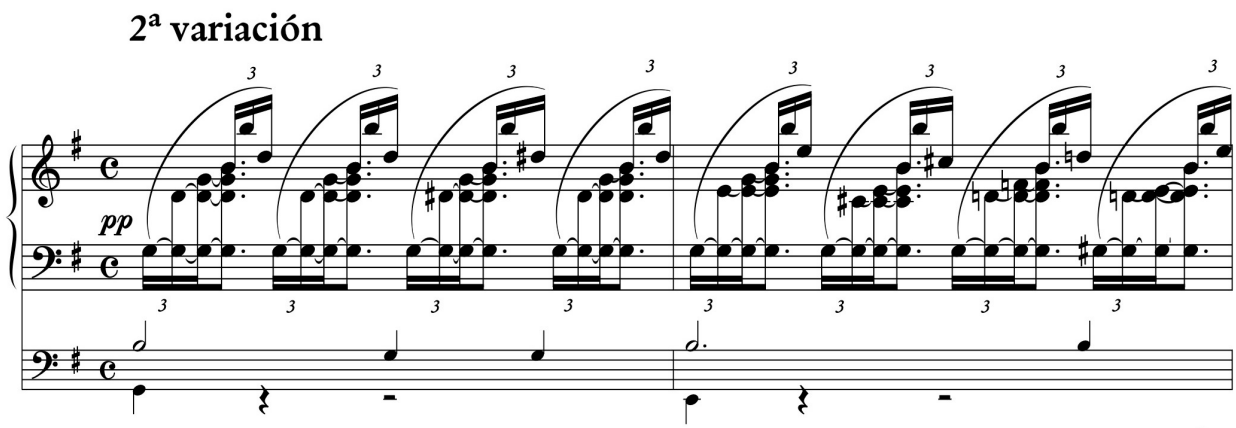
The final Variation IV can be described as a harmonized chorale, sounding in a high tessitura with flowing passagework in the accompaniment. The solemnity of this variation is enhanced in the coda (*Example 6*). While Mocoroa's technique clearly reflects the influence of German chorale treatments, the overall structure of the cycle reveals traditions of the French Romantic style, especially in the combination of Variations III and IV. In the former, the airy sound of *récit en taille*[11] dominates for two manuals, with minimal pedal involvement, while the latter serves as the triumphant conclusion of the variation cycle.

[10] Donostia J. A. de. *Cancionero Vasco*. Eusko lkaskuntza, 1994, p. 774.

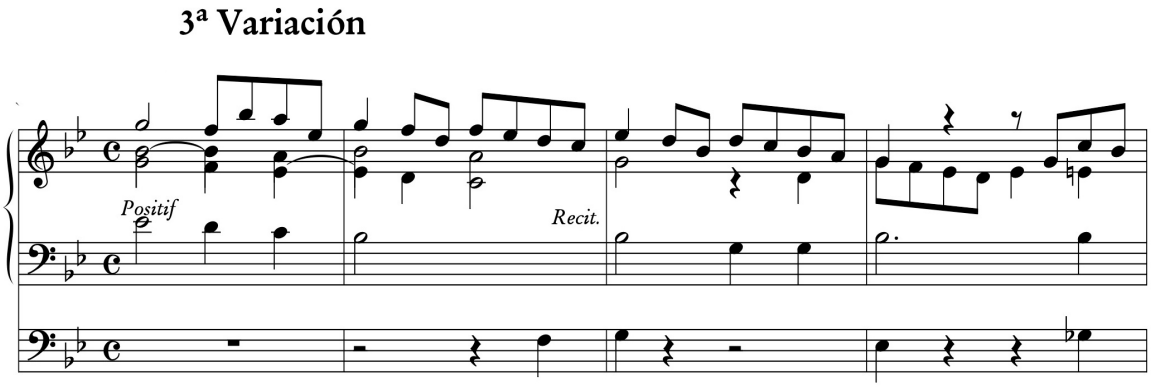
[11] According to the French classical organ registration, the solo part is played in the tenor.



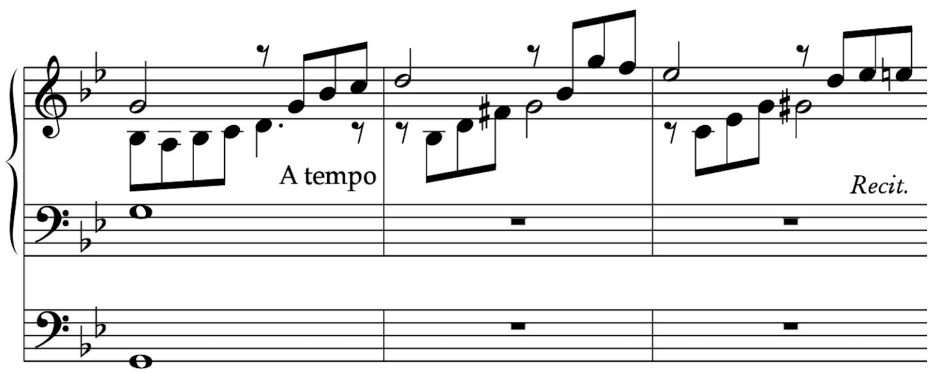
Example 3. Mocoroa E. *Variations on a Basque Religious Theme*. Theme



Example 4. Mocoroa E. *Variations on a Basque Religious Theme*.



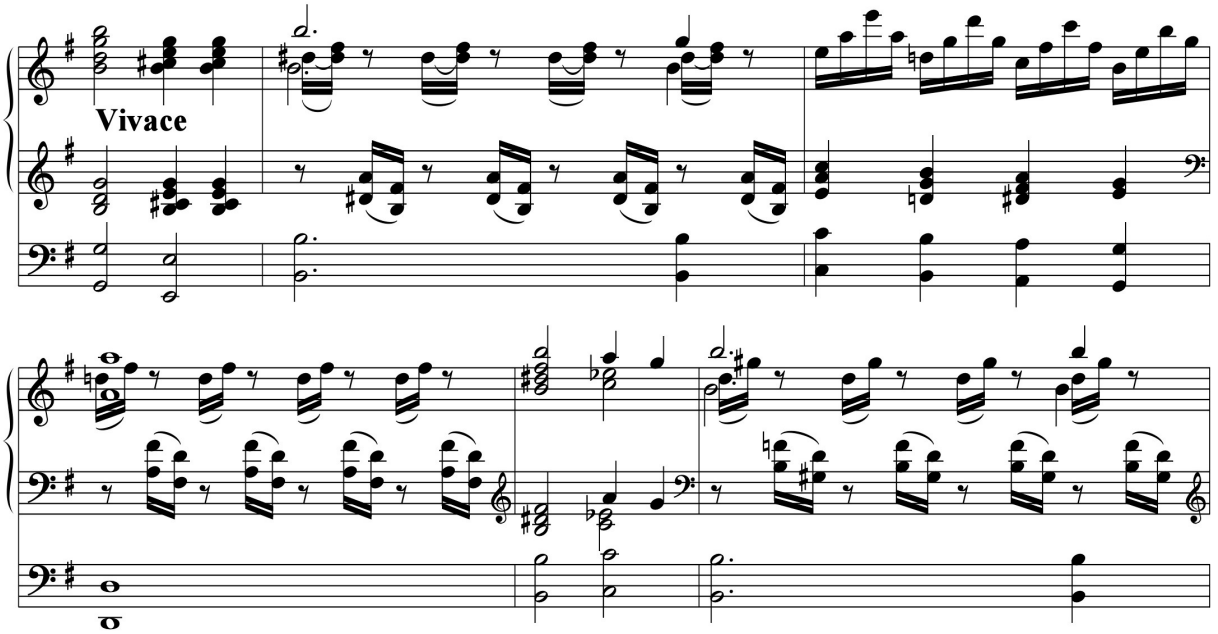
Example 5 (a). Mocoroa E. *Variations on a Basque Religious Theme*. Beginning of Variation III, mm. 1–4



Example 5 (b). Mocoroa E. *Variations on a Basque Religious Theme*. Beginning of Variation III, mm. 10–12

Beginning of Variation II Mocoroa preserves the characteristics of the folk song but enriches it to the fullest, exploiting the capabilities of the Romantic organ. Without resorting to imitative techniques or introducing fugues into the variation cycle, he limits himself to renewing the harmony and motives in the free voices. This approach allows the theme to be presented in a new context and gives dramatic qualities to an originally simple and schematic melody. At the same time, there remains a sense that the composer deliberately refrained from making significant changes to the theme, staying within its “boundaries.”

The same cannot be said of the next work, *Variaciones sobre un tema vasco* by Jesús Guridi (1886–1961). The lullaby *Itsasoa laino dago* (*Fog on the Sea*) has inspired many Basque composers. It is written in 3/8 time, consists of 16 measures, and has a very simple structure, both tonally and rhythmically. In Azkue's arrangement for voice and piano, a descending chromatic motion is marked in the middle of the piano texture (*Illustration 6*).



Example 6. Mocoroa E. *Variations on a Basque Religious Theme*.
Variation IV, mm. 21–26

In the Theme from Jesús Guridi's *Variations on a Basque Theme*, the same idea allows for the creation of a transparent four-voice polyphonic texture. In both the first and second sections, the bass voice presents a descending melodic line in the style of a lament. In the second section, *crescendi* and *diminuendi* are used to emphasize the dramatic character of the theme (*Example 7*).

In the nine variations following the theme, the composer alternates between almost literal repetition and the extensive use of freely developed material. For example, in Variation I, he takes only the first four notes of the original melody and then adds a new figure, which he repeats (*Example 8*).

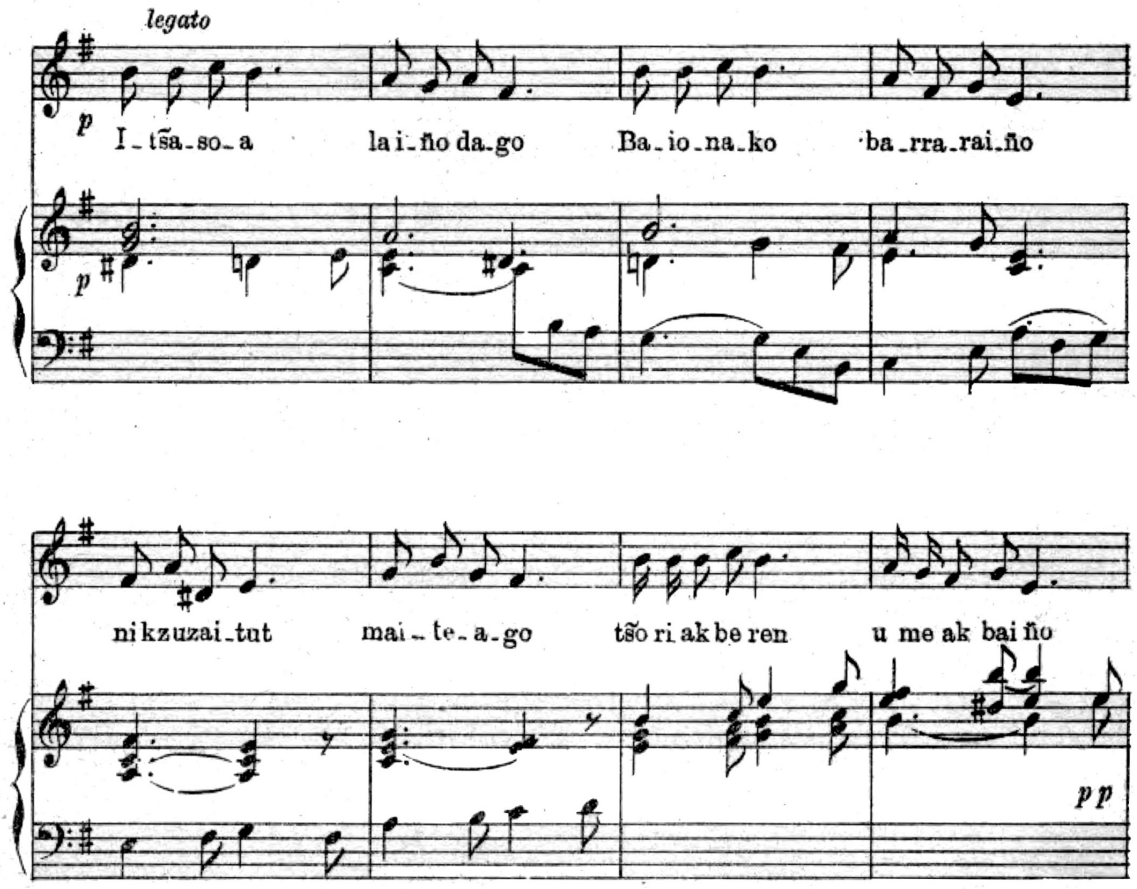
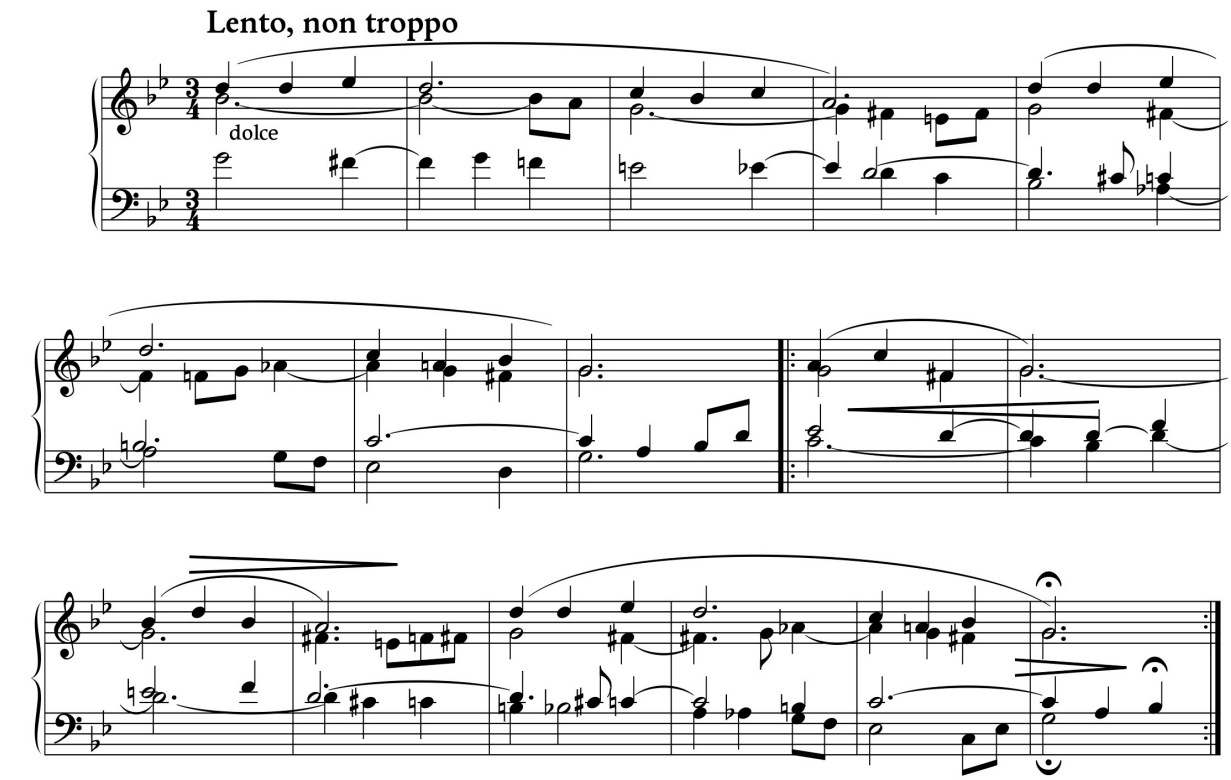


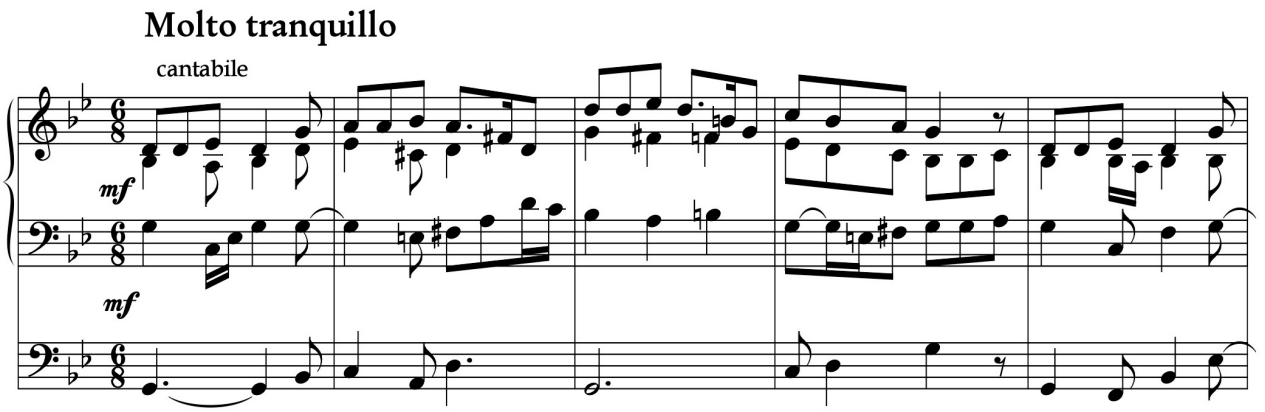
Illustration 6. The song *Fog on the Sea* arranged by M. d'Azkue for voice and piano, mm. 5–12[12]

Variation IV is particularly interesting, as the means of variation involve imitating the timbre of Basque folk instruments. In this case, the song melody is adapted to the rhythm of the *zortziko*, a Basque folk dance traditionally performed by a single musician on the *txistu* (a small, one-handed flute) and the *danbolin*, a small hand- or stick-played drum. Together, these form the Basque tabor-pipe instrument. Guridi imitates this combination of timbres on the organ: the melody runs in the left hand over a bourdon-like sound, simulating the *danbolin*, while the right hand imitates the *txistu* (*Example 9*).

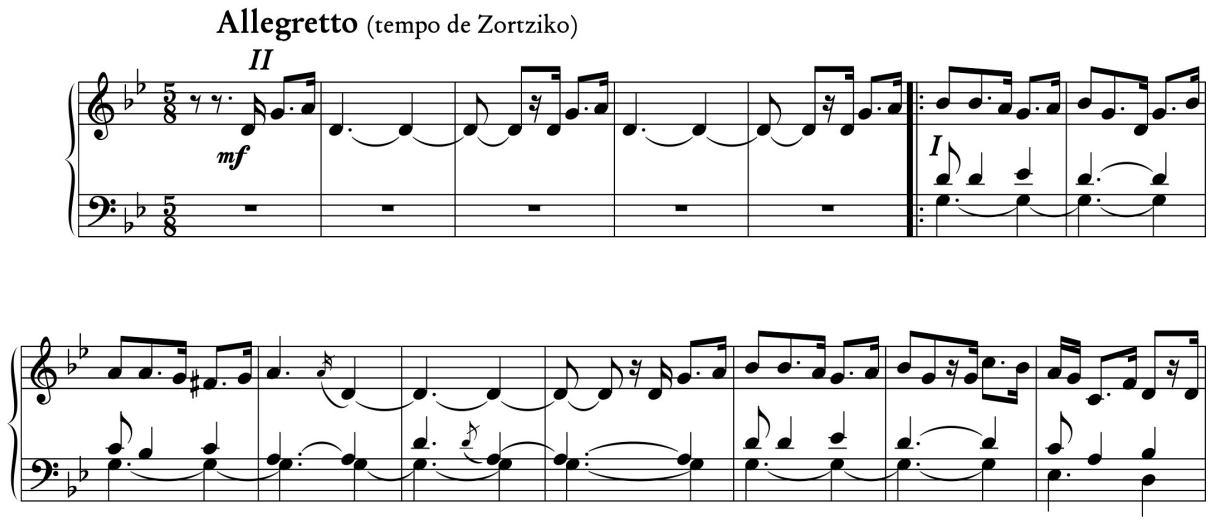
[12] Azkue R. M. de. *La música popular baskongada* [14, p. 9].



Example 7. Guridi J. *Variations on a Basque Theme*. Theme



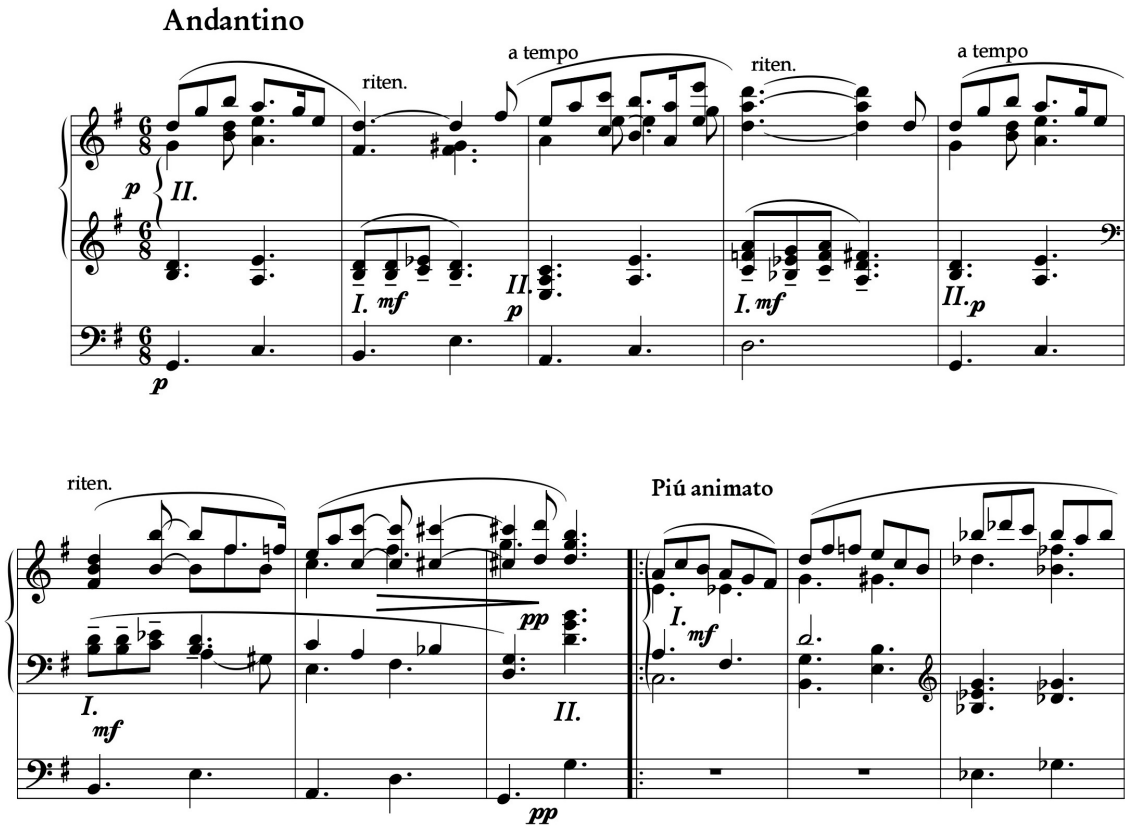
Example 8. Guridi J. *Variations on a Basque Theme*. Variation I, mm. 1–5



Example 9. Guridi J. *Variations on a Basque Theme*. Variation IV, mm. 1–14

In Variation V, the major-centered variation of the cycle, a substantial amount of new free material appears. Despite the change of mode, the theme's melody, played by the left hand, fully preserves its original form, although it is difficult to recognize. First, the theme's motives alternate with inserts of free material: in *Example 10*, the first two motives appear in mm. 2 and 4. Second, the *G minor* of the theme comes into conflict with the harmonization, which is especially noticeable in the treatment of the opening motive. It seems to derive from the third of the *B minor* triad, with the participation of an auxiliary *E-flat* (*Example 10*, mm. 2 and 6).

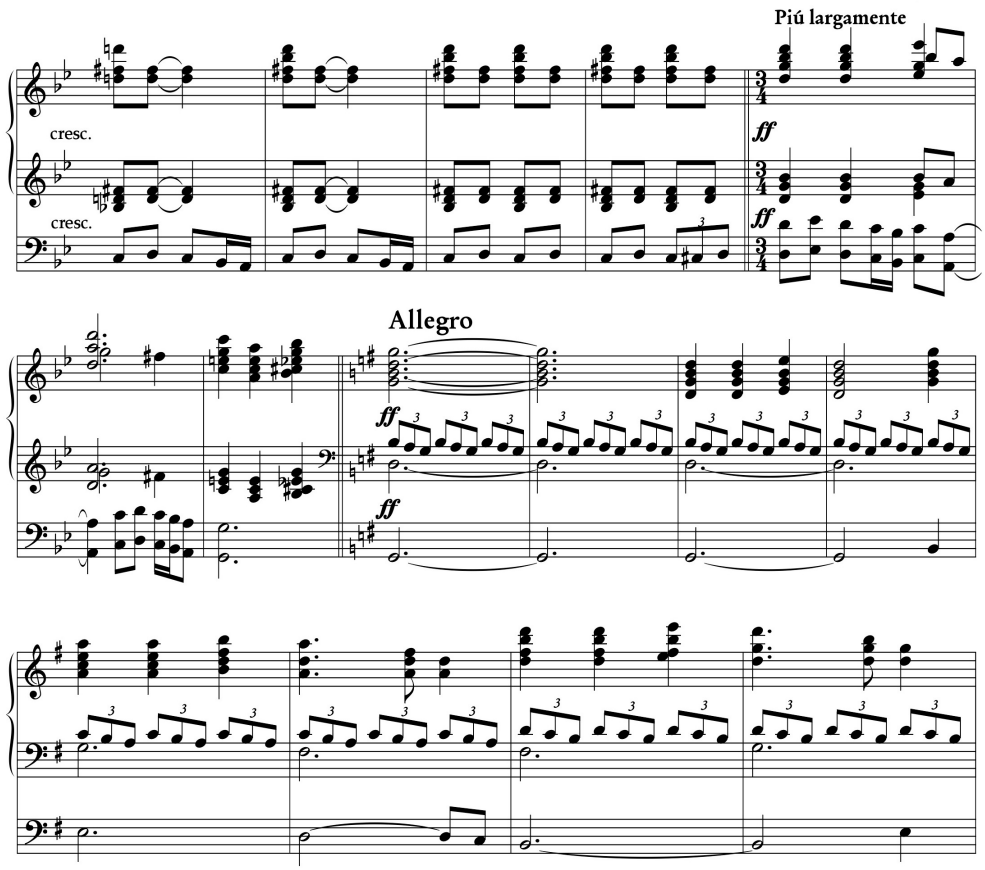
In the seventh variation, the theme is presented very freely, but the beginning of each phrase remains recognizable. In the eighth variation, written for two manuals and pedals, a canon at the fifth appears in the upper solo voices. This variation ends on the subdominant (the second-degree chord), allowing the beginning of the following variation to be heard as its resolution. The final, ninth variation is the largest in scope. The actual variation (*Andantino*) is written in 2/4, like Variation VII, to which it bears a resemblance. At the very end (*Più largamente*), repetitions of the theme's opening motive in the pedals at *fortissimo*, still in duple rhythm, finally lead to the triple-meter beginning of the coda (*Allegro*) in *G major*. Left-hand triplets imitate the sound of a carillon. The drama that has unfolded throughout the work concludes with a triumphant sonority (*Example 11*).



Example 10. Guridi J. *Variations on a Basque Theme*. Variation V, mm. 1–11

Guridi focused not only on the melodic elements but also added new material while preserving the harmonic foundation. In each variation, he transforms the theme without losing connection to it, and the work functions as a unified whole. As Johannes Brahms said, “In a theme with variations, for me, almost only the bass matters. But this is sacred to me; it is the solid foundation on which I then build my stories” (“bei einem Thema zu Variationen bedeutet mir eigentlich, fast, bei nahe nur der Bass etwas. Aber dieser ist mir heilig, er ist der feste Grund, auf dem ich dann meine Geschichten baue”).[13] Something similar occurs in Guridi’s Variations on a Basque Theme, where the listener perceives the unity of the harmonic plan amid active melodic renewal.

[13] Kalbeck, M. (Ed.). (1915). Brahms J. *Briefwechsel, Bd. VIII: Johannes Brahms. Briefe an Joseph Viktor Widmann, Ellen und Ferdinand Vetter, Adolf Schubring*. Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, p. 217.



Example 11. Guridi J. *Variations on a Basque Theme*. Variation IX, mm. 17–31

Conclusion

In his lecture entitled *Folk Song as a Subject of Musical Composition*, delivered upon becoming a full member of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando (1947), Guridi asserted that “folk melody by itself is an unpolished precious stone, and in any case it needs the hand of the artist to give it form” (“La melodía popular por sí solo es una piedra preciosa sin pulimentar y necesita en todo caso la mano del artista que le dé forma”) [17, p. 7]. The idea of polishing the precious stone represents one of the main approaches to understanding Basque folk creativity, alongside the collection and study of songs, theorizing their origins, and establishing spiritual songs in Spanish as a form of paraliturgical music. However, the results of song treatment deserve special attention.

The substantial body of organ music based on folk themes, created within a single generation of composers, is remarkable in itself, but the key point is this: Basque organist–composers clearly sought to extend the life of Basque folk song, opening new possibilities for its expression. Ultimately, they secured a place for it within the broader musical world.

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Shostakovich and death: A lifelong musical thanatology

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Abstract. The article raises the question of the significance of the theme of death for Shostakovich's creative work. It is argued that the composer's thanatology originates in his childhood compositions, as indicated by a number of titles of completed or conceived opuses; it continues in a number of episodes in the works of his youth and mature creative periods, from *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* to the Eleventh Symphony; and finally, acquires a special treatment in the late period, from the Fourteenth Symphony to the *Suite on Verses of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, where it is signaled by the poetic texts themselves.

Translated by the author

It is proven that the presence of the image of death is not limited to the list of works with an explicitly stated program of this kind. Using the example of two opuses from the early and late periods — the Suite for Piano, Op. 6, and String Quartet No. 12, Op. 133 — the article examines how quotations and stylistic allusions create a corresponding subtext and lead to the formation of an internal narrative focused on the problem of death. The question is raised regarding the degree of the composer's conscious use of "another's words" in such cases where authorial commentary is absent. It is emphasized that quotation allowed Shostakovich to create music as an art of communication, not limited to formal exploration or the setting of new technical tasks. The conclusion is drawn that the existential comprehension and experience of the phenomenon of death forms a kind of dotted line of meaning throughout Shostakovich's artistic biography — perhaps its central theme, with his attitude towards it changing during different periods of his life.

Keywords: musical thanatology, Dmitry Shostakovich, Suite for two pianos op. 6, Quartet No. 12 op. 133, Hector Berlioz, Mikhail Glinka, Modest Mussorgsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff

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All fragments from Russian poetry are translated into English by Natalia Bukhtoyarova

Памяти
Д.Д. Шостаковича

Научная статья

Шостакович и смерть: музыкальная танатология длиною в жизнь

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Аннотация. В статье поднимается вопрос о значении темы смерти для творчества Шостаковича. Утверждается, что танатология композитора берет свое начало в его детских произведениях, на что указывает целый ряд названий осуществленных или задуманных опусов; продолжается в ряде эпизодов сочинений юношеского и зрелого периода творчества от «Леди Макбет Мценского уезда» до Одиннадцатой симфонии; наконец, обретает особую трактовку в поздний период от Четырнадцатой симфонии и до Сюиты на стихи Микеланджело, в которых на нее указывают сами стихотворные тексты. Доказывается, что присутствие образа смерти не ограничивается списком сочинений с обнародованной программой такого плана. На примере двух опусов раннего и позднего периодов — Сюиты для фортепиано ор. 6 и Квартета № 12 ор. 133 — исследуется, как цитаты и стилистические аллюзии создают соответствующий подтекст и приводят к формированию внутреннего сюжета,

сконцентрированного на проблеме смерти. Ставится вопрос о степени сознательности использования композитором «чужого слова» в подобных случаях, когда автокомментарий отсутствует. Подчеркивается, что цитирование позволило Шостаковичу создавать музыку как искусство коммуникации, не ограничиваясь формальными поисками и постановкой новых технологических задач. Делается вывод о том, что экзистенциальное осмысление и переживание феномена смерти является своего рода смысловым пунктиром художнической биографии Шостаковича — возможно, центральной ее темой, отношение к которой менялось в разные периоды его жизни.

Ключевые слова: музыкальная танатология, Дмитрий Дмитриевич Шостакович, Сюита для двух фортепиано ор. 6, Квартет № 12 ор. 133, Гектор Берлиоз, Михаил Иванович Глинка, Модест Петрович Мусоргский, Сергей Васильевич Рахманинов

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Introduction

There are several well-known examples of direct reference to the topic of death in Shostakovich's works—sometimes obvious in their texts or programs, sometimes more subtle. They are often referred to, but direct discussion of this topic is rather avoided. One of the few scholars to dedicate a specific study to it is the French researcher Grégoire Tosser. His 2000 book is titled *Shostakovich's Last Works: The Musical Aesthetics of Death, 1969–1975*. The very title suggests that the author dates the formation of Shostakovich's thanatology to the beginning of his late creative period, assigning four works to this musical aesthetics of death: the Fourteenth Symphony (the first that comes to mind due to its program), the Fifteenth Quartet, the *Suite on Verses by Michelangelo*, and the Viola Sonata [1]. However, they were preceded by at least the corresponding episodes of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1934) and the Eleventh Symphony (1957). If we examine the composer's oeuvre more closely from this point of view, taking into account not only what he wrote, but also what he did not write (which constitutes one of the most significant aspects of any creative biography), as well as the unfinished or lost works—so-called unrealized projects—then the beginning of Shostakovich's "thanatology" will coincide with the very beginning of his creative journey.

However, this semantic dotted line remains insufficiently understood by researchers: Shostakovich's understanding of the theme of death included not only works in which it was verbally articulated, but also those in which it was indicated by the author's own cryptic script, the meanings of which remain to be deciphered. Two such works—the beginning and the end of the journey—will be at the center of reflections on Shostakovich's thanatology.

Inevitable Thanatos

It is entirely evident that the image of death, for Shostakovich as for any true artist, was inseparable from his worldview. For some, it looms in the distance for a long time (as long as they manage to keep it there by sheer will), while for others, it comes to the forefront early on. Shostakovich belongs to the latter group. In this regard, he can perhaps only be compared to Hector Berlioz—though Shostakovich engaged with the theme of death artistically at a far younger age. This biographical parallel is hardly coincidental, not least because Berlioz was a significant figure

in the musical atmosphere of Shostakovich's youth. Having befriended Ivan I. Sollertinsky and fallen under his profound intellectual influence, Shostakovich witnessed his mentor's passionate enthusiasm for Berlioz. As artistic director of the Leningrad Philharmonic, Sollertinsky dreamed of restoring Berlioz as a permanent fixture on its posters. We do not know to what extent Shostakovich shared this sentiment, but it is well-documented that he knew many of Berlioz's works intimately and considered the Requiem a masterpiece, which he listened to repeatedly.

For the French composer, the theme of death became an obsession, evident even in his youth. The simplest explanation lies in his experience as a medical student in an anatomical theatre; the shock of what he saw and experienced marked most of his subsequent works. This is apparent in the starkly physiological soundscape of the conservatory cantata *The Death of Cleopatra*—a kind of mono-opera depicting the heroine's death "in real time" with a meticulous recording of its shocking details; the fatal blow of the guillotine and the subsequent grotesque sarcasm of the otherworldly finale in the Fantastic Symphony; the frightening naturalism of the crypt scene in *Romeo and Juliet*; and an attempt at reconciliation with death as a form of sleep in *Lélio* and *The Death of Ophelia* [2]. Berlioz presents two starkly contrasting embodiments of this persistent image that haunted him from youth—two possibilities for accepting the inevitable. These are given form in the traditional sacred imagery of the Requiem and, conversely, in the equally ancient motifs of "metamorphosis" and pantheistic transformation — a dissolution into existence—found in the vocal cycle *Les Nuits d'été*, set to poems by Théophile Gautier. While it is hardly certain that Paradise existed in Berlioz's worldview, he embodied Hell with utmost clarity.

Or let us recall the images of death in Sergei Prokofiev, a senior contemporary and constant antagonist of Shostakovich. It was the latter who once made an unflattering, laconic comparison of his colleague with Berlioz. From a Shostakovich's letter to Boleslav Yavorsky in 1940 (23 January): "Yesterday I listened to Berlioz's Requiem for the second time. It is a genius work. I listened to Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky*. This is not a work of genius. I did not like it."[1]

[1] [Shostakovich, D. D.] (2000). Pisma k B. L. Yavorskomu [Letters to B. L. Yavorsky]. In I. A. Bobykina (Ed.), *Dmitrij Shostakovich v pismakh i dokumentakh* [*Dmitry Shostakovich in Letters and Documents*]. Antika, p. 129.

Prokofiev, in turn, offered similarly unflattering assessments of Shostakovich's film music (though without such pointed comparisons), revealing their fundamentally different approaches to the genre.

But it is in Prokofiev that the kinship with Berlioz becomes clear, particularly in his ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, where the depiction of the dying Tybalt, cursing, is distorted by hideous convulsions. Prokofiev finds a different language for the prophecy of his own departure: the measured ticking of a clock in the coda of the Seventh Symphony, written by the composer as he stood on the threshold of death—not a "children's symphony," as it is often interpreted, but a true testament. It ends in a Pushkin-like manner; this is the farewell of a deeply religious person—"And I do know: that younger living / Will play at my forgotten tomb, / And nature, lustrous, unforgiving, / Will glare in ins eternal bloom."[2]

Shostakovich's case is special. The theme of death attracted him at about the same time it first strikes any child's imagination: psychologists note that children's awareness of the finitude, irreversibility, and inevitability of their own death—what is called "the thanatization of childhood"— typically emerges between the ages of 8 and 10.[3] However, the acuteness of this awareness depends on psychological development, and certainly not every child strives to embody the insight of mortality and the transience of all existence through artistic means, no matter how meager they may be. Eight-year-old "Miten'ka" dealt with this existential experience in exactly this way, and the reason for this lies in the era that made death an inseparable companion of his childhood and, later, adolescence. His self-awareness and growing up coincided with the beginning of World War I: one of Shostakovich's first works was "a long piece called Soldier" from 1914: by his own definition, "a poem on military themes in connection with the world war."[4] We will not take into account other early plans from the same period that had tragic endings, where the heroes meet their death—such as the opera *Taras Bulba*,

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[2] Pushkin, A. S. (1950). *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij: v 10 t.* [*Complete Works: In 10 volumes*] (Vol. 3). Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p. 132

[3] Gavrilova, T. A. (2009). Problema detskogo ponimaniya smerti [The Problem of Children Understanding of Death]. *Psikhologicheskaya nauka i obrazovanie, 1*(4). URL: https://psyjournals.ru/journals/psyedu/archive/2009_n4/Gavrilova (accessed: 25.08.2025).

[4] D. D. Shostakovich—D. R. Rogal-Levitskomu. (2000). O moikh sochineniyakh. Pis'mo ot 22 sentyabrya 1927 goda [About My Compositions. Letter dated September 22, 1927]. In Bobykina I. A. (Ed.), *Dmitrij Shostakovich v pismakh i dokumentakh*, pp. 186, 476.

conceived in 1915–1916; the music for Mikhail Lermontov's poem *A Song about Tsar Ivan Vasilyevich, a Young Oprichnik and a Stouthearted Merchant Kalashnikov*; as well as music for Nikolai Gogol's story *Terrible Vengeance* (both lost works date from 1917–1918). So little is known about them that it is impossible to judge what constituted the main interest for the budding composer in these plots. However, the *Funeral March in Memory of the Victims of the Revolution* (1918) is not merely a tribute to the musical rhetoric of the era. It is a composition inspired by an event that became a psychological shock for the entire Russian society: the murder by revolutionary sailors of the arrested deputies of the Constituent Assembly, Andrei I. Shingarev and Fyodor F. Kokoshkin. They were unarmed, taken by surprise at night in a prison hospital where they were being treated, and killed by a brutal, drunken mob. This crime, regarded by modern historians as marking the beginning of the "Red Terror," was felt by contemporaries as the final verdict on the previous system of humanistic values—already shaken by the war, but not yet completely crushed at that time [3; 4]. That the Shostakovich family, like other Petrograd families, discussed this event with horror is evidenced by the opus of a 12-year-old child.

Images of war continued to haunt the teenager. This is evident in the piece *Longing* from his piano cycle, Op. 5 (1918). Its original title, *Soldier Remembering the Homeland*, directly echoes his earlier piano piece, *Soldier* (1914) [5, p. 20]. Another significant connection lies in the Piano Sonata of 1920–1921 (preserved only in fragments). It is written in the same key of B minor—a key clearly imbued with mournful connotations—as the *Funeral March* of 1918. However, for a time, the conservatory's academic routine, and particularly the didactic focus of composition assignments, suppressed these existential themes.

Suite for Two Pianos in F minor, Op. 6: An Attempt at a Narrative

The young Shostakovich's renewed fixation with the imagery of death in his music was triggered by a profound personal tragedy—the death of his father on February 24, 1922. The *Suite in F minor for Two Pianos*, Op. 6, dedicated to the memory of Dmitry Boleslavovich Shostakovich, was completed almost a year later, on February 14. However, this second version, revised under pressure

from his composition teacher Maximilian O. Steinberg, was soon rejected by the composer, who returned to his initial, independent draft. In the famous questionnaire on the psychology of the creative process, which he completed at the request of Roman Gruber in 1927, Shostakovich retrospectively framed the genesis of the Suite as the first act of his creative defiance against the "school" norms of composition. He singled out this meticulously documented episode as the inaugural milestone in his artistic maturation—a hard-won assertion of autonomy achieved through resistance to his teacher's pedagogical authority and open conflict with him.[5] The Suite for Two Pianos in F minor, the most monumental work from the composer's early period (predating the First Symphony), has rarely attracted researchers' attention.[6] Apparently, this is because the composition is perceived as insufficiently original and lacking in linguistic independence—a tradition established by the initial responses to the work. For instance, after the successful Leningrad premiere, the Moscow one was assessed as "a work of anemic academicism."[7] Such was the review in the newspaper *Iskusstvo trudyashchimsya* [*Art to the Workers*], which accused the young Leningrad author of a lack of originality.

A few years later, the composer himself became disillusioned with his early work, dropping it from his concert programs and considering it a "complete failure," "almost a copy... of Glazunov and Tchaikovsky."[8] The few modern researchers who have written about the Suite, on the one hand, like Vladimir Yu. Delson, see in it an anticipation of "polyphonism and neo-Bachian linearism of Shostakovich's musical thinking in general" [10, p. 22], while others, like Olesya Bobrik, believe that its music "could indeed be perceived as outdated even a few years after its creation" against the backdrop of Shostakovich's more recent compositions [9, p. 132].

[5] See Shostakovich o sebe i o svoikh sochineniyakh. Anketa po psikhologii tvorcheskogo protsessa [Shostakovich on himself and his compositions. Questionnaire on the psychology of the creative process] [September 2–10, 1927]. In I. A. Bobykina (2000), p. 472.

[6] An exception were the works of Vladislav O. Petrov, dedicated to Shostakovich's piano duets [6; 7; 8, pp. 30–44], in which the Suite for Two Pianos is examined both from the point of view of the presence of an epic beginning in it and from the position of the embodiment of a musical-dramatic conflict in it.

[7] Ivanov, Iv. (1925, May 5–10). Shebalin, Shostakovich. *Iskusstvo trudyashchimsya* [*Art to the Workers*], (23), p. 9 (as cited in [9, p. 132]).

[8] [Shostakovich D.] O moikh sochineniyakh [About My Compositions]. In I. A. Bobykina (2000), p. 187.

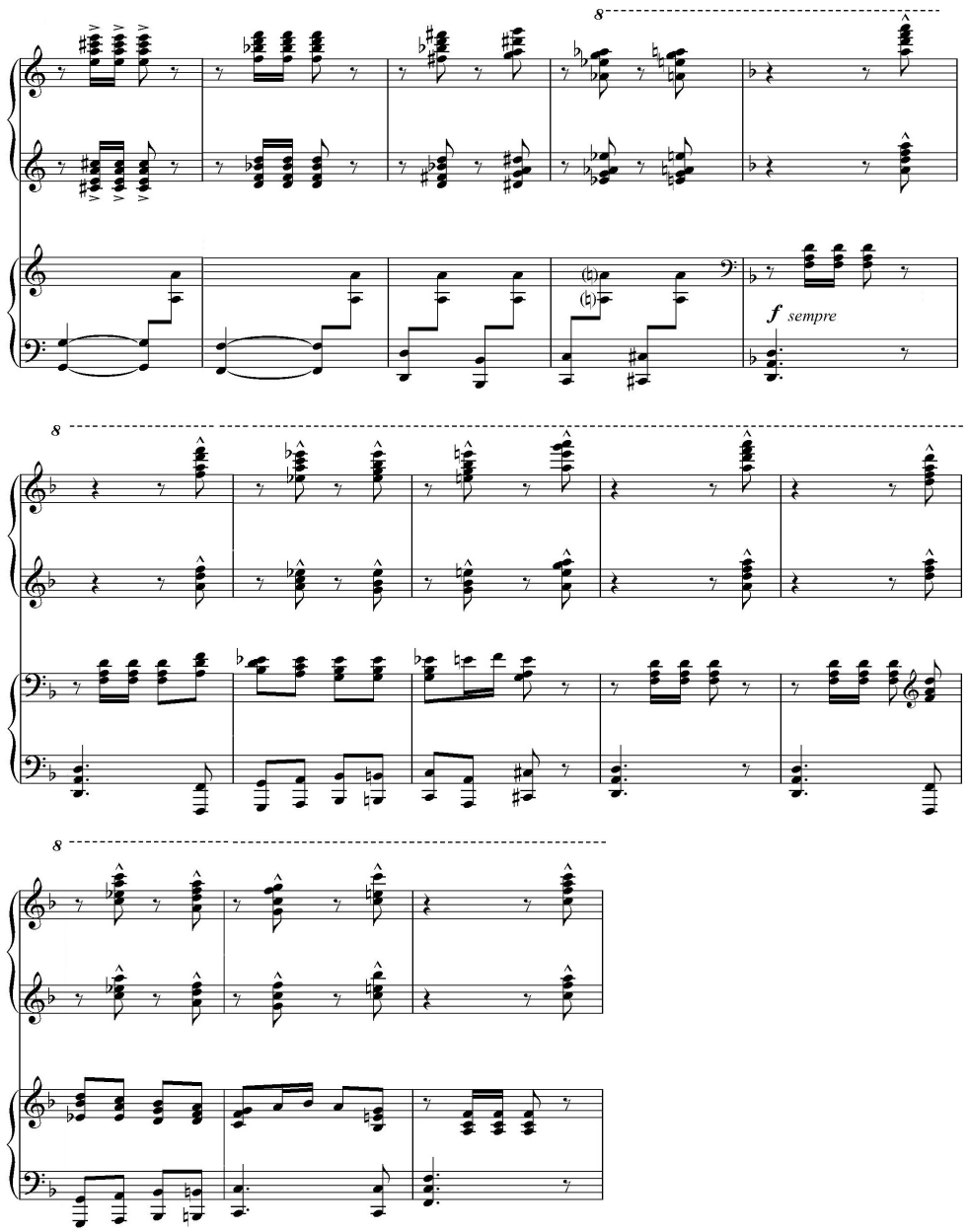
Consequently, stylistic interpretations of the work range widely—from detecting "an affinity for the Bach-Taneyev style" [10, p. 22] to identifying such features as "bell-like sonorities" and "alternation of lyrical 'nocturne-like' passages with energetic march rhythms" reminiscent of Rachmaninoff [9, p. 130], along with affinities to Prokofiev's scherzo-like writing [11, p. 203].

Taneyev, Glazunov, Tchaikovsky, Bach, Rachmaninoff, and also Prokofiev — such an associative chain does not offer any semantic or figurative particular paradigm of the composition. That is, until we address the matter of quotations. It is the quotation, with its precise referentiality, that endows initially vague stylistic allusions to "other people's voice," with semantic potential. And such an "other people's voice" does indeed emerge in the text of the Suite. Despite the fact that it has gone unnoticed in the literature on Shostakovich, it is quite easy to identify. In the 2nd movement (Fantastic Dance, *Allegro vivo*), a "signature" bolero rhythm appears at m. 41, growing increasingly recognizable until, by mm. 58–70, it crystallizes into an unambiguous quotation (*Example 1*).

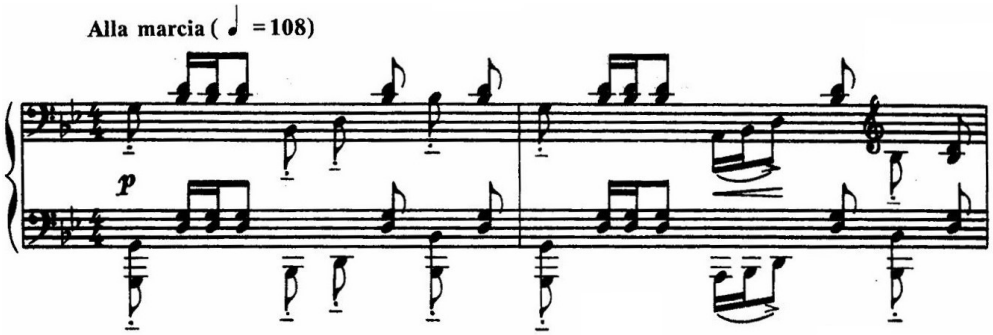
This explicit reference to Rachmaninoff's famous *Prelude in G minor*, Op. 23, No. 5 [6, p. 76] (*Example 2*), casts new light on the less recognizable but foundational "bell-like" leitmotif of fourths that sounded earlier: it opened the work, defining the imagery of the entire 1st movement (Prelude), and then latently arose in the 2nd movement. From the midpoint of the second movement, these elements begin to rhyme as deliberate nods to Rachmaninoff: the near-literal quotation from the *Prelude in G minor* now dialogues with imagery from another celebrated Rachmaninoff work—the *Prelude in C-sharp minor*, Op. 3 No. 2.

It is from the middle of the 2nd movement that they begin to rhyme as references to Rachmaninoff: an almost exact quotation from the *Prelude in G minor* with the image of another famous Rachmaninoff piece—the *Prelude in C-sharp minor*, Op. 3, No. 2 (*Examples 3, 4*).

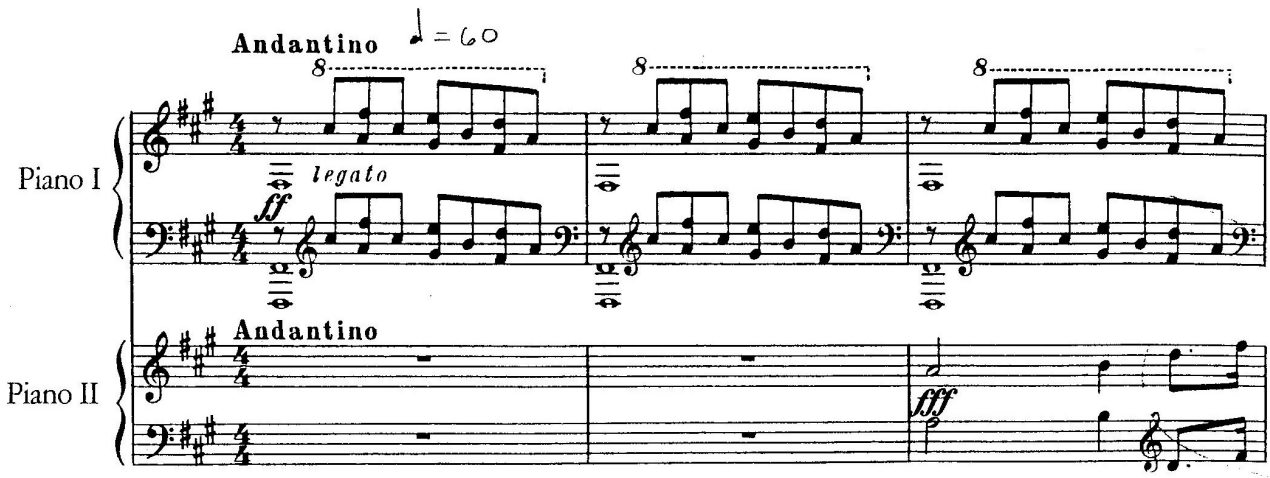
Further, the implementation of the main leitmotif at the culmination of the 3rd movement (Nocturne, *Piu mosso*, mm. 42–55) and the 4th movement (Finale) confirms the fate theme as central to the Suite. It is also highlighted in its own way by the another Rachmaninoff leitmotif, based on the rhythm of the bolero. An echo of the same rhythm using the chord progression from Rachmaninoff's Prelude is repeated several times in the cycle's finale, which is structured around the genre formula of the funeral march, including its particularly expressive sound in the coda (*Example 5*).



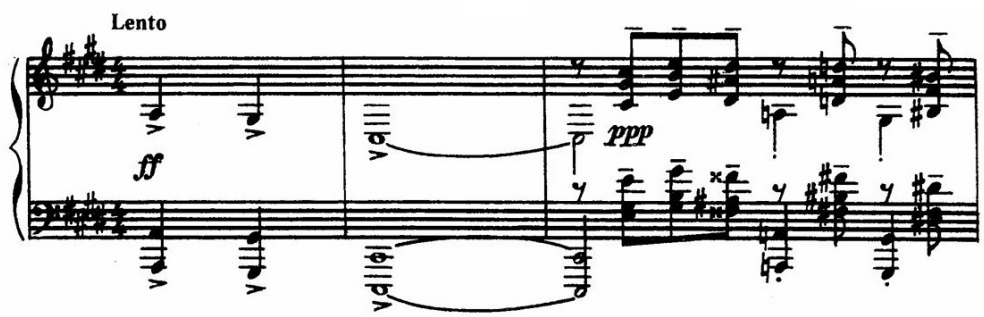
Example 1. Shostakovich D. Suite for 2 pianos.
II. Fantastic Dance, mm. 58–70



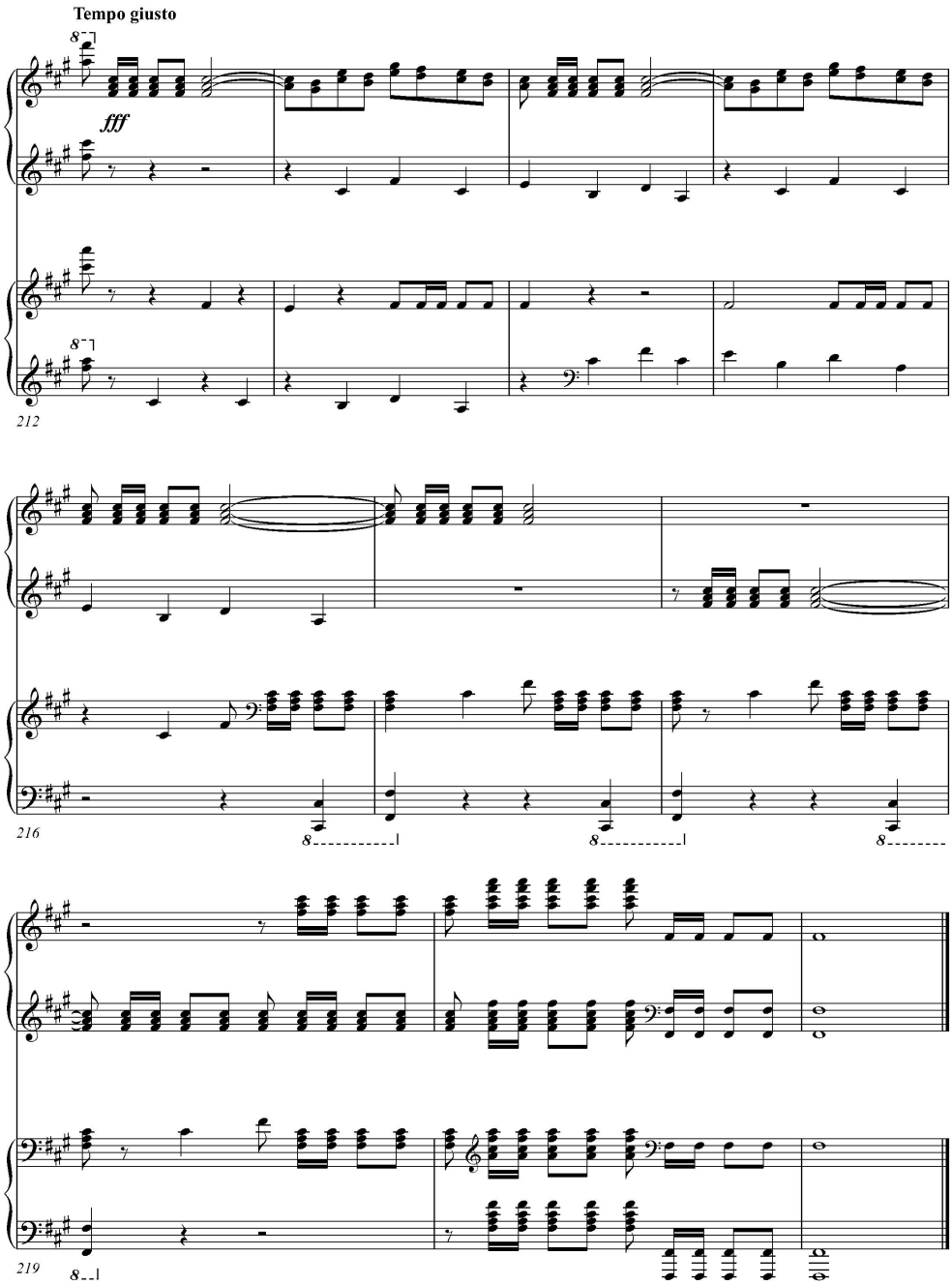
Example 2. Rachmaninoff S. *Prelude in G minor* op. 23 No. 5, mm. 1–2



Example 3. Shostakovich D. *Suite for 2 Pianos*.
I. Prelude, mm. 1–3



Example 4. Rachmaninoff S. *Prelude in C-sharp minor*, Op. 3 No. 2



Example 5. Shostakovich D. *Suite for 2 Pianos*.
IV. Finale, mm. 212–221

Thus, this act of quotation provides the key to understanding to the cycle's overarching concept and its hidden program, clarifying the ambiguous imagery of the 2nd movement. Its title—Fantastic Dance—likely carries a subtextual reference to Rachmaninoff's deeply symbolic "danse macabre motif," to which he paid generous tribute. Both the Fantastic Dance and the Nocturne, viewed from this perspective, emerge not as dramatic digressions from the principal narrative line but rather as alternative angles of displaying the same theme of fate.

The Suite's dedication to his father proves to be more than just a mere tribute: the theme of death, fate, and protest against the greatest injustice constitute the composition's program, not explicitly stated but clearly expressed through musical means. And quotation becomes the primary means of its realization.

It is obvious that Shostakovich's creation of the *Suite for Two Pianos* in terms of genre was provoked by two similar works by Rachmaninoff: his Suites for Two Pianos No. 1 (1893) and No. 2 (1901). It is characteristic that Shostakovich himself did not mention Rachmaninoff's name among this work's predecessors. Such omission is a very typical feature of the attitude of many authors to the painful question of original models and borrowings—a kind of creative Oedipus complex, particularly characteristic of artist's establishing their names. Nevertheless, in Gruber's questionnaire, filled out by the young Shostakovich, Rachmaninoff's name appears in the list of his favorite composers.[9] Arguably, the Suite stands as virtually his sole early creative testament to this admiration.

Another obvious Rachmaninoff parallel—Shostakovich's unfinished opera *The Gypsies*, based on the same Pushkin plot as opera *Aleko*—was not completed. While its exact chronology remains unclear, composition likely coincided with the Suite Op. 6 in the early 1920s. Destroyed by the composer in 1926 piano score of *The Gypsies* nonetheless survive in any fragments [5, pp. 27–28]. Even in his later years Shostakovich associated a narrative of Pushkin's *The Gypsies* with fatality. Having invoked *Aleko*, we might recall a testemony from the composer's friend Isaac Glikman dating to the mid-1960s—a famous memoir episode capturing Shostakovich's reaction to Party pressure regarding his forced membership. Recounting these agonizing events, Shostakovich concluded with a quotatio "And there is no defense against fate."[10]

[9] See Shostakovich o sebe i o svoikh sochineniyakh, p. 475.

[10] Glikman, I. D. (Ed.). (1993). *Pisma k drugu: Pisma D. D. Shostakovicha k I. D. Glikmanu* [Letters to a Friend: Letters from D. D. Shostakovich to I. D. Glikman]. Kompozitor, p. 161.

This associative chain naturally extended to—and was tinged by—his perception of Rachmaninoff's music, from whose diverse output he singled out precisely those works of tragic import.

Thus, one of Shostakovich's very first opuses once again raises questions about the specifics of his programmatic nature, the role of quotation in it, and the composer's signature "secret writing," about which, it would seem, so much has been written and said.

Programmatic Elements, Quotation, and Cryptography

Indeed, the interplay between concealed and revealed meanings in Shostakovich's works remains a perennial focus for scholars. The discourse typically follows several key trajectories: the use of musicale monograms (including the author's—DSCH), quotation and self-quotation. Most likely, the most large-scale use of self-quotation with the inclusion of "other people's voice" (from Beethoven to Berg, from Mahler and Richard Strauss to Galina Ustvolskaya) is demonstrated by the Viola Sonata op. 147 (1975). Sensational in their conclusions, observations by Ivan Sokolov on the central section of the 3rd movement, published in 2006, reveal the meaning of its development as a consistent recollection of all of Shostakovich's symphonies (except the 11th Symphony, which does not contain the author's themes) [12]. This radical technique ultimately reveals the significance of the Viola Sonata as the composer's final musical statement, his opus magnum. Moreover, the use of the author's monogram DSCH in various works by Shostakovich by default includes the figure of the lyrical hero, identified with the author, in the intonational plot of the work.

However, cases of Shostakovich quoting other authors do not always find a sufficiently convincing analytical explanation. Thus, the complex of quotations noted by various researchers in the *Fifth Symphony* does not form a coherent semantic (or even stylistic) unity: here, the operas *Carmen* [13, p. 748], *Onegin* and *Ruslan and Lyudmila* [14, p. 242–245] as well as scores by Berlioz, Richard Strauss and Mahler [15, c. 151–155; 16], which are so different in their possible plot subtexts, are named.

The question is inevitable: to what extent was the composer himself aware of these allusions. Is it necessary to imply the presence of semantic subtexts behind them, or are we dealing with the result of an unconscious play of sound associations, reflecting the formal similarity of motives? The case of another of Shostakovich's final works, his 15th Symphony, emphasizes the ambiguity of the answer. Even the composer seemed uncertain about the meaning behind his own deliberately documented quotations from Rossini, Wagner, Glinka, and Beethoven, or whether they shared any conceptual unity. His confused confession says at all: "I myself don't know why these quotations are there, but I couldn't not include them, I couldn't not..."[11]

However, the use of quotations remains for interpreters, one way or another, a marker of the semantic depth of a work, a reason to search for its semantic subtexts—that very cryptography that is largely incriminated to the work by the era itself. Consider conductor Vladimir M. Yurowsky's reflections on programmatic music itself—starting with Mahler's symphonies, he makes a broader generalization:

> ...the absence of textual explanations in Mahler's later symphonies does not mean the absence of an internal program in them. I am convinced that such a program exists in all of Mahler's works—as, incidentally, it does in Bruckner's and even Brahms's symphonies, despite the latter's supposed adherence to "absolute music". Frankly, I am rather skeptical of the doctrine of "pure art", especially when applied to the Romantic 19th century, and likely to the 20th as well (at least to many of its representatives). Another thing is that the music of Debussy or Stravinsky often truly expresses only "itself" (to borrow the latter's term), which cannot be said about the music of Shostakovich, Britten or Henze. All of them were in some sense the heirs of Tchaikovsky and, of course, Mahler [17, p. 23].

I would like to subscribe to these words. But let's listen to the opinion of Shostakovich himself. He touched on this topic more than once, although it must be understood that none of his statements can be interpreted with a full degree of trust. The very conditions in which these confessions were made never provided the composer with unlimited freedom of expression. And yet, we cannot completely ignore these self-characteristics either.

Shostakovich's most detailed statement on the problem of content was made during the discussion on programmaticity that took place on the pages of the *Soviet Music* in 1951. Despite its obvious official tone, it deserves our attention:

[11] Glikman, I. D. (1993), p. 282.

> In the printed debates on program music, two different points of view emerged: some comrades consider only music with an author-supplied verbal text or concrete plot-based title to be programmatic. Others interpret the concept of programmaticity more broadly—as a work's internal idea, its content expressed through corresponding musical imagery.
>
> Personally, I identify programmaticity with meaningfulness. <…>
>
> For me, such works as Bach's fugues, Haydn's, Mozart's, Beethoven's symphonies, Chopin's etudes and mazurkas, Glinka's *Kamarinskaya*, Tchaikovsky's, Borodin's, Glazunov's symphonies, some of Myaskovsky's symphonies and mach else are deeply meaningful, and therefore programmatic.[12]

He then gave examples from Bach's *Das wohltemperierte Clavier* and Chopin's works, as well as Borodin's First Symphony, which, as he "admitted loving no less than the 2nd."[13]

While the phrasing of general theses in this article undoubtedly bears traces of editorial intervention—or at least self-censorship—the selection of examples likely reflects, to some degree, the composer's personal preferences. This may also hold true for the concluding argument:

> The author of a symphony, quartet or sonata may not announce their program, but is obliged to have one as the ideological basis of his work. It seems to me deeply false when a composer write music first, then 'discovers' its content with the help of critics and interpreters of his work. For me personally, as for many other authors of instrumental works, the programmatic concept always precedes the composition of the music.[14]

Another important statement:

> …Some participants in the discussion asserted that program music necessarily demands radical formal innovation. It seems to me that program music can be fully embodied in the forms and schemes bequeathed to us by the classics.

[12] Shostakovich D. (1951). O podlinnoj i mnimoj programmnosti [On Genuine and Imaginary Program Music]. *Sovetskaya muzyka*, (5), p. 76.
[13] Shostakovich D. (1951), p. 76.
[14] Shostakovich D. (1951), p. 76.

> <…> Works with a specific verbally formulated plot, inspired by living images of our modernity, are possible and necessary; but there can and should be symphonies, quartets, sonatas, instrumental concerts, the program of which is of a more general, philosophical nature, but which also reflect contemporary Soviet life.[15]

This verbal balancing act, in which the "generalized, philosophical character" must seamlessly coexist with the concrete requirement to "reflection of contemporary Soviet life," cannot eliminate the impression that behind these theses lies an attempt to protect pure instrumental music from the pervasive ideological blackmail of "Soviet themes." And, of course, Shostakovich's public declaration that not only is any author, in his opinion, "obliged to have a program," but that he himself always has one "prior to composing music," attracts special attention.

To what extent can we trust this claim? We posses only one absolutely uncommitted (since it was not intended for publication and assumed "purely scholarly" purposes) statement by Shostakovich about his creative process: his answers to the above-mentioned Roman Gruber's 1927 questionnaire. The young composer names reading Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* as immediate causes of the "impulse to creativity," as well as episodes of the World War I and revolutionary events, which he witnessed: "…in general, I composed a lot under the influence of external events."[16] Yet even beyond childhood, he sometimes admits that he continues to compose under the influence of external impulses. This is, for example, his message about the origin of the piano cycle *Aphorisms*: "I thought a lot about one law of nature at that time, and this gave me an impetus to compose *Aphorisms*, all unified by one idea. What that idea is, I do not want to say now."[17] Both the first and the second parts of this passage are symptomatic: there is a programmatic nature, but it is concealed by the author, although the name of the cycle indicates its possibility.

Undoubtedly, the composer's internal relationship with programmaticity could change over time and varied across works. It is interesting to compare the extreme periods of the composer's biography from this point of view: the example of the Suite

[15] Shostakovich D. (1951), pp. 77–78.
[16] Shostakovich o sebe i o svoikh sochineniyakh, p. 476.
[17] Shostakovich o sebe i o svoikh sochineniyakh, p. 477.

for Two Pianos—one of his first opuses from the early 1920s, in which programmaticity is demonstrated so clearly—with the non-programmatic composition of the late 1960s, marking his final creative period.

Quartet No. 12 in D-flat Major, Op. 133 (1968)

By the time of the Twelfth Quartet's composition, many events had taken place in the composer's creative laboratory that could not but indirectly influence Shostakovich's principles of work. Having gone through two ideological "purgatories" (Levon Hakobian) in the form of party purges, he was forced to draw the appropriate conclusions. These experiences fundamentally transformed his style over five decades. Mark G. Aranovsky summarized their main direction as follows:

> In short, his music possesses an exceptionally strong semiotic layer <...> Here we encounter a defining feature of Shostakovich's poetics—the strategic use of masks, symbols, and, consequently, encryption and decryption methods in the system of his artistic means. All these cases are connected with what was called indirect expression above, with the action of intermediary structures. The composer did not have much hope that the "pure" music, to which he almost entirely turned after the defeat of *Lady Macbeth*, would be protected from the punishing hand of political censorship. He had to find a way of self-expression that would allow, on the one hand, to fully realize his ideas, and on the other, to minimize the reasons for new persecutions [14, p. 238].

This perspective was shared by Tamara N. Levaya, who argued that "the composer likely came to recognize subtextual's techniques as a kind of creative program during the 'Thaw' era" [19, p. 152].[18]

But what exactly is meant here by "subtext"? Apparently, the "doublethink" that was diagnosed in Shostakovich back in 1979 with the publication in the West of Solomon Volkov's scandalous *Testimony*, or "a certain two-facedness," as Marina D. Sabinina would describe the same quality two decades later [21]. Today, this verdict, but now with the incriminating definition of "duplicity," is delivered by Leonid Maksimenkov's book *Shostakovich. Marshal of Soviet Music* [22]. And we cannot dismiss these judgments as baseless. Questions of this kind are inevitable for an author who writes a dedication to "victims of fascism and war" on the title page of his String Quartet № 8, and in a private conversation says that it's "dedicated

[18] This collision is discussed in detail in my work [20].

to my own memory."[19] As well as questions of an ethical nature: even if there was only bitter irony behind this confession, and not the incriminating pathos attributed to it by a friend-memoirist Glikman, the severity of the author's trials and tribulations and the aforementioned "victims of fascism and war" are clearly incomparable.

There is no lie detector that could be used to examine Shostakovich's verbal self-representations of different times and on different occasions, but music in many cases has its properties. Of course, if we take as a basis the understanding of music as thinking, and utterances with sounds as speech. And this in turn is also a rich source of discussion.

Therefore, along with the desire to read out hidden meanings, there are other research strategies that allow one to bracket out individual works by the composer, seeing in them precisely the development of the self-sufficient idea of pure music as a kind of other way to hide from the punishing hand of political censorship. Thus, Levon O. Hakobian, speaking about the time period between the post-Thaw *Thirteenth Symphony* and "pessimistic Fourteenth," singles out three opuses in which the twelve-tone structure becomes an important and "far from episodic structural idea": the vocal cycle *Seven Poems by Alexander Blok* (early 1967), the *Twelfth Quartet* (January–March 1968), and the *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (August–September 1968) [23, p. 579]. The researcher focuses his attention precisely on the principles of use and the significance of the twelve-tone technique in these works as a new original feature of Shostakovich's style that emerged during these years and testifies to his formal searches. He writes, in particular:

> The most original aspect in Blok's cycle is the theme opening *Secret Signs*. <…> Its beginning is none other than a complete twelve-tone row <…>. The association of the twelve-tone paradigm with the terrifying "secret signs" referenced in Blok's poem naturally suggests an evolution of the idea first expressed in the *Fears* movement of the Thirteenth Symphony, where the nearly twelve-tone theme represented, in general, the same semantic field [23, p. 580].

Thus, according to the researcher's remark, the twelve-tone nature in Shostakovich's vocal cycle "indicates something alien and dreadful, forcing," in Blok's words, "to close one's eyes in fear" to the "black dream" that "weighs in the chest," and suggests thoughts of the proximity of the "predestined end"

[19] See Glikman, I. D. (1993), p. 159.

[23, p. 582]. As Hakobian concludes, "this tendency toward semanticizing the twelve-tone technique will receive further development in the Fourteenth Symphony" [23, p. 582]. In other words, the twelve-tone method becomes imbued with connotations of fate and death.

However, the next work—the *Twelfth Quartet*—does not, in Hakobyan's interpretation, follow this trend. Here, twelve-tone technique serves a purely formal purpose—"creating and resolving tensions between the twelve-tone and tonal paradigms" [23, p. 582]. In other words, for Shostakovich in this case, it is not what but how that matters. Hakobyan expands on an approach first proposed by Western scholar Judy Kuhn, who views the *Twelfth Quartet* as uniquely devoid of Shostakovich's usual extramusical connotations: "...this monumental experimental quartet <...> more than any other of Shostakovich's quartets, can be understood as a composition about composition itself—about the methods and means of musical construction. In this sense, it stands as the composer's contribution to the ongoing Soviet debate on new music" (as cited in [24, p. 150]).

Of the semantic moments in the theoretical interpretation of the *Twelfth Quartet*, Hakobian emphasized only a significant stroke at the beginning of the 1st movement, which was noted by the addressee of the dedication of the quartet and the then first violin of the Beethoven Quartet, Dmitry Tsyganov[20]: the silence of the second violin throughout the main theme is endowed with symbolic meaning in light of the fact that the Beethoven Quartet recently lost its second violinist Vasily Shirinsky, and Shostakovich's previous quartet was dedicated to his memory [24, p. 149]. Another observation of a semantic plan in relation to the Twelfth Quartet belongs to the same D. Tsyganov and provides an outlet to the problem of semanticization of twelve-tone: he characterizes the violin cadenza, built on reminiscences of the epigraph of the 1st movement, as ominous music, likening its long pizzicato to the steps of death.[21]

Are there any grounds to see in these performer's comments a reason to search for the programmatic basis of the entire composition? Who is right —

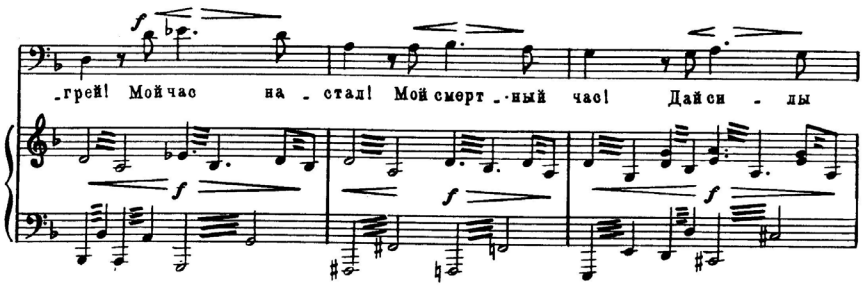
[20] See commentary by D. Tsyganov in the book: Khentova, S. M. (1996). *V mire Shostakovicha* [*In the World of Shostakovich*]. Kompozitor, p. 211.

[21] Khentova, S. M. (1996), p. 211.

the performer, who appeals to the hidden meanings of the composition, or the theorist, who reduces its dramaturgy to the realization of a purely formal compositional idea?

On Quotations and Allusions in Quartet No. 12

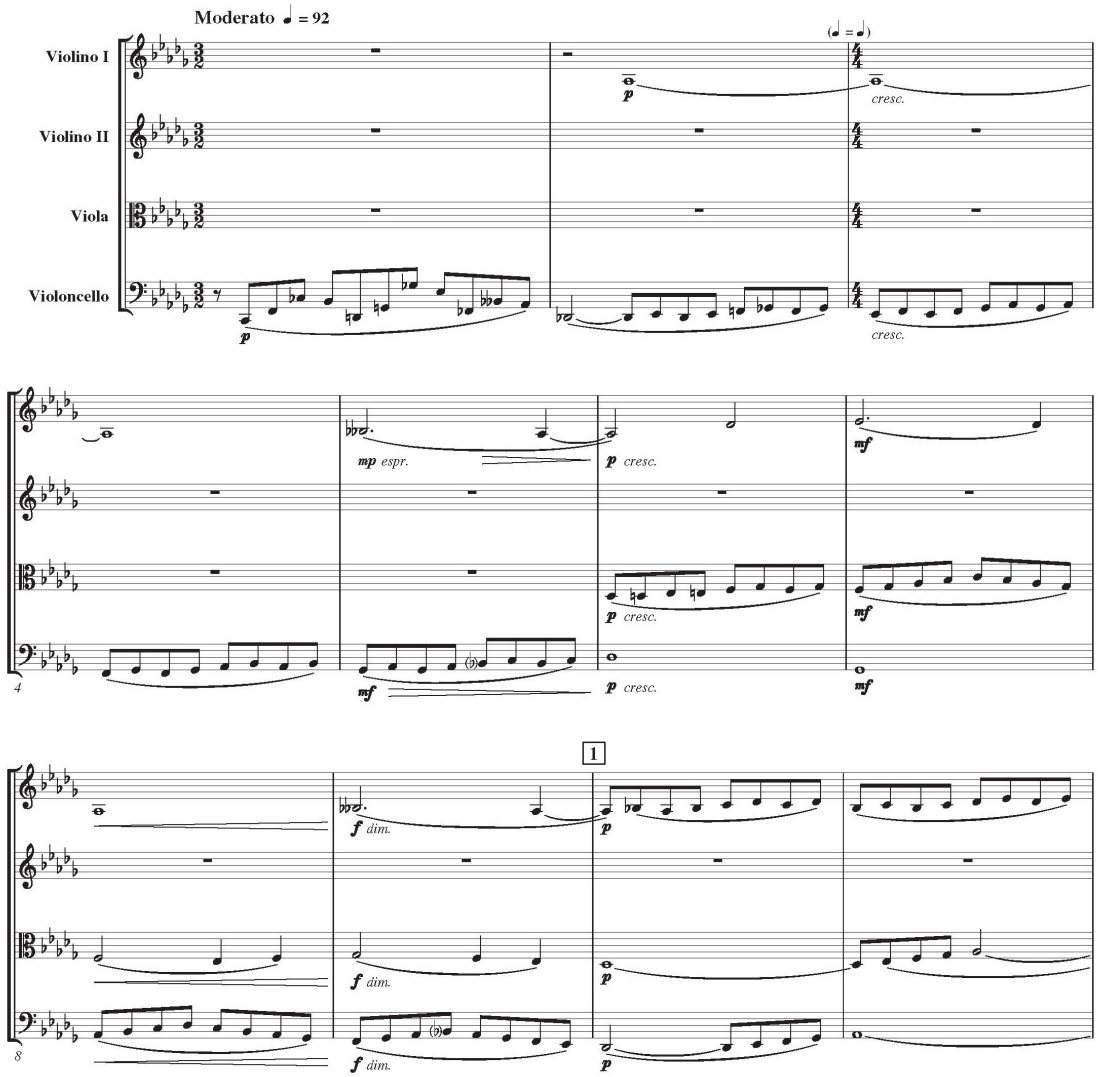
The answer is found in the cryptography of this text, the presence of which is most clearly evidenced by the citation of "other people's voice." In the scanty literature on the Twelfth Quartet, only an allusion to Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* was once marked, declared from the very first notes: it opens the quartet and is an important thematic element of its further development, forming a contrapuntal line of the leitmotif running through the entire work. This is a completely recognizable quotation from the instrumental accompaniment of Pimen's Tale from Act IV of opera [25, p. 98]. It determines the mood and imagery of the entire first movement of the quartet, and it also appears in key moments of the second. But another allusion, which acquires the concreteness of a quotation, has not yet been noted in the literature—the actual melodic line of the leitmotif. If in the first performance (mm. 6–8) there is only a hint at the melodic prototype (the intonation is slightly paraphrased and given in a major key), then the second performance (from m. 24) reveals a very specific reference, and not just to a certain theme, but also to "a word hidden in music"[22] (B. Katz): the tragic culmination of Susanin's aria in Act IV is quoted: *My hour has come! My mortal hour!* (*Oh, bitter hour! Oh, terrible hour!*) (*Example 6, 7*).[23]



Example 6. Glinka M. Susanin's Aria from the opera *A Life for the Tsar*, Act IV

[22] Katz, B. A. (1995). Slovo, spryatannoe v muzyke [The Word Hidden in Music]. *Music Academy*, (4–5), 49–56.

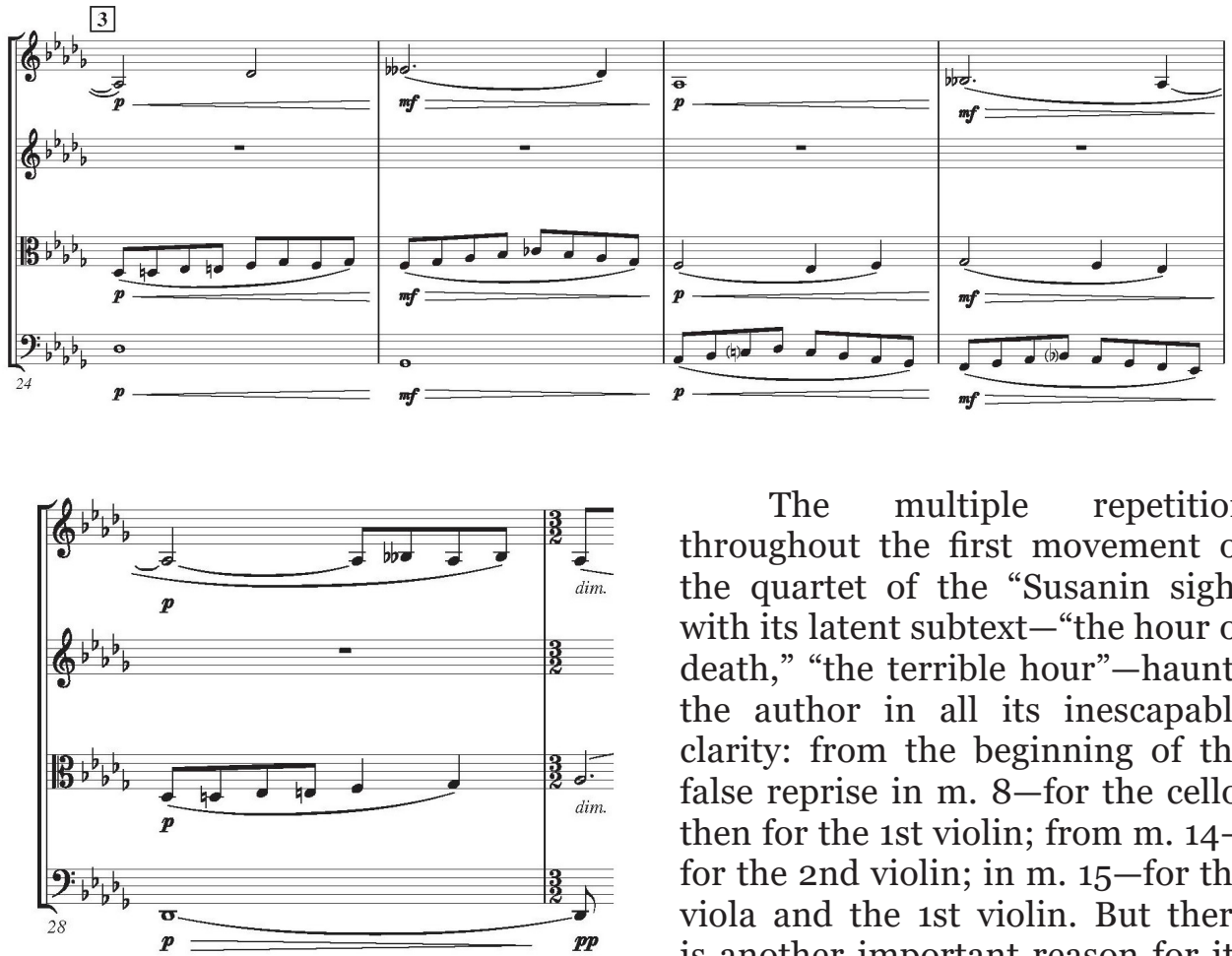
[23] Two versions of the text are given here: the first by S. M. Gorodetsky, the second by Baron von Rosen. Both were undoubtedly known to the composer, but it's difficult to say which one was most memorable for him by this time.



Example 7. Shostakovich D. *Quartet No. 12*, 1st movement

"The word hidden in the music" creates the semantic subtext of the composition, and the quotation, thanks to repeated performances, acquires the status of a leitmotif of the entire quartet. If at its first appearance in m. 2 in the first violin part it sounds in a deceptive major variant, then on the wave of development of "Pimen leitmotif" it acquires an even greater, and now undeniable similarity with the "Susanin motive": in the first violin part in m. 24 it is reproduced almost verbatim—in a minor and practically

at the same pitch as in Glinka, but with the flat deepening of the tonality characteristic of Shostakovich. The size coincides, the rhythmic relationship of the steps is preserved, but weighted due to the doubling of the durations[24] (*Example 8*).



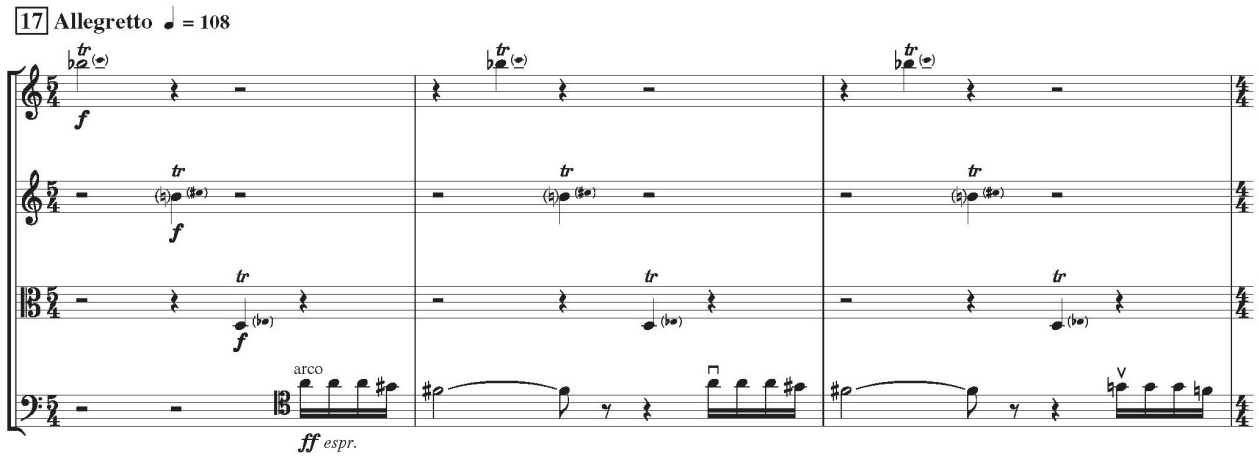
Example 8. Shostakovich D. *Quartet No. 12*, 1st movement, mm. 24–28

The multiple repetition throughout the first movement of the quartet of the "Susanin sigh" with its latent subtext—"the hour of death," "the terrible hour"—haunts the author in all its inescapable clarity: from the beginning of the false reprise in m. 8—for the cello, then for the 1st violin; from m. 14—for the 2nd violin; in m. 15—for the viola and the 1st violin. But there is another important reason for its appearance—it begins with *D–Es* as a reminder of Shostakovich's monogram.

[24] It is interesting that, having not noticed this quote, Olesya A. Osipenko nevertheless classified the motif itself as a category of themes with a "clearly expressed national flavor," noting its "song-like length" and "plaintive-heart-rending tone" [25, pp. 92, 98].

Thus, the entire first movement of this cycle is accompanied by a lament about death, very personally colored and fused with the tragic motif from *Boris Godunov*. Its appearance here is also explained by the "hidden word": the operatic Pimen tells about the death of the young Dimitry.

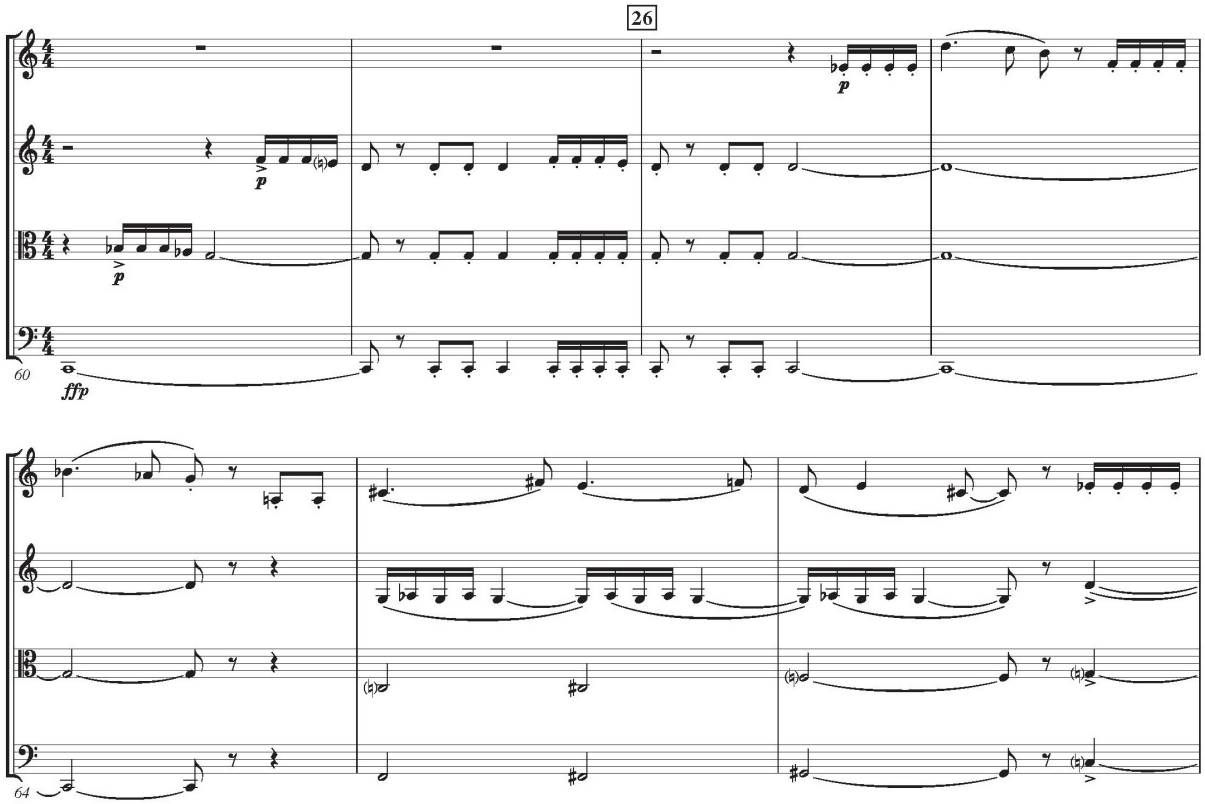
The dramatic milestones of the Twelfth Quartet, endowed with distinct semantic and a connection with the word, continue further, in the second movement, to build the listener's perception of the plot logic, whose semantic unity is reinforced by the compactness of the unconventional (including for Shostakovich himself) two-movement cycle. The second movement opens in an extremely expressive and unexpected way: "...a characteristic textural element—sharp, point-like 'flashes' of short trills, appearing in turn (in the first violin, then in the second, then in the viola—R. 17) and accompanying the development of the theme in the future" [25, p. 89] (*Example 9*).



Example 9. Shostakovich D. *Quartet No. 12*, 2nd movement

Olesya Osipenko rightly attributes the pointillistic motifs of the quartet to the sphere of "terrifying visions of the beyond" [25, p. 91] typic of Shostakovich's late works. It is characteristic that this introduction further leads to a fierce dispute between the instruments in the main theme of the second movement (from R. 19), which unfolds as a contrast between the trill motif and the motif of four sixteenth notes ending with a long note "in the space between the twelve-tone and tonal poles" [24, p. 150].

But there is also a semantic dimension here, since in the second movement the deeply personal pathos of the statement is confirmed and strengthened by the introduction of a variant of the Shostakovich monogram in R. 26: *Es-D-C-H*. The motif, which had long been established by this time in the composer's works, is combined with the rhythmic formula "Mi-ten'-ka," the significance of which was noted by Arkady I. Klimovitsky [26]. In this way they semantically strengthen and clarify each other (*Example 10*).



Example 10. Shostakovich D. *Quartet No. 12*, 2nd movement (R. 26)

In the process of development, the exact formula of the monogram is gradually acquired—the intonation plot seems to come to it.

The culmination, begun in R. 31, returns the main leitmotif of the "groan," distorted by suffering, and on the crest of the waves of rolling despair, its exclamations sound (R. 32–33). Further, the intonation plot naturally leads to

the tragic cello solo in R. 45. It is answered by the quietest mournful chorale, and then the mystical atmosphere of this liturgical responsory is broken by the cello lines of "lamentation with sobs" in the tense tessitura of the treble clef. This chorale in R. 46, in its lengthy development and tempo, corresponds to the image of a funeral procession. As Osipenko notes, in R. 48, both violins and viola have a crucifix motif in the chorale texture, while in the cello part the figure of passus duriusculus clearly emerges [25, p. 170]. The development comes to a powerfully semantically loaded formula, literally screaming about mortal agony.

The following cadenza of the 1st violin, to the infernal imagery of the pizzicato of which Tsyganov drew attention, really calls for the symbolism of the *danse macabre*—and in R. 56 a ghostly waltz-like *tutti* appears, which echoes the *quasi*-waltz secondary theme of the 1st movement, colored by twelve tones (R. 4–7). The use of dodecaphony, therefore, is fully corresponds to the "recipe" given by the composer in an interview in the spring of 1968 on the eve of the quartet's premier. Shostakovich said:

> If, say, a composer sets himself the task of necessarily writing dodecaphonic music, then he artificially limits his possibilities, his concept. The use of elements of these complex systems is entirely justified if it is dictated by the idea of the composition.[25]

The role of dodecaphony here turns out to be precisely semantic, being endowed with negative semantics, as was typical in general for the Soviet avant-garde of the 1960s. The ghostliness created by dodecaphony in the secondary theme becomes a stable image, one of the faces of death, appearing in both the 1st and 2nd movements.

The chorale, this time preceded by a violin monologue, will sound again in R. 59. After it, in R. 60, the leitmotif will return, like a reprise of the entire composition, which creates the effect of a one-part form with a certain semblance of monothematics. And yet, everything ends with a coda that is unexpected in its imagery and meaning: in R. 65, a convulsive, tense joy of the sixteenth-note motif arises, like the giggling of small demons. But their onslaught is pacified by the insistent, demanding, almost ecstatic assertion of the tonic

[25] Shostakovich D. (1968). Priglashenie k molodoi muzike [Invitation to Young Music]. *Yunost'*, (5), 87. (as cited in [24, p. 149]).

D-flat major, who weightily refutes the possibility of a nihilistic ending. A certain semantic similarity to this powerful image of overcoming such a tragic plot in the finale can be found in Pasternak's poem *On Passion Week* (from his novel *Doctor Zhivago*), written during the first post-war Easter of 1946:

> At midnight flesh and soul are dumb,
> As they hear some spring story,
> That in the holy gleaming sun
> Death will be absolutely won
> By Resurrexit glory.[26]

With a similar "gleaming sun's effort" the D-flat major in the finale of the Twelfth Quartet drives away the evil spirits of the night, forcing one to recall these verses, possibly unknown to Shostakovich.[27]

> On March 9 (in Repino) he said to me and my wife Vera Vasil'evna with a smile: "Maybe it's funny, but it always seems to me that I won't have time to finish my next opus. What if I die and the piece remains unfinished?" But, thank God, nothing happened and on March 16 Dmitry Dmitrievich played (in Repino) for me and Veniamin Basner the deeply dramatic Twelfth Quartet. He was in an elevated mood.[28]

Conclusion

Our analytical excursion in search of Shostakovich's thanatology in relation to one of his earliest and one of his latest works makes us think about at least two questions. The first is why such obvious quotations from such famous works by Russian classics were not noticed by researchers (and, apparently, by performers). What is the focus and pattern of this "deafness" of ours?

It seems that we trust the author's evidence too much. As we have already mentioned, one could read about the *Suite for Two Pianos*, Opus 6, a self-

[26] Pasternak, B. L. (2004). *Complete Works: in 11 volumes. Vol. 4. Doctor Zhivago, 1945–1955*. Slovo. P. 518.

[27] The poem, written on the first post-war Easter, was later included in the cycle *Poems of Yuri Zhivago*, but even before the publication of the novel, it appeared in the Russian-language émigré press in 1957.

[28] Glikman, I. D. (1993), p. 240.

commentary referring to Tchaikovsky and Glazunov. The author himself did not indicate Rachmaninoff, and analysts did not dare to go further than stating general stylistic similarities. Concerning the Twelfth Quartet, the self-commentary turned out to be even more cunning. Regarding the new opus, Shostakovich said about it to its future performer Dmitry M. Tsyganov: "Symphony, symphony…" (as cited in [27, p. 510]). In fact on the contrary, the musical text clearly refers to operatic allusions. And then the second question arises: is there any cunning here and was the composer being disingenuous, was he himself aware of the existence of these quotes.

If we try to explain everything by the work of the subconscious, then most likely the catalyst for the operatic associations in the Twelfth Quartet was the draft used for its sketches with a fragment of the work on the editing of *Khovanshchina* (1958)[29]. And his editing of *Boris Godunov* in 1940, pushed into the shadows by many other works and events, could have served with its long-standing nature as the same game of the subconscious. Also pushed into the past were meetings with Glinka's first opera score: in 1944, he included a quote from *A Life for the Tsar* (then already—*Ivan Susanin*) in the finale of the music for the film *Zoya*, and in 1957—10 years before working on the quartet, he took part in writing the collective *Variations on a Theme* of Glinka (for the 100th anniversary of the death of the classic), which were based on Vanya's Song.

Susanin's motif with its preserved albeit clouded by the flat-sphere, pitch, when placed in a new context, could be detached from specific words in the author's memory, but retain its tragic semantics. Although the author did not leave us any evidence of his deliberate use of the aforementioned quotes, the harmony of the concept of the whole, the consistency of the connection of allusions to *Boris Godunov*, *Ivan Susanin*, the author's monogram with the figurative dramaturgy of the Twelfth Quartet demonstrates the impeccable work of his artistic intuition.

The principles of this work, which created the richest content resource of the composition, did not arise overnight, not under the pressure of external ideological circumstances, as is commonly believed, but were initially inherent in his talent, as demonstrated by his first major independent composition, Suite for Two Pianos, opus 6. From it to the last creative stage, a direct continuity can be traced—

[29] Dmitry Shostakovich's Archive. Rec.gr. 1. Section 1. F. 136. Sheet 1 rev. See [28, p. 217].

in the attitude to music as an art of communication, in the commitment to specific methods of creating this communication. That is, musical speech.

It is also certain that both of these opuses—one with a published dedication-*memoria*, the other without any hint of the intended programmatic nature—are part of Shostakovich's thanatology, the idea of which, as we see, occupied Shostakovich from childhood to his last days. From this point of view the theme of death seems central to Shostakovich's work. And, of course, this existential problem precedes any social responses in its appearance. But the horror of Thanatos was tirelessly fueled by historical trials—from childhood rumors about the First World War and impressions of revolutionary everyday life to the feeling of doom during the years of Stalin's rule and the global catastrophism of the Second World War, and later—the wise pessimism of the last decades of his biography, darkened by the most severe physical ailments.

The hypnosis of the image of death did not weaken, although the interpretation and embodiment of the theme could change repeatedly. And here again, one should not completely trust the auto-comments. For example, Shostakovich's confession of unbelief, disarming in its sincerity and tragedy, his nihilistic characterization of the end of human life as an unconditional and unappealable end, publicly made at the dress rehearsal of the Fourteenth Symphony—an opus entirely devoted to the theme of death. Written a year later than the Twelfth Quartet, the symphony, as it becomes clear, was another stage in his reflection on this theme, which led to the disclosure of the composer's life *credo* both in the program of the new opus itself and in the commentary to it. What sounded then from his own lips offers a tempting possibility of projection onto other opuses connected with the same theme:

> I am partly trying to argue with the great classics who touched on the theme of death in their work, and, as it seems to me… let's remember the death of Boris Godunov, when Boris Godunov, that is, died, then some kind of enlightenment comes. Let's remember Verdi's *Othello*, when the whole tragedy ends and Desdemona and Othello die, then a beautiful calm also sounds. Let's remember *Aida*. When the tragic death of the heroes occurs, it is softened by light music. I think that the no less outstanding English composer Benjamin Britten—I would also reproach him. <…> So, it seems to me that in part, perhaps, I am following,

> imitating, following in the footsteps of the great Russian composer Mussorgsky. His cycle *Songs and Dances of Death*. Maybe not all [songs], but *The Commander* is a great protest [against] death and a reminder that one must live one's life honestly, nobly, decently, and never commit bad deeds. Because, alas, our scientists will not think of immortality so soon. This awaits us all, so to speak. I don't see anything good in such an end to life…[30]

However, it is evident that this statement cannot be extrapolated to the Twelfth Quartet with its finale-overcoming. The "Agony in the Garden" (revealed by the crucifix motif)[31] ends this time with amnesty. And the similarity of the intonational plot of this score with the poetic plot of Pasternak's Easter poem is strengthened by the perhaps strange and accidental coincidence that the quartet was completed in the spring of 1968 at the beginning of Lent.

Music, therefore, including the quoted "other people's voice," is always capable of saying more about the doubts, hopes, and depths of its author's worldview than he himself will tell us, and than he himself is perhaps capable of realizing.

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[31] Vera B. Val'kova states that the "plot of Golgotha" is one of the constants in Shostakovich's works [29].

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EDN LITHZK

Resonances of absence: Voice, nostalgia, and memory in Dmitri Shostakovich's *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok*

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Abstract. Dmitri Shostakovich's *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok's op. 127* (1967), is a profound meditation on voice, nostalgia, and memory, set against the backdrop of Russian Symbolism and late Soviet aesthetics. By setting seven of Blok's poems for soprano, violin, cello, and piano, Shostakovich crafts a work where the voice is simultaneously central and destabilized, dissolving into fragmented musical textures. This article explores the cycle through Jacques Derrida's critique of *phonocentrism* and *différance*, Roland Barthes' *le grain de la voix*, Svetlana Boym's typology of nostalgia,

and Peter Kivy's philosophy of musical expressivity. These perspectives reveal how *Seven Romances* embodies a deeply philosophical engagement with absence, longing, and the instability of meaning. Blok's poetry, marked by mystical longing and existential uncertainty, finds an ideal counterpart in Shostakovich's late compositional style, where silence and fragmentation speak as powerfully as sound. The soprano's voice, often disrupted or absorbed by the ensemble, reflects Derrida's *trace*, where meaning is continually deferred, resisting stable presence. At the same time, Barthes' *grain of the voice* comes to the fore, as the raw, tactile qualities of breath, tone, and articulation emphasize the materiality of sound over textual clarity. This interplay between presence and disappearance renders the voice both expressive and spectral, echoing something irretrievably lost. Kivy's enhanced formalism offers another lens, suggesting that music's expressive power arises not from extramusical meaning but from its internal structures. In *Seven Romances*, Shostakovich exploits these structures, using harmonic instability and vocal dissolution to evoke emotions that resist direct representation. Nostalgia shapes the cycle's structure and emotional depth, aligning with Boym's concept of *reflective nostalgia*, which acknowledges the impossibility of return. Rather than reconstructing a lost past, *Seven Romances* lingers in the fractures of memory, particularly in the final song, Music, where the voice dissolves, leaving only instrumental echoes. In this way, Shostakovich does not merely set Blok's poetry to music — he enacts its themes, creating a sonic landscape where time, history, and identity blur into a haunting meditation on impermanence.

Keywords: Dmitri Shostakovich, Alexander Blok, *Seven Romances on Alexander Blok's Verses*, Russian Symbolism

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Памяти Д. Д. Шостаковича

Научная статья

Резонансы отсутствия: голос, ностальгия и память в «Семи романсах на стихи Александра Блока» Дмитрия Шостаковича

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Аннотация. «Семь романсов на стихи Александра Блока» соч. 127 (1967) Дмитрия Шостаковича для сопрано, скрипки, виолончели и фортепиано — сочинение о рефлексирующей ностальгии и памяти, связанное с русским символизмом и позднесоветской эстетикой. Голос в нем одновременно занимает центральную позицию и дестабилизируется, растворяясь во фрагментированной музыкальной ткани. В статье цикл рассматривается через призму критики «фоноцентризма» и *différance* Жака Деррида, концепцию «зерна голоса» Ролана Барта, типологию ностальгии Светланы Бойм и философию музыкальной выразительности Питера Киви. Эти подходы показывают, как «Семь романсов» воплощают глубокую философскую вовлеченность в тему отсутствия, в нестабильность смысла. Поэзия Блока, пронизанная мистической тоской и экзистенциальной неопределенностью, находит идеальный отклик в позднем стиле Шостаковича, где тишина

и фрагментированность заявляют о себе столь же мощно, как и звук. Сопрано, нередко прерываемое или поглощаемое ансамблем, отражает «след» Деррида, где смысл все время ускользает, сопротивляясь постоянному присутствию. В то же время на первый план выходит «зерно голоса» Барта, поскольку первозданные, осязаемые качества дыхания, тембра и артикуляции подчеркивают материальность звука, а не ясность текста. Эта игра между присутствием и исчезновением делает голос одновременно выразительным и призрачным, отражающим нечто безвозвратно утраченное. «Усиленный формализм» Киви предлагает еще одну точку зрения, предполагающую, что выразительная сила музыки возникает не из внешнего значения, а из ее внутренних структур. В «Семи романсах» Шостакович использует эти структуры, применяя гармоническую нестабильность и вокальное истаивание, чтобы вызвать эмоции, которые сопротивляются прямому представлению. на строение цикла и его эмоциональную глубину влияет ностальгия, соотносящаяся с концепцией *рефлексирующей ностальгии* Бойм, предполагающей невозможность возвращения. Вместо того чтобы реконструировать потерянное прошлое, «Семь романсов» концентрируются на изломах памяти, особенно в финальной песне «Музыка», где голос растворяется, оставляя только инструментальные отзвуки. Таким образом, Шостакович не просто пишет музыку на стихи Блока — он воплощает его темы, создавая звуковой ландшафт, где время, история и идентичность сливаются в завораживающую медитацию о преходящем.

Ключевые слова: Дмитрий Шостакович, Александр Блок, «Семь романсов на стихи Александра Блока», символизм, меланхолия, память

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Introduction

This article explores Dmitri Shostakovich's (1906–1975) *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127 ("Семь романсов на стихи Александра Блока", соч. 127), as a profound meditation on voice, memory, melancholy, and absence. Composed in 1967, near the end of the composer's life, the cycle marks a deliberate turn away from the monumental language of Soviet musical ideology toward an introspective, ascetic chamber idiom. In this late style, the expressive weight shifts from rhetorical assertion to fragment, silence, and resonance—elements that cultivate poetics of memory and mourning. Scored for soprano, piano, violin, and cello, *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* invites an intimate listening space in which the instrumental ensemble does not simply accompany Blok's poetry but acts as a constellation of spectral interlocutors—alternately echoing, shadowing, or resisting the presence of the voice.

Theoretical and Philosophical Framework

To interpret the multidimensional resonances of the cycle, this study adopts an interdisciplinary methodological framework, integrating insights from musicology, literary theory, and philosophy. Richard Louis Gillies's *Singing Soviet Stagnation*: *Vocal Cycles from the USSR, 1964–1985* [1] (which provides the interlinear translation of Blok's poems) remains the most comprehensive scholarly study of *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok*, its interpretive horizon is shaped primarily by historical, stylistic, and cultural concerns. Gillies offers invaluable insights into motivic design, tonal and structural organization, and the broader context of Soviet vocal cycles of the late twentieth century and mid-twentieth century. His work provides an essential analytical foundation for understanding Shostakovich's compositional strategies.

The present article acknowledges this contribution yet proposes a fundamentally different orientation. It turns toward questions that remain underexplored in existing scholarship: the philosophical status of the voice, the spectrality of memory, the phenomenology of disappearance, and the poetics of affective stasis. By bringing a few philosophical concepts, which will be discussed below, into dialogue with the musical text I aim to show

that *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* articulates a more radical meditation on presence and absence than has previously been discussed.

Thus, the novelty of this article lies not in offering another structural analysis, but in repositioning the cycle within an interdisciplinary field—one that reads the music as a site where voice fractures, memory erodes, and meaning becomes suspended. In this respect, Gillies's work serves as a point of departure, while the current study expands the conceptual framework through which the cycle may be understood.

Drawing on Jacques Derrida's theory of the "trace" and his critique of "phonocentrism" [2; 3], the analysis considers how the voice in *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* performs its own erasure—how it haunts rather than asserts, revealing presence through its deferral and disappearance. Roland Barthes' concept of "le grain de la voix" [4] serves as a complementary lens for examining the corporeal and affective textures of vocal sound, particularly where expressivity transcends semantic clarity. In parallel, Svetlana Boym's notion of "reflective nostalgia" [5] frames memory not as a retrieval of the past, but as a lingering meditation on its irretrievability, suspended in sonic time.

Philosophical reflections on musical meaning further deepen this analysis. Peter Kivy's formalist conception of musical expressivity [6; 7; 8] foregrounds the emotional power of structure, gesture,[1] and form over representational content—an idea particularly resonant with Shostakovich's late style. Meanwhile, Paulo C. Chagas's understanding of melancholy as a structuring mood [9] offers a framework for considering how emotional lucidity, artistic restraint, and existential clarity emerge not in catharsis but in a stasis of mourning. These perspectives together illuminate a music that listens inwardly, that voices not triumph but tremor, and that sustains a space of unresolved longing.

[1] Throughout this analysis, the term *gesture* is used in an expanded sense—drawing from musicological, phenomenological, and semiotic frameworks—to refer not only to physical or performative motion but also to expressive acts that mark or orient meaning without fully determining it. A *gesture* may be sonic, structural, poetic, or philosophical: a motion toward significance, a trace of intention, or a suspension of expression. In this context, *gesture* often names a moment of articulation that remains open, provisional, and affectively charged.

Rather than reading *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blo*k as a straightforward setting of Symbolist verse, this article approaches it as a musical essay in "spectrality"—as theorized by Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx* [10]. "Spectrality" refers to the presence of something that is no longer fully present yet not absent, like a ghost or an echo. In Derrida's philosophical thought, "spectrality" is also related to the trace: the idea that meaning or presence is constantly haunted by what came before and by what's missing. In this sense, something "spectral" is a lingering absence that still speaks. It describes the condition in which the past continues to affect the present through traces, such as fragments, faded voices, temporal dislocations, or lingering atmospheres. In this reading, memory emerges not as linear recollection but as echo, erosion, and recurrence. The voice, too, is never fully anchored but hovers, dispersed, absorbed into instrumental timbre, or suspended in psalmodic stasis. The cycle becomes a sonic palimpsest in which speech is destabilized, and presence is transformed into trace. "Spectrality," then, is not a theme but a structural condition: the music's unfolding is haunted by what is lost, what no longer speaks, yet still resonates. It is in this space of textual and sonic liminality that *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* reveals its deepest character—not merely as an elegy for a vanished world, but as a haunting meditation on the fragility of the self, on what it means to speak—or sing—when language, time, and certainty have already begun to fade.

Thus, the interpretive approach adopted in this article integrates deconstruction, semiotics, aesthetics, and phenomenology to illuminate the philosophical resonances of voice, nostalgia, and memory in Dmitri Shostakovich's *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok*. Drawing on the thought of Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Svetlana Boym, Peter Kivy, and Paulo C. Chagas (in dialogue with Eduardo Lourenço), I propose a framework that foregrounds the spectral, fragmentary, and affective dimensions of Shostakovich's late vocal *écriture*. This conceptual apparatus is not merely a set of methodological lenses but a necessary interpretive infrastructure for understanding how Shostakovich's vocal cycle stages the very instability of musical meaning, vocal presence, and historical memory.

Between Symbolism and Late Style: Shostakovich Meets Blok

Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok was written for soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, her husband, the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, violinist David Oistrakh, and pianist Moisei Vainberg. The cycle was premiered privately in October 1967 and later performed publicly in January 1968 [1, p. 84]. The choice of an ensemble consisting of soprano, violin, cello, and piano—an aspect already mentioned above—reflects Shostakovich's move away from the expansive orchestral canvases of his earlier works, especially the war symphonies. It indicates a later shift toward more intimate, formally concise idioms. In other words, the cycle embraces a chamber aesthetic marked by extreme formal economy and textural subtlety.

Its seven songs—*Song of Ophelia*, *Gamayun*, the *Bird of Prophecy*, *We Were Together*, *City Sleeps*, *The Storm*, *Secret Signs* and *Music*—create a dramaturgical arc of emotional and formal attenuation, traversing affective states of longing, estrangement, foreboding, and dissolution. As Richard Louis Gillies notes, *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* evokes memory not through direct thematic recurrence but through recursive transformations, intertextual allusion, and spectral resonance that unfolds across the cycle as a whole [1, pp. 82–88]. This dramaturgy, grounded in motivic contraction (e.g., perfect fifths to perfect fourths), modal ambiguity, and rhythmic ostinati, fosters a poetics of reflective listening and temporal recursion.

Stylistically, *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* exemplifies what Edward Said, drawing on Adorno, termed a "late style" [11, p. 7]—aesthetic idioms of irreconcilability, restraint, and unresolved tension. In this sense, Shostakovich's compositional voice shifts from resolution toward music that resists closure. Silence, fragmentation, and the suspension of tonality are not merely dramatic devices but serve as existential and philosophical gestures. The voice, rather than asserting itself as a sovereign melodic force, becomes increasingly absorbed into or dissolved by the ensemble, reflecting not only expressive fading but also a more profound meditation on the limits of utterance, memory, and the self.

This late aesthetic resonates directly with what Tijana Popović Mlađenović [12, pp. 17–48] identifies, in the context of Shostakovich's string quartets, as the chronotopic focus of his music: a shaping of musical time that foregrounds duration, recursion, and reflective temporality over linear progression. In *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok*, musical time is not a vehicle for dramatic teleology but a medium for memory. Each song unfolds as a fragment within a recursive structure that evokes recollection rather than narrative continuity. The principle of *forme formans* [12, pp. 20–21], where musical form emerges organically through a process rather than through fixed structural templates, supports this orientation: gestures evolve through subtle variation, rather than through thematic exposition or climax.

Moreover, the reduction of expressive means—another of Popović Mlađenović's defining characteristics in the context of Shostakovich's string quartets—underscores the emotional restraint of the cycle. Shostakovich's limited use of motivic material, sparse textures, and attenuated dynamics exemplifies a poetics of subtraction. Expressivity emerges not through contrast or accumulation, but through controlled transformation [12, pp. 17–48]. This aesthetic of reticence parallels the philosophical concept of deferred presence: musical meaning is not immediate but suspended, spectral, always arriving just beyond the moment—a phenomenon that aligns closely with Derrida's "trace" and the intensification of musical "futurity" [12, pp. 22, 24].

The cycle's variational-polyphonic logic [12, p. 28]—especially in the treatment of contracting intervallic motives and textural layering—reinforces its inward, reflective structure. Musical development here is not oppositional but accretive: memory is shaped not through new material but through the reworking of old fragments. This compositional logic, based on "change through repetition" [12, p. 29], transforms fragmentation into continuity, not by resolving discontinuities but by sustaining them as expressive forces (cf. [12, p. 36]). In this way, Shostakovich's *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* enacts a late style that is both formally open and emotionally saturated, where absence, silence, and spectral resonance become conditions for musical and existential meaning.

The poetic voice of Shostakovich's cycle is that of Alexander Blok (1880–1921), the preeminent figure of Russian Symbolism and a central presence in the cultural efflorescence known as the Silver Age. Blok's poetry is infused with metaphysical yearning, visionary intensity, and historical anxiety. His verses summon liminal figures—muses, prophets, angels, spectral women—who hover between transcendence and dissolution. These presences inhabit a mystical, often fractured world, permeated by recurring images of mist, twilight, fire, and silence [1, p. 39]. Such cycles of imagery do not merely ornament the text; they enact a poetics of inner dislocation and mystical anticipation—a constant deferral of meaning toward an unreachable elsewhere.

For Blok, Symbolism was never reducible to a style or literary school; it was a "total worldview" grounded in a "search for spiritual meaning in the phenomena of the visible world" [13, p. 6]. In this metaphysical framework, poetry becomes a medium of revelation: a site where the invisible flickers through the visible, and the material world becomes charged with transcendent resonance. This aspiration to spiritual synthesis—to a reconciliation between art, philosophy, and life—is what grants Symbolism its utopian character. As Irina Paperno and Joan Delaney Grossman emphasize, the Russian Symbolist movement constituted an "aesthetic utopia" [14; 15], a dissenting current opposed to the rationalist, utilitarian ethos that shaped much of early twentieth-century Russian modernity.

Shostakovich's decision to set Blok's poetry in 1967—a moment of political and personal precarity—was therefore not merely an aesthetic homage. It was a deliberate act of cultural memory and philosophical alignment. By invoking Blok's Symbolist idiom, Shostakovich activates a repressed tradition that stood in quiet opposition to Soviet materialism and ideological formalism. He retrieves from Blok a vision of art as a site of metaphysical inquiry—an act of remembering that is itself resistant to historical closure.

The correspondence between Blok's poetic cosmos and Shostakovich's late style is not illustrative but structural. Just as Blok's lines dissolve into ellipsis, ambiguity, and apocalyptic vision, so too does Shostakovich's music eschew linear development in favor of fragments, echoes, and suspension. The soprano's voice

hovers between invocation and retreat; instrumental timbres acquire symbolic resonance—bells, laments, and whispers that haunt rather than resolve. In this respect, the cycle functions not as a traditional song setting but as a musical transposition of Symbolist metaphysics. If Blok's poetry articulates a temporality of prophecy and disappearance, Shostakovich's score renders that temporality audible, tracing the unstable threshold where memory becomes loss and voice fades into silence.

Voice as Trace and Material Grain

Jacques Derrida's critique of phonocentrism provides a crucial foundation for interpreting the status of voice in *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok*. As Derrida argues in *De la grammatologie* [*Of Grammatology*], the voice is not a site of immediate self-presence but is already implicated in the spacing and deferral of meaning: "The signified always already functions as a signifier" [2, p. 11]. This conceptualization of *différance*—where temporal postponement and spatial displacement render all meaning inherently unstable—enables a reading of the soprano's voice in Shostakovich's cycle not as a vehicle of semantic clarity, but as a sonic trace. The voice here does not affirm presence but signals its own erasure, what Derrida describes as follows: "The trace is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself. The trace has, properly speaking, no place, for effacement belongs to the very structure of the trace…" [16, p. 156]. In other words, the trace could be understood as the erasure of presence (cf. [3, p. 24]).

Musically, this dynamic is enacted in the frequent dissolution of the voice into instrumental textures, the silencing of the singer at structural peaks, and the articulation of fragility through suspended or interrupted cadences. Far from expressive plenitude, the voice becomes a fractured conduit of meaning, a residue rather than a revelation. This framework allows us to interpret the vocal writing not as an expressive utterance in the traditional sense, but as an acoustic manifestation of deferred subjectivity.

Roland Barthes' concept of "le grain de la voix" complements this deconstructive view by shifting the analytical focus from linguistic content to the physical and affective qualities of vocal sound. Barthes describes grain as "the body in the voice as it sings…" [4, p. 188]—a frictional site where meaning gives way

to materiality. In *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok*, the soprano's utterance often seems to exceed or evade the poetic text, projecting a sonorous tactility that aligns with Barthes' notion of the voice's grain. Particularly in songs such as *Gamayun*, the *Bird of Prophecy* or *The Storm*, breath, vocal timbre, and inflection become primary expressive agents. They do not signify in the semiotic sense but rather impress themselves upon the listener as affective phenomena. This reading underscores the extent to which Shostakovich's treatment of voice dramatizes not semantic transmission but the very limits and textures of human utterance.

Nostalgia, Melancholy, and the Poetics of Time

The conceptual distinction between "restorative" and "reflective nostalgia," elaborated by Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia*, is especially illuminating for interpreting the temporal aesthetics of *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok*. "Reflective nostalgia," Boym writes, "dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance" [5, p. 41]. It resists closure and eschews reconstruction of the past, preferring instead to linger in the ruins of memory. The structure of *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok*, and especially its culmination in the final song *Music*, epitomizes this mode of nostalgia. The soprano's voice is gradually effaced, yielding to instrumental afterimages. What remains is not recollection but resonance: the echo of what has been lost. This dissolution is not a theatrical gesture but a temporal condition—an acknowledgment of the impossibility of return and the fragility of voice as a bearer of memory.

This interpretive trajectory finds further resonance in Paulo C. Chagas's reflections on melancholy, developed in 'dialogue' with Eduardo Lourenço. Chagas conceives melancholy as a temporal disposition rather than an emotional affect, a form of being inhabited by the past in which memory becomes a resonance of absence rather than a retrieval of presence [9, pp. 6–34]. Such a conception reframes silence, suspension, and fragmentation not as expressive failure but as the sonic markers of a melancholic temporality. In Shostakovich's vocal cycle, the music's repeated evocations of stillness—via sustained pedal tones, empty intervals, and blurred harmonic resolutions—articulate precisely this temporality. The listener is invited not to recall but to inhabit a temporal dislocation, to perceive absence not as void but as acoustic contour.

What emerges from this perspective is a more nuanced phenomenology of melancholic listening. As Chagas suggests via Lourenço, melancholy operates as a "game inside memory, bringing out things that are more alive than things in the present, yet still intangible. Melancholy addresses the *unsayable*, it speaks of things that are outside the empirical realm…" [9, p. 8]. Music, in this context, becomes not only the medium through which melancholy is expressed but the condition for its perceptibility. Because of its intimate relation to time and memory, music renders the metaphysical dimensions of melancholy audible and affectively tangible. It allows listeners to traverse the "lost eternity of ourselves" [9, p. 8], to capture and momentarily rescue what has been erased by linear time. In Simone Weil's evocative words, music is "an image of eternity, but it is also a substitute for eternity" [17, p. 19] (as cited in [9, p. 8])—a double gesture that gives form to the formless, voice to the absent, and time to the timeless.

Thus, both Boym's "reflective nostalgia" and Chagas's concept of "melancholic time" elucidate the poetics of temporal rupture that governs Shostakovich's musical language. They legitimize a reading in which form, gesture, and silence function not as decorative or rhetorical elements, but as epistemological signs of a world in which voice, memory, and subjectivity are radically unstable.

Expressivity Through Form: Peter Kivy's Enhanced Formalism

Peter Kivy's theory of "enhanced formalism" provides an indispensable counterbalance to approaches that seek extra-musical meaning in programmatic or biographical content. In *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music*, Kivy contends that music's expressive content arises from its internal structures: "what the music is expressive of, in any given instance—if, that is, it is expressive of anything (which need not necessarily be the case)" [18, p. 31]—depends entirely on its internal musical features. This insight is crucial for understanding how Shostakovich's cycle conveys emotional states, such as longing, anxiety, and resignation, without recourse to overt mimesis or narrative. The expressive effect emerges through the interaction of compositional elements: dissonant counterpoint, modal ambiguity, rhythmic instability, and the unstable role of the voice within the ensemble. Crucially, Shostakovich's techniques privilege processes of "change

through repetition" and gradual continuity, rather than abrupt formal contrasts. Expression unfolds through an accumulative logic of subtle variation and internal transformation. Such strategies redefine fragmentation not as rupture but as becoming—processual, layered, and introspective. This formal ethos reinforces the affective depth of the work without relying on dramatic affirmation, aligning closely with Kivy's claim that music's expressive content arises from within its own internal grammar.

In this light, for example, Shostakovich's harmonic strategy—his frequent use of tonal centers that resist resolution, the juxtaposition of modal and atonal idioms—does not merely illustrate nostalgia or melancholy but constitutes them. These are not externalized emotions applied to the music; they are enacted through its very fabric. The soprano's fragmentation and eventual disappearance are not symbolic gestures but structural articulations of disintegration and spectrality, shaped by time-bound musical processes. Kivy's aesthetic formalism affirms the autonomy of these techniques while acknowledging their profound capacity to elicit affective resonance. It grounds interpretation in the materiality of sound, without reducing it to technical mechanics, and thus reinforces the philosophical claim that musical form itself can be a mode of expression.

The Cycle as Philosophical Form in-between Structural Binaries: Self vs. Other

Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok is not merely a song cycle, but a deeply layered aesthetic architecture in which each song operates both as an individual utterance and as part of a recursive, symbolic whole. The cycle unfolds as a philosophical arc, moving from the *Self* to the *Other* and ultimately toward dissolution, reflecting themes of memory, melancholy, and existential transformation through musical form, poetic imagery, and expressive restraint.

Drawing on Eero Tarasti's theory of existential semiotics [19; 20; 21], the work can be understood as a dramaturgy of shifting subjectivity, where each musical gesture participates in a broader semiotic process of becoming. Tarasti's model provides a powerful framework for understanding how these musical oppositions articulate

modes of being. In his existential semiotics, musical signs are not merely syntactic entities but rather existential acts: articulations of subjectivity, intention, and transformation. As he states:

> It starts from Hegelian logic and its categories of being: *an-sich-sein* and *für-sich-sein*. The former means being as such without any determination, and the latter means being for someone else, as observed and limited by someone else; therefore, it is something social. When we add these categories of Me and Society (*Moi* and *Soi* in French), we get a field of four terms: *an-mir-sein*, *für-mich-sein*, *für-sich-sein*, and *an-sich-sein*; or being-in-myself, being-for-myself, being-for-oneself, and being-in-oneself. These terms can be placed into the semiotic square of the semiotic school of Paris (Greimas), which stems from linguistics [...]. When one makes a semantic investment there, remembering that what is involved here is the human mind after all, we obtain the following cases: 1) body, 2) person or actor, 3) social practice, and 4) values and norms. In other words, we move from the axis of the *sensible* in Lévi-Strauss' terms to the new dimension of *intelligible* or to Adorno's categories of Me vs Society. I call this model zemic because it is a) emic in portraying the world from within; it is phenomenologically experienced, and b) there occurs Z's movement in two directions: either the body gradually sublimates (Freud!) into values, or values gradually concretize into a body (in English, I use the terms "sublimation" and "embodiment," respectively). In this manner, I also resolve the problem of the Greimassian/Cartesian tough, achronic and rigorous system, which evolves into a temporal and dynamic process, better corresponding to what happens in the *Dasein* in reality. The model, therefore, depicts the elements that comprise the human mind [21, p. 251]. (see *Figure 1* and *Figure 2*)

In other words, Eero Tarasti's *zemic model* of existential semiotics reinterprets the classical semiotic square through a dynamic, temporally grounded understanding of subjectivity. Drawing on Hegelian categories (*an-sich-sein*, *für-sich-sein*) and the relational opposition between *Moi* (inner self) and *Soi* (social self), Tarasti constructs a fourfold field of being that traces the subject's negotiation between embodiment and value. These states are not static but unfold as processes of sublimation (body—values) and embodiment (values—body), thus rendering semiosis as a lived, temporal experience. In this context, every utterance in music

is positioned within a modal tension between ego (the self as agent) and non-ego (forces of alterity, exteriority, or fate), forming what Tarasti terms a "modal narrative of being" [19, pp. 70–74].

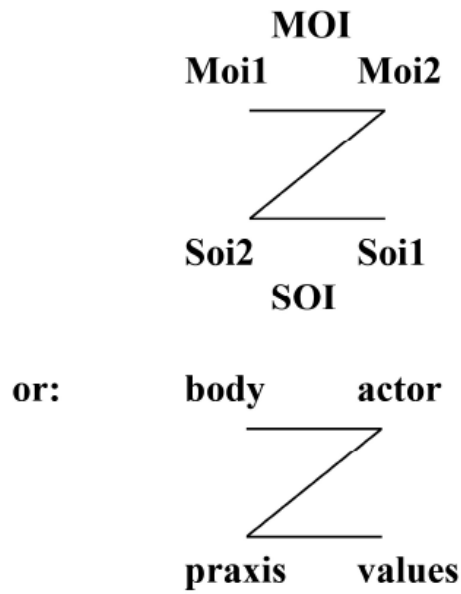


Figure 1. The *SOI/MOI* model, according to Eero Tarasti [21, p. 252]

In works like Shostakovich's Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok, these processes are audible: voice and instruments continuously move between poles of inwardness and external pressure, personal utterance and societal encoding. Tarasti's model thus offers a valuable tool for understanding how music constructs subjectivity not as a fixed essence, but as an evolving interplay between self, sound, and symbolic order.

This dynamic finds concrete realization in the first four songs of the cycle—*Song of Ophelia*, *Gamayun*, the *Bird of Prophecy*, *We Were Together*, *City Sleeps*—which articulate an evident dramaturgical dialectic, one rooted in the tension between the *Self*, the personal, the intimate, and the *Other*, the alien, the supra-personal. This structural binary is not merely thematic but also semiotic and existential, enacted through instrumentation, tonal centers, and vocal texture.

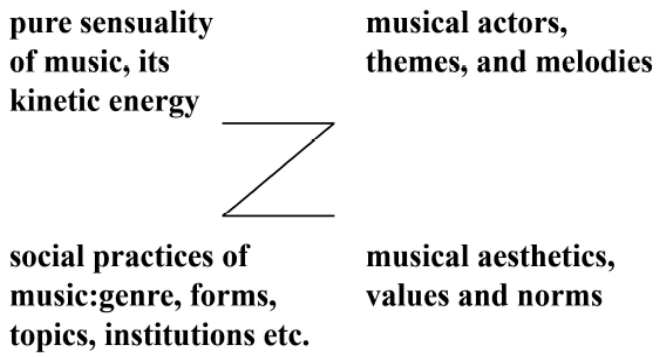


Figure 2. The zemic model, according to Eero Tarasti [21, p. 252]

In *Song of Ophelia* and *We Were Together*, Shostakovich positions the voice within a close, dialogic space with a solo string instrument—cello in the former, violin in the latter. These songs embody Tarasti's ego-modal conditions: moments where the subject (the voice) acts within a familiar, affectively resonant space. The harmonic language is mostly stable, the textures are spare, and the frequent use of contracting intervals (perfect fifth to perfect fourth) becomes a musical emblem of inwardness and reflective intimacy. Here, memory is embodied, close, and melancholically self-aware.

By contrast, *Gamayun*, the *Bird of Prophecy* and *City Sleeps* displace the voice into alien environments dominated by *quasi*-mechanical piano textures and unresolved dissonance. These settings reflect non-ego modalities: states in which the voice is acted upon rather than acting, where the musical environment becomes uncanny, cold, and disembodying. The voice no longer speaks from within, but witnesses from without—proclaiming prophecy (*Gamayun*, the *Bird of Prophecy*) or surrendering to fate (*City Sleeps*). Tarasti's model helps articulate

this shift: the subject becomes fractured, reactive, caught in an ontological condition of the *Other*, of not belonging.

The transition to the final three songs—*The Storm*, *Secret Signs*, and *Music*—marks what Tarasti would describe as a "transvaluation": a shift in existential modality where the subject's positioning begins to change. These songs are performed *attacca*, without break, suggesting an unfolding transformation. Rather than a return to ego-centered expressivity, the cycle moves toward an aesthetic synthesis where the polarities of *Self* and *Other* begin to intertwine. The *Self* is no longer isolated nor effaced, but dispersed within a sonic field of empathy, memory, and dissolution.

In *Music*, the final song of the cycle, this process culminates with the vanishing of the voice altogether—a gesture that, in Tarasti's terms, represents the final modal shift: a transformation from subjective utterance to "pure aesthetic being." The music becomes the "trace" of the *Self*, no longer voiced, but resonating. The disappearance of the voice does not signal silence but rather a different modality of presence, one that echoes beyond articulation (see *Table 1*).

The first two songs occupy an ego-modal space of personal intimacy; the middle two songs shift into non-ego states marked by estrangement and alienation. The final three form a progressive arc: from transition, to the intertwining of self and other (intermodality), and finally to transvaluation—the dissolution of subjectivity into "pure aesthetic being."

Tarasti conceptualizes "pure aesthetic being" as a non-representational ontological mode that emerges when the subject enters a state of aesthetic totality—an absorption in form and expression that suspends functional, discursive, and narrative identities. In this state, musical semiosis is no longer governed by ego intention or referential meaning but by the immanent logic of aesthetic experience. The *Self* dissolves into the sign process, not as a stable referent, but as a becoming—an existential resonance within the musical flow. This condition finds an intriguing parallel in Derrida's notion of the "trace," which posits that meaning is never fully present but always mediated by what is absent, deferred, or lost.

Table 1. A visual representation of the modal trajectory in *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok*, based on Eero Tarasti's existential semiotics

Song of Ophelia: Ego-modal (Intimate *Self*)
We Were Together: Ego-modal (Intimate *Self*)
Gamayun, the Bird of Prophecy: Non-ego (Alien *Other*)
The City Sleeps: Non-ego (Alien *Other*)
The Storm: Transition (Modal shift)
Secret Signs: Intermodality (*Self* and *Other*)
Music: Transvaluation (Aesthetic *Being*)

Although Tarasti and Derrida approach from different epistemological grounds—phenomenology and existential semiotics in the one case, deconstruction in the other—they converge on the idea that aesthetic subjectivity is inherently unstable. For Tarasti, "pure aesthetic being" suspends rather than affirms an autonomous Self, situating it within a temporal, performative field of signs. Derrida's notion of the "trace" likewise denies the possibility of a fully present subject, replacing it with a structure of continual deferral.

Both frameworks help us understand how in *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok*, especially in the later songs, the voice ceases to affirm identity and becomes, what we could name, a "spectral remainder"—a site of dissolution rather than expression. The aesthetic subject does not proclaim but disappears, becoming legible only through the after-image of tone, silence, or harmonic shimmer. In this shared horizon, Tarasti's "aesthetic being" and Derrida's "trace" both offer ontologies of vanishing: ways of being that are constituted not by presence, but by disappearance.

From the perspective of "voice," this has significant implications. In vocal music—especially in the context of Shostakovich's cycle—the voice often oscillates

between utterance and erasure, between meaning and pure sonority. In moments where the voice dissolves into texture or silence, or is absorbed into instrumental resonance, it enters a state akin to Tarasti's "pure aesthetic being": no longer an agent of linguistic communication, but a site of sounding presence without referent. This vocal erasure parallels Derrida's *différance*, where the voice becomes a trace of subjectivity rather than its affirmation.

Moreover, nostalgia, as articulated by thinkers like Svetlana Boym, is not simply the longing for a past presence, but the inhabitation of temporal rupture. In Tarasti's "aesthetic being," the subject is detached from narrative time, suspended in a timeless now that resists historicity. This echoes "reflective nostalgia," which does not seek restoration but dwells in temporal disjunction. The musical voice, in this state, becomes a vessel for memory not as recollection but as *resonance*—a "spectral remainder" that speaks without fully returning. Thus, Tarasti's notion of "pure aesthetic being" not only aligns with philosophical concepts of the "trace" and "reflective nostalgia," but also provides a phenomenological account of how the voice, in specific musical contexts, transcends communication and becomes a medium of ontological exposure, where the subject both disappears and resonates.

'Song of Ophelia': Fragmentation, Semitonal Dissonance, and the Poetics of Melancholy

The opening song of *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok*, *Song of Ophelia*, functions as a microcosm of the entire cycle—an elegiac space in which the voice is both invoked and destabilized, where memory begins to fracture, and a melancholic aesthetic is established through subtle disruptions of tonality and form. At the heart of this song lies the poetic theme of separation—emotional, spatial, and ultimately metaphysical. The cello's opening five-measures introduction, fragmentary and cadential, destabilizes the tonal centre through the intrusion of non-diatonic tones (D-flat and then G-flat in the sixth), resisting the gravitational pull of C minor—a phenomenon also noted by Gillies, who highlights the same "fragmentary, almost cadential motif" and its "slippery semitonal disruption" [1, p. 40]. These recurring semitonal intrusions

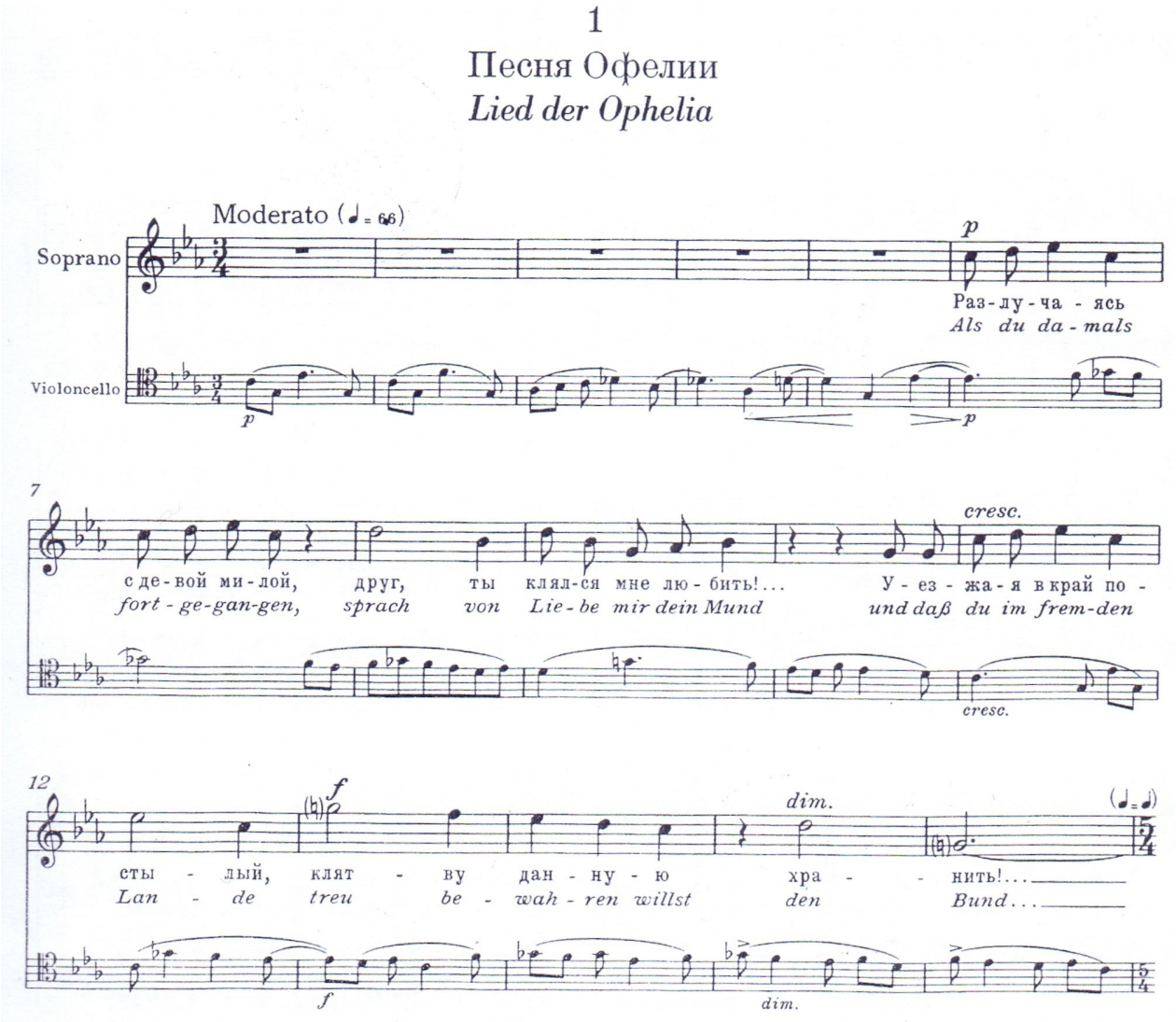
function as musical emblems of dissonance and doubt, resonating with what Chagas describes as a melancholic aesthetic in which beauty is inseparable from loss—never pure, but always shadowed by its own fading [9, pp. 19–21].

The voice enters not as a commanding lyrical presence but as a vulnerable participant in a dialogue with the cello. This dialogue will become the structural and expressive foundation for the entire cycle. The early climactic moment ("…*Клятву* данную хранить!.." / "…To keep the *vow* you gave!..") is articulated through a rising G natural in the soprano line, underscoring the emotional apex of fidelity and union. Yet this assertive ascent is immediately shadowed by the cello's return to G-flat, creating a stark semitonal clash. This dissonance functions not merely as a harmonic tension but as a sonic metaphor for creeping doubt and internal collapse. As Gillies notes, "the vocal line […] tries to drive away the creeping doubt injected by the cello's non-diatonic notes," yet ultimately "the invidious lure of the G flat begins to drag the vocal line down with it" [1, p. 42] (see *Example 1*).[2] This musical trajectory mirrors what Paulo C. Chagas, via Eduardo Lourenço, describes as the "melancholic mirror of memory" [9, p. 7]: a consciousness shaped not by affirmation but by recursion, contradiction, and the quiet impossibility of wholeness.

The cadential motif introduced by the cello expands from semitone to sixth (see *Example 2*), echoing the theme of growing emotional distance. Yet, it is eventually answered by a contracting intervallic gesture—a descending perfect fourth that will recur throughout the cycle. This contraction, which Gillies has identified as a "key motive" [1, p. 42], becomes a musical emblem of the *Self* (*svoj*), or the intimate. It carries associations of togetherness, memory, and quiet transcendence, standing in contrast to the disruptive external forces embodied by the *Other* (*ne svoj*)—those violent or alienating moments heard most powerfully in *Gamayun*, the *Bird of Prophecy* and *City Sleeps* [1, p. 46].

In this opening song, we already see the emergence of Shostakovich's philosophical form: a music that moves not toward catharsis but toward a deepening awareness of "spectrality," where even expressive outbursts are soon absorbed into ambiguity. As the voice descends into pianissimo for the final stanza, the cello reprises its earlier gestures with altered nuance, threading together themes of love, fidelity, and loss into a cadence that resists resolution. Rather than resolving,

[2] All score examples, except *Example 2*, are taken from the following edition Schostakowitsch, D. (1970). *Romanzen-Suite op. 127: für Sopran, Violine, Cello und Klavier*, Deutsche Nachdichtung: Manfred Koerth. VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik.



Example 1. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *Song of Ophelia, Moderato*, mm. 1–16

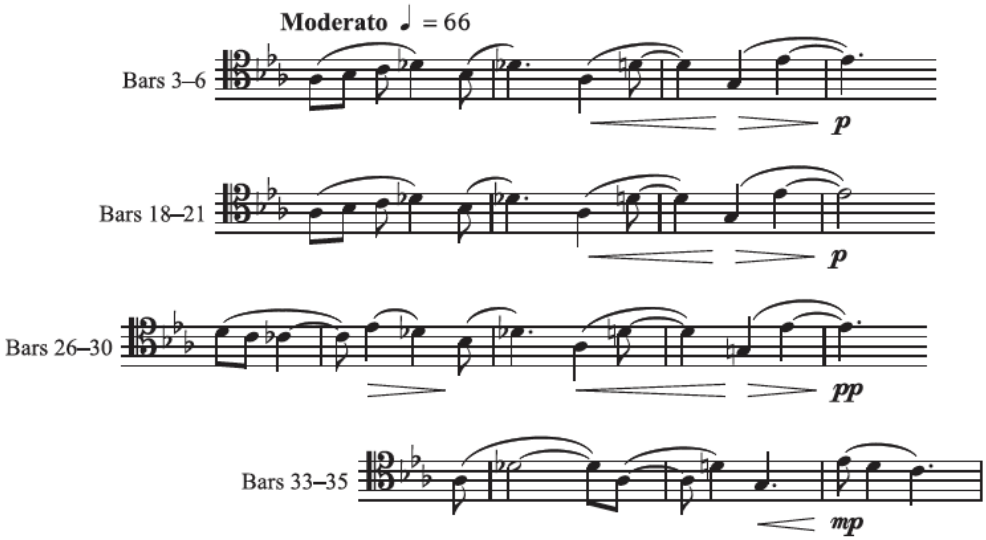
the music hovers around a half-diminished sonority, suggesting not tonal finality but harmonic memory. This cadence evokes, without repeating, the earlier dissonances, now dissolved into a spectral echo. The harmony thus serves as a resonance of past affect, not as structural closure but as a lingering, fading presence (see *Example 3*).

This closing moment becomes a palimpsest of affect, in which Blok's poetic symbolism takes on musical life as semiotic remains. The intervallic motion itself—rising fifth (see: voice, mm. 39–40) followed by falling fourth (see: cello, mm. 41–43) [1, p. 44]—marks the turning point from separation to introspective reconciliation, suggesting that while unity may not be restored, its echo remains audible. In this way, *Song of Ophelia* does not merely introduce motivic or textual material for the cycle. It inaugurates the work's sonic philosophy: the voice as a space of melancholic diffraction, the cello as memory's double, and musical form as a mirror reflecting the instability of presence. As such, it affirms the central claim of this article: that *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* is not only a composition but a meditation on the conditions of utterance, listening, and impermanence.

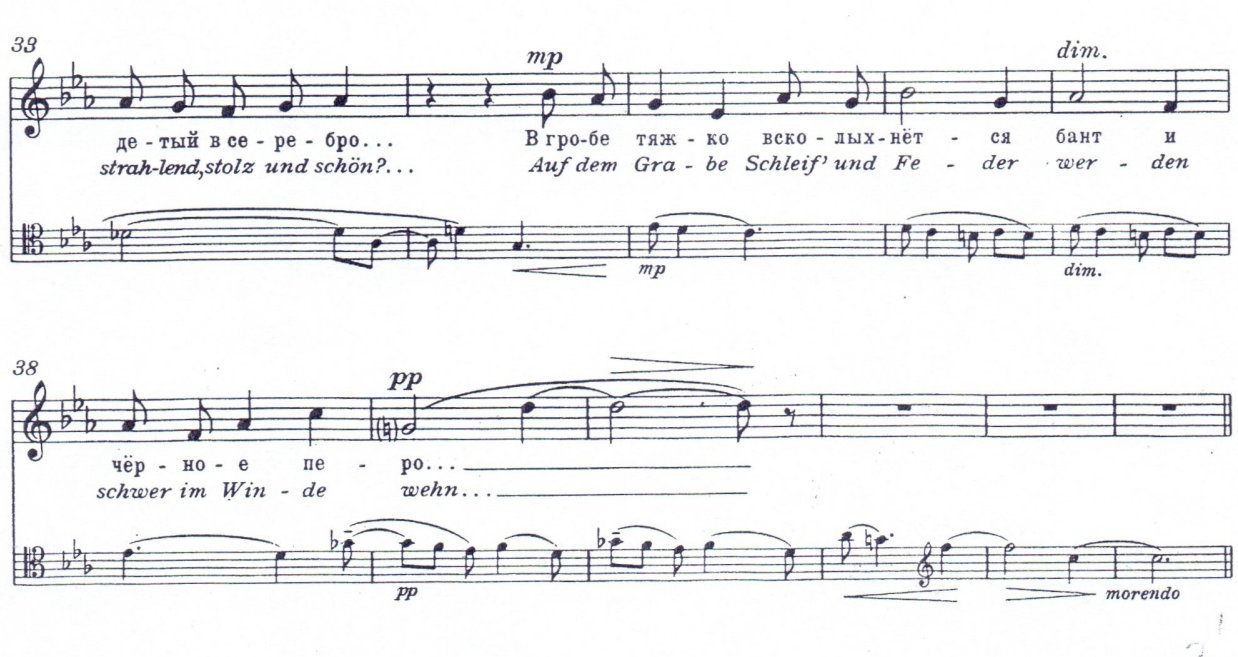
'Gamayun, the Bird of Prophecy': Prophetic Dissonance and the Crisis of Voice

If *Song of Ophelia* introduces a sonic world of intimacy, fragility, and elegiac reserve—of *Self*—then *Gamayun*, the *Bird of Prophecy* performs a violent rupture. It tears the cycle out of its chamber-like inwardness and thrusts it into a zone of mechanistic prophecy and symbolic violence, what can be called a space of *Other*. The voice is no longer reflective but apocalyptic—delivering a message so burdened by horror that the music itself threatens to collapse under the weight of its utterance.

Shostakovich's setting of Blok's poem—subtitled "[*After*] *V. Vasnetsov's Painting*"—immediately evokes the Symbolist fascination with mystical vision, mythic temporality, and metaphysical destruction. The contrast with *Song of Ophelia* is not merely emotional or textual—it is structural, rhythmic, and timbral. The violoncello's *pianissimo* murmur at the end of the first song is obliterated by the piano's *fortissimo* entrance, which surges forward with unrelenting rhythmic rigor and outlines E minor against the soprano's B minor—already dislocating



Example 2. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *Song of Ophelia, Moderato,* motivic variation of the cadential motif, according to Gillies [1, p. 42]



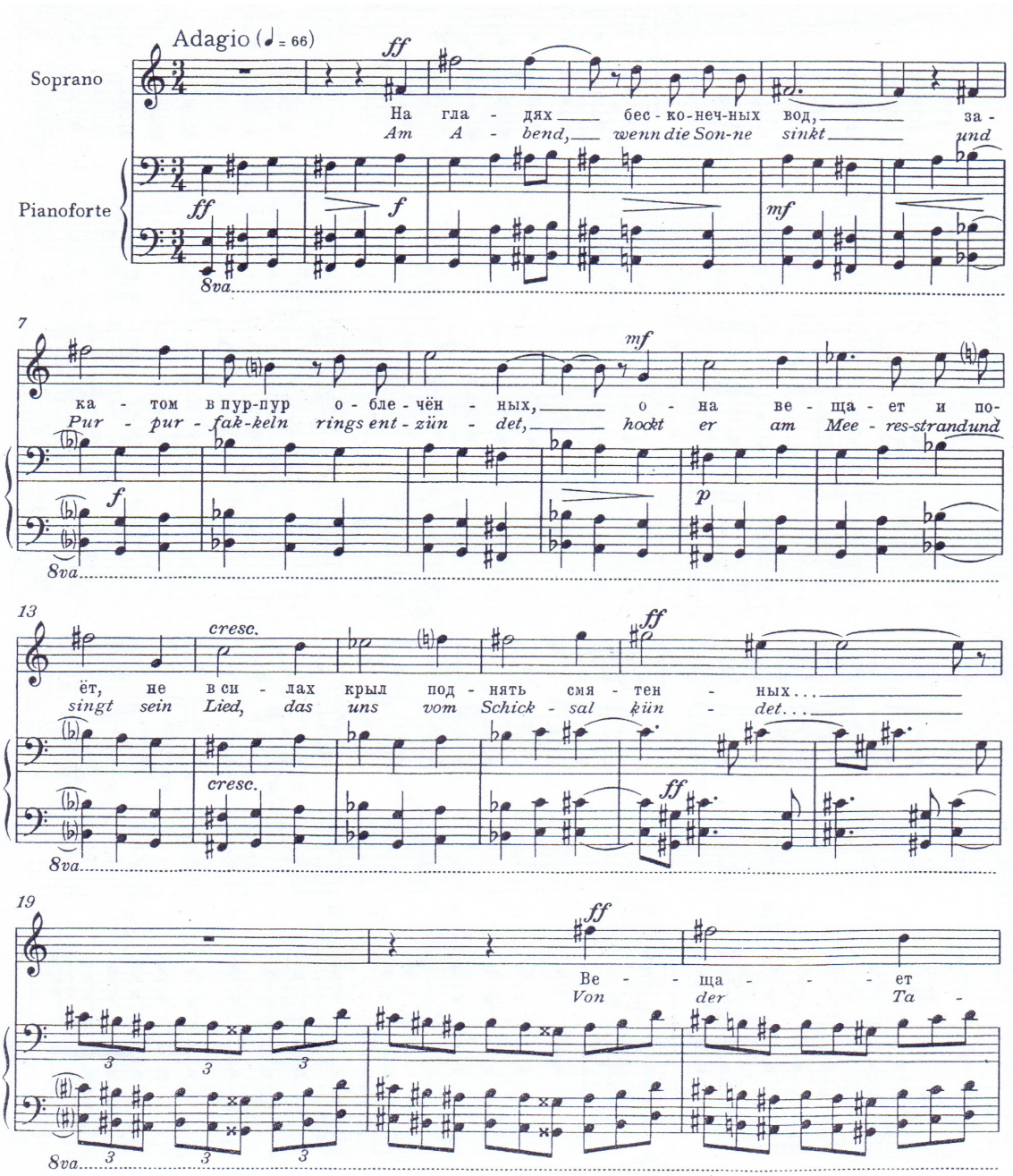
Example 3. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *Song of Ophelia, Moderato,* mm. 33–43

the voice from its harmonic footing. This friction marks a collapse of Ophelia's intimate dialogism, establishing a new regime: alienation through musical force (see *Example 4*).

This conflict is not merely harmonic but existential. The soprano and piano do not speak together; they struggle against each other, mirroring the duality between the personal and the supra-personal, between what is "one's own" and what is foreign, imposed, or cosmic. In Chagas's melancholic and aesthetic terms, *Gamayun*, *the Bird of Prophecy* enacts the inversion of the mirror: not a gentle reflection of memory but the shattering of its surface.

Semitonal dissonances—first introduced subtly in *Song of Ophelia*—now return in a more radical form. As Gilllies notes: "the serpentine D flat / G flat pull which planted the first seeds of doubt in 'Song of Ophelia' becomes the very focal point of the 'eternal horror' and declamation of 'righteous prophecy' at the end of 'Gamayun' as they are enharmonically re-spelled to F sharp and C sharp and hammered out against a *fortissimo* C minor chord in a delayed musical reaction to the text. Where the disquieting semitonal lilt of 'Song of Ophelia' merely unsettled the musical flow, here it brutally assaults, jolting the narrator, the audience, and the performers from the hypnotic music of the preceding measures back to the horror of the prophecy and the poetic text" [1, p. 51]. This enharmonic transformation—from the destabilizing D-flat/G-flat to the violently reiterated C-sharp/F-sharp—marks a shift from suggestive unease to direct confrontation. No longer merely a harmonic inflection, the semitone becomes an agent of textual rupture and psychic shock, intensified by its opposition to the fortissimo C minor chord. The semitone's recurrence across songs thus creates a motivic thread that is not developmental in a traditional sense, but symbolically charged: a sonic sign of intrusion, fragmentation, and foreboding. Its evolution from a "serpentine" [1, p. 51] pull into a hammering insistence embodies the narrator's growing destabilization—from inner doubt to prophetic horror.

At the very end of this song, in *Coda*, the relentless piano propulsion, and tonal ambiguity between E minor, C minor, and octatonic overlays create a sound world that resists grounding, reflecting the "eternal horror" in Blok's vision. *Gamayun*, the *Bird of Prophecy* abandons climactic energy and reverts to an unsettling tread. The soprano hovers on F-sharp, a pitch enharmonically related to the G-flat of *Song of Ophelia*—a "spectral" return of instability. The music does not resolve but



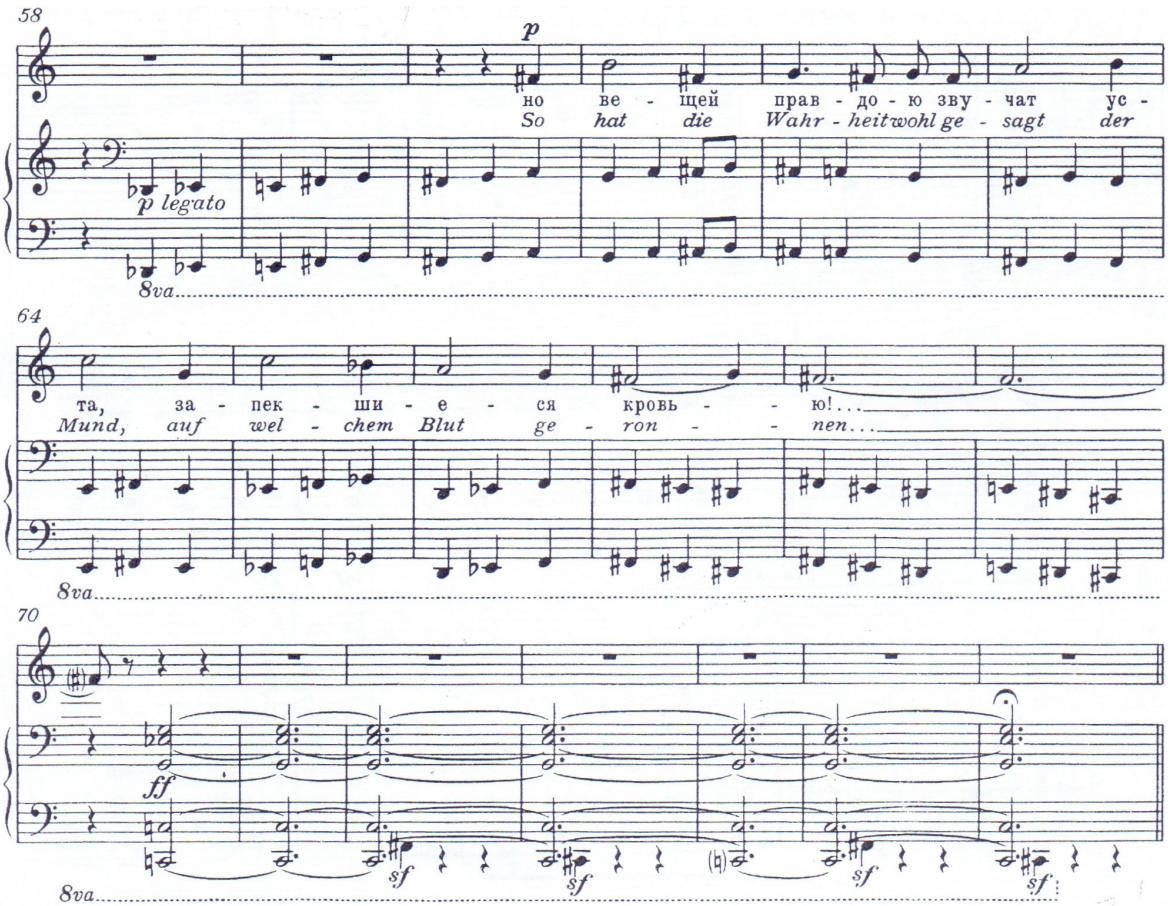
Example 4. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *Gamayun, the Bird of Prophecy, Adagio,* mm. 1–21

rather recedes into a hypnotic uncertainty, haunted by its own pronouncements. This reflects Derrida's "trace": the voice does not declare meaning—it leaves, what might we call, a *scar of signification*, a remnant that can never be fully retrieved (see *Example 5*).

Gillies interprets *Gamayun*, the *Bird of Prophecy* as one of the most crucial dramaturgical pillars of the cycle [1, p. 51]: it ruptures the internal continuity established in the first song. It projects the work both backward and forward. Musically, it looks back to the G-flat induced unease of *Song of Ophelia*, now weaponized. Philosophically, it foreshadows the spectral emptiness of *Music*, the cycle's final song. While Gillies identifies a literal overtone phenomenon—"a very strong overtone that reverberates as a B-flat above middle C" and anticipates the closing open fifth of *Music* [1, p. 51]—my reading emphasizes a broader tonal prefiguration, particularly the recurrent B-flat/E-flat open fifths and the modal descent into a prophetic trance.

The voice, though soaring to expressive heights, is not victorious. Its climactic A-flat—the emotional peak of the song—is swiftly followed by a collapse into lethargy and low-register murmur as if drained by its own vision. The mouth, "clotted with blood," no longer speaks truth in triumph but in melancholic compulsion, echoing Chagas' notion of the voice as haunted by its own impossibility. Meaning emerges here not as presence but as interruption.

In this song, Shostakovich composes prophecy as rupture, memory as violence, and time as a recursive trauma. Blok's mythic bird, radiant and bloodied, sings not to affirm truth but to bear witness to the collapse of the human order into eschatological delirium. The symbolic dislocation of this song establishes the foundation for the cycle's philosophical arc: from intimate remembrance to spectral disintegration, from lyrical voice to silence. *Gamayun*, *the Bird of Prophecy*, in this light, is not just the second movement—it is the axis of foreboding around which the entire structure rotates.



Example 5. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *Gamayun, the Bird of Prophecy, Adagio,* mm. 58–76

'We Were Together': Memory, Intimacy, and the Violin as Voice

Following the psychic rupture and apocalyptic upheaval of the second song, the third one, *We Were Together*, offers a moment of luminous stillness. This song represents not merely a tonal or emotional contrast within the cycle but a return, however fragile, to the sphere of "reflective nostalgia," one filtered through the delicate interplay of memory and intimacy. Where *Song of Ophelia* opened a melancholic space of separation, and *Gamayun*, the *Bird of Prophecy* ruptured it with prophetic violence, *We Were Together* stages a momentary reconfiguration of the *Self* in recollection.

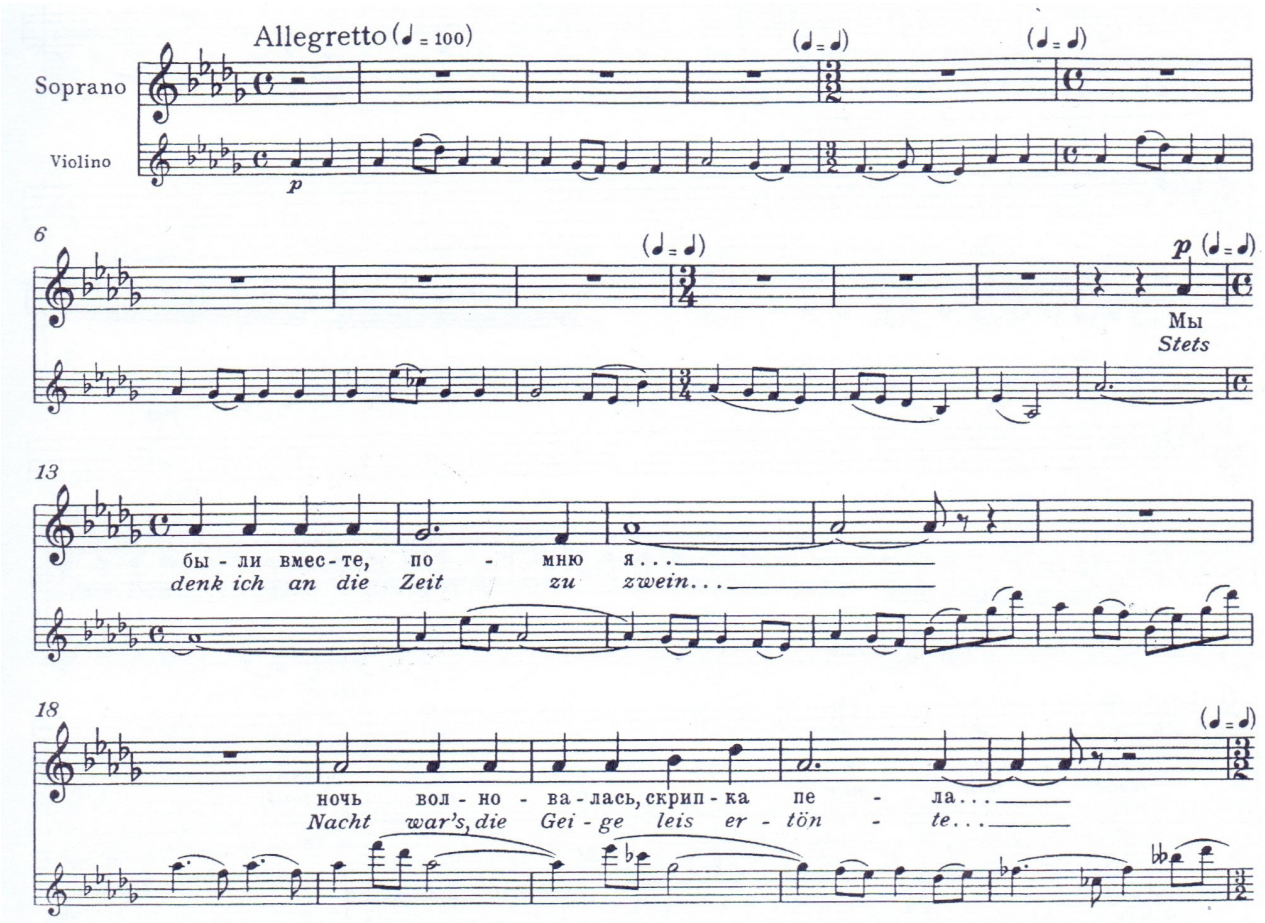
Blok's poem touches more gently on loss and distance. Its mood is suffused with nostalgic warmth; its lyricism tinged with the ephemeral beauty of remembered union. Shostakovich's decision to accompany the voice with solo violin is both symbolically and sonically resonant: it honors the poem's reference to the sound of violins [1, p. 53] while simultaneously enacting an inner voice of memory, less a musical counterpart than a sonic extension of the narrator's subjectivity. In other words, the violin becomes memory's echo. The voice is restrained, declamatory, psalmodic, built on repetition and near-monotone phrasing that foreshadows the ritualistic austerity of *Music*, the final song [1, p. 52]. The voice is a trace rather than an expression through which intimacy lingers without resolution. This song marks a turning point, as it introduces the static vocal style that reappears in later songs, framing memory as a suspended time.

Also, this compositional device—monosyllabic, declamatory, emotionally still—is not expressive in the romantic sense but rather in the philosophical. It invites listening as a remembrance. It frames memory not as a narrative but as a stillness in sound (see *Examples 6* and *7*).

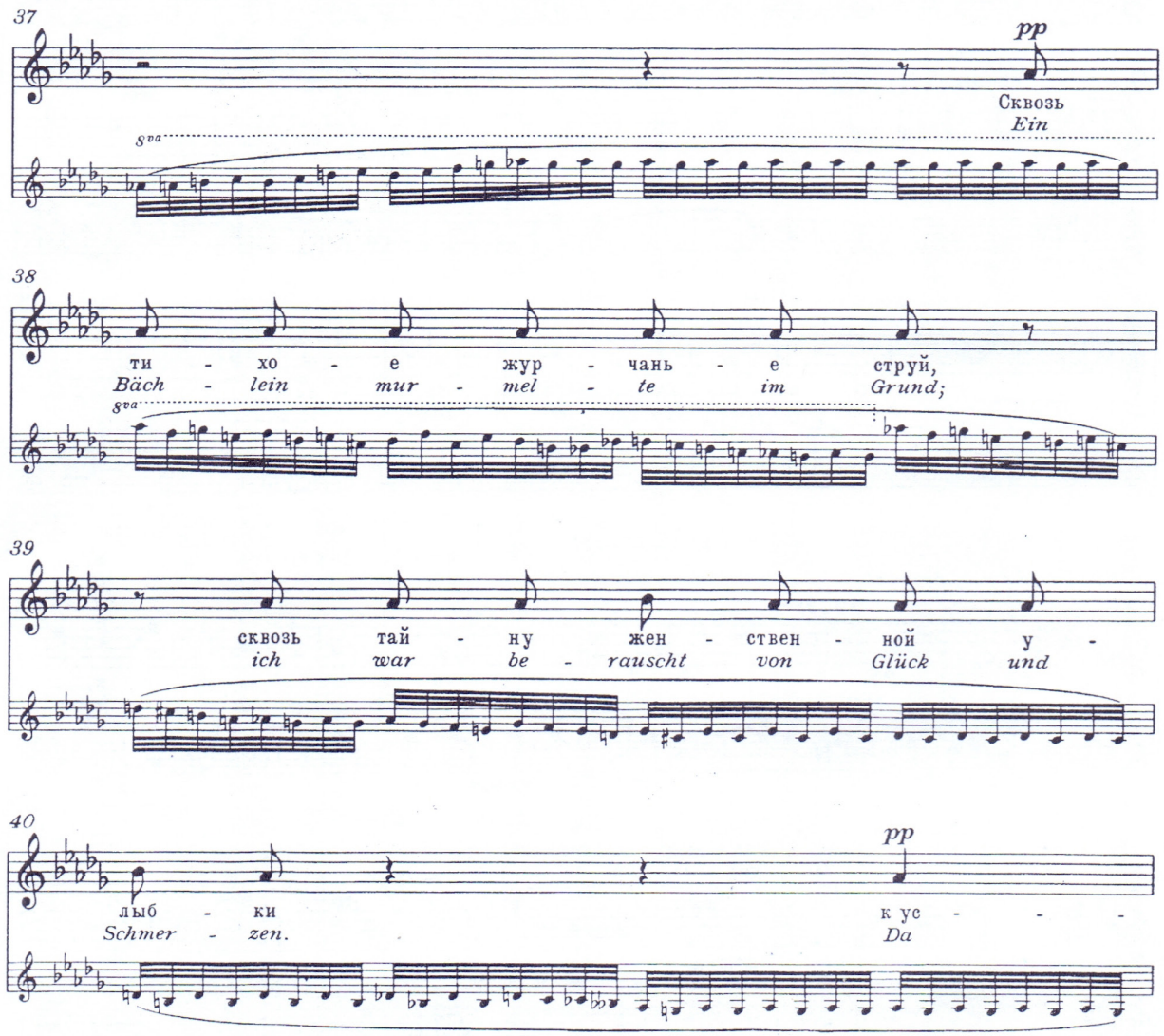
Against this suspended vocal field, the solo violin animates the texture—not as mere accompaniment but as a sonic embodiment of the poem's imagery. It mimics the "quiet murmur of streams" (see the second stanza: "Through the quiet murmur of streams") [1, pp. 53–54], transforming textual memory into sound. The boundaries between voice and violin, between speaker and recollection, begin to dissolve; the violin does not comment—it remembers. Only then does the voice become more than narrative: it becomes texture, corporeality. In this way, the song powerfully enacts what Roland Barthes called the "grain of the voice"—not florid expressivity but the material body of sound: breath, friction, softness, and time. Here, the grain is gentle but resonant, a sonic imprint of loss that is no longer painful, only quietly persistent.

This song also plays a pivotal role in the temporal architecture of the cycle. As the first song to feature this suspended vocal line, anticipating *The City Sleeps*, *Secret Signs*, and *Music*, *We Were Together* marks the moment when memory begins to solidify as a musical language. Stillness, repetition, and intervallic contraction establish

a poetics of reflective memory: not to recreate the past, but to signal its irrevocable distance.



Example 6. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *We Were Together*, *Allegretto*, mm. 1–22



Example 7. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *We Were Together, Allegretto,* mm. 37–40

Finally, the use of solo violin, rather than cello, introduces a subtle but significant sense of detachment. While the cello might mirror the human voice in timbral depth, the violin floats above the voice, thin and fragile, as if already removed from the body. It does not double speech but hovers beside it, suggesting memory rather than presence. Where the piano in *Gamayun*, the *Bird of Prophecy* articulates rupture and alienation, the violin in *We Were Together* murmurs with spectral distance, inaugurating the emotional strangeness that will deepen in the later songs. It evokes not empathy but the "trace" in Derrida's sense.

From the perspective of Tarasti's existential semiotics, this song exemplifies a modal state of *being-for-myself* (*für-mich-sein*)—a moment in which the subject, through memory, regains an interior mode of existence not defined by external forces but by reflective presence. The voice, suspended in monotone, does not assert egoic agency but enters a state of aesthetic stasis: what Tarasti would call a passage toward "pure aesthetic being," where utterance ceases to function as discourse and becomes an existential trace. The violin's line, subtle and introspective, acts not as accompaniment but as an extension of the subject's inner temporality—sublimating memory into sound, and thus embodying what Tarasti describes as the transformation from corporeal resonance to symbolic value.

In this configuration, the voice no longer speaks—it lingers. It becomes, in Derrida's terms, the residue of a presence that can no longer affirm itself but remains sonically inscribed in time. The nostalgic modality here is not restorative but reflective, as described by Boym, anchored in the recognition that the past cannot be recovered—only echoed. The song thus realizes an ontological space of memory where identity, voice, and time are suspended within a poetics of stillness. It is precisely in this stasis, where expression contracts into breath, where the violin murmurs instead of declares, that Shostakovich renders absence as presence, and voice as both spectral and intimate.

'The City Sleeps': Alienation, Passacaglia, and the Weight of Prophecy

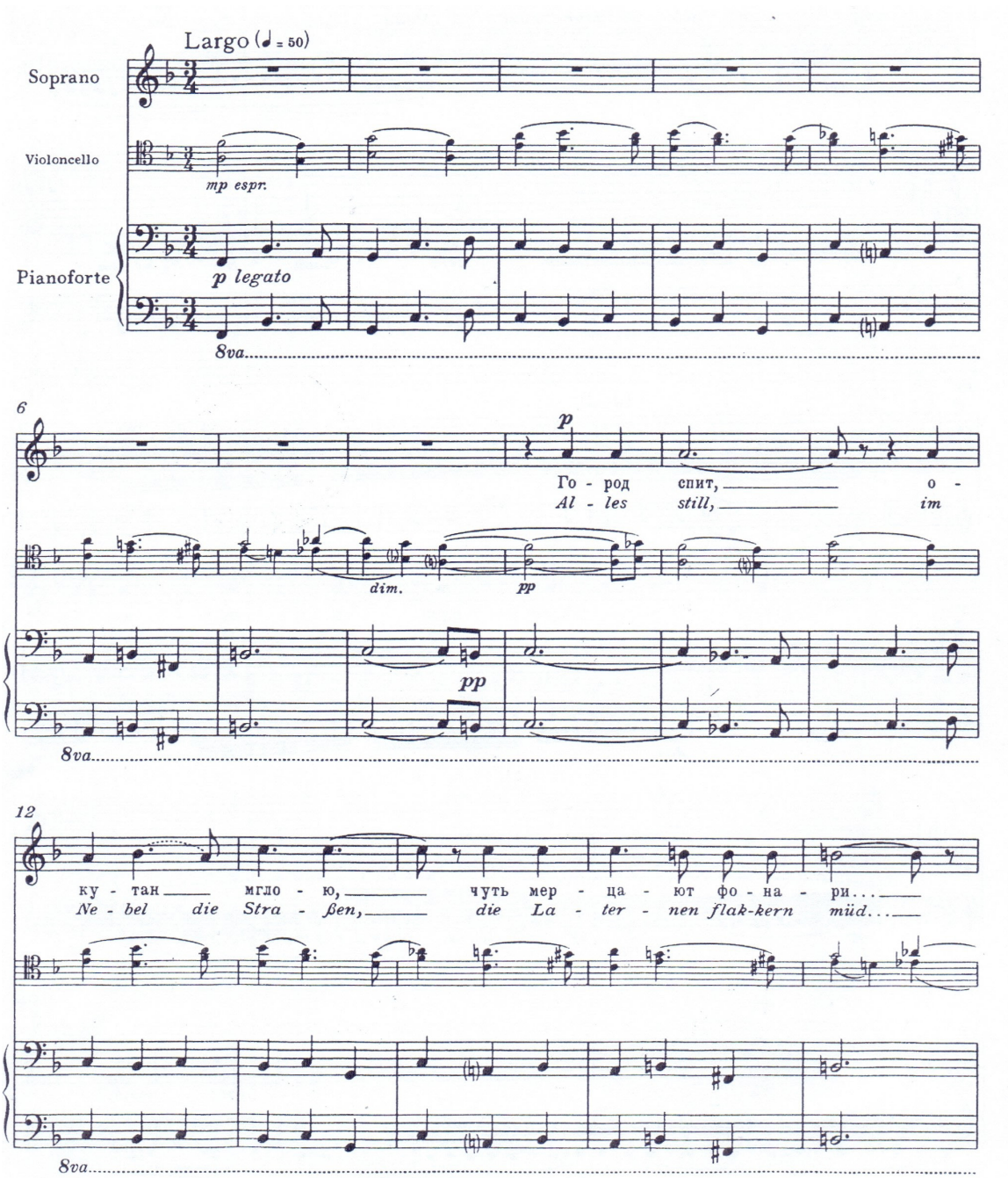
If *We Were Together* shimmered with the warmth of memory and the tentative return of Self, *The City Sleeps* shifts us once again into the sphere of estrangement—

the *Other*. Formally constructed as a modified passacaglia (as Gillies points out [1, p. 55]), this movement evokes a sense of inexorability, loneliness, and psychic stasis. "The repetitive ostinato bass line (and, for that matter, the whining cello line) of '*The City Sleeps*' evokes a similar mechanical tread," but "less violent and crushing than 'Gamayun'" [1, p. 56]. It also evokes the absence of the contracting interval motif, which points to a re-emergence of the *Other*—the impersonal, the "spectral," *ne svoy*. In other words, the song loops in melancholic stasis. Its ostinato and lack of intimacy signal a voice detached from the *Self*. This is not a response, but a suspended mourning (see *Example 8*).

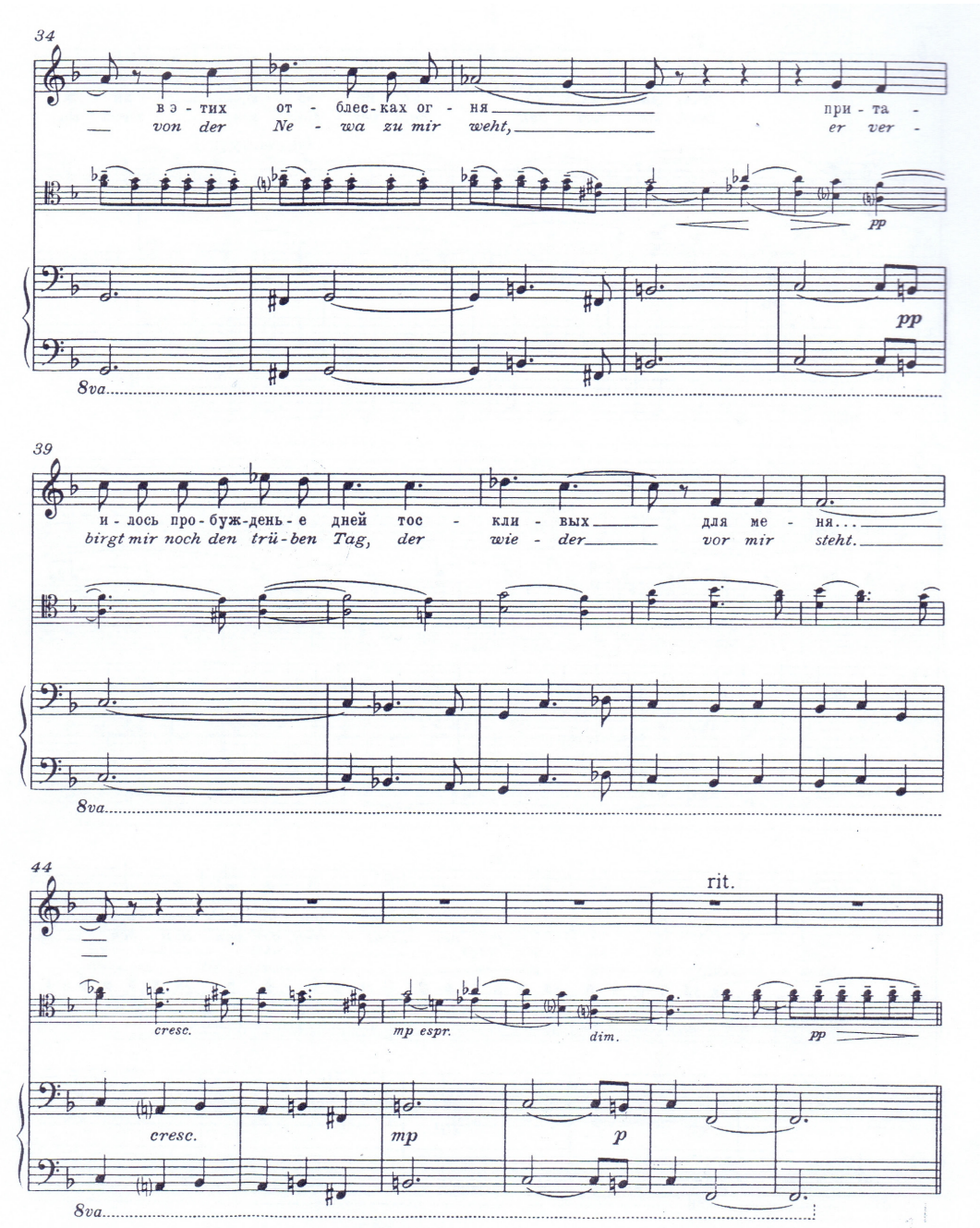
Shostakovich's use of the passacaglia form here is not incidental. In his compositional vocabulary, this structure often carries associations with solemnity, death, and emotional paralysis, as evident in his *Piano Trio No. 2*, *Symphony No. 8*, and *Lady Macbeth* of the *Mtsensk District* [1, p. 55]. In *The City Sleeps*, the passacaglia functions as a mechanism of melancholic repetition—the recurrence of a condition that cannot be changed. This is a memory not as a warm recollection but as ritualized sorrow, caught in a loop of deferred mourning.

Blok's text, with its imagery of mist, distant flames, and glow of dawn, dovetails with Shostakovich's musical language of obscuration and displacement. The poem's closing lines—"the awakening / Of days, so dreary for me"—are enveloped by the returning passacaglia theme, suggesting that dawn brings not hope but the return of inescapable suffering. The light is not redemptive; it is reflective of an earlier horror. In this sense, *The City Sleeps* is intimately connected to *Gamayun*, *the Bird of Prophecy*, both musically and thematically [1, pp. 55–56] (see *Example 9*).

Just as *Gamayun*, the *Bird of Prophecy* articulated the trauma of prophecy, *The City Sleeps* enacts its aftershock. Its mechanistic ostinato echoes the relentless piano motor of *Gamayun*, though here subdued and funereal. The cello, strained in double-stops, lends a tension of its own—not expressive, but suspended, muffled. The absence of the contracting interval motif, mentioned earlier, is profoundly felt. This absence is not simply musical but ontological: the voice here is no longer a locus of selfhood but a subject drifting in the haze of estrangement.



Example 8. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *The City Sleeps, Largo,* mm. 1–16



Example 9. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *The City Sleeps, Largo,* mm. 34–49

This dichotomy reinforces the larger binary that underlies the first four songs: a psychological and philosophical opposition between *Self* (the personal, intimate, remembered, *svoy*) and *Other* (the impersonal, fractured, ne svoy, and prophetic). While *Song of Ophelia* and *We Were Together* frame the self in intimate dialogue with its own memory, *Gamayun* and *The City Sleeps* externalize voice into alien sonic territories—fields of mechanization, detachment, and foreboding.

Ultimately, *The City Sleeps* crystallizes the thematic and structural tension of the cycle. It does not resolve; it reiterates, looping voice and ensemble into a muted procession of melancholic return. The listener is invited not into catharsis but into the recognition of stasis—a recognition shaped by melancholy as an aesthetic of suspended time, as Chagas has described. What *The City Sleeps* offers is not a song of dreams but a sonic cartography of deferred awakening, where the city does not rise but trembles and where prophecy no longer shouts but lingers beneath the skin of sound.

This state of suspended subjectivity—where the voice no longer articulates identity but drifts in mechanical repetition—can be read, in Tarasti's terms, as a descent from *being-for-myself* into a depersonalized *being-in-itself*, a semiotic condition where the subject becomes pure function, devoid of agency, caught in an alien temporal loop no longer shaped by expression but by structural inevitability.

'The Storm': Compassionate Dissonance and the Threshold of Synthesis

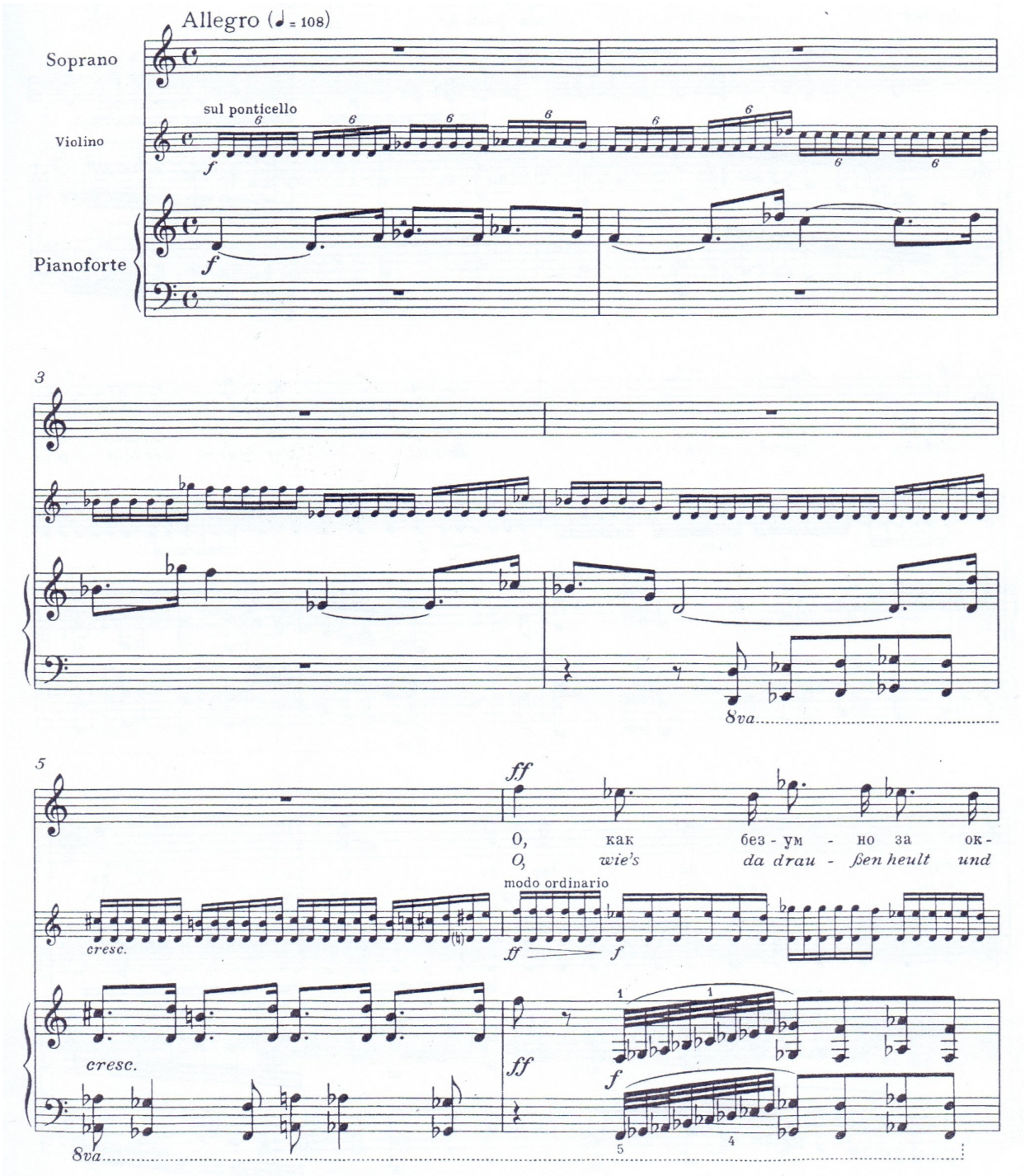
The Storm occupies a pivotal position in the architecture of *Seven Romances*. It is the first song in the cycle to move beyond the rigid binary of *Self* and *Other*. While the first four songs establish a dialectical structure—*Song of Ophelia* and *We Were Together* evoking memory and intimacy, *Gamayun* and *The City Sleeps* suggesting fragmentation and mechanistic dislocation—*The Storm* initiates a turn. It marks a threshold where oppositions begin to dissolve and a deeper mode of relation becomes possible. Here, empathy arises not as a sentimental expression but as a structural necessity: a sonorous response to alterity. In this sense, the song enacts what Jean-Luc Nancy calls a "being-with" (*être-avec*), in which subjectivity is always already exposed to and constituted by its relation to others through "resonance"

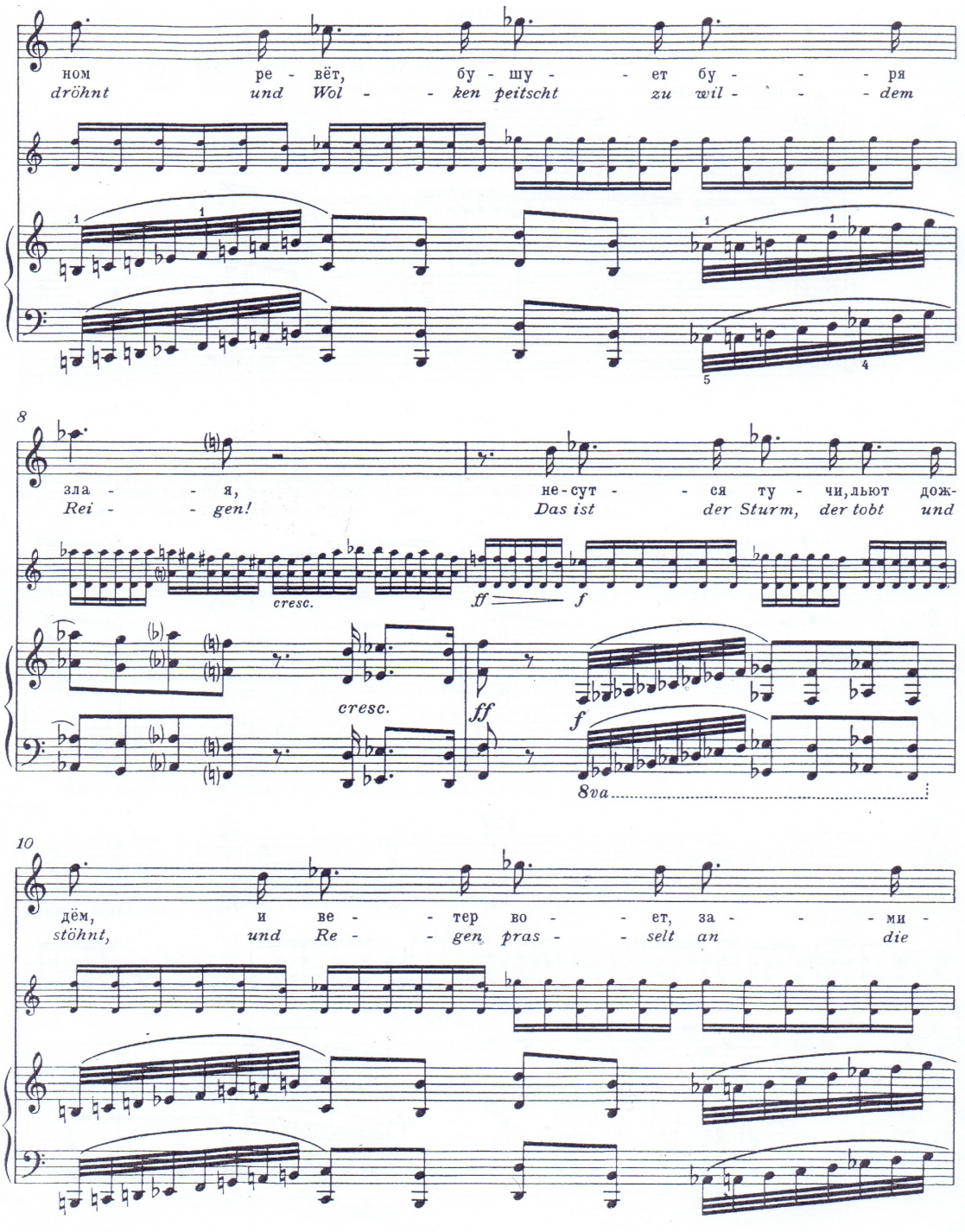
and “co-presence” [22, pp. 14–15]. Similarly, in the explosive emergence of polyphonic texture and harmonic instability, we hear what Emmanuel Levinas describes as the ethical imperative to respond to the face of the *Other*—an interruption that dismantles totality and calls the self into ethical relation [23, pp. 194–197]. Through this sonic configuration, *The Storm* becomes a moment of ethical mediation: not a resolution of tensions, but their recognition as necessary conditions for being in relation.

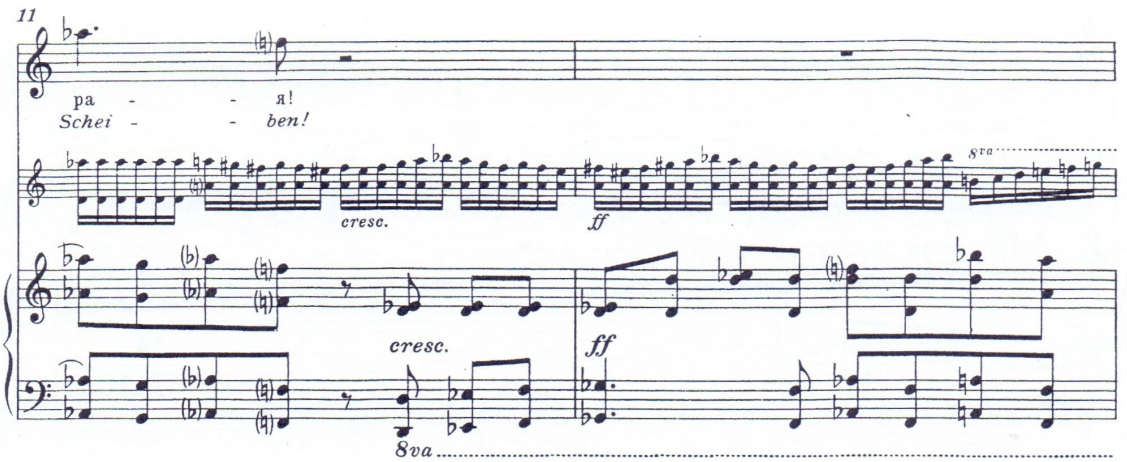
Shostakovich’s choice to title this untitled Blok’s poem *The Storm* intensifies the externalized turbulence evoked by the text. Still, the deeper function of the song lies not in its imagery alone. The narrator does not merely observe suffering; they feel compelled to enter into it, to dissolve the boundary between inner reflection and collective experience. This act of voluntary submission to the storm becomes a metaphor for what Paulo C. Chagas, through Eduardo Lourenço, might describe as melancholy with ethical agency (cf. [8, pp. 10, 14]): a listening that is no longer passive but compassionate and participatory.

Musically, the song oscillates between extremes. The violin and piano create a violent, swirling texture of *sul ponticello* tremolo in minor seconds, recalling the destabilizing storm tropes from *Gamayun* but now turned inward. The violin’s fluttering, once suggestive of the “quiet murmur of a brook” in *We Were Together*, has turned icy and brittle (cf. [1, p. 60]). The opening measures are especially telling: in measure 4, the violin repeats the open D string, anchoring the low register and opening into stark double stops built on the open D and A strings (*Example 10*).

These unfretted, resonant tones are not shaped by expressive vibrato or lyrical line; they speak instead through physical presence—the raw grain of the instrument. This sonic measureness, grounded in the violin’s body and resonating wood, invokes a dimension of material embodiment that recurs throughout the cycle. Where earlier songs explored the voice as a site of memory or absence, *The Storm* returns to the body through the friction of bow on string, the resonance of open intervals, and the chant-like delivery of the vocal line. The voice itself assumes a psalmodic, incantatory tone, most notably in the haunting declamation: “To struggle with the darkness and the rain, / The sufferers’ fate to share…” In this moment, embodiment is not lyrical but somatic—an affective convergence of breath, bow, and elemental resistance.


Allegro (♩ = 108)
Soprano
Violino
sul ponticello
Pianoforte
f
3
8va
5
ff
О, как без - ум - но за ок -
O, wie's da drau - ßen heult und
modo ordinario
cresc.
ff
f
1
8va


ном ре - вёт, бу - шу - - ет бу - - - ря
dröhnt und Wol - - ken peitscht zu wil - - - dem
8
зла - - я, не-сут - - ся ту - чи, льют дож-
Rei - - gen! Das ist der Sturm, der tobt und
cresc.
ff f
cresc.
ff
f
8va
10
дём, и ве - - тер во - - ет, за - - - ми -
stöhnt, und Re - - gen pras - - selt an die



Example 10. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *The Storm, Allegro,* mm. 1–11

Here, Shostakovich reprises a strategy first introduced in *We Were Together*: a suspended vocal line that does not soothe but intensifies emotional weight. What initially appears as stillness becomes a form of internal tension. At the harmonic core of the piece is the diminished fifth (D to A-flat), which recurs obsessively and anchors the song's expressive fabric. This interval is inherently unstable—neither consonant like the perfect fifth (D–A), which traditionally symbolizes cohesion and tonal stability, nor compact like the perfect fourth (D–G), often associated with containment or intimacy, as introduced in *Song of Ophelia* [1, p. 62]. The diminished fifth, instead, is poised between these poles, both spatially and functionally. It evokes a psychological tension: the desire to reach toward another (the openness of the fifth) is thwarted by dissonance; the wish for closeness (the fourth) collapses under strain. In this way, the diminished fifth becomes a sonic metaphor for the emotional paradox that recurs throughout the cycle—the simultaneous longing for connection and the impossibility of achieving it. "In terms of thematic typology and psychological development, it hovers between togetherness and separation, between alienation and empathy, between *svoy* and *ne svoy*" [1, p. 65], it does not represent the resolution of alienation and intimacy, but rather the persistent, dissonant effort to negotiate their distance.

In this way, *The Storm* stands as a liminal movement. It is neither solely intimate nor entirely impersonal; rather, it is a movement of traversal, *in between*. As such, it represents the first clear gesture toward synthesis in the dramaturgical arc of the cycle. The voice does not dissolve, nor does it dominate. It emerges, full of melancholic agency, aware of the horrors outside but refusing to remain untouched. The ethical tone of this music is not only lyrical—it is aesthetic in its responsibility, echoing Boym's concept of "reflective nostalgia," which does not seek restoration but dwells within the fractures of time and feeling with open attentiveness.

The song's unresolved ending—anchored by a sustained D in the violoncello set against A-flat in the piano and violin—leads directly into *Secret Signs*, forming an *attacca* transition that blurs the boundary between the two [1, p. 65]. This seamless passage is more than a technical link; it functions as a structural and expressive bridge. Harmonically unresolved and emotionally suspended, *The Storm* becomes a moment of liminality—a space between rupture and recollection. It does not resolve the tensions of the preceding songs, nor does it yet settle into the meditative stasis of what follows. Instead, it suspends the subject in a state of transit: between *Self* and *Other*, interior and exterior, memory and presence. In this sense, *The Storm* is not only about weather, turmoil, or compassion. It stages a transformation in the condition of voice itself—its attempt to reach beyond its own echo chamber, to resonate with an *Other*. By doing so, the voice recovers its own fragility, re-sounding not as sovereign subject but as part of a shared acoustic fabric—an embodied trace of human vulnerability and memory. The transition here is thus not only musical but existential: a threshold the voice must cross in order to reimagine relation.

'Secret Signs': Fragmented Memory, Symbolist Palimpsest, and the Threshold of Silence

Secret Signs becomes the chamber in which that rupture is internalized, dismantled, and reconfigured. Where *The Storm* projects its turmoil outward through sonic violence and ethical urgency, *Secret Signs* draws that tension inward, suspending it in a sound world of disintegration, repetition, and spectral quietude. In this shift, the possibility of synthesis is neither affirmed nor deferred, but displaced into a zone of haunted reflection. It is a song of "ghosts": of refracted themes, disassembled motifs, and poetic prophecy. At this point in the cycle,

we have entered the threshold space between rupture and transcendence, where language begins to dissolve, and sound transforms into a symbolist palimpsest of memory.

Shostakovich's decision to name this setting *Secret Signs*, where Blok offers no title, is revealing. The allusion to the *Book of Daniel* and the mysterious prophetic inscription, decoded as the fall of a kingdom, embeds the poem within the semiotics of the apocalypse. Blok's vision is filled with spectral imagery: poppies suspended in dreams, golden braids on the pages of a frozen book, and celestial chimeras staring through cosmic mirrors. It is a symbolist text *par excellence*, demanding a musical language that is equally destabilized and allusive. Shostakovich responds by deploying his most unstable material: a twelve-tone row, not in strict serialism but as a form of harmonic exile, a no-man's-land in which tonality is evacuated and motifs float as dislocated fragments.

Composer's use of twelve-tone material in *Secret Signs*—the penultimate song of *Seven Romances*...—introduces a stark break in the otherwise impeccably tonal landscape of the cycle. As Levon Hakobian clarifies, Shostakovich does not employ dodecaphony in the orthodox, Schoenbergian sense of organizing both horizontal and vertical dimensions according to serial technique. Instead, his twelve-tone writing consists of linear segments—configurations of twelve non-repeating tones—that are inserted into or set against a tonal background. In *Secret Signs*, this twelve-tone theme recurs like a musical cipher, tied explicitly to the sinister signs mentioned in Blok's poem. Hakobian notes that this association of the twelve-tone idiom with something alien and uncanny recalls the composer's earlier treatment of atonality in *Fears*,[3] where chromatic disintegration evokes forces so disturbing that they compel the listener to "close your eyes out of fear" [24, pp. 271–272].

Peter Schmelz similarly reads this passage as "a catalyst of harmonic instability and atonality" [25, pp. 232–233] (cf. [26, pp. 303–354]), yet it is not instability for its own sake. In the context of *Seven Romances*..., the twelve-tone row does not signify modernist progress, but symbolic estrangement. It marks a shift from tonal

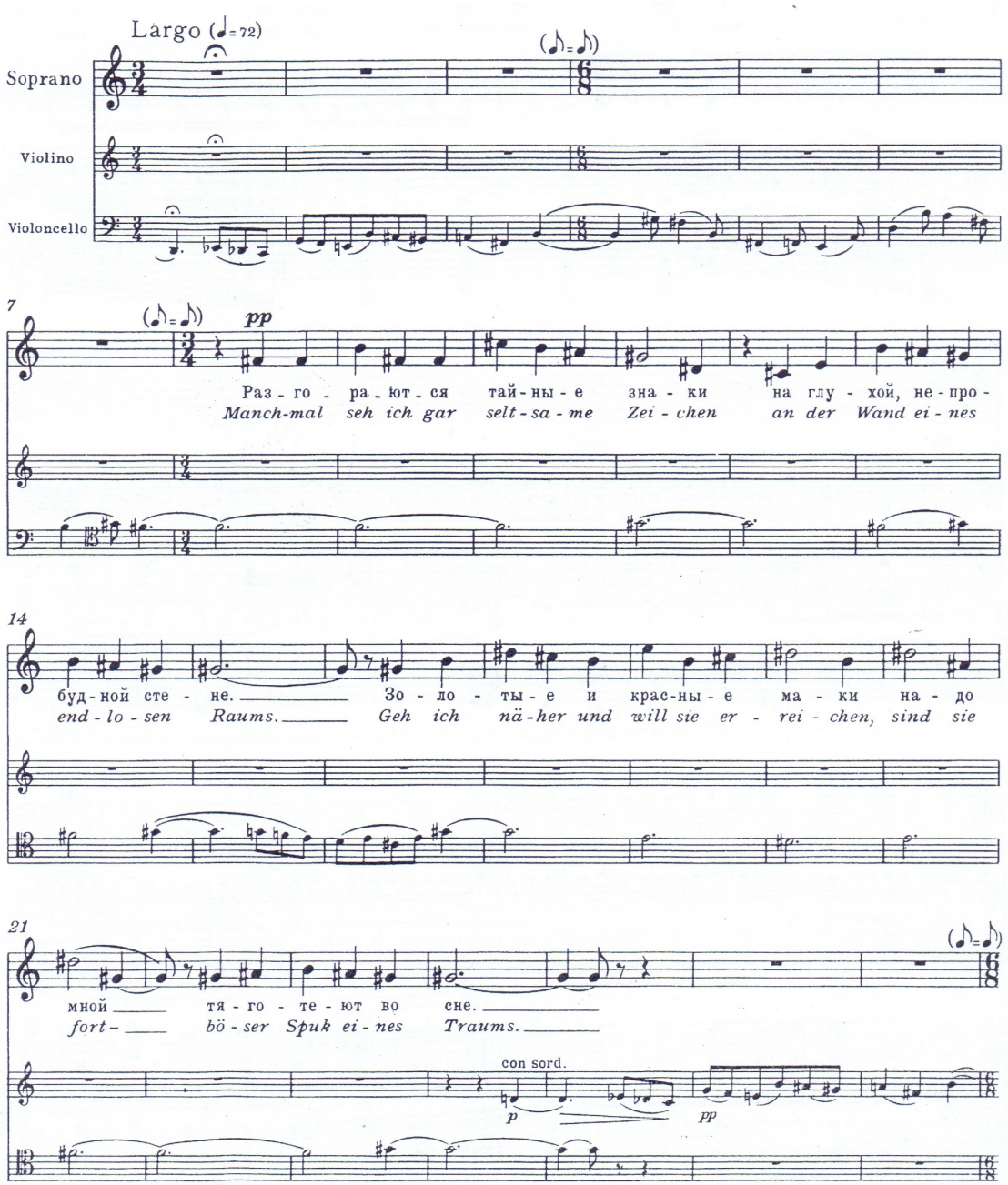
[3] The fourth movement of Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 13*.

clarity to semantic opacity, functioning as a musical emblem of the untranslatable—not in the literal linguistic sense, but in the sense of that which resists stable meaning or expressive containment. In this context, the twelve-tone row operates not merely as a compositional device but as an expressive metaphor: an embodiment of spectral memory, of signs that no longer refer, of language whose meaning has faded or become inaccessible through temporal distance. The row's internal logic—closed, abstract, and non-referential—evokes a space where expression becomes haunted by its own failure, or by the impossibility of fully rendering grief, memory, or presence in sound.

The alternation between soprano and cello is particularly striking: when the voice enters, the cello retreats into long, sustained tones; when the voice falls silent, the cello re-emerges (see *Example 11*). This antiphonal texture creates not a dialogue, but a delicate interplay of presence and absence, where the two lines never fully coincide. Rather than supporting each other in harmonic or rhythmic unity, they appear to take turns holding space, as if embodying memory in its fractured, elusive form. In this way, the alternation mirrors the thematic core of the piece: the impossibility of simultaneity between self and other, sound and silence, past and present. Each line seems to remember the other, but only in absence. This structural restraint enhances the atmosphere of spectrality already suggested by the twelve-tone row, deepening the sense that we are hearing voices that no longer fully belong to the present.

This aligns with the cycle's larger aesthetic of "reflective nostalgia" Shostakovich's twelve-tone line is precisely such a fragment: it remembers nothing clearly, but it haunts the tonal field with the residue of something once coherent. The result is not merely a landscape of harmonic instability, but a sonic experience of fragmentation and uncertainty—one in which meaning flickers, slips away, and resists anchoring. In this suspended space, the listener is drawn into a state of attentiveness that borders on withdrawal, as if compelled to close their eyes not to see better, but to listen more deeply to what is barely there.

In this sense, *Secret Signs* enacts what Derrida calls *différance*: not simply delay or difference, but a structural condition in which meaning is constituted through temporal deferral and absence. It is not that musical



Example 11. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *Secret Signs, Largo,* mm. 1–27

ideas are repeated or developed in a teleological way, but that they return as traces—fragments suspended between presence and disappearance. The past songs do not reappear in their original form; rather, they resonate spectrally, as if remembered by the music itself. The violoncello evokes *Gamayun* not through direct quotation but through timbral memory; the violin gestures toward *Song of Ophelia* and *We Were Together*, now emptied of lyricism; the voice, increasingly subdued and flattened, anticipates its silence in *Music*. In this sound world, meaning flickers but never stabilizes. As in Derrida's formulation, every sign arrives already haunted by its difference, by the echo of what it is not, and what it can never fully be [2, p. 65; 3, pp. 17, 26].

The voice's spectral stillness—its hushed, nearly motionless presence—intensifies the effect of poetic imagery. This stillness is not simply quietness, but a haunted quality of sound, as if the voice itself were no longer fully embodied, already fading into memory. Its psalmodic recitation, barely rising above a breath, is often misaligned with the syntax of the poem, suggesting not speech but trance [1, p. 70]. This detachment is not expressive in a traditional sense—it is suspended subjectivity, a form of musical melancholia that hovers rather than declares. Roland Barthes' "grain de la voix" is transformed here into "grain de la mémoire": what we hear is not the voice of emotion, but the textural residue of remembrance, fragile and fragmentary, breaking and reforming in time.

Scattering is key. Motifs from earlier songs reappear and evolve: the "golden braid" recalls Ophelia's vows, now frozen into object-memory; the cello's crawling bass figures echo the mechanistic march of *Gamayun* and *The City Sleeps*, yet now they are slower and dimmer, as if remembered from a great distance. Even the jagged diminished intervals central to *The Storm* begin to soften into perfect fourths and fifths, heralding the emergent consonance of the final song.

Indeed, *Secret Signs* is best understood as a transitional membrane—not only between *The Storm* of the previous songs and the suspended resonance of *Music*, but between sound and silence, voice and its dissolution. Its final passage,

where violin and cello intertwine over a pure F-sharp two octaves apart, establishes a new kind of harmonic and psychological space: narrowed, transparent, and disembodied. This is not resolution but concentration—a distillation of gesture and memory into a suspended sonic trace.

In this symbolic and affective liminality, Secret Signs functions as the philosophical heart of the cycle. It prepares the listener by dissolving the voice into its spectral remnants. In existential semiotic terms (Tarasti), this song hovers between für-mich-sein (being-for-myself) and an-sich-sein (being-in-itself): a space where subjectivity begins to detach from agency, and sound no longer communicates, but traces the fading outline of what once was.

'Music': Transcendence, Trace, and the Final Silence

The final song of the cycle, *Music*, serves as the culmination of the philosophical and expressive tensions woven throughout *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok*. If *Secret Signs* signifies the site of fragmentation and dissolution, *Music* emerges as a tentative gesture—understood here as a suspended expressive act—toward synthesis, not in the form of resolution, but of resonance. The text, drawn from Blok's untitled 1898 poem, blends religious mysticism, ecstatic vision, and sacrificial imagery into an offering of self-erasure. In this context, Shostakovich composes not a closure but an echo chamber: a space in which musical, poetic, and philosophical motifs are gathered, reformed, and gently dissolved into memory.

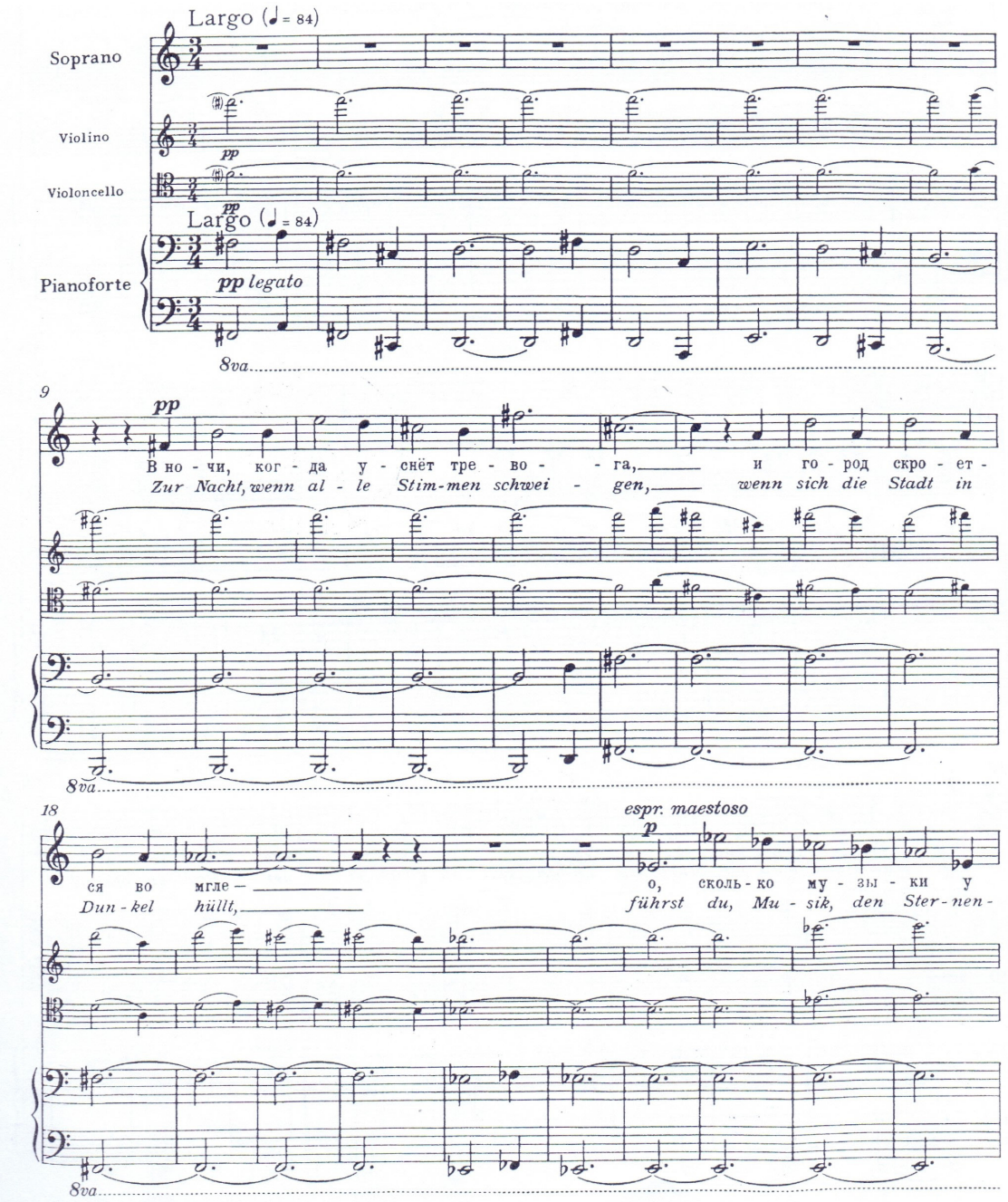
From the outset, the musical setting cultivates a sense of otherworldliness. The held F-sharps in the violin and cello, which link *Secret Signs* to *Music*, are more than tonal bridges—they are traces of tonal memory. As Schmelz notes, the introduction of twelve-tone material in *Secret Signs* serves as a destabilizing force that disrupts the tonal field [25, pp. 232–233]. While he does not explicitly foreground the F-sharp, its emergence within the row may be understood as a latent tonal anchor. This gesture also inverts the motivic expansion from fifths to fourths, which has recurred throughout the cycle. It is a spatial contraction—a gravitational pull toward unity [1, p. 74]. Barthes' concept of "grain de la voix" is here extended metaphorically into what might be called a "grain de l'espace sonore": a resonant texture not of vocal emission but of sonic presence itself, a texture that listens rather than speaks.

The vocal line, emerging in pianissimo with intervals from fourths and major seconds, evokes the serenity and detachment of chant. Here, musical language is pared down to its elemental state, divested of the dissonant, mechanistic energies that once dominated *Gamayun* or *The Storm*. The piano, which earlier acted as a site of violent subversion (*The City Sleeps*), now responds delicately to the voice's harmonic suggestions, following rather than leading [1, p. 75]. For the first time in the cycle, voice and instruments converge not in conflict but in gentle, breath-like weaving (see *Example 12*).

In Tarasti's existential semiotic terms, this final withdrawal of the voice may be understood as a modal descent—from *being-for-myself* into *being-in-itself*—where subjectivity is no longer voiced but remembered, where agency gives way to symbolic resonance. What remains is not expression but the trace of expression, a transition into pure aesthetic being where sound no longer speaks but simply is.

This fragile equilibrium is broken, however, by the setting of the poem's final stanza. The ritualistic intensity of Blok's imagery—"Through blood, through torment, through the grave…"—triggers a musical eruption. The voice strains against rhythmic asymmetry, pitch instability, and harmonic chaos, accompanied by tremolo strings and clashing intervals. The *Self* offers itself up—no longer as presence but as a sacrificial gesture, a final act of musical ekstasis. The symbolism echoes back to *Gamayun*, to *Song of Ophelia*, to *Secret Signs*—but now it is uttered in a register of acceptance rather than terror. The voice then vanishes.

What follows is the most profound musical statement in the cycle: an extended postlude of instrumental memory. The trio resumes the intervals and rhythms first articulated in *Song of Ophelia* and *We Were Together*, but now they are transformed—more spacious, less fractured. The cello and violin share melodic duties once assigned to the voice, enacting what Naomi Cumming describes as a subjectivity constituted not through unified expression but through distributed sonic gestures [27, pp. 115–132]. As she suggests, the musical subject is not unified but "multiple, situated, and shifting" [27, p. 218]. In this sense, what might be called a "sonic self in dispersion" refers to a subjectivity

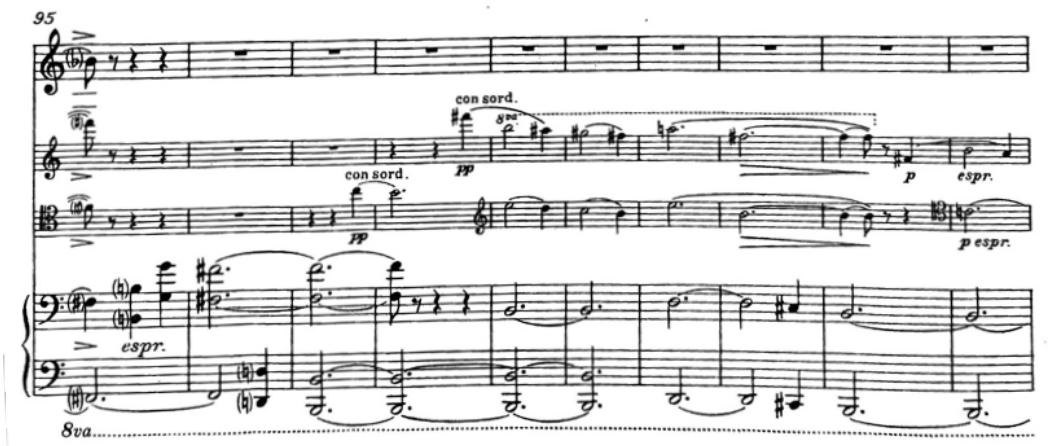


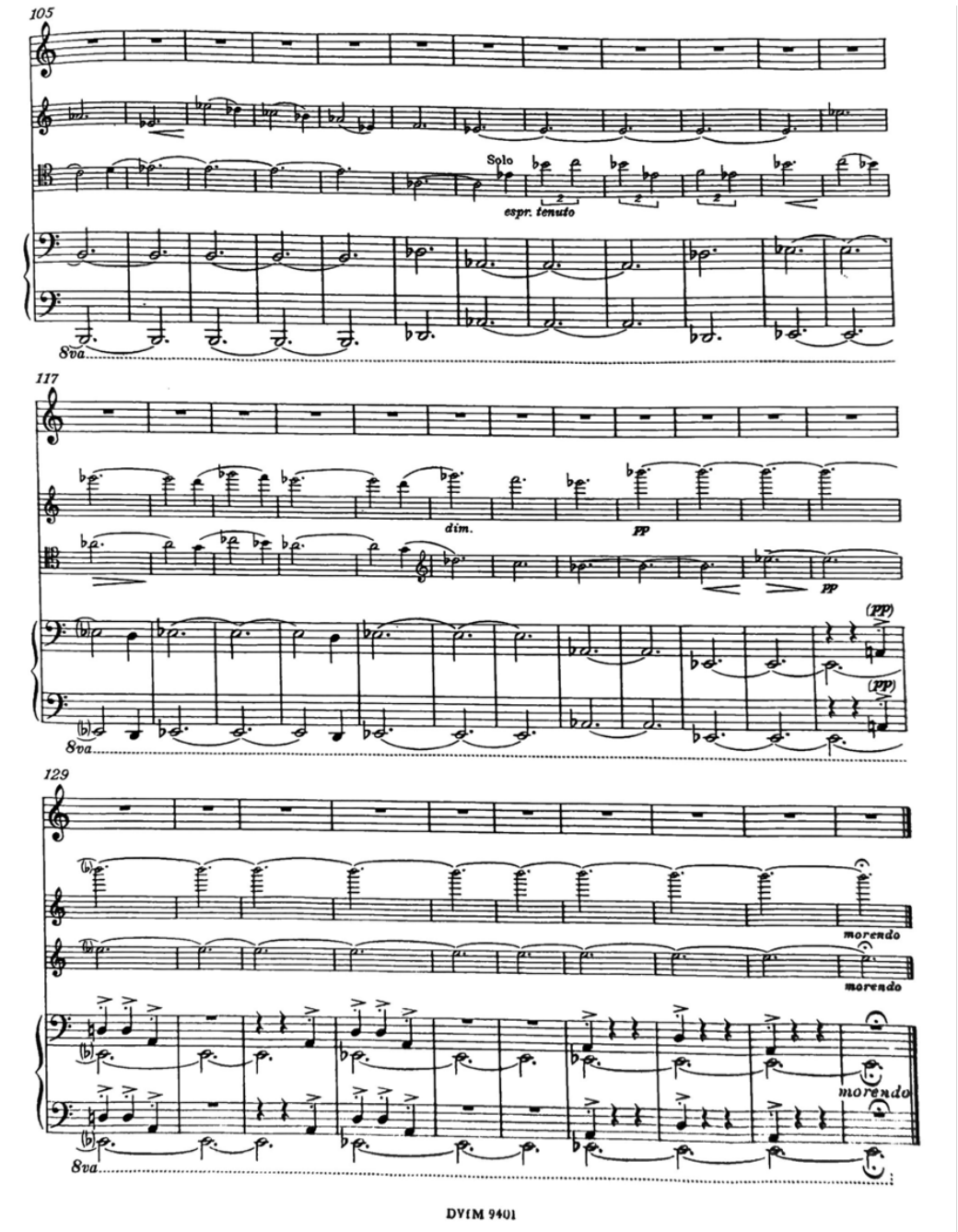
Example 12. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *Music, Largo,* mm. 1–21

that resonates through fragmented intervals, timbral traces, and memory, without coalescing into a single expressive center.

The final cadences are built on open fifths and fourths, gradually collapsing into unisons. Even the previously dissonant intervals from *Gamayun* return—this time *pianissimo*, low in the piano register, not as threats but as distant memories. This is the logic of "spectrality": recurrence without reanimation, presence without presence. What we hear in these final tones is not resolution, but something closer to what Roland Barthes describes as "le bruissement de la langue"—a sonic texture that bypasses semantic clarity and instead evokes a continuous shimmer of meaning, never fully formed, never fixed [28, pp. 76–79]. In this context, the music does not signify in a traditional way; it resonates—as memory, as loss, as the trace of what has been voiced and is now fading (see *Example 13*).

Thus, *Music* becomes not an ending but a final withdrawal. It avoids culmination, entering instead a state of harmonic and expressive stasis. Rather than projecting narrative resolution, it sustains a modality of stillness. This aligns with Eero Tarasti's concept of the modality of *être* (being), which characterizes moments of musical stability, existential contemplation, and non-action. In contrast to the dynamic modality of *faire* (doing), which drives musical progression, *être* manifests as a suspension of teleology, a state in which "no action is performed" and where meaning resides in being itself [29, pp. 90–91]. In *Music*, this mode is achieved through static textures, open intervals, and the gradual dissipation of voice, suggesting not resolution, but a lingering presence beyond articulation.





Example 13. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* op. 127. *Music, Largo,* mm. 95–138

Shostakovich thereby completes the poetic logic of the cycle: not by representing memory or grief, but by inhabiting their silent aftermath.

Conclusion: Echoes of the Irretrievable

Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok by Dmitri Shostakovich is not simply a cycle of songs; it is a meditation in sound—on time, on memory, on the impossibility of return. In this work, the composer does not set poetry to music in the conventional sense. Rather, he composes around the voice, treating it not as a source of presence but as a site of disappearance, of vanishing. The cycle's expressive language is not one of affirmation or narrative clarity but one of fragmentation, silence, "spectral" return, and philosophical hesitation.

Through the lenses of Derrida's "trace," Barthes' "grain," and Boym's "reflective nostalgia," we have seen how the music speaks by deferring, by fraying, by echoing what has been lost. The voice in *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* does not articulate identity; it gestures toward it and then dissolves. Meaning is not declared—it is postponed, hinted at, and most poignantly, withheld. The formal structure itself mirrors the instability of memory, with motifs returning in altered, softened, or distorted shapes. What remains is not a message but a residue.

In this sense, Shostakovich's work may be understood as a sonic enactment of melancholy, not as an emotional posture, but as an aesthetic structure, in the sense developed by Paulo C. Chagas through Eduardo Lourenço. Melancholy here is not passive grief; it is active listening, a way of inhabiting time as fragmentation and echo. It is, as Chagas writes, a "mirror of memory," one that reflects not what was but what cannot be reclaimed. *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* composes this mirror—not with surface reflection, but with depths of recursion, shadows of the voice, and the quiet shimmer of vanishing sound. In that sense, the concept of melancholy introduced by Chagas—as a philosophical tension between the desire for unity and the reality of disintegration—finds its perfect sonic analogue in Shostakovich's treatment of the soprano. The voice is never stable; it is always in retreat, always drawn into the ensemble, until in the final movement, it ceases altogether. What follows is not silence but a trace sustained by instruments that no longer accompany but remember. The music does not resolve; it listens.

In this way, *Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok* articulates an ethics of disappearance. It offers no heroic closure, no synthesis of past and present. Instead, it allows the listener to dwell in the echoes of the irretrievable, where absence becomes audible and silence becomes expressive. It is a music of mourning but not of despair—a music that, like melancholy itself, finds form in fracture, beauty in distance, and meaning in something that might be the resonance of what is no longer there…

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Vladimir Tarnopolsky's *...Le vent des mots...*: Towards a poetics of elusive sensation

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Abstract. One of the main vectors of Vladimir Tarnopolsky's compositional strategy, which is conditioned by the composer's constant interest in exploring the primary element of music, consists in the search for novelty in sound material. For Tarnopolsky, the creation and structuring of sound involve its plastic metamorphoses, which regulate the "growth" and "branching" of sonorous tissue to form the trajectories of acoustic flows that ensure the processuality of the "self-developing" musical form. According to Tarnopolsky's empirical approach, in which each work involves the creation of a unique "root" system of connections in an attempt to find

Translated by Thomas A. Beavitt

a “new euphony”, intellectualism and sensuality are considered to form the dual basis of genuine creativity and art. By linking the concept of the “beingness” of sound to the idea of breath in music, the spatio-temporal continuum of the composer’s works is organised according to the wave principle to strengthen the constructive-expressive function of timbre and dynamics as factors of dramaturgy. An example of a composition of this type is the piece for cello and orchestra *…Le vent des mots qu’il n’a pas dits* (1996). The article focuses on the study of the “internal” form of the essay as the realisation of its content-semantic structure as revealed by the entire complex of expressive means.

Keywords: Tarnopolsky, sound substance, time continuum, timbre, form-process, breath, sensation

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Музыкальное творчество рубежа XX–XXI столетий

Научная статья

«...Ветер слов...» Владимира Тарнопольского: к поэтике ускользающего ощущения

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Аннотация. Один из векторов композиционной стратегии Владимира Тарнопольского — поиск новизны звуковой материи, обусловленный неизменным интересом композитора к исследованию первого и главного элемента музыки — звука. Звук созидается и структурируется, его пластичные метаморфозы регулируют «рост» и «ветвление» сонорной ткани, формируют траектории акустических потоков, обеспечивающих процессуальность «саморазвивающейся» музыкальной формы. Относя себя к категории творцов эмпирического склада, Тарнопольский в каждом из сочинений создает уникальную «корневую» систему связей, всякий раз стремясь и к обретению «новой эвфонии», — интеллектуализм и чувственность рассматриваются им в качестве двуединой основы подлинного творчества и искусства. С концепцией «бытийности» звука тесно связана идея музыки-дыхания — пространственно-

временной континуум сочинений композитора организован волновым принципом, с усилением конструктивно-выразительной функции тембра и динамики как факторов драматургии. Образец композиции такого типа — пьеса для виолончели и оркестра *…Le vent des mots qu'il n'a pas dits* (1996). В статье сделан акцент на исследовании «внутренней» формы сочинения как реализации его содержательно-смысловой структуры, раскрываемой всем комплексом выразительных средств.

Ключевые слова: Тарнопольский, звуковая субстанция, временной континуум, тембр, форма-процесс, дыхание, ощущение

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Quand nous disons que l'image existe en dehors
de nous, nous entendons par là qu'elle est extérieure à notre
corps. Quand nous parlons de la sensation comme d'un état
intérieur, nous voulons dire qu'elle surgit dans notre corps.
Et c'est pourquoi nous affirmons que la totalité des images
perçues subsiste, même si notre corps s'évanouit…
Henri Bergson [1, p. 49].

Introduction

To write sensation — this is how Gilles Deleuze once formulated the aesthetic credo of a creator, who, in moving away from illustration and narrative, sets out to reflect the true nature of things.[1] *To write an elusive sensation* — this is how one could describe Vladimir Grigorievich Tarnopolsky's artistic intention to "materialise" in music a special spiritual substance, which is comprehended through plastic metamorphoses of sound. The "anthropomorphic" character of Tarnopolsky's sound is indicated by breathing, pulse and sensitivity to the phases of its life cycle. As such, it can be studied as a living organism and as an acoustic object, literally "constructing" the form and organising the "chronotope" of the works.

According to Pierre-Albert Castanet, the belonging of this or that composer to the idea of musical modernity determines precisely the interest in sound, which is realised in "en tant que métaphore d'une nouvelle cosmologie, concevant la musique comme une projection de couleurs acoustiques inédites sur l'écran spatio-temporel des partitions en devenir" [2][2].

[1] In the book *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* Jacques Deleuze undertakes a philosophical analysis of the work of the English artist, emphasising the intention of capturing sensation on canvas — which, in contrast to the image, becomes the direct object of perception.

[2] Castanet's article has been published only in Russian. The original French manuscript was kindly provided by the author.

The achievement of the "philosophy of sound" in conjunction with its analytical research is realised on the scale of all of Tarnopolsky's work, marking his involvement in the significant artistic attainments of the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century: the global *Klangfarbenkomposition* project (in a broad perspective, from György Ligeti and Iannis Xenakis to Gerard Grisey, Tristan Murail, and further — to representatives of the post-spectral direction), the original concepts of *phenomenology of sound* (Giacinto Scelsi, Salvatore Sciarrino), *immersive listening* (Luigi Nono, Beat Furrer), *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung*[3] (Helmut Lachenmann, Georg Friedrich Haas), achievements in the field of technology of electronic processing and sound synthesis, multiple forms involving the interpenetration of sound synthesis techniques and instrumental writing in mixed compositions… Despite all the differences in aesthetic guidelines, technology and creative methods, these strategies form a single main trend, inspired and conditioned by discoveries in the field of the properties of sound matter, the "physiology" of sound and the psychophysiology of human perception.[4]

In the context of the poetics of Tarnopolsky's work, sound — exhausted, overcoming its own limits, torn apart or distorted by optical aberration — becomes the only protagonist, on the path between "impression" (*Eindruck*) and "expression" (*Ausdruck*)[5] invariably fixed in threshold values and shaky categories of the transient.[6]

[3] A collection of Lachenmann's texts was published under this title: Lachenmann, H. (1996). *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung: Schriften 1966–1995*. (J. Häusler, Herausg.) Breitkopf und Härtel.

[4] The relevance of this issue is confirmed by the updated corpus of foreign scientific articles and developments that study auditory perception in terms of the action of physiological and cognitive mechanisms, subjective interpretations through cross-modal associations, based on the interaction of auditory experience with other perceptual modalities, including the development of a methodology for computer analysis and description of temporal, spectral and psychoacoustic properties of sound using special acoustic and psychoacoustic descriptors. See: [3; 4; 5].

[5] *Eindruck — Ausdruck* (*Hommage à Kandinsky*) — the title of Tarnopolsky's composition, which has three instrumental versions: for piano (1989), for piano and ensemble (1992) and for piano, flute, clarinet and string trio (1996).

[6] These transitional states are reflected in the titles of the works: *Echoes of the Passing Days* (1990), *The Breath of the Exhausted Time* (1994), *Wenn die Zeit über die Ufer tritt* (1999), *Feux follets* (2003), *Jenseits der Schatten* (2006), *Red Shift* (2013), *Scattered Words* (2016), *Blue Shift* (2017), *Study of Breath* for cello (2018).

The space-time continuum of the composition is represented by transition, fluidity and variability, which constitute the deep essence of the processes that organise it ...*Le vent des mots qu'il n'a pas dits* for cello and orchestra, was created in 1996 and dedicated to the memory of the outstanding violinist Oleg Kagan.[7] The presence of a hidden program is indicated by the line from Stéphane Mallarmé's poem *Toast funèbre*[8] in the title of the work and the absence of the violin part in the score,[9] which serves as a symbol of an irreparable loss. The voice of the solo cello, so close to the human voice in terms of its expressiveness and expression, is associated with the composer's speech of condolences to the musician's widow, cellist Natalia Gutman.

On "external" form

The structure of the piece embodies the idea of self-organisation and self-development of musical material, i.e., its growth based on internal, immanent laws, which is essential to the composer's creative method. According to Tarnopolsky, when organising a musical composition, "one must proceed from life itself and carefully monitor the germination of the sound material itself. When this sound "accumulates" for 5–7 seconds, it already "forms". Thus, the composer's task becomes simply to correctly guess the forms into which will organise itself".[10]

[7] The premiere took place in 1996 in Warsaw, in the concert studio of Polish Radio named after Witold Lutosławski. Performers: Julius Berger (Germany) and the orchestra *Sinfonia Varsovia*, conductor: Wojciech Michniewski (Poland). The Russian premiere took place on November 21, 2006, in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory as part of the closing concert of the 7th festival *Dedication to Oleg Kagan*. Performers: Natalia Gutman and the State Symphony Orchestra *New Russia*, conductor: Yuri Bashmet.

[8] First published in a collective collection: Lemerre, A. (Éd.). (1873) *Le Tombeau de Théophile Gautier*. Alphonse Lemerre.

[9] The orchestra consists of 3 flutes (II, III = Picc), 3 oboes, 3 clarinets (III = Picc), bass clarinet in B, 3 bassoons, 4 French horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, 2 percussion groups (10 instruments), harp, 10 violas, 8 cellos and 6 double basses.

[10] Amrakhova, A. A. (Ed.). (2009). Sovremennost' i prostranstvo tradicii / Interv'yu s Vladimirom Tarnopol'skim [Modernity and the Space of Tradition / Interview with Vladimir Tarnopolsky]. In Amrakhova A. A. (Ed.), *Sovremennaya muzykal'naya kul'tura. Poisk smysla: Izbrannye interv'yu i esse o muzyke i muzykantah* [*Contemporary Musical Culture. Searching for Meaning: Selected Interviews and Essays on Music and Musicians*]. Kompozitor, p. 137. The idea of parity between *ratio* and *sensus* is one of the cornerstones of the

The establishment of the form-process in *...Le vent des mots...* is regulated by the "breathing" of musical matter, whose dynamics are imprinted in the stages of creation and destruction, compaction and rarefaction, compression and expansion of the fabric, in the "layering" of texture and "branching" *timbre-texture lines*.

The composition is built on the principle of a single wave, when a long period of accumulation of sound energy and growth of tension is followed by a period of decline and dispersion. In essence, this is a metaphor for a single breathing cycle with a disrupted *chronostructure* and a missing pause phase: a prolonged multi-stage "inhalation" and an "exhalation"[11] that does not bring the expected release.

The reduced "wave" diagram can be represented in the form of a diagram, where phases I–IV correspond to the stage of growth, accumulation ("inhalation"), and phases V–VI to the stage of inhibition, extinction ("exhalation") — see *Schema 1*:

Schema 1. V. Tarnopolsky. *...Le vent des mots qu'il n'a pas dits*. Schema of the form

mm. 1–65	mm. 66–148	mm. 149–161	mm. 162–181	mm. 182–254	mm. 255–283
I	II	III	IV	V	VI
energy accumulation → →		zone culmination		decline, dispersion	

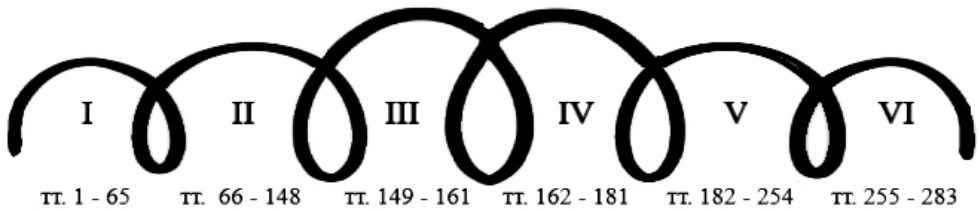
The boundaries indicated in the diagram are quite arbitrary – the segments of the through, or "fluid", structure are built into one another; the musical fabric is permeated with microprocesses, whose course is fundamentally desynchronised. The construction of a nonlinear model of the temporal structure of a play is carried out depending not so much on cause-and-effect relationships and the progressive development of the "plot" as on the changing spatial characteristics of the material — volume, homogeneity and continuity. Real and psychological time *...Le vent des mots...* is a "spiral" going into infinity, on the turns of which there is a compaction and rarefaction of sound matter, an accumulation and dissipation of the energy

composer's aesthetics, for whom art is "simultaneously a very sophisticated intellectual work, and an equally strong and refined emotional-sensory enjoyment of the sound matter itself." Amrakhova, A. A. (Ed.). (2023). Reestr nashih zabluzhdenij (besedy s kompozitorami [V. G. Tarnopol'skij]) [The Register of our Delusions (Conversations with Composers [V. G. Tarnopolsky]). In Amrakhova A. A. (Ed.), *Sovremennaya muzyka: vglyadyvayas' v sebya: sbornik statej i materialov* [*Contemporary Music: Looking into Oneself: Collection of Articles and Materials*]. Moskovskaya konservatoriya, p. 188.

[11] The author also speaks about the metaphor of "sigh", which defines the concept of the form of the composition. See Tarnopolsky, V. G. (n.d.). *...Le vent des mots qu'il n'a pas dits (Comments)*. https://tarnopolski.ru/ru/works.html#wind

of sound flows, which are composed of “events” that have a single “genetic code” (see *Schema 2*):

Schema 2. V. Tarnopolsky. *...Le vent des mots qu’il n’a pas dits*. Temporal structure model



On “internal” form

A non-discrete whole is formed by the superposition and interweaving of these event series, each of which, like Deleuze’s “Aeon”, represents a “labyrinth of one line”,[12] a segment of time, open in both directions and removing the sense of temporal modality. Multiple configurations and transformations of the musical material of the piece are regulated by ambivalence in the system of binary relations of dynamics and statics, movement and rest. As in other works by Tarnopolsky, here the conductors of the idea of binarity are semantically significant “singularities” — sound objects associated with the expression of the *process* or of the *state*.[13] The specificity of the composer’s method of working with sound presupposes

[12] “Nous avons vu que le passé, le présent et le futur n’étaient pas du tout trois parties d’une même temporalité, mais formaient deux lectures du temps, chacune complète et excluant l’autre ; d’une part le présent toujours limité, qui mesure l’action des corps comme causes, et j’état de leurs mélanges en profondeur (Chronos); d’autre part le passé et le futur essentiellement illimités, qui recueillent à la surface les événements incorporels en tant qu’eifelS (Aiôn)” [6, c. 77]. In characterising the time of Aion as “*pure ligne droite*”, Deleuze quotes Borges: “Je connais un labyrinthe grec qui est une ligne unique, droite... <...> je vous promets ce labyrinthe qui se compose d’une seule ligne droite et qui est invisible, incessant” [6, p. 78].

[13] In this classification, the author of the text takes as a starting point the universal taxonomy of sound types of New Music, proposed by Helmut Lachenmann and first described in the 1966 article: Lachenmann, H. (1996). Klangtypen der Neuen Musik. *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung: Schriften 1966–1995*. Breitkopf & Härtel, *1–20*.

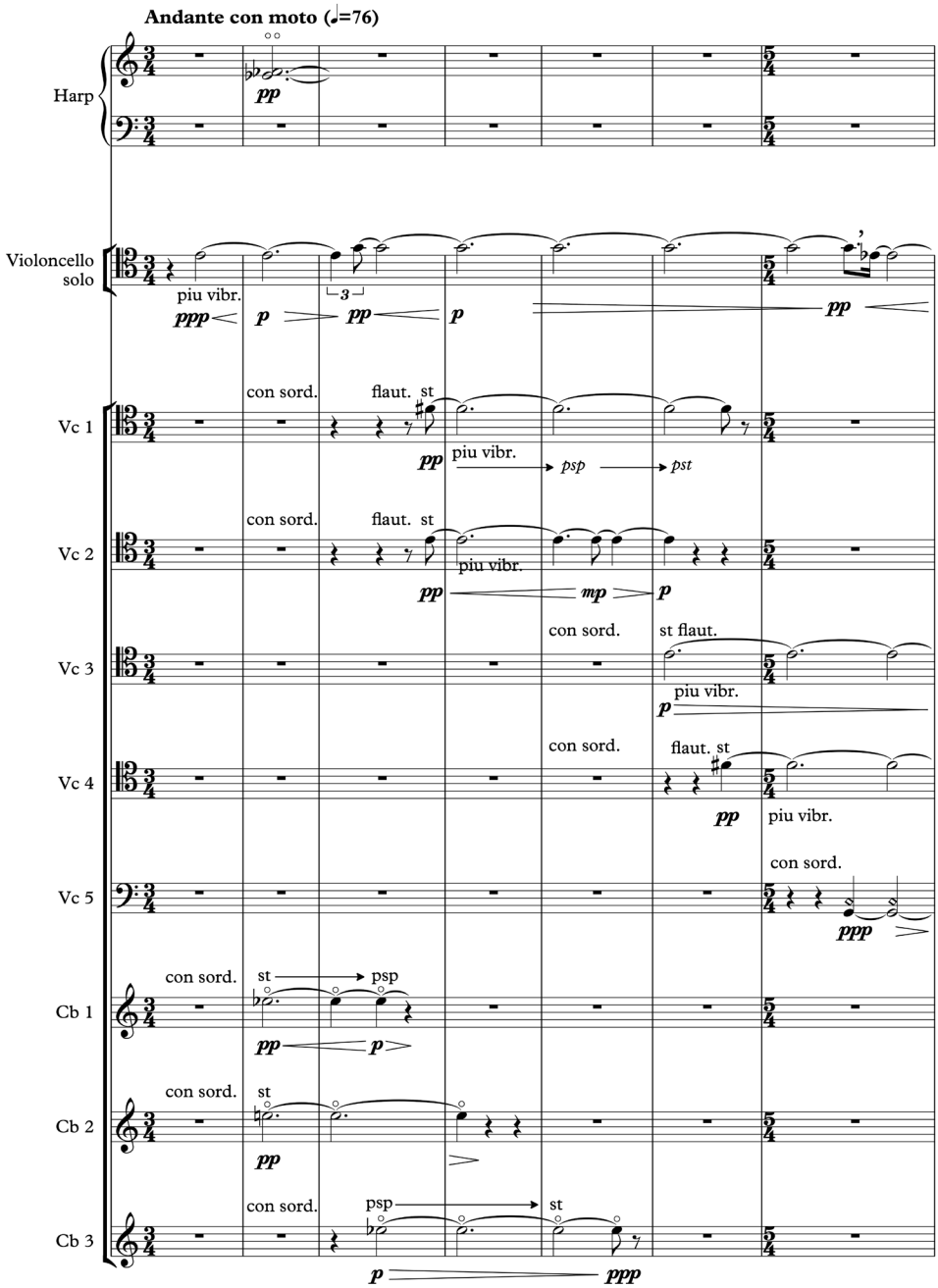
the mutual dependence of these characteristics: at the basis of a sound-state, which is imprinted in the form of rhythmic pulsation, pitch fluctuation, or timbre-texture "layering", there is always a sound-process in the trinity of attack, sustain and decay phases.

The interpenetration of the features of both sound types as one of the constructive factors of the composition is supported by the unity of the intonation structure. The entire diversity of configurations of sound matter is derived from unison — a kind of proto-form, a common "gene" that generates sound "mutations" and variations of similarities. A single sound opens the piece, almost immediately triggering a process of intonational "arborescences" — the horizontal turns into a vertical, the line splits to become harmony, and the image of time-space acquires a score-like visualisation. The opening section of *...Le vent des mots...* repeatedly recreates the model of transformation of the "process" into a "state": the solo cello replica hangs in the sonorous "cloud" of the instrumental voices that pick it up, becoming part of the hemitonic harmonic complex (see *Example 1*).[14]

The texture is represented by a host of lines-timbres imitating each other. The finest sonorous web is woven from the shadows of sounds, "floating" in the elusively changing and emphatically asymmetrical sound space: harmonics, *tremolo* and flageolet *tremolo* muted strings playing *sul tasto*, *sul ponticello* or sliding the bow from the fingerboard to the bridge, flageolet *glissandi* flutes, a polyphony of extended sounds — wavy *crescendo–diminuendo* — like a cocoon, wrapping and enveloping the soloist's melody. The disembodied pedal harmonics of the double basses "illuminate" the melting instrumental voices and fade away, turning into a trace of sound — *the wind of unspoken words?..* The priority of "immaterial" sonorities generated by specific sound production techniques, as well as the expressive role of agogics and dynamics on the edge of the limits of perception, evoke a spectrum of associations from the world of musical ideas close to the composer — such as the "ecology of sound" of Salvatore Sciarrino,[15] the "tonic function" of silence

[14] The musical notation for this and other examples is based on the author's score. See Tarnopolsky, V. G. *...Le vent des mots qu'il n'a pas dits* pour violoncelle et orchestra. Manuscript. 52 p.

[15] A concept that implies acoustic ecology (organic qualities of sound matter) and the ecology of listening (perception) [7, pp. 19–21].



Example 1. V. Tarnopolsky. *...Le vent des mots qu'il n'a pas dits*, mm. 1–7

in the "existential rhetoric" of the works of Faradzh Karaev, the sonorous aura of the "proto-elements" of the musical language of Alexander Raskatov…[16]

Schema 3 illustrates the dynamics of sound "growth" on the scale of the first section of the composition (measures 1–65).[17] The expansion of the overall range is carried out slowly and gradually, reaching its extreme limits only in measures 60–65 (*as–as¹*); a parallel process of expanding intonation occurs in the solo cello part — from the initial monotony to the minor third in bar 3 and to the minor sixth in measures 57–62. Unexpected in the context of the chromatic twelve-tone scale, the "shimmer" of pure diatonicism (measures 23–24, 33–39, 47–48) creates the illusion of the inclusion of major "colour" — a similar effect of the play of light and shadow in Ligeti's *Lontano* was referred to by Alfred Schnittke[18] (see *Schema 3*).

The dramatic significance of the soloist's initial micro-intonation — a metaphor for a sigh, realised in the form of an extended sound with "modulating" dynamics *ppp<p>pp* — goes far beyond the boundaries of a single instrumental part. This "lexeme" becomes the quintessence of the emotional content of the piece, its main and only musical "theme", layered into instrumental lines and multiplied by the counterpoint of motives. The wave principle of its presentation not only models the timbre-textural development in individual sections of the score, but is also projected onto the macroform of the composition. In the system of Tarnopolsky's compositional style, the sigh-intonation becomes key: being determined by the natural

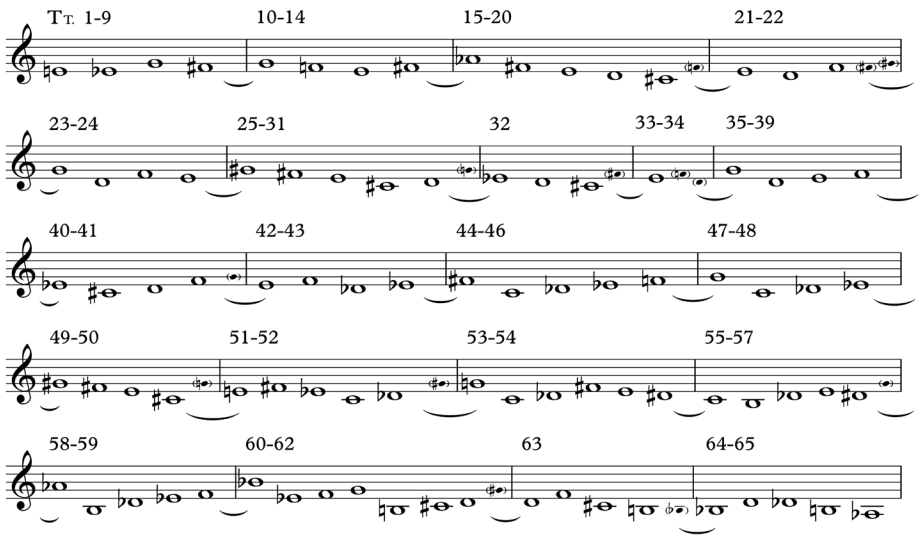
[16] Turning to the theory of Walter Benjamin and considering the possibility of an auratic perception of art in the era of the completed technical revolution, Svetlana Vitalievna Lavrova writes: "Aura today is a search for the limits of perception, operating with barely audible sound material. Only a fragile, endlessly changing sound substance is capable of reviving a living perception in the listener today" [8, p. 5].

[17] Harmonic sounds that are not duplicated by other voices (mainly in double basses) are highlighted in brackets. The ligaments at the border of segments mark the "hanging" of part of the voices of the sound complex of the previous segment at the beginning of the next one.

[18] "The listener is enveloped in a fine web of sound, in which familiar themes of romantic music appear as distant ghosts. Sometimes they clear up and focus into blinding rays, foreshadowing the appearance of a miracle, but at the last moment the golden halo fades, and everything is covered in darkness. Here this darkness is thickening, now sharp dark contours are visible, but darkness is just as unstable as light. Everything is shaky, ambiguous and elusive" [9, p. 66].

properties of sound as a physical phenomenon, it most naturally reflects the composer's idea of "time, felt through breathing, through a wave-like line".[19]

Schema 3. V. Tarnopolsky. *...Le vent des mots qu'il n'a pas dits*. Schema of expansion of the sound range in mm. 1–65 (pitch reduction)



The hypostases of this semantically weighty proto-intonation represent a series of invariant sound "events" that acquire thematic status at different stages of dramatic development. Almost all of them, to one degree or another, characterise a sound type with a certain balance of dynamic and static properties, revealed by contextual conditions. The following musical compositional structures are particularly relevant:

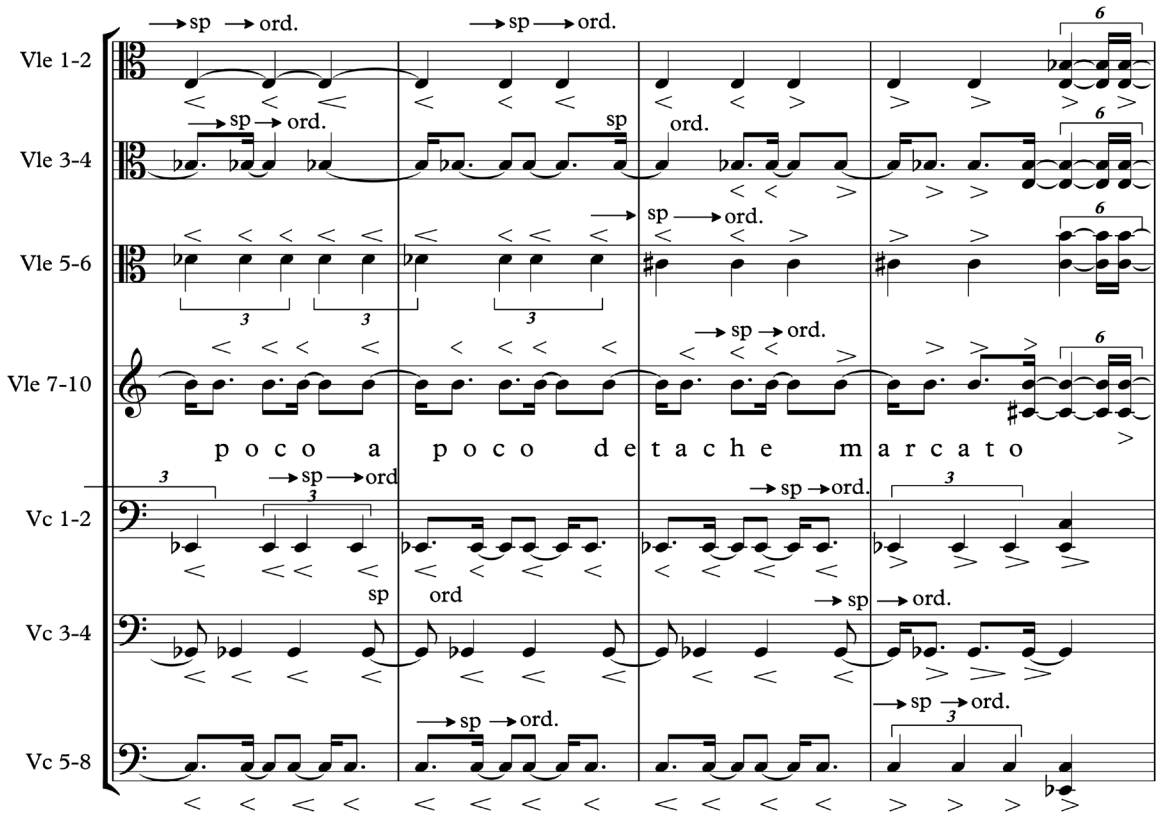
— based on oscillatory (periodic and non-periodic) movement, carried out both in pitch and through a combination of basic strokes and specific sound production techniques: various kinds of *vibrato*, *tremolo* (including *frullato* and *quasi bariolage*), trills (including flageolet ones), *transitional forms sul ponticello*

[19] Amrakhova, A. A. (Ed.). (2009). Sovremennost' i prostranstvo tradicii / Interv'yu s Vladimirom Tarnopol'skim [Modernity and the Space of Tradition / Interview with Vladimir Tarnopolsky]. In Amrakhova A. A. (Ed.), *Sovremennaya muzykal'naya kul'tura. Poisk smysla: Izbrannye interv'yu i esse o muzyke i muzykantah* [*Contemporary Musical Culture. Searching for Meaning: Selected Interviews and Essays on Music and Musicians*]. Kompozitor, p. 141.

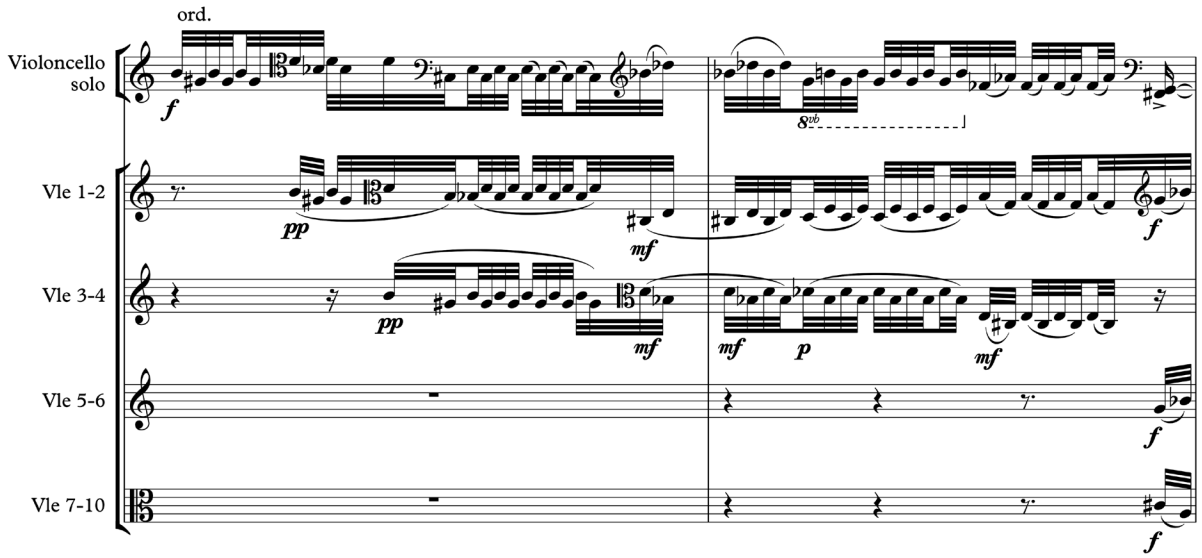
/ *ordinario*, *sul tasto* / *sul ponticello*, *flautando* / *ordinario*, *luft vibrato* / *press ordinario*, *con sordino* / *senza sordino*;

— based on the cyclic principle of beats, realised in the form of rhythmic figuration, including with the help of non-traditional playing methods: first of all, these are various forms of ostinato (*Example 2*), as well as a technique designated as *quasi Schwebungen* and providing for a special technique of shaking and pushing the bow;

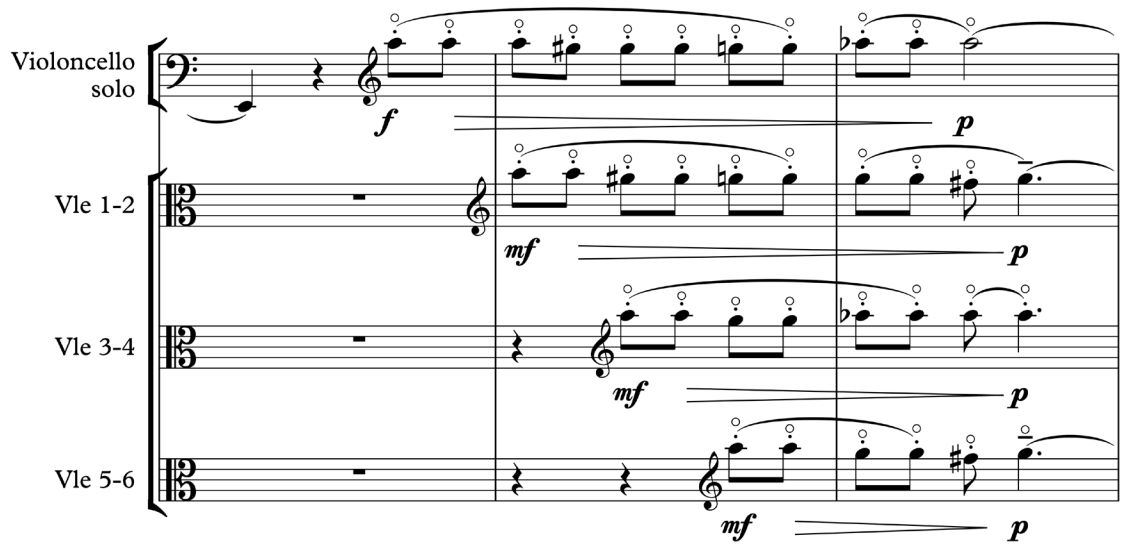
— imitating reverberation (*quasi reverberato*) and the phenomena of sound diffraction and interference: micropolyphonic complexes (*Examples 3, 4*), linear counterpoint timbre-sounds (*Example 5*).



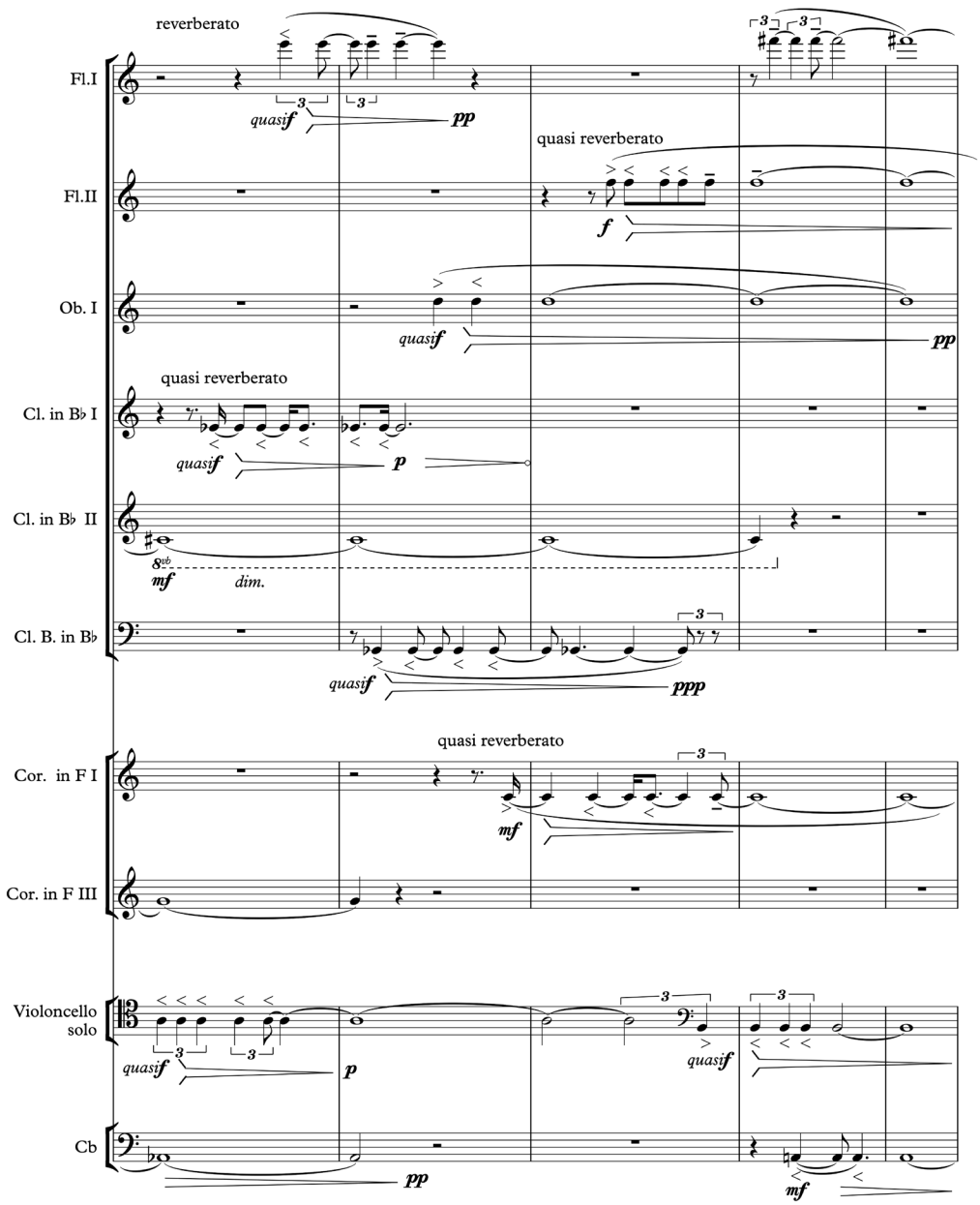
Example 2. V. Tarnopolsky. *...Le vent des mots qu'il n'a pas dits*, mm. 156–159



Example 3. V. Tarnopolsky. *...Le vent des mots qu'il n'a pas dits*, mm. 130–131



Example 4. V. Tarnopolsky. *...Le vent des mots qu'il n'a pas dits*, mm. 228–230



Example 5. V. Tarnopolsky. *...Le vent des mots qu'il n'a pas dits*, mm. 255–259

Variations on the idea of time-breathing involving the various states of the sound matter of the piece demonstrate the living "germination" of its internal form. In this continuous process, the procedures of crystallisation and melting of the sound "substance" are equalised in rights: the weightless *tremolo* in the mode of rhythmic braking "materialises" into an ostinato figure, whereupon the dense cluster disintegrates into airy harmonics. The continuity of the transformations of musical substance cancels any oppositions; the dichotomy of chronometry and chronoametry — the main semantic conflict of the future *Foucault's Pendulum*[20] — is smoothed out to the utmost. In the absence of a pronounced "centre", the multidirectionality of sound flows, connected to each other "through the 'root system'"[21], contributes to the birth of a special quality of musical matter, the meaning of which is conveyed by the composer through the concept of *sound magma*. In a number of texts and interviews, Tarnopolsky speaks of attempts to find a certain "*metastyle*, in the sound magma of which any potential certainty of certain idioms would be washed away by sonorous waves of *harmony-timbre-noise*".[22]

[20] "I tried to construct my work on the basis of a comparison of two contrasting types of musical matter: music as free ametrical breathing and music as polychronic mechanical movement, and also, accordingly, two types of time – continuous and mechanically discrete. It was especially interesting for me to explore the processes of the emergence and development of each type of music, as well as to trace the stages of transition from one to another." Tarnopolsky V. G. (n.d.). *Foucault's Pendulum* for chamber orchestra (Comments). https://tarnopolski.ru/ru/works.html#foucault

[21] Tarnopolsky, V. G. (2000). Wenn die Zeit über die Ufer tritt. *Music Academy*, (2), 15–17, p. 17.

[22] Ibid. "I am looking for music in the sound magma of which consonance and dissonance would be melted, contradictions between musical sounds and noises, harmony and timbre, acoustic and electronic instruments would be removed" [from the commentary on the programme of the anniversary concert, which took place in the Rachmaninoff Hall of the Moscow Conservatory on November 11, 2005]. "Some musicologist said: You began music from the beginning, pushing off from the breath. It seems to me that this is such a simple idea, not even an idea, it is my nature. What is it based on? On the sound magma, where everything is absolutely intertwined. At the core is not just the sense of time, but how it develops through timbre. This sensual side is very important to me." Amrakhova, A. A. (Ed.). (2009). Sovremennost' i prostranstvo tradicii / Interv'yu s Vladimirom Tarnopol'skim [Modernity and the Space of Tradition / Interview with Vladimir Tarnopolsky]. In Amrakhova A. A. (Ed.), *Sovremennaya muzykal'naya kul'tura. Poisk smysla: Izbrannye interv'yu i esse o muzyke i muzykantah* [*Contemporary Musical Culture. Searching for Meaning: Selected Interviews and Essays on Music and Musicians*]. Kompozitor, p. 141.

The decisive role of timbre and dynamic parameters in the implementation of the compositional idea in *...Le vent des mots...* as the composer's version of *Klangfarbenkomposition* is obvious. All the designated structures, claiming the status of leitmotifs and microthemes, are based on the reduction of the pitch component in favour of the colour of the sound, i.e., the timbral quality of the musical fabric. This approach is relevant in relation to both the simplest motives — single- and double-voiced ones — deployed in a horizontal plane, as well as in complexly organised timbre-sounds that form a sonorous vertical. Thematic functions are given to the performing touch, the sound production technique, the agogic "gesture", the textural configuration, and even the dynamic sine wave — everything that can detail the phonic scale contributes to the identification of timbre and its perception as an object.

The weakening of the linear-melodic connections within the timbre groups is compensated by their extreme "tension" in the solo cello part. In the context of the polyphony of micro-motives, the "endless" cantilena in its development with its vocal-speech expression is perceived as an expression of a sensual, existential experience. Only in measure 159 (3 measures before the R. 13) this Bergsonian of "*la mélodie continue de la vie intérieure*"[23] is first broken by a pause, subsequently increasingly destructuring its own "word", causing its "disembodiment" to the level of a phoneme.

In Tarnopolsky's composition, physical and psychological time are two fundamentally different dimensions. The evolutionary transformation of musical matter, which is crowned by an extended culmination and completed by a decline, changes in texture, a consistent change of processes in the field of textural and timbre construction — everything that constitutes the real sound existence of the piece and flows along its directed and irreversible temporal "arrow", can be recorded in diagrams

[23] Henri Bergson use of the image of melody to interpret the concept of duration (durée) is key to his philosophy. The fusion and interpenetration of melodic segments is associated by him with the continuity of a person's inner experience as an "indivisible continuity of changeability" ("*la continuité indivisible de changement*"). The full version of the quotation, taken from his second Oxford lecture, "*La Perception du changement*", is: "Mais la vérité est qu'il n'y a ni un substratum rigide immuable ni des états distincts qui y passent comme des acteurs sur une scène. Il y a simplement la mélodie continue de notre vie intérieure, — mélodie qui se poursuit, indivisible, du commencement à la fin de notre existence consciente. Notre personnalité est cela même" [10, p. 26].

and graphic figures. The true dramaturgy of *...Le vent des mots...* is revealed not in the externally manifested structure of the artistic text, but rather in what becomes its "internal form", reflecting the mechanisms of meaning generation. The time of psychological perception of a work ("*peau du temps*", according to Grisey[24]) is the time of experiencing a lasting *sensation*, an experience that has the properties of unevenness and cyclicality, being capable of stretching and slowing down. This is the time associated with a subject going through the existential experience of realising the finiteness of existence. Within the boundaries of this experience, time is forever lost, no longer being defined by duration, but *remaining*, together with the final sound gesture *al niente* "exhaling" into the void.

The drying up of sound on the final pages of the score is almost visualised: beginning from the number 17 (measure 182), the process of "braking" of the form is accompanied by the "switching off" of the voices and the discharge of dynamic intensity — the fermata zone expands, the pulsation frequency decreases, and the successive enlargement of rhythmic units in the presentation of the written *tremolo* step-by-step slows down the overall rhythm of the entire structure. The movement turns into statics, while the monotonous motifs stretch out and "hang" to form polyostinato complexes — this is exactly how time will "freeze" in the finale of each of the three scenes of Tarnopolsky's opera *Wenn die Zeit über die Ufer tritt* (1999). Along with the immersion into the "dark" timbre and the lowering of the general tessitura relief to the extreme point of the range (*C*), the soloist also slides. The final ostinato of the cello sounds like a distant allusion to Berg's *Hauptrhythmus* from *Lulu* — a weakening pulse, a dying heartbeat, an exit into the weightlessness of an objectless world?..

In place of a conclusion

Just as a word entails a trail of contextual meanings, the lexical elements of a musical text appeal to associativity to form the semantics of the text. Instead of the usual spatial coordinates — depth, height, width — there arises something similar to what Hermann Hesse called "*der Dimension zuviel*", characterising with this definition

[24] In one of the texts fundamental for understanding the spectral method, Grisey proposes a classification of the temporal levels of composition. In designating in the composition the zones of structure, texture (actually sound matter) and correlation with the "*temps de l'auditeur*," he resorts to the metaphors "*squelette du temps,*" "*chair du temps*" and "*peau du temps*" [11].

the ability to penetrate with thought and feeling into the secrets of a person's inner world, "*jenseits der Zeit und des Scheins*".[25] The artist looks deep into consciousness to create an image woven from the imaginary and the known, the illusory and the real — everything exists on an equal footing, moves, everything is a living diachronic integrity.

"Breath as the first gesture of life and its last sign"[26] — this philosophical image so important for Vladimir Tarnopolsky in *...Le vent des mots...* — takes on the appearance of plastic and changeable sound matter. The play is perceived as a metaphor of a sigh; the basis of its dramaturgy is the textural metamorphoses of the suspiration figure, reminiscent of the process of revealing a hidden formula. The final transformation of this key "lexeme" into the figure *aposiopesis* ("silence"), expressed by the pause of all voices, symbolises death and the limit beyond which what has been heard and experienced turns into memory. But isn't the very process of the piece's sound construction generated by the experience of the past — this attempt to capture the substance of the unspoken — the elusive sensory sensation? And isn't the philosopher, the author of the concept of temporal retrospection, right when he asserts: "Toute perception est déjà mémoire. *Nous ne percevons, pratiquement, que le passé*, le présent pur étant l'insaisissable progrès du passé rongeant l'avenir" [12, p. 163]?

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Operas by Poul Ruders: Artistic ideas, dramaturgy, style

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Abstract. This article focuses on the operatic work of contemporary Danish composer Poul Ruders. His oeuvre includes five operas: *Tycho* (1986), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1998), *Proces Kafka* (2005), *Selma Jezková* (2007), and *The Thirteenth Child* (2016). The article examines their key themes, compositional features, dramaturgy, and musical language. It is noted that the Danish composer favors dramatic stories reflecting contemporary social issues (gender inequality, misogyny, power, religion, guilt)

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and offering insight into the psychological world of complex human relationships. The plots of his operas are often ambivalent, lending themselves to conflict-driven dramaturgy. Virtually all his works are based on the principle of artistic duality, expressed through temporal contrasts (old world vs. new world, past vs. present) and artistic contrasts (life vs. creation, reality vs. dream). This conceptual duality results in stylistic pluralism. Ruders' operas blend high and low genres, classical and popular art, tonality and atonality, speech and singing, sound and noise. The composer employs stylistic allusions and quotations, often deliberately creating a tension between the meaning of the quotation and its context. The article concludes that Ruders continues the traditions of Alban Berg's expressionist drama in his operatic work and serves as an heir to the ideas of pluralistic musical theatre pioneered by Bernd Alois Zimmermann.

Keywords: Poul Ruders, Paul Bentley, Margaret Atwood, Franz Kafka, Lars von Trier, *Tycho*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Proces Kafka*, *Selma Jezková*, *The Thirteenth Child*

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Музыкальное творчество рубежа XX–XXI столетий

Научная статья

Оперы Пола Рудерса: художественные идеи, драматургия, стиль

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Аннотация. В центре внимания статьи — оперное творчество современного датского композитора Пола Рудерса. Его перу принадлежат пять опер: «Тихо» (1986), «Рассказ служанки» (1998), «Процесс Кафки» (2005), «Сельма Ежкова» (2007), «Тринадцатое дитя» (2016). В статье рассматриваются их ключевые темы, особенности композиции, драматургии и музыкального языка. Отмечается, что датский мастер отдает предпочтение драматическим историям, отражающим проблемы современного общества (гендерное неравенство, мизогиния, власть, религия, чувство вины) и позволяющим исследовать психологический мир сложных человеческих взаимоотношений. Сюжетам его опер свойственна амбивалентность, обусловливающая обращение к конфликтному типу драматургии. Фактически все сочинения базируются на принципе художественного двоемирия, действующего в разрезах времени (старый мир — новый мир, прошлое — настоящее) и искусства (жизнь — творчество, реальность — мечта).

Следствием концепционной раздвоенности становится стилевой плюрализм. В операх Рудерса смешиваются высокие и низкие жанры, классическое и популярное искусство, тональность и атональность, речь и пение, звук и шум. Композитор использует стилевые аллюзии и цитирование, нередко прибегая к намеренному рассогласованию смыслового поля цитаты и контекста. В статье делаются выводы о том, что Рудерс продолжает развивать в своем оперном творчестве традиции экспрессионистской драмы Альбана Берга, а также выступает наследником идей плюралистического музыкального театра Бернда Алоиза Циммермана.

Ключевые слова: Пол Рудерс, Пол Бентли, Маргарет Этвуд, Франц Кафка, Ларс фон Триер, «Тихо», «Рассказ служанки», «Процесс Кафки», «Сельма Ежкова», «Тринадцатое дитя»

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Introduction

Poul Ruders is a contemporary Danish composer whose recognition in the West has steadily increased. He is the creator of original compositional techniques, such as the "change ringing" method and the minimorphosis technique, which he describes as a personal form of "intellectual minimalism" (see [1; 2] for details). Ruders' body of work includes five operas, six symphonies, over twenty orchestral pieces, numerous instrumental concertos, as well as chamber and choral music. His works are regularly performed in Europe and the USA and receive positive reviews from critics and audiences alike. In recent years, Russian musicology has also shown increasing interest in Ruders' music [3, p. 186].

Ruders' operas have achieved the greatest success to date. They have been staged in Copenhagen, London, Munich, Umeå, New York, Santa Fe, Minnesota, and many other cities worldwide. His most famous work is *The Handmaid's Tale*, which premiered at the Royal Danish Opera in 2000. The recording of this production by Dacapo Records was nominated for a Grammy and received the Cannes Classical Award in 2002 as the best work by a living composer. Since then, the opera has been performed repeatedly around the world.

The growing interest of musical theatres in Ruders' operas makes a closer scholarly examination relevant, especially since this area of his work has yet to receive comprehensive coverage in musicology, being addressed only in a few articles on individual works [4; 5].

Themes of the Operas

Ruders first turned to musical theatre in 1986. Over forty years, he created five operas: *Tycho* (1986), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1998), *Proces Kafka* (2005), *Selma Jezková* (2007), and *The Thirteenth Child* (2016).

His first opera, *Tycho*, was considered by Ruders himself an unsuccessful attempt, due partly to the libretto and a less compelling theme. The central character of the opera was the Danish astronomer and astrologer Tycho Brahe (1546–1601), known for his highly precise astronomical observations, including the recording of a supernova

(the so-called *Stella Nova*). The plot focused on Brahe's relationship with Johannes Kepler and included a discussion between the astronomers on the laws of planetary motion. In the opera's brief synopsis, Ruders emphasized that the confrontation between the two scientists formed the core of the dramatic narrative:

> Tycho is in severe need of an intelligent challenge. Which he gets, and with a disastrous result for himself. The encouraging encounter with Kepler turns into Tycho's scientific and earthly death verdict. Slowly Tycho realizes that his own conception of the Earth as the indisputable axes of the Universe is shattered by Kepler's theory <...>. The ancient picture of the Universe collapses, Tycho feels deceived by Kepler who leaves the castle <...>. But they meet again and reunite... at Tycho's death bed.[1]

The libretto, written by Henrik Bjelke, combined texts in Danish and Latin. In addition to historical figures (Kepler, Brahe, King Christian IV of Denmark, Emperor Rudolf II), allegorical characters, Urania (the Muse) and Time, were introduced to comment on the astronomers' debates. Some Danish musicologists (Ole Nørlyng, Per Erland Rasmussen) considered the libretto heavy and difficult to set to music, describing it as "a drama to be read only" [1, p. 182]. Indeed, the monologues and dialogues were filled with philosophical, scientific, and religious reflections, written in the elevated style of Renaissance poetry. Not surprisingly, alongside singing, the opera included spoken dialogues.

Ruders later admitted in an interview that writing Tycho taught him what an opera composer should avoid. Most importantly, he clarified his approach to subject matter: musical theatre should serve as a center for socially critical activity, with social or psychological drama at its core. Henceforth, Ruders preferred stories that would not merely excite but profoundly move audiences while highlighting contemporary issues. The themes of his subsequent operas addressed gender inequality, misogyny, power, religion, and the nature of creativity.

[1] Ruders, P. (n. d.). Poul Ruders. Tycho (1986). *Wise Music Classical*. https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/21492/Tycho--Poul-Ruders/

His second opera, *The Handmaid's Tale*, was based on the eponymous dystopian novel by Canadian author Margaret Atwood, depicting a society governed by distorted religious laws. Set in the imagined Republic of Gilead, created in former U.S. territory after environmental disasters and declining birth rates, women were stripped of all rights and divided into classes: Wives, Aunts, Marthas, and Handmaids. The latter were forced to bear children for the Gileadean elite. Through the story of the protagonist, Offred, Ruders explored issues of female identity and oppression under a theocratic regime.

> Ruders said in an interview: "This book has it all — forbidden love, hope, desperation, violence, tenderness, public executions, grandiose processions. It is a vast drama all the way through, one that begs to be set to music. Moreover, it is a highly visual novel. Full of colours: red, blue, green; the guardians are in grey. It is fit for the stage" [1, p. 377].

The opera's libretto was written by the British actor, singer, and writer Paul Bentley. It is worth noting that, beginning with *The Handmaid's Tale*, all of Ruders' subsequent musical-theatrical works were written in English, an important point that reflects the composer's desire to overcome the language barrier and reach as wide an audience as possible. Nevertheless, this focus on accessibility did not prevent him from including texts in Latin and employing verbal counterpoint, with several scenes drawing on a mix of different texts.

Themes of existential human experience, social alienation, guilt, and communication difficulties are fully explored in *Proces Kafka*. Ruders continued collaborating with Bentley, adapting Franz Kafka's novel *The Trial*, which had been staged in various operatic adaptations in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (notable examples include Gunther Schuller's *The Visitation* [1966]; Luca Mosca's *K.* [2000]; Philippe Manoury's *K.* [2000]; Salvatore Sciarrino's *La porta della legge*

[2009]; Philip Glass' *The Trial* [2014] (for more details see [6]). Ruders and Bentley's originality lay in linking the novel's plot with Kafka's private life, especially his relationships with Felice Bauer and Grete Bloch, an observation first noted by Nobel laureate Elias Canetti [7, p. 168]. In 1969, he published the book *Der andere Prozess: Kafkas Briefe an Felice (Kafka's Other Trial: The Letters to Felice)*, in which he attempted to demonstrate that Kafka's engagement to and break-up with Felice were reflected in the novel. In particular, according to Canetti, "the engagement became the arrest in the first chapter, the 'trial' — the execution scene in the last" [6].

Fragments of Kafka's letters to Felice were included in the opera's libretto, forming the basis for the extensive prologue as well as the counter-scenes that alternated with scenes from the novel. The reinforcement of these links and parallels was aided by role doubling. Thus, the parts of Kafka and Josef K. were intended for the same singer (lyric-dramatic tenor). The same applied to the roles of Felice and Miss Bürstner (lyric-dramatic soprano), and Grete, Miss Montag, and Leni (lyric-dramatic mezzo-soprano). In this way, the opera contained at least two love triangles featuring characters doubled in this manner. The connections established between fictional characters and real-life figures allowed the opera to illustrate how lived experiences are transformed within the artistic world of the writer.

The absurdity, which is an integral feature of Kafka's creative universe, received a stage expression. The opera included three mute zanies who grimaced, danced, laughed, and carried letters from one end of the stage to the other, among other antics; their presence introduced elements of farce into the dramatic story. The composer noted that, alongside the novel's pessimistic view of the world, Kafka's work is filled with black humor and satire, so he intentionally made the opera balance between tragedy and comedy, horror and laughter.

For his fourth opera, Ruders drew inspiration from cinema. The libretto of *Selma Jezková*, prepared by Henrik Engelbrecht, was based on the screenplay of Lars von Trier's film *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). Interest in the world of screen arts represents a notable trend in the development of 21st-century opera and increasingly captures the attention of contemporary researchers [8].

Ruders became the first composer to bring Trier's experimental cinema onto the academic stage.[2]

The Danish director, as is well known, has acquired a controversial reputation as a genius-psychopath, a disturber of public calm who strives to wrench the spectator out of their comfort zone and trap them in peculiar ethical snares. *Dancer in the Dark* formed the concluding part of his *Golden Heart* trilogy, which included *Breaking the Waves* (1996) and *Idioterne* (*The Idiots*, 1998).

In various interviews, Ruders noted that what attracted him above all to the film was its dramatic element: "The most important thing, though, is the EMOTIONS! I repeat: the EMOTIONS! That's where music is far and away superior to the other arts. There has to be a strong human story behind the realistic scenario, as there is in both Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* and in Lars von Trier's film *Dancer in the Dark*. That's why I chose exactly those two stories"[3]. The composer deliberately drew no parallels with the film per se, using its plot as if it were a book. It would seem, however, that along with its emotional potential, the film's problematic themes also played no small role for him. Ruders noted that the boundary between altruism and egoism in this story is extremely thin, exposing a moral dilemma: by sacrificing herself for her son, Selma imposes an intolerable burden on his shoulders. Does he need the sight gained at the cost of his mother's life?

Ruders' most recent opera to date, *The Thirteenth Child*, stands apart in the composer's oeuvre. Unlike the preceding works, whose themes touch on social and ideological problems and whose narratives are shaded in dark tones, it is distinguished by an optimistic finale. The libretto, written by Becky and David Starobin, draws on the Grimm Brothers' tale *The Twelve Brothers*, in which, as is proper to the genre, good triumphs over evil. Ideas of fidelity

[2] In addition to Ruders, three other composers have turned to the films of the Danish director. In 2016, Missy Mazzoli, commissioned by the Philadelphia Opera, composed the opera *Breaking the Waves*; in 2023, the German composer Gordon Kampe presented his adaptation of Trier's controversial film *Dogville*; and the Swedish composer Mikael Karlsson created an opera based on *Melancholia*.

[3] Beyer, A. (n.d.). Selma's Songs. *Poul Ruders. Selma Jezková (Dancer in the Dark)*. https://www.dacapo-records.dk/en/recordings/ruders-selma-jezkova-dancer-in-the-dark

and love, which help overcome any hardships and trials, resonate importantly in the opera. At the same time, the story is filled with sinister, at times dramatic, events that afford the composer broad imaginative scope. These include Drokan's slander, Hjarne's paranoia, Gertrude's death, the transformation of Lyra's brothers into ravens, and Benjamin's death in a duel with Drokan.

Thus, as the review undertaken shows, the themes of Ruders' operatic works reflect the problems and contradictions of contemporary society while concentrating on the psychological world of complex human relationships. The main characters of his works, whether historical figures or fictional persons, are extraordinary individuals experiencing deep emotional crises or finding themselves in difficult life situations. Tycho Brahe suffers the collapse of his scientific ideals; Offred lives in an atmosphere of psychological and physical violence; Kafka is consumed by a sense of guilt; Selma Jezková unconsciously seeks death; and the fairy-tale Lyra chooses a sacrificial path. Moreover, most of these characters (with the exception of Lyra) cannot be called unambiguously positive. Brahe, in reality, is a narcissistic, embittered despot unwilling to acknowledge his scientific defeat. Kafka is portrayed as a mentally unbalanced neurotic whose actions toward Felice and Grete are immoral. Selma, in effect, commits indirect suicide, burdening her son with guilt. Offred pays in the present for a past affair with a married man.

Composition and Dramaturgy

In his work, Ruders builds on operatic models developed in the classical-romantic tradition while introducing a number of authorial features related to the specifics of each plot, its realization, and the particularities of musical dramaturgy. As a result, practically every composition has a distinct genre orientation: Ruders himself described *Tycho* as a tragic operetta, *The Thirteenth Child* carries the subtitle "fairytale opera", *The Handmaid's Tale* is a dystopian opera, *Kafka's Trial* can be considered a tragic farce, and *Selma Jezková* is defined as a cinema-script drama (or drama based on a cinematic plot).

The orientation toward different genre models dictates the variety of compositional solutions. Ruders' operas include one-act works (*Proces Kafka*, *Selma Jezková*), two-act works (*The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Thirteenth Child*), and a three-act opera (*Tycho*). The originality of each structure directly depends on the artistic concept. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are the compositional structures of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Proces Kafka*. Initially, Bentley intended to make the structure of *The Handmaid's Tale* completely symmetrical. By condensing Atwood's novel without significant loss of meaning, he fit the entire story into two acts with a prologue, prelude, and epilogue. Each act was further divided into 15 scenes that corresponded to each other in terms of location and events. In the final version, full symmetry was not maintained, but partial correspondences remained. Overall, the symmetry helped reveal thematic and symbolic intersections arising between characters and situations, while simultaneously illustrating how our past shapes the present and the future [5].

In the one-act composition of *Proces Kafka*, a prelude precedes the main action, demonstrating the history of Kafka's relationships with Felice and Grete. The main action itself is built on parallel narration. The alternation of scenes and counter-scenes, which shifts the viewer's attention from the events of the novel to the twists of the author's private life, forms two independent dramaturgical and stage planes.

Ruders' operas are marked by a unity of dramaturgical techniques. The composer is foremost an heir to the traditions of Wagnerian musical drama. He adheres to the principle of a freely structured scene, combining monologues, dialogues, ensembles, and choral episodes. The development of material is driven by a variety of leitmotifs, leit-chords, and recurring themes. Orchestral interludes are often inserted between scenes, sometimes reaching genuine symphonic proportions. At the same time, Ruders rejects orchestral introductions: only *Selma Jezková* opens with an overture, while *Tycho* begins with an instrumental ritornello labeled *Hofmusik* (*Court Music*). The other operas omit this traditional component of musical theatre.

The composer pays special attention to the orchestral ensemble. In his early work, he relied on accompaniment typical of the opera genre at its inception (the action of *Tycho* is set in 1601). Instead of a full orchestra, Ruders used an instrumental ensemble including clarinets *in B flat*, *in E flat*, bass clarinet, French horn, harp, guitar, violin, double bass, piano, harpsichord, celesta, DX-7 synthesizer, and a variety of percussion instruments (tambourine, pedal-bass and snare drums, vibraphone, marimba, timpani, tam-tam, metal-wind chimes, suspended cymbals, antique cymbals, tubular bells, and others, including unusual instruments such as a talking drum and hi-hat). As is evident, the instrumental accompaniment combined both historical and modern instruments; this duality reflects the ambivalence of the world (old and new), embodied in the views of Brahe and Kepler.

Ruders expanded to a triple orchestra in *The Handmaid's Tale*, adding organ, digital piano, and an Akai sampler capable of reproducing rare instruments (such as waterphone, kalimba, didgeridoo, etc.) as well as various noises (frightening sounds, scraping, humming, hissing, footsteps, and more). A quadruple orchestra was employed in *Proces Kafka*.

The unusual sound of *Selma Jezková* and *The Thirteenth Child* is due, on one hand, to the omission of flutes and oboes (replaced by saxophones), and on the other, to a broader use of synthesizers. In *The Thirteenth Child*, synthesizers create the sounds of various instruments (harpsichord, church organ, guitar, accordion, etc.) without additional musicians, and contribute to a mystical, magical atmosphere[4] (forest scenes, the mother's ghost, transformation of the brothers into ravens, etc.). In *Selma Jezková*, synthesizers are often used to reinforce the string section.

The emphasis on drama leads the composer to adopt a conflict-oriented type of dramaturgy. Ambivalence is present in the plots of virtually all works, making the principle of dual worlds the dramatic core. As is known, this type of conflict emerged

[4] Ruders also resorts to special acoustic effects. In the scene with the ghost of Gertrude, a pre-recorded countertenor voice is projected into the auditorium through speakers and reinforced with multiple echoes. The impression of the "non-living" voice is enhanced by its juxtaposition with ordinary singing (Lyra's soprano).

in Romantic art and took many individual forms, each with its own coordinates and artistic toolkit [9]. In Ruders' operas, the dual-world concept functions primarily along the axes of time and art, usually without affecting space. For example, *Tycho* is based on the antithesis "old world – new world," embodied in Brahe's and Kepler's cosmological views. A temporal dual-world model is also used in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The opera unfolds across two temporal planes: present (life in Gilead) and past (memories of the former world, often chaotic), whose events frequently intersect in the same location[5]. The narrative strategy entails several radical solutions for musical theatre. Offred's role is divided between two singers, representing different aspects of her consciousness and different temporal perspectives. Constant flashbacks produce a dual-stage effect: in many cases, the stage is split into two parts reflecting different temporal events, occurring both sequentially and simultaneously. The climax of this duality is Offred's aria from Scene 9 of Act II, *How could you so betray her?*, a duet of Offred in the past and Offred in the present.

The dual-world structure of *Proces Kafka* is defined by the antithetical model of "life versus creativity," reflecting the twofold nature of the writer's world, in which his phobias undergo artistic transformation. As in the case of Offred, this leads to the emergence of a double (Kafka/Josef K.); but here Ruders adopts a different strategy, the two roles are performed by the same singer. The composer also turns to the possibilities of stage counterpoint. An example is the conclusion of the Prologue (the Prelude), where Kafka and Grete's engagement and love scene are fused into a single moment. The immorality and absurdity of the situation are emphasized not only scenically (the characters make love in full view of their gathered relatives, including Felice) but musically as well, the background to their actions is a chorus of guests singing Psalm 127 in Hebrew, a text that speaks of God's blessing and family happiness bestowed upon one who lives in fear of the Lord and walks in His ways.

[5] For instance, the Gilead brothel Jezebel is located in the hotel where Offred would meet with Luke.

A similar dual-world structure appears in the opera *Selma Jezková*. As in Trier's film, the heroine inhabits two realms: the real and the imagined. A passionate admirer of Hollywood musicals, she frequently withdraws into fantasies, constructing in her mind an artificial, glossy world without flaws, a world where everyone is carefree and happy. Here, the conflict is closest to Romantic aesthetics, reflecting the tension between dream and reality. In Trier's film, it is realized both visually and aurally. The artistic space is clearly divided through the mode of delivery: speech (reality) versus singing (the vocal-dance numbers). Most of the film is shot with a live (handheld) camera in a muted color palette, which lends the events a documentary quality. The musical episodes, by contrast, use a static (tripod) camera and heightened color saturation. Ruders, however, differentiates the two worlds through stylistic means.

The dramaturgy of *The Thirteenth Child* differs substantially from that of the earlier operas. Despite an antagonist in the figure of Drokan, this work is essentially free of ambivalence; its dramatic development obeys a classical logic, "from darkness to light." The trajectory of this movement is palpable on the acoustic level when comparing the beginning and the end of the opera. The work opens with the despair of Hjarne, who has believed Drokan's slander. Notably, in the score, alongside the indication of the vocal type (soprano, tenor, etc.), an original emotional-imagistic epithet is added that designates a defining trait of the character[6]. King Frohagord's voice, for example, is marked *paranoid bass*. The orchestral accompaniment draws heavily on the low register (bass and contrabass clarinets, bassoons, trombones and tuba, cellos and double basses); the musical material is dark and tonally unstable. The opera concludes, however, with the sound of organ, high strings, and horns reminiscent of pealing bells. The ensemble of singers and the chorus intone in unison a vision of healing from sorrow, the restoration of hope, unity, and love. The leading

[6] Earlier operas appealed to traditional voice types: dramatic soprano, lyric soprano, lyric-dramatic soprano, heroic tenor, buffo bass, and so on. In *Proces Kafka*, an unusual designation appears for the washerwoman's voice – "sluttish" mezzo. In *The Thirteenth Child*, each character's voice receives a specific designation: Gertrude is a tragic contralto, Drokan is a scheming bass-baritone, Frederic is a proud tenor, Benjamin is a good-hearted tenor, Corbin is a worried bass, and Toke is a worried tenor.

lines are assigned to Lyra, whose voice is described as an *innocent soprano*. The music is set in D-flat major, a key long associated with the semantic field of happiness, love, and the ideal. The thematic material is borrowed from the first scene of Act II, where the brothers, together with Lyra, sang of beauty, love, and devotion to their mother.

Stylistic Pluralism

The conceptual duality forming the dramaturgical foundation of Ruders' operas also plays a defining role in his stylistic strategy. A crucial aspect of all compositions, with the exception of *The Thirteenth Child*, is stylistic pluralism.

For instance, the opposition between the "old" and "new" worlds, reflected in the confrontation of Brahe's and Kepler's views, is primarily realized through a complex array of musical-stylistic means. Brahe is characterized by arias in the spirit of Monteverdi. "Tycho, so to speak, dies throughout the entire performance, which is why I turned him into a singing mausoleum, implying pomp and archaic tension," Ruders commented [10, p. 296]. Kepler, in contrast, speaks in the language of "modernist music" [ibid.]. In addition to stylistic references to the Renaissance, Baroque, and the contemporary world, the composition contains elements of music hall and operetta culture (for example, in the depiction of Brahe's servant, Jeppe the dwarf), traits of the "Russian style" (in the characterization of Tycho's wife, Christina), and Viennese waltzes and mazurkas (in the dialogue between Tycho and Emperor Rudolf II). Ruders somewhat ironically described his pluralistic strategy as follows:

> For me, a significant part of any musical experience is connected with 'internal images' and rapidly changing associations, so when I began working, I had no choice but to try to offer a box of assorted chocolates, in which each delightful piece corresponds to a stylistic facet that underscores the mood of the current flow of action [10, p. 296].

According to Rasmussen, the use of stylistic clichés created an ironic distance in the music of *Tycho*, so "the ideological drama was doomed to fail as a serious opera" [1, p. 183]. Subsequently, the composer agreed that his work hovers between "immense sadness and extreme ridicule," representing a "tragic operetta"[7].

A wide stylistic palette is present in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The musical language of the opera is defined by at least three different stylistic layers: sacred hymns, representing the internal politics of Gilead; jazz music, used in scenes set in the Jezebel brothel; and expressionism, reflecting the disharmony of Offred's inner and outer worlds. Among these, expressionism functions as the leading stylistic domain.

The opera is filled with quotations and allusions; in their use, the composer follows the strategy of the literary original. The intertextual space of Atwood's novel is permeated with citations and reminiscences of texts from the Old and New Testaments, which are invoked by the Gilead regime. However, in the hands of the political elite, the interpretation of the Scriptures always acquires a distorted meaning. Quoted fragments are often removed from context, taken literally, or even falsified. Ruders' handling of quotations is based on the principle of dissonance between the semantic level of the quotation and its original source. For example, the composer incorporates the Christian hymn *Amazing Grace*, considered the unofficial anthem of the United States, into the opera. The text of the original celebrates divine grace descending upon a person and cleansing them of spiritual blindness. In the opera, however, the context of the song is always linked to sexual activity. Ruders calls the theme of *Amazing Grace* "sickly, hypocritical" [1, p. 378], designating it as a leitmotif of sex, both "licit," undertaken in the name of the fundamentalist Christian regime, and forbidden (vicious, sinful). The dynamic interaction between the semantic field of the quotation and the musical context helps Ruders expose the hypocrisy of Gilead's policies and its inversion of Christian values [5].

[7] Poul Ruders. Tycho. In *Wise Music Classical*. Retrieved October 26, 2025, from https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/21492/Tycho--Poul-Ruders/.

Among other quotations subjected to semantic and musical distortion are the Protestant chorale *Wer hat dich so geschlagen* from Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, appearing in Scene 16 of Act II, and the refrain of the famous song *Tea for Two* from Vincent Youmans' musical *No, No, Nanette*, opening Scene 11 of Act II. In the first case, the chorale is sung by a male choir *bocca chiusa* with organ accompaniment, while simultaneously the string section of the orchestra plays the chorale with an eighth-note delay, and each note is extended by a quarter of its original value, producing a temporal divergence between the two layers (chorale and orchestra). In the second case, Ruders preserves the harmonic support and rhythmic formula of the refrain of *Tea for Two* but alters some intervals and, in essence, inverts the main motif. In both cases, a dynamic coupling arises between the quotation and the context. Bach chorale underpins the brutal murder of a man in the Center for Salvation, while the light jazz song about idyllic happiness for two lovers plays during a scene of forced sexual activity. Ruders' strategy aims to recontextualize cultural associations of quoted material and to provoke a sense of psychological discomfort in the listener confronted with the contradiction between what is seen and what is heard. References to widely known music, semantically distorted, also serve as a reminder of bygone eras and of the spiritual purity and innocence irretrievably lost to humanity.

In *Proces Kafka*, expressionism, as in *The Handmaid's Tale*, becomes the dominant style. Exalted agitation and nervous tension constitute the prevailing type of musical expression. At the same time, a distinct stylistic layer of the opera consists of passages in the spirit of klezmer music (for example, in the engagement scene in the Prologue) and dance melodies reminiscent of Hollywood film music (scenes with Miss Bürstner).

The confrontation between dream and reality in *Selma Jezková* is also created through various stylistic means, with the composer juxtaposing popular music against expressionism. The opera's intertextual space consists of references to musicals, with quotations and allusions being both musical and strictly verbal. For instance, Selma's very first words in the opera, *So long, farewell*, are lines from the eponymous song from *The Sound of Music*, but Ruders sets the text

to his own melody. A musical allusion to the song *Edelweiss* from the same musical appears in Selma's phrase *I remember thinking to myself* (Scene 2), when she recalls her life in Prague. The opening motif of Selma's monologue *Hear the Magic* (Scene 1), is based on the refrain of the song *Ol' Man River* from the musical *Show Boat* (1927). Unlike in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the semantic field of this quotation does not contradict the context but deepens it. The song's text addresses hard labor and the social position of African Americans. Its central image, the Mississippi River, calm and indifferent, contrasts with the lives of African Americans, full of deprivation and hardship. This social subtext and the contrast between the two worlds correlate with Selma's life situation as a Czech immigrant forced to work from dawn to dusk in a factory.

Ruders' most recent opera, *The Thirteenth Child*, differs stylistically from his previous works. It lacks pronounced stylistic contrasts, with the composer organically combining atonal-dissonant elements with extended tonality. Reviews of the opera's production in Santa Fe noted the neo-Romantic orientation of Ruders' musical language. Atonal-dissonant elements often serve a vividly expressive function, for example, the chorus of mourners in Scene 2 of Act I, whose pointillistic, echoing texture between male and female voices imitates the sound of funeral bells; or the chorus of little princes in Scene 1 of the same act, based on clusters that reflect the cacophony of quarrelling children and, simultaneously, through their tense sound, pierce the consciousness of the anxious Hjarne, poisoned by Drokan's suspicions.

Conclusion

Despite the neo-Romantic and lyrical tendencies emerging in *The Thirteenth Child*, in his musical-theatrical work as a whole, Ruders primarily stands as an heir to the expressionist drama of Alban Berg. As with the great Austrian master, his music embodies an atmosphere of psycho-emotional tension, tragic hopelessness, often absurd existence, and social alienation. Stylistic pluralism does not prevent the expressionist mode from being the leading musical-stylistic type.

The engagement with various genres of domestic, popular, sacred, and other music introduces contrast into the dominantly emotionally tense sphere, highlighting the intensity of life's conflicts.

Ruders' operatic output can also be regarded as a further development of the ideas of pluralistic musical theater pioneered by Bernd Alois Zimmermann. Numerous parallels can be found between the Danish composer's works and Zimmermann's *Soldiers*: mixing of temporal events (*The Handmaid's Tale*) or mental events (*Proces Kafka*, *Selma Jezková*); collage of stylistically heterogeneous musical material; included quotations; diversity in vocal-executive techniques (singing onstage and offstage, speech, shouting, whispering); amplification and recording equipment (*The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Thirteenth Child*); orchestra expanded with unusual instruments; incorporated film footage (*The Handmaid's Tale*); and use of mimes and acrobats (the zanies in *Proces Kafka*). Ruders and Zimmermann are also united by their distinctive orientation toward cinematic aesthetics: essentially, all of their works approach the form of "film operas."

Thus, in the musical-theatrical works of the Danish composer, the traditional and the new, the familiar and the alien, the academic and the popular, the everyday and the artistic, the transient and the eternal converge. Despite the heterogeneity of the components listed, this synthesis is quite organic and defines one of the key qualities of Paul Ruders' operatic style.

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Paisiello e la Russia. Lettere al conte Voroncov, by G. Giuliano and P. De Simone*

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Abstract. This review presents the first volume of the new scholarly series *Correnti d'incontro tra Russia ed Europa* (University of Salerno, Italy), edited by Giuseppina Giuliano and Andrej B. Shishkin. The volume presents the first annotated edition of sixteen letters (1780–1816) from the Italian composer Giovanni Paisiello to the Russian diplomat and patron of the arts Count Semyon Romanovich Vorontsov, prepared by Giuseppina Giuliano and Paola De Simone and accompanied by an extensive critical apparatus.

Translated by Irina G. Latysheva

Keywords: Giovanni Paisiello, Count Semyon Romanovich Vorontsov, correspondence, Italian opera, Catherine II, the 18th-century Russian and Italian literary and cultural ties

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* **Paisiello e la Russia. Lettere al conte Voroncov, by G. Giuliano and P. De Simone. Roma: Valore Italiano Editore, 2024. 256 pages. ISBN 979-12-81584-09-9** (Correnti d'incontro tra Russia ed Europa / Collana diretta da G. Giuliano e A. Shishkin. Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici dell'Università di Salerno. Centro Studi e Ricerche V. Ivanov. Vol. 1 — Ottobre 2024)

Рецензии

Научная рецензия

Джулиано Дж., Де Симоне П. Паизиелло и Россия. Письма к графу Воронцову*

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Аннотация. В рецензии представлен первый том новой научной серии университета Салерно (Италия) «Встречные течения между Россией и Европой» под редакцией Дж. Джулиано и А. Б. Шишкина, включающий первое комментированное издание шестнадцати писем (1780–1816) итальянского композитора Дж. Паизиелло российскому дипломату и покровителю искусств графу С. Р. Воронцову, подготовленное Дж. Джулиано и П. Де Симоне и сопровождаемое богатым научным аппаратом.

Ключевые слова: Джованни Паизиелло, граф Семен Романович Воронцов, переписка, итальянская опера, Екатерина II, русско-итальянские литературные и культурные связи XVIII века

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Among this year's publications, special attention should be paid to the first volume of the series *Correnti d'incontro tra Russia ed Europa*, released in late 2024. Conceived by Salerno-based Russian studies scholars Giuseppina Giuliano and Andrej B. Shishkin, both leading specialists in the history of Russian literature and, in particular, the 18th-century Russian and Italian literary and cultural ties, the series is supported by International Scientific Committee, which includes prominent Slavists from universities in Italy, Poland, France and North America, as well as from the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The aim of the project *Correnti d'incontro tra Russia ed Europa* is to present concrete examples of cultural interaction, transmission, development and transformation of creative impulses across borders. The series will be based on annotated editions of primary sources (memoirs, articles, letters, diaries, etc.) illustrating cross-cultural interaction between Russia and European countries. It fits into the rich and fruitful tradition of Italian Russian studies and the study of Russian and Italian cultural ties. This purpose is best served by the annotated edition of the letters of Giovanni Paisiello (1740–1816) to Semyon Romanovich Vorontsov (1744–1832) — see *Illustration 1*.

The letters are preceded by an informative introductory essay by G. Giuliano, *Tra diplomazia e melomania: il conte Semen Romanovič Voroncov e Giovanni Paisiello*, which, drawing on a broad range of bibliographic and documentary sources, traces the history of the relationship between the two correspondents [1].

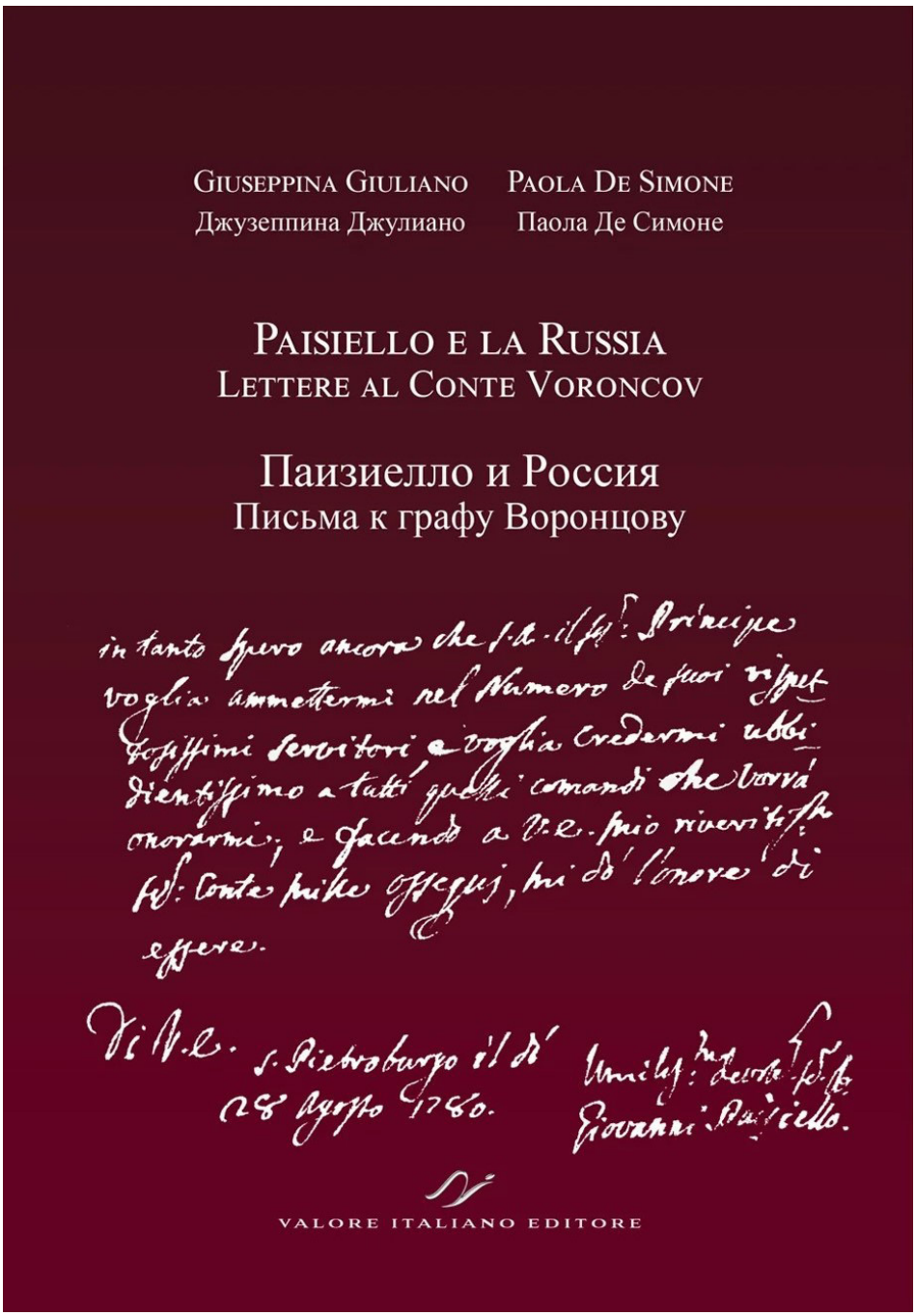

Illustration 1. Book cover

The topic of "Paisiello and Russia" has been studied for over two centuries.[1] The renowned Italian musician, who was acclaimed in the musical capitals of Europe and brilliantly successful on the St. Petersburg court stage (1776–1784), maintained a long-lasting correspondence with S. R. Vorontsov, a prominent Russian diplomat, patron of the arts, and passionate music lover. Paisiello shared with him his artistic ideas, reflections, and news. Vorontsov's wife, Ekaterina Alexeyevna Sinyavina (1759 or 1761–1784), a lady-in-waiting to Catherine II, was Paisiello's student, and he dedicated several works to her — a Concerto for Harpsichord and Orchestra and thirteen duets based on poems by Pietro Metastasio [2, p. 139].

The Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts holds 16 letters from Paisiello to Vorontsov, written in Italian. Three ones were previously published in the Vorontsov Prince's Archive (vol. XXX, 1884). The prince's response letters have not survived.

In the new edition, Paisiello's letters are accompanied by extensive footnotes, which are supplemented by rich supporting materials. Paola De Simone, one of the leading specialists in the history of 18th-century Italian musical theatre, examines the published letters in great detail against the backdrop of a vast body of already known data about Paisiello's life and work. She demonstrates how the new documents correct and supplement earlier knowledge, how they align with it and how they are integrated into its framework. All this information is conveniently summarized in three tables concluding the article [3, pp. 124–148].

[1] Let us list just a few publications: Ivan de Dominicis [Dominicis, G. de]. (1818). *Zhizn' kavalera Don Zhuana Paesiello, znamenitogo sochinitelya muzyki* [*The Life of the Cavalier Don Juan Paesiello, the Famous Music Composer*]. V tipografii Avgusta Semena (the first Russian biography of Paisiello); Panareo, S. (1910). *Paisiello in Russia: Dalle sue lettere al Galiani*. Vecchi & C.; Pryashnikova, M. V. (2000). Iz istorii notnogo sobraniya Vorontsovykh: S. R. Vorontsov i Dzh. Paiziello [From the History of the Vorontsov Music Collection: S. R. Vorontsov and G. Paisiello]. In V. A. Udovik, & M. I. Mikeshin (Eds.), *Vorontsovy — dva veka v istorii Rossii* [*The Vorontsovs — Two Centuries in the History of Russia*]: *Proceedings of the Vorontsov Society* (Issue 5, pp. 66–78). Tsentr istorii idej Publ.; Shcherbakova, M. N. (2004). Giovanni Paisiello: rossijskie shtrikhi k portretu ital'yanskogo maestro [Russian Touches on the Portrait of the Italian Maestro]. In A. K. Kenigsberg, & N. A. Braginskaya (Eds.), *Russko-ital'yanskie muzykal'nye svyazi* [*Russian and Italian Musical Relations*] (pp. 5–28). Izdatel'stvo Politekhnicheskogo universiteta; Russo, F. P. (Ed.). (2007). *Giovanni Paisiello e la cultura europea del suo tempo: Convegno internazionale di studi. Taranto 20-23 giugno 2002*. Libreria Musicale Italiana (LIM).

Among the letters, the earliest one, dated 28 August 1780, stands out for its dedication to questions of musical theory and practice. Paisiello extensively discusses the structure and stylistics of the minor mode, paying special attention to the sixth degree in the ascending motion of the scale. The letter responds to a now-lost message from Ernst II, Duke of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg (1745–1804). The Duke, together with his court Kapellmeister Anton Schweitzer (1735–1787), speculated about the possibility of avoiding the low sixth degree (*sesta minore*) and using instead the raised sixth (*sesta maggiore*) when approaching the high seventh degree (*settima maggiore*). Paisiello firmly rejects this melodic and harmonic solution, referring to Italian taste, experience, and nature:

> Così gl'Italiani hanno convenuto e sostenuto da molto più tempo, che quando la scala è in terza minore, la sesta deve essere anche minore montando alla settima maggiore; e non già come dicono i Tedeschi che si puol passare, ma dev'essere minore per assioma, e stabilimento fisso senza nessuna eccezione [4, p. 32].

The composer supports his argument with examples from works by Italian composers Antonio Sacchini, Leonardo Vinci, Giovanni Battista Bononcini, and Nicola Porpora, as well as the German composer Johann Adolph Hasse. These examples were examples previously sent by Duke Ernst in favor of the raised sixth degree in the ascending minor scale. Paisiello's objections are twofold. In some cases, the raised sixth functions as a passing tone, which is easier for singers and string players to execute and scarcely perceptible to the listener:

> ...in una simil velocità di Note facendosi la sesta minore montando alla settima maggiore sarebbe scabrosa per chi deve eseguirle in un'instromento da corde, e per chi deve eseguirle con'il canto, ma per l'effetto non pregiudica niente alla melodia, mentre in simile velocità l'orecchio non'arriva a distinguere se la eseguissero maggiore o minore [4, p. 36].

In leisurely melodies, however, he links the choice of the high sixth degree in a minor key with the correspondence of the musical intonation to the meaning of the sung text. In the example from Vinci's opera, the raised sixth degree falls on the words *nel vendicarmi* ("in vengeance"). Paisiello notes: "...onde da questo si vede bene che l'è una minaccia, onde se la sesta fossesi eseguita minore l'espressione non'avrebbe quella forza che hà facendo la sesta maggiore" [4, p. 37].

There is another interesting example of musical rhetoric: the words *Non'avrai di me pietade* require, according to Paisiello, a low sixth degree to express a tender plea, while Hasse mistakenly uses a high sixth degree here, which makes the expression "harsh and rough" (*aspra e dura*) [4, p. 38]. Bononcini, in contrast, introduces a high sixth degree at the words *mensognero*, *ti burli di mia fé*:

> ...non è che un rimprovero che si fa, addunque come possono pretendere la sesta minore. Perché, mai io hò veduto rimbroverare piangendo onde saviamente il Bononcini si è servito della sesta maggiore in tale occasione [4, p. 39].

Thus, in a friendly letter to his patron, amid the tricks and distortions born of polemical fervor against the "coarse German ear" in favor of the "delicate Italian one," a small aesthetic treatise on the artistic expressiveness of a particular degree of the minor scale is born.

The volume also contains two appendices. The first one will be of particular value to historians of Russian musical theatre, as it provides a list of 27 works by Paisiello, written and performed in Russia during the reigns of Catherine II and Paul I. The table consists of titles, librettists, dates of premieres and subsequent performances, dramatis personae, voice types and performers, as well as the locations of manuscript scores. The second appendix contains a new publication of Paisiello's letters from Russia to his Italian correspondents — Abbot Ferdinando Galiani (1727–1787), an economist and honorary member of the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences (1781), involved in the creation of the libretto for *Socrate immaginario* (1775), and Pastor Johann Paul Schulthesius (1748–1816), a German composer and theologian, resided in Livorno. This expressive correspondence, brought together and re-verified against the manuscripts after its initial publications in the early 20th century, usefully complements the main subject of research and deserves mention on the title page of the edition. A valuable component of the scholarly apparatus is the name index, which ties together diverse reference materials.

A further noteworthy item is a brief curious note by P. De Simone, placed at the end of the volume, concerning several biographical anecdotes about Paisiello, which were printed in the Milanese newspapers *Illustrazione Popolare* and *Illustrazione Italiana* in 1881, 1883, and 1886 [5].

The first amusing and touching anecdote describes a concert at the court of Catherine II, where Paisiello played the clavichord and rubbed his hands, frostbitten from the cold. Noticing this, the Empress took the ermine coat with diamond clasps from her own shoulders and placed it on the musician's shoulders with words of care and affection. The second anecdote recounts the composer's fortunate deliverance from prison in Naples, where he had been thrown by the government of the restored Bourbons for composing a hymn for the ephemeral Parthenopean Republic in 1799. Help came unexpectedly from Russian soldiers.[2] Remembering the maestro's successes at the Russian court, they demanded his release and that he be honored, which was carried out. Both anecdotes were accompanied by illustrations, which are also reproduced in the book alongside a portrait of the musician and some handwritten title pages of his compositions written in Russia.

This first issue of the series *Correnti d'incontro tra Russia ed Europa*, using a specific example and drawing upon both new and expertly systematized known materials, concerning intercultural and diplomatic ties in the realms of music and theatre, fully reflects the concept and fulfills the objectives set by the publishers. The book will undoubtedly be of great interest to scholars, students, and all readers fascinated by the cultural history of that "century of madness and wisdom," remarkable for the openness of its borders and the sociability of its peoples. One can only hope that copies of this publication will reach the major Russian libraries and become accessible to interested readers. It would also be most desirable for this important source publication on the history of music in Russia to receive a full translation and a Russian edition.

[2] Probably the naval sailors of the squadron of Captain-Commander Alexander Andreyevich Sorokin, who stormed the city together with supporters of King Ferdinand IV.

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