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## **CELLO AND FORTEPIANO SONATA No. 1 BY ALFRED SCHNITTKE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF EVOLUTION OF AUTHOR'S STYLE**

*The article is dedicated to consideration of image-sense, composition-dramaturgical and genre-style peculiarities of the first cello sonata by A. Schnittke within the context of evolution of his composer's thinking. Attention is focused on dramaturgical techniques, specific features and range of linguistic means, on peculiarities of interpretation of expressional possibilities of instruments, on compositions image structure as landmark on a new loop of composer's author's style evolution.*

*Keywords: cello sonata, by A. Schnittke, intonational unity, monostylistics, pause.*

The first cello sonata (1978) dedicated to Natalia Gutman<sup>1</sup> is in the center of the chamber-instrumental creativity of A. Schnittke. It is separated by a decade from the writing of the Second Violin Sonata, nine years from the First Piano and sixteen from the Second Cello. The composer himself, who repeatedly spoke about his work, gave the following description of his first cello sonata that sounded for the first time on the author's evening of A. Schnittke on March 29, 1979: "This is a very simple composition, and I did not have any special technological ideas. The only thing that draws attention – what I'm interested in now – it is an attempt to find such intonational language that could turn out both tonal and non-tonal. By this I wanted to achieve not only a contrast, but also an intonational relationship" [5, page 86].

This work was created at the time of the composer's creative activity, which S. Savenko called "new maturity" [2], and V. Kholopova described it as a period of "new simplicity", "quiet music", "memorials" [4, page 24]. The tragic events that occurred in the composer's personal life forced him to see many things in different light, to think about the "eternal" issues of life and death. Creative credo of this stage can be called "the need to say simply about a difficult without losing depth" [2, page 40], and naturalness, lyricism, emotional openness became characteristic features of almost all musical works of this stage, making A. Schnittke's language more accessible. S. Savenko emphasizes that such searches of the composer in a new direction are characteristic not only for him, but also for a number of other domestic and foreign

composers. "Apparently," writes S. Savenko, "this current direction of music reflects one of the essential needs of 20th century art" [2, page 42].

Unlike the rest of the composer's sonatas<sup>2</sup> written earlier, the first cello is stricter, more restrained, there is no sharp expression, large range of contrasts, characteristic for the composer of the image-emotional confrontation associated with the poetics of the conflict. This poetics, which leads to the utmost sharpening of contradictions with the simultaneous use of several stylistic (genre-stylistic) complexes. In this same sonata, the image and intonational unity are more noticeable than in others. There is no polar opposite of stylistic layers. Researchers of A. Schnittke's works note that "stylistic transitions and shades here (in the cello sonata - Yu. G.) are subject to a single intonational logic – this, I think, is truly a new monostylistics" [2, page 41].

An important distinctive feature of the sonata is its great imaginative and intonational unity, which is achieved thanks to the use of thematic sound systems and through mono-intonations. Dramaturgy works combine features of conflict and meditation. The first is manifested in the opposition of three eternal categories: the individual human consciousness fights against the negative world of reality and strives for spirituality "as the highest harmony and beauty of man" [3, page 140]. Meditativeness - dramaturgy of a state, figurative statics, staying in a certain mode - is characteristic of the extreme parts of the sonata and manifests itself in a slowed flow of time, in increased attention to details, the significance of which increases, in the continuity and immutability of the flow. Although this constancy can lead to the appearance of new elements and to a qualitative shift, but not in "eventual", but in figurative emotional-psychological sphere.

The three-part composition of the sonata is contrasting (*Largo – Presto – Largo*) and at the same time is united not only by the principle of *attacca*, but also by the intonational complex "c - e (es) - g", which, according to V. Sumarokova, is the central element of the Cello Sonata [3, page 143]. The musical architectonics of the composition combines the principles of one-part and cyclicity, which manifests itself not only in the above features, but also in reliance

on symmetrical constructions, arches, on the principle of "intonational growth" [3, page 143]. All this makes us perceive the sonata as a drama of a through development: "... the intense thought of the first part, as if temporarily interrupted by the invasion of the second part, is picked up and culminates in the finale ..." [4, page 138].

Small in size, the first part – capacious and concise – combines functions of the prologue and sonata exposition. Three thematic elements constitute the basis of *Largo*. The first one opening the composition, is the recitative cadence of the cello, which is a figurative embodiment of the "reflective individual consciousness" [4, page 138], "reflective personality, individuality with a rich inner world, which absorbs all the spiritual values of humanity" [3, page 144]. One cannot disagree with these characteristics, especially since the typical combination of genres of recitative and cadence is the focus of the individual-personal principle for A. Schnittke, and the "voice" of the cello only once again emphasizes this. It is noteworthy that such a genre combination is characteristic for the developmental sections of "merging-cyclic" forms (the term of V. Kholopova) of the composer. Using this technique in the beginning of the composition allows A. Schnittke to re-emphasize: now the individual consciousness is the "main character" of the musical action. The theme-monologue of wide breathing covers a wide range of sound. Its melody is based on alternation of tertiary, second-order relations with moves to wide intervals (nones, sexts) and a constant bass voice (dwelt notes of great and subsequently of a small octave – *c*, *d*).

The second thematic element acts as a "foreign word": it is a quasi-quote, which reproduces the historical-stylistic model of the past – the theme "French horn golden passage". Along with the third thematic element – the chorale – the first two constitute embodiment of an objective, impersonal beginning. However, modern reality still invades this ideal world, full of harmony. And this common for A. Schnittke's creativity thought is confirmed by the penetration of dissonance into the theme of the "golden passage". Its third passage is atonal, the outlines are blurred, which indicates the impossibility of including the "ideal of the past" in the contemporary art model of the world. Eight strokes of the pedal nona, against which the theme of the "golden turn" was held, are replaced by mature seconds in the grand piano. The non-cello becomes a strong part of the figure resembling a basic bass formula, often used in jazz pieces.

The first phase of the presentation ends with the sound of the third thematic element - the chorale, which entered after the tact of silence. Sounding on one pedal, slow "slipping" of the bass and the tritone ratio of the last two chords (*g - Es - F - H*) provide it with the features of gloom, inevitability.

In the second phase of the part (*poco a poco agitato*) the leading role belongs to the cello, and the piano sounds only in two bars. Recitative, a beginner *Largo*, here is modified: first, it synthesizes the original thematic elements; secondly, the recitative of the genre is itself re-interpreted and transformed from a monologue into a "monologic choir" (the term of S. Savenko). The prerequisites for this development of the topic were embedded into it initially – let us recall the bass voice in the exposition. “The expressiveness of this technique is based on the paradoxical “multiplication” of the monologic line, which by its nature is one – this is voice of a hero” [3, page 145]. The doubled melody of a violoncello with a leading interval of a reduced octave, sounding on the background of the bass (*c, g, and further*) bears a double meaning: "on the one hand, the quantitative amplification, sharpening the expression, since there is a multiple imprint, an echo – but not physical fading, but a psychological, growing, like sounding voices of consciousness. On the other hand, stratification of lines neutralizes their intonational individuality and, as a result, articulated speech grows into a cry of dumbness” [3, page 145]. In other words, in this episode, there is doubt about the possibility of any monologue, since the "reflective individual consciousness" is split and non-separate.

The theme of the "golden passage" which became the prerogative of the hero is replaced the chorale, but it is immediately interrupted by the cello *pizzicato*. In the final chords of the part, the stability embodied by the harmony of G-dur is compared, and its violation is in the form of chords with a reduced octave.

The second part, *Presto*, introduces a tangible contrast with its appearance, since it contrasts itself with the previous part in a figurative way. This invasion of modern reality, gradually dragging the hero into a terrible hostile whirlpool of real events. According to the author, *Presto* synthesizes the features of the scherzo and sonatas. It is noteworthy that the scherzo is mechanically close in character to the "evil" Scherzo by D. Shostakovich. The image of a hostile world dragging into its eerie whirlpool, all life is created by the principle of polyostinato consisting of two non-coincident layers marked by the author's remark: eight times

repeating thirteen cello cycles are superimposed on a sixteen-bar period in the piano part. In addition, in the second part you can find the features of jazz improvisation, the shoots of which appeared in the first part.

Due to the absence of a contrast between the main and secondary themes, sonatas are receding into the background. The main theme of the part is an ostinatic theme, built in the form of a spiral, which in the course of its development covers a wider range. Its core is a theme-circle, which is characterized by a second intonation, structural symmetry, rotational type of melody, which gives the theme a similarity to the musical-rhetorical figure *circulatio*. A side theme is formed gradually from the "deep" accented octaves in the piano part. Gradually they gently overlap the letharmony of the part: a reduced seventh chord that changes its pitch position every four bars. The complication of the harmonic vertical leads to the appearance of clusters that sound in a higher register on *mf* pattern, which brings sharpness and nervousness to the mood of the part. In the next stage of development, the theme-circle sounds both in the cello part and in the piano part. It is interesting that it is given simultaneously in three time dimensions and in a constant dynamic increase:

| VOICES           | CONTINUITY  |   |   |
|------------------|---|---|---|
| 1                |  |  |  |
| 2                |  |  |  |
| 3                |  |  |  |
| NUMBERS          | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| DYNAMIC PATTERNS | <i>F</i>  | <i>FF FFF</i>   | <i>MF</i>   |

The glissanding fifths of the cello are replaced by sweeping moves spanning a range of two octaves. From the theme-circle, after its climax, there is only a contour in the cello part in the form of a rotational movement. On the background of this ostinato figure sounds the canon on the theme of recitative from the first part, passing here in increase and in circulation.

Starting from c. 11 again the exchange of musical material takes place again. *Perpetum mobile* sounds in a piano part, combining in itself a theme-circle and sweeping moves, built on

the same sounds as the theme itself. The initial phrase from the main motive of the first part returned to the cello part, presented here in a toccata. The final section, on the one hand, sums up the previous stage of development, and on the other hand prepares a new one. Suddenly, they sound quiet, like the torn phrases of the recitative (from the first part), going against the background of polyharmonic combinations, and also against the background of the sustained nona (from the first part). Especially distinguished descending minor second of lamento intonation, subtracted from the recitative. Its sound is strained lonely in the high cello register and gradually freezes. After a pause, the middle part begins – or the development episode – it's a waltz grotesque under character – in the spirit of waltzes by D. Shostakovich. It is based on the "antagonistic" dialogue of the two instruments [3, page 146]. In our opinion, this is rather a dialogue between two thematic complexes that reflect two emotional-imaginative spheres: expressive recitative phrases (individual consciousness) and frozen, sometimes harsh polyharmonic combinations (the real world). The culmination of the part at the point of the golden section continues this line, but in a hypertrophic form. For example, the "soaring" expressive phrase in the cello part takes four octaves. Its peak is built on solid motions, disguised in trills, performed by forced sound, as if on the verge of possibilities. Also, the ascending line in the piano part, but in tritons, leads to an accented cluster-pedals - two quarts at a distance of a tritone.

The reprise begins, like the exposition, on *pp*, but the reception of *sul ponticello* introduces lifelessness into the character of the returned theme-circle. After the canonical carrying out of the modified theme of the recitative, a waltz episode appears from the first part, in which the cello does not participate. It will join only after seven bars with a long-worn theme *perpetum mobile*. As if conquering its lost positions, the theme-circle will again pass in three time dimensions, emphasizing its inevitability. The form of the canon only enhances the sense of running in a closed circle. Again giving way to the recitative of the cello, supported by quart moves in the piano part, the theme-circle will return in a large, taccato-structured episode with numerous repeated "deep" consonance *a-es-a*. The circle is narrowing more and more, even the impression is created that the composer wants to turn the subject in unison, but the sound stream is carried away to infinity. Another attempt to break through is completed without result,

as evidenced by the cluster *fff* in the piano part. Since c. 29 begins the coda leading to the third part, which is a dramatic and structural continuation of Presto.

The entire final section of the second part, in fact, is the cadence of the cello, since in the piano part during thirty-nine bars is supported with league and cluster pedal, ending up with the reprise. Cadence synthesizes the thematic elements that sounded before: pizzicato chords (from the conclusion of the first part) and the topic *perpetum mobile*. "Screaming" and tense in the third octave, it gradually narrows after a small expansion, pauses and stops.

The third part of *Largo* begins at the extreme level of tension as a natural continuation of the previous stage of development. The section begins with c. 12, and it can be considered a reprise of the first part. In addition, it still carries the load of codas of the whole cycle, in which the themes from the first and second parts of the sonata will sound.

In the initial section, against the background of choral chords, the intonation of a descending small second accented on each beat in the high register sounds. Usually treated as *lamento*, in this context it acquires a protesting character – it is a cry in its expressionistic interpretation, talking about helplessness, about bitter hopelessness, about the futility of all diligence in achieving the ideal. Gradually, this theme turns into the sound of a solo cello, which is joined by choral chords in the rhythm of the funeral procession, like burial of dreams and desires of the hero. The counterpoint to recitative and choral chords is the theme of the "golden passage", the contours of which are gradually saturated with polytonal and atonal inclusions. At this time, intonations from the second phase of the recitative of the first part ("monologic chorus") penetrate into the cello part. Further it is visible as these thematic complexes echo each other, supplementing each other and gradually reducing the ripple of the c-moll chord in the funeral procession.

The next stage of development is imitations of the lateharmonies of the second part, presented here in a melodic form, in different time dimensions. This episode under the principle of the embodiment of musical material resembles a fragment from the second part. The feeling of running in a vicious circle (canonical imitations) is a harbinger of the gradually emerging theme of the circle. Its sound gets a softer tone, as it sounds in the first octave on the river. Changing the register and the performance stroke - from *arco* to *pizzicato* - gives this ostinato figure a shade of mourning. If at the first appearance the theme-circle passed against a

background of quiet pedal clusters, then, starting from c. 8 the piano part sounds in a high register, and the contours of the melodic movement of the right hand imitate the theme of the *circulatio*. This unhurried movement is twice interrupted by emotional recitative splashes, contrasting with the previous episode, not only in a dynamic, but also in an invoice manner. The descending melodic movement to the deep bass (from *F* to ) leads to a local reprise, almost unchanged, the initial eleven cycles. The difference lies in the fact that instead of the descending second in the cello part, a slurred sound *c* sounds. It's like a respite before the coda of the part bearing an important dramatic load, as it (as noted earlier) is also the coda of the whole cycle.

Starting from c. 12 the thematic material in the cello part repeats fragments of recitative phrases from the first part, but they sound on *pizzicato* that gives them unreal pattern. In the upper voice of the faded cello quint and sextons, the relief of the theme-circle is heard, which appears in the high register of the pianoforte in full form. Covering an increasing range, the *perpetum mobile* then rises high, then descends, gradually dying, into the bass. Further, in a one-off contrast, the theme of the "golden passage" and the accompaniment of the grotesque waltz from the second part sound. The decreased seventh chord gradually disappears, leaving behind only *marcato* moves on the thirds (the beginning of the second part). Since c. 13 and until the end of the sonata *c* sounds in contra octave to the piano – first repeated in each bar, and then pedalized.

In the last bars of the work, the theme of *perpetum mobile* sounding again on the backup of the *c – cis – fis* complex, once taken and pedaled, again takes place. Its echo continues for as many as nine bars, filled with a mechanical movement of the theme-circle in the cloudy heights, finally moving to an endless horizon.

Summarizing the aforesaid, the following features can be named defining the compositional-dramaturgic and figurative-semantic originality of the sonata:

- cyclicity with a tendency to merge into one-part;
- development and independence of instrumental parts of the sonata, which indicates their parity. In addition, the presence of a sufficient number of episodes (in all three parts of the sonata), in which the instruments change with musical material, which is characteristic for everyone up to this point, speaks of a kind of attempt to "speak in the

language of the other in order to approach", which is one of the distinctive features of A. Schnittke's chamber instrumental works in a whole;

- striving for intonational unity of the cycle due to reliance on basic thematic elements, among which: 1) the recitative cadence of the cello, which starts the sonata and permeates all of its musical fabric associated with the author's statement; 2) quasi-quote, which reproduces the historical-stylistic model of the past - the theme of the "French horn golden passage", which appears in the composition of the sonata as "another's word"; 3) chorality as the concentration of the consonant sphere, which A. Schnittke understands as a transcendental sounding of the voice; 4) theme-circle, which is characterized by a second intonation, structural symmetry, rotational type of melody, which gives the theme a similarity with the musical-rhetorical figure *circulatio*. In the sonata this figure is embodied in the theme *perpetum mobile*, built on the type of a developing spiral, gradually taking an increasing range. The coincidence of the figures of the cross and the circle in this motif indicates a semantic multilayeredness of this topic. It is significant that this fact once again reveals us the dialogueness of A. Schnittke's thinking. On the one hand, the theme-circle symbolizes the idea of infinity and, at the same time, closedness of being, on the other hand – the choral aspect of the cross theme means a direction to a high goal, to a positive spiritual result;
- giving thematic meaning to pauses, which is manifested, in particular, in using the idea of sudden pauses. The pause in the sonata is dramatic and thematic. As A. Schnittke notes so-called "sudden" pauses, are the particularly important. They arise when the general stress increases "up to an intolerable state" while "everything stops completely motionless so that later to collapse and to move on" [5, page 52].
- The musical language of the First Cello Sonata demonstrates the author's desire for liberation from allusiveness, associativity. However, the composer not only relies on the game of major-minor, but also applies the principle of citation, interpreted by the author here as "citation of technique" (A. Schnittke's term), that is seen on the example of the *g-moll* chord belonging to the tonal technique, the golden passage of the French horn bar recolouring, preservation of the importance of the tonal center of the composition – *c-moll*.

In general, organization of this composition is distinguished by the internal conjugacy of all thematic elements. While creating natural successions from the mosaic of dissimilar themes, A. Schnittke equally naturally turns the themes similar in the initial formulas into different ones. However, this kaleidoscope of movement and the enchanting transformations element first of all intrigues with its "imperceptibility". A kind of "interchangeability" of exposure relations occurs in this combination and comparison of various themes, that allows us to speak of the use of the stylistic contamination method by the composer.

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