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## **POLYSTYLISTIC ASPECTS**

### **OF COMPOSER'S POETICS OF ALFRED SCHNITTKE**

#### **(ON THE EXAMPLE OF CHAMBER AND INSTRUMENTAL WORKS)**

*The article offers general description of chamber-instrumental works by A. Schnittke. Particular attention is paid to the composer's sonata works. On their example the polystylistic aspects of composing poetics of A. Schnittke are revealed: the leading compositional principles are determined, forming a special author's model of polystylistics in the works of the composer.*

**Keywords:** *polystylistics, sonata, dialogueness, citationality, collage, allusion.*

The works of chamber genre take a significant place in the works of Alfred Schnittke; among them – quartets, a piano quintet, a septet for flute, two clarinets, violin, viola, cello and harpsichord, a string trio, "Suite in Old Style" for violin and piano, "Hymns" and other works for chamber orchestra. A special place among the chamber-instrumental works of the composer belongs to sonatas – violin, cello and piano ones. The composer's addressing this genre cannot be called frequent and constant. The first sonatas were written in the years of his study at the Conservatory in the 1950s: this is a sonata for violin and piano and a sonata for piano (both works are single-movement). To some extent, they have identified two main instrumental compositions, for which sonatas would be created by the composer: they are "string" (for violin and piano, cello and piano) and piano works.

Throughout his career A. Schnittke wrote three violin sonatas, two cello and two piano ones. What makes the composer again and again to address exactly this genre, although in some interviews, he talks about his commitment to larger instrumental forms? Not the least role in the choice of works genre was played by close cooperation of A. Schnittke with outstanding performers, for whom in most cases, those works were written. The violin sonatas were dedicated to Mark Lubotsky, the cello one – to Natalia Gutman, the piano ones were written at the request of Alfred Garrievich's wife. "There are authors of music that seem to write music for future, their music can be "opened" and heard as well many years after its creation, but there are artists, musicians whose creative way is measured by not very long time, by limited human life. I am writing for them" [9, p. 46]. That is how the composer described one of his creative principles.

The main exponents of A. Schnittke's musical ideas – are the symphony orchestra, string quartet, and what is especially important for us, the violin, the viola, the cello. The piano takes collateral place for the composer. Stringed instruments with their non-temperedness proved to be the instruments of the XX century, compared to the tempered piano, although composer used the piano "in a modern way", according to a new acoustic-harmonic structure of music of the XX century. This explains the predominance of "string" sonatas over the piano ones. And if the first were created throughout the entire career of the composer, the latter appeared only in the late 1980s, as the completion of the performing repertoire of the pianist wife.

It so happened that the first two violin sonatas and the cello one were created by the composer one by one in the periods of his creative development. The first sonata, written in 1963, refers to the experimental dodecaphonic-serial stage. The next violin sonata was created five years later. That was one of the first and most striking examples of using polystylistics in the Soviet music of that period. Despite of comparing the styles in shocking contrast, sonorant sharpness and new performing difficulties, this work has become one of the most played works of the composer.

Only after ten years A. Schnittke turns to the sonata genre again, but now the cello plays solo in it. The period of this work creation is characterized by B. Kholopova as a period of "new simplicity", "quiet music", "memorials" [6, p. 24]. The tragic events in the personal life of the composer forced him to look at many things with different view, to think about the "eternal" questions of life and death. The creative credo of this stage can be called "just need to tell about the complicated without losing depth" [4, p. 40]. S. Savenko stresses that such searches of Alfred Garrievich in a new direction are typical not only for him but also for a number of other national and foreign composers. "Apparently, – S. Savenko writes – this current direction of music reflects one of the essential needs of the art of the XX century" [4, p. 42].

Cello sonata stands in the center of the chamber-instrumental creativity of A. Schnittke. It is separated by a decade from writing the Second violin sonata and nine years from the piano one. Unlike other sonatas, it is stricter, more restrained, there is no acute expression, large range of contrasts, typical of the composer's figurative-emotional confrontation, associated with the poetics of the conflict. It is it that leads to sharpening of the contradictions to the limit by the simultaneous use of several

stylistic (genre-stylistic) complexes. In the same sonata figurative and intonation unity is more noticeable than in the other ones.

The organization of cello sonata is distinguished by internal consistency of all the thematic elements. Creating natural successions from mosaic of diverse motives, A. Schnittke, equally naturally, turns close in the source formulas motives into diverse ones. However, this kaleidoscope of motion and fascinating element of transformations, first of all, is intriguing by its "inconspicuousness." In this combination and comparison of a variety of motives takes place a kind of "interchangeability" of exposition ratios, which suggests speaking of the use by the composer of stylistic contamination method. The researchers of A. Schnittke's creativity note that "stylistic transitions and shades here (in the cello sonata – Yu.G.) are subordinated to a single intonation logics – this appears to be truly new monostylistics" [4, p. 41].

The end of 1980s was marked by the creation of two piano sonatas. Such a tightened gap between the conservatory sonata for piano and the works composed about thirty years later, can be explained in part by the particular attitude of the composer to the instrument and partly by an attempt to once again spiritualize the sonata form. V. Kholopova sees in this work a typical product romantic sonata. The first part represents an exact sonata form, full of expression in the spirit of the XIX century "enlightened, as in F. Liszt, coda, in the dramatic climax of which two-elbow cluster" [6, p. 48]. The second part preserves the atmosphere of romanticism. It contrasts "light chorals" and "black clusters." The Second piano sonata is also written at the request of the composer's wife, mentioned only as a fact of biography of the composer.

Written in 1994, the Third violin sonata crowns the works in the chamber-instrumental genre and "proves" by its appearance that the violin was and remains as own composer author's voice, blocking in its importance and informativeness the other (non-violin) works. It is interesting that this sonata was created during the completion of the opera "Faust". According to V. Kholopova, the thematic material of the work is aligned with the music of this opera. The first part of the sonata – is not the main one, it performs the function of the prologue and the proceeds from the common forms of movement. The second part is characteristic in thematism using *pizzicato*, *staccato* and flashy accents. The third one in its generalization is aligned with the first part, and its lyricism relieves the stress of *Adagio* (II part).

Dramaturgically is unusual the finale of the sonata going in a troubled and free movement, it breaks off in mid-sentence. Such understatement is characteristic of many of the composer's works. "In my works everything often goes into elision marks or just stops ..." – said A. Schnittke in a conversation with A. Ivashkin [2, p. 87]. Unconsciously (or consciously) the composer emphasizes by his works the eternity and intractability of the conflict of creative soul: "the conflict of the poet, who depicts life in tragic colors, but who gives life to his creations" [2, p. 87]. Perhaps this one again confirms the idea of H. L. Borges that "... there is a limited number of stories, cycles, metaphors. And the destiny of human and culture in general – is endlessly retelling them again, in their own way, with their new intonation" [1, p. 85].

The work, which became one of the first examples of the application of polystylistics in the Soviet music, was the Second Sonata for Violin and Piano. Like D. Shostakovich, A. Schnittke left the mono-style idea of the musical language. He introduced the term "polystylistics", having linked it with the pluralism of human consciousness of the XX century, with increased intensity of information flows in this century. Polystylistics in musical culture, in his opinion, performs a number of semantic and structural problems:

- reinforces associative row of music, replacing the verbal programness of the XIX century;
- provides enriching semantic synthesis;
- facilitates the democratization of language, closing subcultures of the XX century;
- discovers new types of musical dramaturgy and form-making.

The latter phenomenon is characterized by multi-layeredness, polyparameterness (the term of V. Kholopova), variety of scale of bases and shows the state of formation, in which the composer bases on the individual choice of the composition, and not from any generally accepted doctrine of form. In this regard, A. Schnittke noted that at that moment "the very idea of form is in doubt as a kind of insincere convention when a composition can be alive only in case of doubting in the form, when there is a certain risk in the form of the work ..." [9, p. 49].

Sonata for violin and piano No. 2 was written in 1968 – in the period of "individual concepts" (V. Kholopova). In various specific versions, A. Schnittke embodied in the works of the 1960s the classic dualistic dramaturgy, however, was

not limited to it, as the composer also used the paradoxical "stylistic" dramaturgy in his own interpretation, and together with it the "not yet played instrumental concept" [5, p. 42]. All these features are reflected in the Second Violin Sonata, the intervallics, accordics of which are elevated dissonant, disturbing with their sharpness. According to the statement of the composer in that period he was attracted to such "... aggressive and dissonant music" [6, p. 43].

The subtitle of the Sonata «quasi una Sonata» not accidentally echoes Beethoven's «Sonata quasi una Fantasia». The matter is, A. Schnittke put himself in a position opposite to that in which L. Beethoven was. The latter worked during the growth of organization in the music, and A. Schnittke – in the epoch, which destructiveness reached a point where forms could be interpreted widely and freely. The contours of a classical sonata by L. Beethoven are "romantically blurred", and «quasi una Sonata» is so polemical and "torn by contradictions that cannot be a sonata," according to V. Kholopova [6, p. 56].

But along with the vast pluralism of expression violin sonata retains some traditional features. According to the author, this steep-sided three-part cycle in which the first part is constructed as a sonata form with contrasting main and collateral parties, with a reprise of only the main part; the second part is "a kind of slow part" [6], a string of slow episodes of *Andantino*, *Lento*, *Andante*, *Moderato andante*; the third part – according to V. Kholopova [6, p. 317] "has various structure with contrasting invasions." A. Schnittke sees here «*quasi Fuga*» [8, p. 50]. We propose to speak in determining the structure of the final part of the *Ricercar* features since the imitation introduction of voices is combined here with variationness.

The musical material of the work gains acute, convulsive, nervous character. It is formed not by extended long but laconic motives-impulses. In the dramaturgy of sonata one of the leading mechanisms is dialogueness. It is noteworthy that A. Schnittke in his works almost never used the academic method of solo and accompanying instruments. For him each instrument has its own personal voice, its often diametrically opposed to the traditional function of the instrument, characteristics, which once again proves dialogueness – the basic factor of A. Schnittke's thinking.

The concept of the sonata is one of the "eternal" ideas – a conflict of harmony and disharmony. The first – a "beautiful ideal, formed in the past" [6, p. 60], the second – a modern world full of anxieties, problems and contradictions. Musical

embodiment of this sphere is achieved as follows: the sphere of disharmony is expressed by two drama centers – chord-shot, diminished seventh chord and all dissonant constructions, implementing by their interaction the principle of unity of opposites; the sphere of harmony – choral harmonization of BACH theme.

V. Kholopova highlights two dramatic centers in sonata, represented by structural music – "arsenal of early classical music" (g-moll chord, diminished seventh chord, BACH theme) – and deconstructed, "based on modern principles of the organization of pitch." This division is undoubtedly one of the options musicological interpretation of composition, but leaves out another vivid evidence of the composer's dialogueness thinking. The proof of that lies in the conflict nature of the modern world, of the human in this world: dissonance, as the embodiment of problems, anxieties, even disasters on a larger scale, solved in sustainable g-moll chord as the allusion of everyday tradition, canon, carrying hope for finding stability in the whirlwind of the turbulent life.

This idea is implemented from the first bars of the sonata when sustained chord g-moll at the piano after a long pause is answered by similarly bright on *sfff* chord of the violin. The main difference between these complexes is that the second one is harsh in sounding, dissonant, consists of two sevenths. Since both dramatic centers are included in one figurative-dramaturgic sphere of disharmony, in the process of development they not only contradict each other, but also interact. This leads to the penetration of the musical material of the violin part into the piano one and vice versa. For example, in the episode of *quasi Allegretto* the cluster chord of the piano is responded by the melodic phrase of the violin, built on the sounds of g-moll.

Final *quasi Fuga* definitively asserts that true formative moment in the work is not thematism of the sonata cycle, but through thinking based on other elements. "That's what the topic is – triad g-moll, diminished seventh chord, pause and citationality" [9, p. 49]. These words of A. Schnittke define the fundamental elements of the work, on which it makes sense to dwell:

1. g-moll *sfff* chord begins the sonata and throughout the work does not change its dynamic shade, which allowed V. Kholopova characterize this consonance as a "chord-shot" [6, p. 56]. Consonance permeates the entire musical fabric of the sonata, playing an important dramaturgic role. It appears in all the significant moments of the work almost always in the same wide location, capturing extreme registers. This is almost always accentuated by the staccato thirty-second duration. Interestingly, the

chord is the prerogative of the piano, appearing in the violin in the form of a melody on the sounds of *g-moll*.

Most clearly struggling in the sphere of disharmony is shown in the code, the final section of *quasi* sonata. Here the deafening flow of *g-moll* chord is alternating with clusters. This conflict struggle occurs against the main party of the first part of the sonata, the return of which code in the final code though stresses the dramaturgic unity of the whole, does not give the final clarification of the conflict of the work. In the last holding, forty-six times repeated *g-moll* chord "was crossed out" suddenly by burst *fff* cluster. This consonance will freeze at the time of the cadence-epilogue. The rapid, angry waves of the violin phrases contain reminiscences of thematic elements involved in the development of the sonata: they are series and diminished seventh chord. They are constantly interrupted by pauses and gradually disappear. In the last two bars the piano pedal cluster is removed and in the violin solo monogram theme sounds. It combines the holding of the motive in a direct manner in inversion as well, and completes its sounding in *g-moll* chord, set breves. Thus, the final outcome of the struggle, is as if driven out of the work. Although given in the last bars of the sonata "beautiful ideal" of the past coincides with the voice of the author, but it sounds so that it reveals the "traces of destructive disharmony" [6, p. 59].

2. Diminished seventh chord in full force manifests itself in a section like the sonata development. Until that moment, its the pre-images appeared in the violin part, in the introductory section of the sonata, as well as in the original chorale harmonization. This consonance, as it reaches the climax, is expanding its range and forms polyharmonic combinations, such as: harmony *dis-fis-a-c* is superimposed on *d-f-as-b* or *ais-cis-e-g* for *gis-h-d-f*. Diminished seventh chord, as noted above, related to the sphere of disharmony and reflects its internal contradictions, as the along with *g-moll* chord opposes to dissonant music of the sphere. Both harmonies are "basic formula of early classical and classical art" [272, p. 32].

3. Pause in the sonata bears dramatic and thematic significance. Especially important, as noted by A. Schnittke, are the so-called "sudden" pauses. They come with an increase in the total voltage "to intolerable condition", while "everything freezes very still in order to then come down and move on" [9, p. 52]. Most clearly, this idea is reflected in the final section of the code. It is interesting that the pause in this work is also part of the theme. For example, at the beginning of the sonata introduction several weighty thematic elements are given, playing dramaturgic role: it

is *g-moll* chord, dissonant chord of two sevenths, cluster consonance and harmony, in a compressed form containing the sounds of BACH motif (they all sound on *sfff*). In our view, it is the separation of these elements by pauses that helps understanding their special purpose in this work, because the true interpretation takes place in silence. Regulation of the time (6, 10, 3, 5 seconds) and reprise holding (together with the above harmonies) emphasizes the thematic importance of pauses. It is interesting that the author's writing out the length of pauses exists only in the introductory section, in other cases, the mark . is applied. It is a conventional unit of count, approximately equal to second.

4. Citationality and allusion is the most common application of polystylistic method in this work. According to V. Kholopova, both of these methods are used in the conditions of collage, that is "... dramatically contrasting juxtaposition of diverse elements of style here follows directly from the general idea – demonstration of fierce, uncompromising struggle" [6, p. 57]. Citation principle A. Schnittke uses as "technology quoting" (the term of A. Schnittke), as exemplified by *g-moll* chord, owned by tonal technique, and as the "adaptation" of strange text (paraphrase of someone else's music notation in own musical language). The latter was applied to the quotations from L. Beethoven – finals of the Third Symphony and Piano Variations with Fugue Op. 35.

The principle of allusion creates in the sonata, according to V. Kholopova, "the most striking effect of collage" [6, p. 57]. These, according to A. Schnittke, "feigning moments – different style insertions" are not the dominant part of the work, but they are substantial enough in dramaturgical terms. Allusions of classical-romantic music of the past – by L. Beethoven, F. Liszt, J. Brahms, C. Frank – give birth, thanks to learning styles, the bright, visual semantics of semantic representations. For example, the monogram motif BACH is given in the classical choral texture in the low register, in a quiet sonority, which is important in dramaturgic terms, because this material is the sphere of harmony in the sonata.

Chorale theme is quite a traditional sequence. Its extreme voices mirror each other, which adds some dissonance to the sounding of the theme. Primary importance in the chorale belongs to the intonation of small second. It is noteworthy that before the appearance of the chorale, this intonation permeated the entire musical fabric of the sonata. She was veiled either in ostinato figuration in the violin part, or in the accentuated course of bass voice of the main party, or in the tremoling violin cadenza.



In the final party monogram motif is used to build the twelve-tone series. Then BACH theme is compressed in one chord (as in the introductory section) and sounds with *g-moll* triad.

In the *Andantino* after presentation of BACH by breves (like "Sphinxes" by R. Schumann), the motive monogram is generally re-dressed and acquires the features of dancing style – "inverted BACH sounds as waltz" [9, p. 52]. Then the theme is hidden in the "Franco-Liszt" harmonization and represents free half-quarter-tone recitative.

In *quasi Fuga* BACH becomes the main theme, which is held in both the choral texture, and in the form of imitation. The contrast is achieved due to the inclusion in the *Moderato* and *Adagio* of other style fragments. Apart from their being both tonal, the latter is an allusion to music by Brahms, with the inclusion of his monogram into the musical fabric. These other style insertions are alternating with the main theme, which sets out octavely and gains menacing character.

In the transition to the code section BACH motif is held in rhythmic reduction in the piano and resonates with the soaring progress on sounds in the violin part. The composer settles it so that the presence on the stage of the second piano with the lid open reinforces the resonance of the pedal cluster of the first piano and creates "special acoustic dialogue" – the piano as if responds to the violin [6, p. 59] – its final sounds, which represent a sliding leap into "nowhere" in the dynamic wave *fffpppp*. This suggests that for A. Schnittke chirality is based on the perception of it as a "transcendent sounding of voice." For the composer's perception of the world characteristic is a sense of unity of his musical consciousness with a certain "objective" sound space, with some "metamusic", which manifests itself in the form of ongoing audio stream.

Thus, the internal stress of the image, focusing attention on the leading author's intonation, the similarity of the different stylistic modifications, dramatization and concision of the form, extreme sharpening of the contradictions in the simultaneous use of several genre-stylistic complexes, sharp accentuation of the polar principles etc. – become the fundamental characteristics of chamber- instrumental creativity of A. Schnittke, forming a special – centripetal – type of polystylistics in the works of the composer.

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