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The Semantic Structures of the Musical Text and Practical Semantics

The content of the musical text, as opposed to the text of the musical score with its parameters of composition and musical grammar, has not been described by theoreticians or practitioners in structural categories. There exists a stable tradition of a narrow grammatical directedness of teaching to read and interpret the text of the musical score. In analysis of musical composition there is a prevalence of either the *grammatical-syntactic* aspects (in the music theory disciplines), or the *intuitive-artistic* ones (in the historical disciplines). The structural approach makes it possible to change the results of penetration into the depths of musical content. This article acquaints the reader with this direction of elaboration of the technology of analysis and reading the semantic organization of the musical text. Examination is made of the structure of intonational formulas with established meanings and their features of accumulation of secondary semantic formation upon their migration from one musical text of a particular composer to another, or compositions of various genres and styles. The article contains information and references towards results of research works and publications in the sphere of practical semantics – a new direction in the works of Russian scholars under the tutelage of the author of this article in the community of scholars and researchers from the Laboratory for Musical Semantics.

<u>Keywords</u>: musical semantics, analysis of musical compositions, Laboratory of Musical Semantics, intonational lexis, migrating intonational formula.

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Смысловые структуры музыкального текста и практическая семантика

Содержание музыкального текста, в отличие от нотного текста с его параметрами композиции и грамматики, не описывается теоретиками и практиками в структурных категориях. Устойчива

традиция узкой грамматической направленности обучения чтению и интерпретации нотного текста. В анализе музыкального произведения преобладают либо *грамматико-синтаксический* (в теоретических дисциплинах), либо *интуитивно-художественный* (в исторических дисциплинах) аспекты. Структурный подход позволяет изменить результаты проникновения в глубины музыкального содержания. С этим направлением по разработке технологии анализа и чтения смысловой организации музыкального текста знакомит читателей предлагаемая статья. Рассматривается структура интонационных формул с закреплёнными значениями и их свойства наращивания вторичных смысловых образований при миграции из текста в текст одного композитора или сочинений разных жанров и стилей. Статья содержит информацию и ссылки на результаты исследований и публикации в области практической семантики – нового направления в работе российских учёных под руководством автора статьи в научно-исследовательском коллективе Лаборатории музыкальной семантики.

Ключевые слова: музыкальная семантика, анализ музыкальных произведений, Лаборатория музыкальной семантики, интонационная лексика, мигрирующая интонационная формула.

Analysis of musical content as a sphere of knowledge encompasses a very broad circle of phenomena. In order to shape a particular position in this multidimensional research-related and practical perspective, it is important to trace the boundaries within it, to choose a methodology and to formulate the issue. In recent years the most important issue to be perceived is that of "*the musical text and the performer*" with the possibility of its elaboration on the basis of a *methodology of semantic analysis*.

With the aim of carrying out musical research and also for the sake of adaptation of the obtained scholarly knowledge to the field of pedagogy and performance in 2001 I founded the *Laboratory for Musical Semantics* [http://lab-ms.narod.ru/]. At the beginning of my presentment I wish to draw attention towards several apparent paradoxes which have manifested themselves both in musical scholarship and musical practice.

The paradox of musical scholarship is apparent, because investigative thought continues to direct its efforts at elaborating the issue of form generation, the technical side of the musical composition, compositional logic and the grammatical rules of the musical language. At the same time, the most significant content-based categories – *the idea, the theme, the subject, the hero, the protagonist, the image* – are still not given sufficient attention and pertain to a sphere which is hardly scholarly in its nature: they continue to exist on the borderline of free rendition and descriptiveness of the subjective results of perception. This leads to a substitution of the content of the musical text with the content of the listener's perception, or else serves as a non-binding occasion for free artistic associations from the sphere of universal culture and the contiguous arts.

In other words, content, unlike form, is virtually not recognized as a structural category, which inevitably eternalizes the stability of the tradition of the narrow-grammatical directedness of musical study. In the research of musical content and in analysis of musical thematicism up

to the present day there is a prevalence of either *grammatical-syntactic* aspects (in theoretical subjects), or of *intuitive-artistic* ones (in historical subjects).

And, indeed, research acknowledges that content is endowed with its own structural organization which is subdivided into a chain of independent, logically interconnected notional segments. The semantic structures of the musical text – for example, *musical quotations, retorts (in narrative dialogues), utterances made by the main protagonist (monologues), rhetorical figures and intonational lexis – expressions of speech with fixed meanings,* etc. – constantly migrate from one musical text to another and form an independent semantic logic which does not coincide with the syntactic structures and the form-generating logic of a musical composition.

The paradox of musical practice lies in the fact that in Russian musical education (as well as that of a number of other countries as well) there is an absence of the tradition of structural analysis of content. From the first steps of studying music theory and playing an instrument the student learns to read the signs of the *musical text of the score*, but nobody teaches him or her in any circumstances to interpret the meanings of the musical text [2].

There is no less amount of paradoxes in the professional system of the relationship of "the musical text vs. the performer." The most important of them is the authoritativeness of the "intermediary" between the musical text and the performer in the likeness of the editor or the pedagogue. Both attempt to achieve an efficacy of the authorial version. However, notwithstanding the entire axiomatic character of the perceptions of the musical composition as the "bearers of the musical image," every performer (just as every editor or pedagogue) convinces

himself or herself of the same thing: the regular laws of interpretation of the meaning, even within the boundaries of the artistic space of a musical theme, remain a secret of the seven seals. In the present day this is obvious to an equal degree both to a scholar and to a practicing musician. Incidentally, let us note that the types of relation to the musical text (within the conditions of graphical fixations) formed during later times – namely, the Classical and Romantic periods – are automatically transferred to the earlier urtext, as well, which is absolutely extraordinary, since in this case it is not considered that this type of musical text is intrinsically mobile, flexible, variable or demonstrably intended not only for the multivariate performance, but also for active transformation. And while the tradition of the authoritative replication of the editor's version (or of following the pedagogue's version) evolved in connection to the Classical and Romantic musical text, in connection to early music a complete disregard of the specificity of the urtext. The consequences of such a phenomenon are known as the lack of skills of free music-making: a mastery of the technique of arrangements, adaptations and transcriptions. The successful solution for many of the aforementioned problems, including the establishment of adequate relations in the sphere of "the musical text vs. the performer" depends on the mastery of the contemporary developments in the sphere of a competent application of interpretation of the semantic structures of thematicism, as well as of the intonational lexis permeating it. And here it becomes fitting to emphasize the prioritized role of semantic analysis in the sphere of performance articulation and interpretation, since it is primarily important for a musician to ascertain, what he or she is performing,

and then already to determine *how* to achieve this (Heinrich Neuhaus).

If we are to give a concise formulation of the position in relation to the issue of analysis of the content of a musical composition in general, it comes down to the necessity of cultivation of *systemic perceptions* of the musical language and musical speech (phonetics, grammar, syntax and semantics), where the semantic component, or the level of the intonational lexis forms the leading element in the analysis of semantic structures and the content-based logic of a musical composition. In connection with the indicated requirements, it is important to realize the necessity of a purposeful formation of an alternative tradition of interpreting the musical text from the point of view of poetics, semantics and the stylistic domain, and not only (as it is customary) from the positions of phonetics, grammar and syntax.

The prospect of forming a system is perceived in two main directions: 1) in further development and perfection of a scholarly methodology in the sphere of analysis of musical content (implicitly, by collective means); 2) in an active inoculation of applied scholarly-methodological elaborations into the tutorial process with the aim of adapting academic results towards it. It is necessary to relate the sphere of *practical semantics* to the latter.

The second field obtained its right to existence and made a claim about itself with serious and effectual results.

In the sphere of practical semantics, a number of stably functioning universals of a sign character has already been revealed, and with their aid it becomes possible to achieve a competent and quite reasonable analysis of the connection of the theme with the musical image, of the "sign" with the "meaning" and "signification" (according

to Algirdas Greimas). Undoubtedly, the scholars are correct: it is both important and essential to make sense of the theory of signs, especially by applying scholarly terminology with the aim of a substantial intromission into the issue of the specific features of music and the laws of organization of the content of musical compositions. However, there is and should be no direct interdependence between the constant search for more perfected classifications and practical actions in interpreting the semantic structures of the musical text.

In scholarly elaborations it is important to proceed from the fact that the musical texts of various epochs and styles are organized according to the principle of a "semantic musical score" which creates a peculiar "polyphony of semantic strata." Whereby, in music it possesses both horizontal and vertical projections. Each musical text is divided into semantic segments, which do not coincide with the traditional form-generating structures. Thus, a retort *in a dialogue*, which is a semantic segment of the musical texts, may equal to one measure, as well as to an integral syntactical construction.

A significant role in interpreting semantic structures is played by the *intonational lexis* and the phenomena of *intertext*, possessing not only a textual etymology proper (the quotation, the monogram, the emblem), but also a sign-situational one.

Intonational lexis (the migrating intonational formulas) is formed by stable constructions with fixed meanings, capable of arousing concrete subject-related and image-related perceptions. Intonations with fixed meanings migrate actively in the thematicism of various musical texts, enriching the musical language and concretizing the content of musical compositions. But while the grammatical

approach relies principally on mythological and syntactical structures (a tonal plan, chords, meter-rhythm, the structure of motives, phrases, the form of a musical composition), the main goal of semantic analysis is the definition of the intonational-lexical components of a musical theme, the key intonations of a musical composition[1]. They present the possibility of a subsequent competent articulation which would be pertinent to the authorial conception. For example, the appearance of pastoral intonations is concretized by quite an ascertainable amount of intonational lexis, such that is clear for setting the goals of articulation. In Haydn's sonatas it is a whole set of constantly appearing migrating intonations: "the gallant figure" (a characteristic motive with dotted rhythms frequently embellished with melismas) is an intonational stereotype of a plastic nature; textual clichés in the forms of parallelisms of thirds and sixths (the so-called "ribbon voice-leading") include the "duo of two panpipes": "he and she" ("the shepherd and the shepherdess"); "the golden progression of horns" in various structural and semantic modifications ("the triadic signal," "the gleaming tone"), "the figure of longing" (a descending chromatic embellishment of the cadence), and "the bourdon bass" (in the rural pastoral). Their fanciful combinations, exquisitely encrusted into ornaments, frequently set up complex analytical goals of interpreting image-related meanings. But particularly the details of the musical text and their semantic realities create within the context of 18th century "regulated feelings" such an immensely indispensable stylistic effect of refined and intricate articulation [3].

Analysis of intonational lexis may help exacerbate the already well-known perceptions of the textual situation of a "genre within a genre," at the same time substantially specifying the goals of artistic replication and performing articulation. Thus, the performance of minuets in Haydn's piano sonatas, which are familiar to everybody and seemingly simple and clear, by means of replication of general genre-related traits circumvolves with most interesting and considerably more profound "theatrical producer" solutions, if the performer is familiar with the techniques of its manifestation by the composer. Thereby, in Haydn's piano sonatas several means of manifesting the minuet are demonstrated:

1) the *narrative-plastic* (the depiction of a dance), 2) the *narrative-musical* (the depiction of scenes of music-making, accompanying dances with characteristic instruments – the flute or the harpsichord), 3) the *narrative-pictorial* (the pastoral), 4) the *narrative-theatrical* (dialogues of opera characters), 5) the *non-narrative* (embellishments) [3].

In all cases Haydn makes use of very varied intonational lexis, however, the key intonation inalterably remains to be the "rhythmic formula of the dactylic step" (F. Caroso) which assimilates the plasticity of the soft manner of the dance. The peculiarity of the gallant style and the means of manifestation of "regulation of feelings" was formulated most precisely by British aesthetician Thomas Read, who defined it as a form of conveying "the innermost by means of the outer." After this, it becomes unnecessary to prove the importance of the performer's orientation in interpreting the extra-musical components of the composer's musical text.

It is especially indispensable to highlight such a semantic structure of the musical text as *embellishment*. Being essentially an extra-musical component of the composer's text, it plays an important artistic role,

adorning the main segment of the musical text, or its construction. Regardless of the means of introducing the embellishment into the melodic or harmonic base, both its varieties – the outer (melismas) and the inner (diminutions, figurations) fundamentally remain to be the "supplementary" (according to Dmitri Likhachev), and not the basic element of the musical text. The realization of the functional role of the definition of "the *supplementary element vs. the basic element*" helps in the theatrical production of the musical composition's dynamic planes and its separate segments, in the correct classification of the musical material into *background* and *relief*, the *accompanying voices* and the theme, the *embellished* and the main segments of the melodic line. Embellishment, upon its appropriate interpretation as the supplementary element, can no longer lay any claims in this case on the role of the leading construction, which would provide for a competent articulation, one that corresponds to the composer's conception.

The extra-musical components are not limited to embellishment. Broadly familiar, for example, are the *theatrical insertions* into the content and the musical language of Mozart's instrumental compositions. In particular, the piano sonatas and concertos contain an entire gallery of "migrating plots and images," scenes and characters from 18th century comic operas [4].

The expositions of many of the piano sonatas contain specimens of intonational theatricality and dramaturgy representing an array of protagonists. The scenes of courtship (Sonata No. 1 in C major, K. 279, 3rd movement), conflict-laden dialogues (Sonata No. 7, K. 309, exposition of the 1st movement, Sonata No. 14, K. 457, 1st movement) and "migrating images" recognizable from other musical and non-musical (literary or theatrical) works present the performer with the obligation of being extremely precise in the replication of dialogical retorts, since they belong to opera protagonists and concrete characters and are saturated with the lexis characteristic to them.

Musical texts which broadly incorporate non-musical elements serve as excellent material for elaborating problem-related situations and roleplaying in professional instruction. Their competent interpretation by the performer provides for a variable setting of semantic goals in the process of search for appropriate stylistic articulation. At the same time, consideration must be given to the protagonist's *character* (his or her age, temperament, manner of behavior, or social affiliation), as well as his or her demonstration of *character in the situation* ("Susanna complains," "Susanna flirts," "The countess defends herself," etc).

In the expositions of many sonatas it is easy to discover and recognize an individual "protagonist-related" lexis of many "migrating images," – for example, of Susanna (or, otherwise, her prototype – Rosina from Mozart's early opera "La finta semplice"). Besides the "gallant" intonations of plastic origin[2], they are frequently manifested in the musical text through characteristic "*images of speech*," *clichés of Italian tongue-twisters* (the 3rd movement of the 1st Sonata, K. 279, the first and third movements of the 10th Sonata, K. 330), *coloratura effects* conveying the excitement and affect and depicting a tempestuous temperament (the first movement of the 5th Sonata, K. 283, the first movement of the 15th Sonata, K. 545), *exclamations, invocations and interjections* (the first movement of the 7th Sonata, K. 309). A constant cliché accompanying the "migrating image" of Susanna is also a harmonic figuration (more frequently as Alberti basses: see the

first movements of Sonatas No. 1 and 15), or a rhythmic figuration (for example, an intense conflicting scene in the exposition of the first movement of Sonata No. 7). As a rule, the clichéd figuration sounding in a fast tempo and creating the necessary inner "nerve" of the image in many cases organizes the indispensable tempo-rhythm of the "theatrical" scenes[3].

The intonational lexis reveals both the protagonist's character (the social status, age, temperament, outer manners corresponding to the "regulations of the etiquette") and the peculiarities of the situation (the conflicting dialogue). The lyrical and sedate Countess is presented in the sonatas exclusively through the "character in the situation" in her dialogues with the Count: her retorts and full-scale utterances. Thus, in the first parallel period in the 14th Sonata in C minor, K. 457 she participates in a conflicting dialogue and "pronounces" laconic, but extremely succinct retorts in these situational-narrative specifics (the situation of "the Count accuses" vs. "The Countess defends herself." The figures of curtseying, ornamentally embellished, combined with *lamento* intonations, correspond to the utmost the means of demonstration of the feelings of the gallant age: the conflict is capable of making the noble lady lose her balance, while the inquietude of the soul remains within the confines of etiquette in all circumstances.

The short retorts are gradually transformed into an unfolded utterance in the exposition of the 7th Sonata, where the change of the emotional states (from wonderment and bewilderment (mm. 10–14) to dissatisfaction and rage (mm. 15–20) demands from the performer a conscious separation of the musical text into "semantic parts of the role" (Konstantin Stanislavsky). The splitting of the musical text into

semantic segments, the manifestation of content-based structures and the analysis of the intonational lexis ultimately determines the appropriateness and the quality-based efficiency of the setting of the performance-based (and production-based) goals in the work on the musical text.

The analogy between the work of the pianist on the musical composition and the work of the producer (or actor) in a theater, made by Samariy Savshinsky in his time, has great perspectives hitherto unrealized either in pedagogy or performance practice. The methodology of work on the expressive (intonational-semantic) pronouncing through setting the "super-objective of the role," the "emotional germ of the role," the tempo-rhythm of the scene" (the semantic segment of the musical text) or the performance (or the musical composition) could organically fit into contemporary pedagogical technology of elaboration of roleplaying and problem-based situations in order to activate the performer's imagination and his or her artistic initiative [5]. The use of the narrative-figurative basis regulates the performer in the necessity of subordinating the articulation to the figurative-semantic side of the performed action, since the retorts are pronounced in this type of dialogue on behalf of concrete protagonists[4]. At the same time, the change of the narrative action, its development stimulate a constant search for solutions and choice of variants of this pronouncing, including consideration of the reaction of the partner – the participant of the dialogue.

Analysis of intonational lexis makes it possible not only to decide efficiently the artistic aims of performance articulation, but also to overturn many entrenched conceptions in the sphere of the theory of thematicism. Semantic analysis presents the possibility of passing from approximate and

amorphous descriptions of the "character of the music" and the "character of the musical theme" to a more in-depth interpretation of the etymology of musical significations, the connections of the theme with the musical image. Thus, analysis of the lexical constitution of a musical theme of the figured bass genres convinces of the necessity of a reevaluation of conceptions about it as being "petrified" and "changeless," since baroque musical themes in Western European music turned out to be saturated by a diverse and quite concrete intonational lexis. The latter possesses both substantive and emotional-affective meanings. Its interaction with its own supra-ostinato stratum indicates at a process of active intertext migration, while its inclusion in the intonational-lexical constitution of diverse formulas testifies about intensive intertext interactions [1].

The issue of "Semantics and Articulation of the Musical Theme" has been highlighted by us as one of the most important in the sphere of practical semantics. It is currently being developed on the basis of integration of musicological and performing disciplines, which helps deepen the technique of performance analysis and is conducive to subsequent development of the theory of musical significations.

In addition to analysis of intonational lexis, we must consider a resultative movement of technologies of practical semantics to be the interpretation of the *segments of the intertext* ("the text within the musical text"). It has been observed that in the musical compositions in many genres by Western European composers from the 17th and 18th centuries we may recognize without difficulty and readily discover semantic universals which carry out the roles of narrative-situational signs. Practically in all baroque musical texts for clavier in a "folded" (sign) appearance

there is a replication of the typical models of dialogues reflecting the interrelations between the participants of music-making ensembles: *continuo – solo* (the vertical projection) and *ripieno – concertino* (the horizontal projection). Due to the fact that these musical textual constructions are of a sign-situational nature, they may serve as a foundation for the organization of problem-based situations and roleplaying in teaching and formation of the skills of "expanding a work for clavier into a musical score for ensemble." In other words, the baroque musical text for clavier itself creates the conditions for organization of roleplaying, imitating the situation and conditions for music-making. When performing a fragment of a musical text (a musical theme or another, more expanded semantic segment of a musical composition), we immutably discover our participation in the narrative, comfortable and quite fitting for work in the problem-based situation "And how this would sound in performance by a historical orchestra?" In the dispensation of the main "roles" – the *continuo* (invariant) and the *solo* (variant) between two partners (the first and second piano) – the playing situation of everyday music-making from the Baroque period is recreated. This gives the opportunity of a multiple variation-type transformation of fragments and sets forward before the performer the tasks of transformation according to the laws of the specific features of the early urtext (application of registers, doublings, the technique of diminution, the technique of coloration, double counterpoint of the octave – the so-called "baroque mirror"). The assortment of skills obtained during the process of work on the "concerto dialogue" (which is how we label this type of exercises) presents the opportunity of coping with many specific types of "free music-making"

which are unfamiliar to the contemporary performer, including improvising on the musical text following an assigned matrix-model. The ideal artistic specimens of such kind are the everyday type of 16th and 17th music and, in particular, J. S. Bach's instructive compositions for clavier: "The Notebook of Anna Magdalena Bach," "The Notebook of Wilhelm Friedemann Bach," the Inventions and Sinfonias. The latter are perceived by us as a "school of free-music-making," in which the work on creating various editorial and performance versions, expansions of musical text for clavier into "orchestral" musical scores with the use of the possibility of timbral imitations in performance "with eight hands" or on two pianos. Interesting results are also achieved by free performance of Bach's Inventions and Sinfonias in the textural-acoustic space of two instruments ("orally" – without any notation) in various versions. This provides a true path towards mastery of the skills of transformation of the text, the use of intonational lexis and stylistic features of the Baroque period [7].

The semantic conditions of the inclusion of *intertext* (in this case – a "non-clavier" musical text in Baroque clavier compositions) places before the performer the additional goals of articulation connected with the skills of timbral imitations by means of the contemporary piano.

In the music for clavier of the 17th and 18th centuries the "migrating images" of the musical instruments of the epoch are broadly disseminated. The intonational lexis of the flute, violin, trumpet and horn, organ and harpsichord has entered the intonational-lexical vocabulary of the clavier music by the old masters. While migrating from one musical text to another, it has formed the semantic vocabulary and the artistic context of the clavier musical theme of the Baroque period.

Students and pupils majoring in piano become accustomed to the integral perception of the musical text and the content of a musical composition, while working on the technology of unfolding clavier music into a musical score for an ensemble with the participation of one or several partners. What is perceived to be valuable here is that the dialogue comprised of two or more semantic structures-retorts of various durations obtains artistic manifestation in the process of sound of an integral semantic segment of a musical text. An ensemble-like participation of two partners in a dialogue makes it possible to change in a variational manner the goals of articulation in various "proposed circumstances" (to use Konstantin Stanislavsky's term).

The efforts of researchers in the field of practical semantics and the development of innovational technologies on its basis are indispensable, since they in particular are capable of providing for music the status of the art of expressive intonating, and for performers and musicologists an artistically appropriate attitude towards the composer's musical text.

NOTES

[1] With the aid of the concept of "crucial intonations" perceptions are created about the intonational lexis among beginning musicians, starting with the youngest age.

[2] In Italian comedies and in the Spanish "comedies of the cloak and the sword" the servants always presented the "mirror" of their masters.

³ It is characteristic that the identical lexis (the "gallant intonations" against the background of Alberti basses in fast tempos) comprises the essence and the "emotional cell" of Susanna's role in the opera itself.

⁴ We ascribe to the concept of "theatrical dialogue" typified manifestations of narrative-based actions with the participation of the heroes and protagonists not only in Mozart's compositions, but also in music of various different epochs and styles. For more about this, as well as about the development of a didactic system of dialogues-etudes (problem-based situations and roleplaying) on a semantic basis see: Shaymukhametova L. N. Osnovy muzykal'nogo intonirovaniya. Programma dlya studentov fortepiannykh otdeleniy muzykal'nyh vuzov. [Foundations of Musical Intonating. Program for Students of Piano Departments of Musical Institutions of Higher Education]. Ufa, 1998. Recommended by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation.

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