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The Listener and the Work as the Dualistic Basis for the Morphological Analysis of Music

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Abstract. In morphological analysis, the musical work and the listener are seen as elements of one communicative duality. Each element of this duality may play the role of either subject or object. This paves the way for a more flexible approach towards analyzing a musical text. The morpheme, one of the cornerstones of morphological analysis, can be defined as a sound construction with a typical set of characteristic features. The other cornerstone, the morph, transforms a morpheme into a generic, stylistic “flesh and blood” of a specific musical text, on the basis of polymorphism. One bright example of the depth and rapidity of morphic transformations in Tchaikovsky’s music is the finale of his *First Piano Concerto*. From the point of view of morphological analysis, the musical development in the “Introduction” to Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* is based on a step-by-step approach to an externally existing object, making it possible for us to perceive (see or hear) its details. The object itself is polymorphic, i.e., similar to an embryo; it contains within itself, from the start, every element it needs for further development. The starting point of the “Introduction,” the high-register bassoon melody accompanied by the supporting line of the horn, can be defined as a forest viewed in a distance, from where the sound of a shepherd’s horn can be heard. The ten intonational elements of the initial three measures of the ballet provide the base from which the form of the “Introduction” is developed.

Keywords: music of Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky, morphological analysis, *The Rite of Spring*, object-descriptive polymorphism

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Международный отдел

Научная статья

Слушатель и произведение как дуалистическая основа морфологического анализа музыки

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Аннотация. В морфологическом анализе музыкальное произведение и слушатель рассматриваются как элементы коммуникативного двуединства. Каждый элемент этого двуединства может играть роль либо объекта, либо субъекта. Морфологический анализ выбирает в качестве своей главной цели звуковую конструкцию. Благодаря этому создаётся возможность более гибкого подхода к анализу музыкального текста. Морфема – один из краеугольных камней морфологического анализа – может быть определена как звуковая конструкция с типовым набором характерных черт. Другой краеугольный камень – морф – трансформирует морфему в жанрово-стилистическую «плоть и кровь» конкретного музыкального текста на основе полиморфизма. Ярким примером глубины и стремительности морфных превращений в музыке Чайковского является финал Первого фортепианного концерта. С позиций морфологического анализа музыкальное развитие во Вступлении «Весны священной» Стравинского является поэтапным приближением к существующему вонне объекту, позволяющим воспринять (разглядеть, услышать) его детали. Сам объект полиморфен, то есть изначально содержит в себе как в эмбрионе все необходимые элементы дальнейшего развития. Исходную точку Вступления – мелодию фагота в высоком регистре, сопровождаемую подголоском валторны, – можно определить как видимый вдали лес, из которого доносится звук пастушьего рожка. Десять интонационных элементов начального трёхтактового мотива балета являются основой развёртывания формы Вступления.

Ключевые слова: творчество Чайковского, Стравинского, морфологический анализ, «Весна священная», объектно-изобразительный полиморфизм

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The problem of what a musical composition contains in itself and how it is perceived by the listener holds a crucial position in musicology. In order to find a solution, I have developed the concept of morphological analysis. Its techniques were used in [1; 2; 3; 4]. In the morphological analysis the musical work

and the listener are seen as elements of one communicative duality. Each element of this duality may play the role of either subject or object. The subjectness of a musical work is based in its innate conceptuality, its ability to trigger emotional or mental associations at various levels of specificity when perceived by a listener. A discussion of the psycho-

physiological bases of this phenomenon, or the steps by which it developed to maturity in European culture, is outside the bounds of this article. Nevertheless, I will note that **innate conceptuality** became an attribute of music fairly late in the history of music, only in the 18th century. It can solve an array of terminological and methodological problems connected with answering questions about what makes music distinct as an art form, and about its content-related or linguistic aspects. I will especially note the relationship between this concept and Boris Asafiev's "symphonism." Clearly, the latter is a special case of the former (as is rhetoric from the Baroque period, incidentally). Also clear is that innate conceptuality is more concrete and more grounded in the real world, as a tool for identifying the profound expressive foundations of music, than is, for example, Ernst Kurth's "energy," Aleksei Losev's "number," or Asafiev's "intonation."

The subjectness of the listener's perception is most vividly on display in terms of **selectability**. In assessing the ability of a musical composition to express most fully the aesthetic aspirations and ideals of a particular time period, aural perception (both the individual and the collective) shapes a set of preferences for selecting the names and artistic legacies of past and present composers. The level of innate conceptuality plays a decisive role in this process. For example, in the second half of the 18th and early 19th centuries, it turns out to be the music of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Rossini that remains conceptually meaningful for the modern listener. Less interest is shown in the music of Gluck, Boccherini, or Paisiello. The Baroque era is associated primarily with Bach and Handel, while Vivaldi, Scarlatti, Corelli, Couperin, and Rameau

have remained in the background. In the 20th century, the highest level of innate conceptuality can be seen in the works of Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovich. The music of Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, Richard Strauss, Mahler, Puccini, Debussy, Ravel, Orff, and Gershwin is of a comparable level.

Morphological analysis takes **sound construction** as its main aim. This makes possible a more flexible approach to analyzing a musical text. It is purely optional for a listener to have knowledge of the concepts and terms describing the arrangement of pitches, syntactic structures, form patterns, or stylistic and generic features in the music of any particular historical period. In contrast, the sound-constructive basis of music as an art is a fundamental attribute, and as a consequence, is always under the spotlight in the listener's consciousness. This means that a description of the sound constructions as a sum total of sounds, shaped by rhythm, timbre, and tessitura in their horizontal progressions and vertical combinations, optimizes the perception of the musical flow as a discrete, constructively organized, and, in the end, innately conceptual phenomenon. A morphological analysis relies on sound constructions of various scales, from simple consonance up to a symphonic cycle. The specific features of their *sklad*¹, their textural, temporal, timbral, and dynamic organization transform them into morphemes, for subsequent morphic realization.

The **morpheme**, one of the cornerstones of morphological analysis, can be defined as a sound construction with a typical set of characteristic features. Within the bounds of its specific type, a morpheme triggers a polysemic array of figurative and semantic associations. This polysemy arises from the expressive specifics of music as an art



form and is regulated both from the “right” and the “left.” Motion to the right, toward a reduction of associative polysemy, lowers the artistic value of the morpheme and makes it easier to recognize. Motion to the left creates a different sort of problem. A significant expansion of the figurative and associative fields exerts a fatal effect on that innate conceptuality and reduces the probability it will be appropriately perceived aurally. The level of morphemic polysemy, both figurative and semantic, is fairly mobile and changeable. While it remains an attributive property of a musical text, this polysemy also lives its own life, relying in large part on the specific features of music perception in a particular historical era.

In my work over the past several years, and also in this article, I refer to the morphemes of:

- the *environment*, based on the interaction of two or more sound sequences uncoordinated in time, with a constructive dissimilarity and dissociation of timbre and tessitura that generates in the listener’s associative perception an image of a kind of space-time continuum;

- an *event* as a specific type of morpheme of environment, including ostinato patterns used for depiction simply of time passing;

- *dissonance* as a sound construction, the constituent parts of which create friction caused by dissonant intervals (minor seconds, major sevenths and tritones);

- *space*, consisting of two elements: a reverberating pedal-tone background associated with endless distances, with a melodic relief which pours over it to create the impression of something visibly within reach;

- *motion*, based on the contrasting combination of two horizontal entities: one manifested as regularity, the other as irregularity;

- *Janus* as a sound construction with features which preclude an unambiguous interpretation, either in terms of modal and harmonic organization, formal design and compositional functionality, or, in the end, in terms of the imagery and its meaning;

- *disruption*, created by the emergence of material that abruptly differs from the proceeding development in terms of melody, mode, harmony, texture, timbre or dynamics;

- a *quadruple* as a four-phase form pattern which can be described as a–a–b–a;

- a *jellyfish*, which provides an associative dynamic portrait of a form based on a sequence of phases in which the musical fabric alternately expands and contracts.

The other cornerstone of morphological analysis, the **morph**, transforms a morpheme into the generic, stylistic “flesh and blood” of a specific musical text, on the basis of polymorphism, rather than ordinary variability. What is the difference between the former and the latter, and why must we prefer the former? There does not exist any uncrossable boundary between polymorphism and variability. Both concepts describe a *plurality* of forms in which a particular object exists. However, the invariant-variant duality is used, as a rule, to describe a linear process, in which the starting point, its structural (melodic, rhythmic, textural) features, are a factor of the recognizability in all subsequent transformations.² The polymorphic object, in contrast, exists as a potential plurality of individualized forms. Their diversity is unified by an initially provided constructive prerequisite: the morpheme. The invariant and variant are linked together by their structural and syntactic similarity. The morpheme and morph are connected in constructive and content-related (innately conceptual) ways.

The interaction between the morpheme and the morph stems from the **polymorphic nature of music** and is closely tied to its temporal foundation. Temporal deployment, governed by repetition (whether exact or with variations), provides morphological analysis with practically unlimited potential. A flexible combination of induction and deduction allows the analysis to find typical innately-conceptual sound constructions, in all the diversity of their textural realizations, among musical compositions of various eras and styles. A comparison of these textural realizations makes it possible for us to refine and, in some cases, to correct the way we describe their aesthetic value.

One bright example of the depth and rapidity of morphic transformations in Tchaikovsky's music is the finale of his *First Piano Concerto*. [5]³ Its main theme presents a morphic realization of the morpheme of the **quadruple** (see Example No. 1).

Example No. 1 Pyotr Tchaikovsky.
First Piano Concerto.
Finale, mm. 5–8



The typical four-phase pattern of this morpheme can be imagined as the sequence $a-b-a$. Here, the ratio of sameness to contrast is 3:1. The a phases are genetically linked. They may vary with repetition. Their recognizable similarity underlies the cohesiveness of the structure as a whole. The b phase provides melodic contrast. In terms of rhythm, in most cases, it is identical to the a phases. Morphic realizations of the

quadruple in Russian and Ukrainian folk and professional music are diverse in form. Some of them are only vaguely reminiscent of the basic construction. Nevertheless, they all have in common a four-phase pattern in which, as a consequence, repetition prevails over innovation. Asafiev's formula $i:m:t$, which traces its lineage to:

– the Aristotelian concept of the whole as something with a beginning, middle and end, and

– Hegel's dialectical triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis,

may be applied to the morpheme of the **quadruple** if reconfigured to $i:r:m:t$, where r represents the repetition of phases.

The morpheme of the **quadruple** in the exposition of main theme of the finale from Tchaikovsky's *First Piano Concerto*, which is based on the Ukrainian folk song celebrating spring, *Viydi, viydi, Ivanku*, can be described as the sequence $a-a^1-a^1-a^1$. The first link in the chain differs from the next three. Nevertheless, this difference does not reach the level of melodic independence that would earn it the letter b . Repetition dominates over innovation in tune with the incantatory nature of folklore prototypes. The prevalence of statics at the internal constructive level is compensated for by the active polymorphic development of the construction as a whole.

In her monograph, Nadezhda Tumanina describes the beginning of the third movement as follows:

*The folk song melody incorporates both the laconic brevity characteristic of ritual calendar songs and **lyricality** [my bold print. – V. G.]... Tchaikovsky's theme maintains the frequent repetition of variants of one and the same motif, which is characteristic of song structure in this genre, but **the lyrical features interweave in a quaint way with the scherzo features,***



which is manifested in the sharpness of the rhythm and its syncopated accents. The harmony is colored by repeating variants of the main motif [score example: measures 1–4 of the piano part. – V. G.]. This theme is complemented by **another theme** in G-flat major, restrained in the same manner as the spring song, but performed *tutti* (while the pianist plays the first one). This conveys the impression that **after the song is introduced** by several voices, **the entire choir-like texture loudly joins in.**⁴

I have marked the fragments with which I essentially disagree in bold. The lyricality of ritual calendar songs is very much up for debate. These songs are a component of a syncretic, magical, incantatory, extra-personal (or more precisely, supra-personal) ritual act. The scherzo features are even more questionable, since they appeared, as we know, at a comparatively late stage in the development of Western European professional music. As a matter of fact, Tchaikovsky introduces a series of alterations to the original melody, strengthening its *plastic, kinetic* foundation. The first and most obvious alteration is the expansion of the initial melodic leap from a fifth to an octave. The periodic layering of the original folk-music-derived melody in thirds becomes constant, and is doubled in octave in the piano parts for both hands. To amplify the dancing effect, the first beat of each measure is texturally similar to a “bass-chord” pattern. The danger that the repetition will become mechanized is overcome by the melismatic stress on the third beat. This fine textural detail conveys the image of the entire specific gestural personality.

The active polymorphic development of the main theme in the third movement takes place over five sections. The first two

present a double exposition, the first played by the solo piano, and the second – by the piano supported by expressive pizzicato accompaniment in the strings. In the third section, the plastic-kinetic repetition is transformed into a modular-developmental continuation. In the parallel D-flat major, the a link is unexpectedly mutated to a melodic cadence, chromatically surrounding the second scale degree. The obvious generic reorientation to the sphere of lyrical songs is subsequently completed with a circular melodic arabesque, which fades away as it repeats.

We can describe the generic metamorphosis of the morphic links in the main theme of the fourth section using the concept of “balletness” (*baletnost'* in Russian). The effect of the “balletness”, or the choreographic characteristic feature is created by the polyrhythmic combination of texturally contrasting parts in the solo piano and the orchestra. While maintaining the $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature, the rhythmic construction of the balletic morph splits into two autonomous layers. The chords in the strings, pulsing at even intervals, create a two-beat rhythmic grouping in which a beat equals the length of three eighth notes, instead of two, within the framework of the main three-beat grid. Tchaikovsky does not stop with layering the $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature over $\frac{6}{8}$ time signature. Replacing the first melodic sound in every link of the folk music prototype in the piano with a pause weakens the downbeat while also making possible an iambic stress on the second beat, which creates a syncopation inside the measure. Most centrally, the effect of “balletness” is achieved by the mismatch in time between the syncopated second melodic quarter note in the piano and the relatively strong second eighth note in the orchestral accompaniment (see Example No. 2).

Example No. 2

Pyotr Tchaikovsky.
First Piano Concerto.
Finale, mm. 29–32



In a letter Sergei Taneyev wrote to Tchaikovsky on March 18, 1878, he lamented as follows:

*The one shortcoming of this [i.e. Fourth. – V. G.] symphony, with which I will never reconcile myself, is that every section has something that **reminds one of ballet music** [my bold print. – V. G.]: the middle section of the Andante, the trio in the Scherzo, something like a march in the finale. When I listen to this symphony, I imagine, in spite of myself, Miss Sobeshchanskaya or Gillert II, which drives me to despair and prevents me from enjoying the many lovely sections of this symphony.⁵*

The response from the great composer is extremely interesting:

I positively do not understand what you are calling ballet music and why you cannot reconcile yourself to it. By “ballet music,” do you mean any type of merry melody with a dancing rhythm? Because in that case, you must refuse to reconcile yourself to most of Beethoven’s symphonies, in which these are to be found at every turn. Do you mean that the trio in my Scherzo was written in the style of Minkus, Gerber, or Puni? I do not feel it deserves that judgment. I really do not at all understand how anyone can find anything negative about ballet music! After all, ballet music is not always insignificant;

some of it is good (think of Léo Delibes’ “Sylvia”). And when it is good, it does not matter whether or not Sobeshchanskaya dances to it, is that not so?⁶

The bone of contention between the correspondents here was a crucial stylistic feature of Tchaikovsky’s music: its gestural-plastic foundation, which summons up associations with ballet choreography. In calling this trait “balletness,” I stress that it is the historical forerunner of one of the fundamental features of Stravinsky’s musical language. Like his ingenious predecessor, the senior member of the St. Petersburg Classical School widely uses gestural-plastic characteristics that recreate the emotionally motivated movements of the human body in his works. Curiously, several of Stravinsky’s scores directly address Tchaikovsky’s balletness, recreating (albeit, not quoting) their characteristic features. For example, in the main theme of the second movement of the *Dumbarton Oaks* concerto, completed in 1938, the melodic configuration, one of hidden polyphony, loses all similarity to the baroque, motor-figurative type of textural deployment. With a subdivision of the melodic line into short two- and three-note trochaic motives, and with an unhurried tempo, frequent pauses, and detailed articulation, Stravinsky submerges his baroque prototype in a completely new gestural-plastic generic environment. A direct analogy emerges with the main theme of the first movement of the Tchaikovsky’s *Fourth Symphony*, or more precisely, with its metamorphosis, audible in the winds in the concluding section (measures 135–141). The sublimated and refined balletness of this metamorphosis, eliciting images of the flawless lines of the Mariinsky Theatre’s *corps de ballet*, can be appreciated as a forerunner of the



main theme in the second movement of Stravinsky's *Dumbarton Oaks*.

In the final section of the main theme from Tchaikovsky's *First Piano Concerto* finale, the Ukrainian spring song transforms into a group folk dance. Tumanina's opinion that this is "another theme in *G-flat major*" is faulty. By using the intervallic inversion of the initial link, the melodic alignment of its three-time repetition, by constructing the texture of the massive orchestral chordal verticals, Tchaikovsky fundamentally rethinks the generic basis of the folk music prototype. Rising to the foreground, here, is the rhythmic figure of a second type of dance step as the basis for the swirling dance motion.⁷ The polymorphism of the main theme in the finale at that point, described by Tumanina the following way: "after the song is introduced by several voices, the whole choir loudly joins in," must be transferred to a completely different generic environment: performances by groups of solo dancers grow into one larger, collective dance act.

The first well-developed analysis of the "Introduction" to Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* was provided by Asafiev. His definition of its form as the "process of growth in the musical fabric" has become axiomatic.⁸ Irina Vershinina's analysis of the same fragment contains a multitude of interesting observations and conclusions. She stresses the special role of timbral motifs:

Each new timbral motif grows out of the previous one and provides a basis for the next. A strongly-forged chain with thematic elements for links takes shape, distinct with structural clarity and connected with common pitches. But, once it appears, every subsequent thematic element is left to live on in its original, unaltered form. The essence of the musical structure in the "Introduction"

is the sequential placement of these timbral motifs as they are born, motifs which move the boundaries of the range of sound, as if coming to fill a particular sonic expanse.⁹

Essentially, Vershinina elaborates on Asafiev's idea of growth, without referring to it. Crucial to this elaboration is her description of the growth of the orchestral texture, its expanding density and volume.

From the point of view of morphological analysis, the musical development in the "Introduction" to Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* can be seen as a step-by-step approach to an externally existing object, permitting one to perceive (see or hear) its details. The object itself is polymorphic, i.e., similar to an embryo, it contains within itself, from the very beginning, every element it needs for further development. The situation is reminiscent of looking at a painting from different distances and angles, or a 360-degree view (moving closer and further away) of a statue, concluding with a return to the starting point. The starting point of the "Introduction," the high-register bassoon melody accompanied by the supporting line in the horn, can be defined as a forest seen from a distance, from where the sound of a shepherd's horn can be heard (see Example No. 3).

Example No. 3 Igor Stravinsky. *The Rite of Spring*. Introduction, mm. 1–3

The specific imagery I am suggesting for the introductory three measures of the

work is based on the morphic realization of the morpheme of the *environment*. Here, the experience of contemplating the natural surroundings is translated into a sound structure which recreates the relationship of two dimensions: the internal and the external. The first is bounded by the limits of the human body, while the borders of the second are laid at the limits of visual perception. As the individual ego dissolves into the infinitude of the natural world, extending to the horizon, a person is submerged in an emotional state that we can define as *dissociated tranquility*. This is a dissociation from the worry and turmoil of everyday life, triggered by the beauty of the outside world. In Stravinsky, the dissociated tranquility appears in a specifically “humanized” form. The sound of the shepherd’s horn, as it is carried in, becomes the point of departure from which the form is deployed, similar to the step-by-step approach to an object audible in the distance.

In its formal aspect, the introductory sound construction of *The Rite of Spring* turns out to be a classic example of the morphic realization of the *quadruple* morpheme. Here, it can be described as the sequence *a–a–b–a*. Aside from the beginning of *The Rite of Spring*, we can also identify the morphemic traits of the *a–a–b–a* quadruple in the introductory sections of *The Firebird* and *Petrushka*.

It is worth examining the initial three measures of *The Rite of Spring* in two ways:

- as an ingenious example of Stravinsky’s psychologically enriched tone painting, reconceiving the romantic paradigm for perceiving the surrounding world in an object-descriptive way;
- as an extremely concentrated manifestation of the polymorphism of the composer’s creative thinking.

The dichotomy of the sound construction at the beginning of the ballet reveals itself in:

- its self-significant artistic value;
- its role as a resource for further polymorphic development.

The self-significant artistic value is rooted in the melodic and rhythmic reworking of the folk music source material: The Lithuanian Wedding Song no. 157 in Anton Juskiewicz’s collection *Litauische Volks-Weisen* (Part I, Kraków, 1900). The result of this reworking is a generic transformation (from song to instrumental playacting). The bassoon solo sounds like the playful, spontaneous improvisation of a folk musician, marked by a rhythmic quantitiveness and melodic ornamentation. However, as Boulez’s analysis has demonstrated, its spontaneity is an illusion.¹⁰ In actuality, it presents a virtuosic amalgam of rhythmic symmetry, parallelism, retrograde movement, and structural repetitiveness. In terms of mode, the initial melody of *The Rite of Spring*, interacting with the horn line, reveals a change at multiple levels. Together with the melodic variations and the sense of rhythmic improvisation, the modal variability adds contemplative features to the cumulative musical image.

The initial counterpoint between the bassoon and the horn forms a polymorphic intonational field, the elements of which, as they develop and interact, recreate the step-by-step approach and entry into the forest from which the shepherd’s playing can be heard. There are ten such elements in total. Four of them are contained in the initial melodic figure of the first measure:

- 1 – the trichord figure $c^2-b^1-g^1$;
- 2 – the stepwise movement over the minor triad ($b^1-g^1-e^1$);
- 3 – the perfect fifth e^1-b^1 ;



4 – the perfect fourth over a distance, shaped by the lowest and concluding pitches (e^1-a^1).

In the melodic figure of the second measure, two new elements appear:

5 – the filling of the lower tetrachord of the natural minor with the adjacent natural seventh scale degree ($d^2-c^2-b^1-a^1-g^1$);

6 – the audible sequence $c^2-a^1-d^2-a^1$.

The phased repetition of the initial melodic figure in the first three measures confirms that the echoes (over a distance) of the repeating core tone a^1 is the seventh element (**7**). The horn line, by itself and in combination with the bassoon line, adds another three elements:

8 – the minor second $c^\sharp-d^1$;

9 – the diminished-octave false relation $c^\sharp-c^2$;

10 – the barely-audible sequence of two major sixths (d^1-b^1 and $c^\sharp-a^1$) at the end of the third measure.

The *first* phase of the approach (from the beginning to the first measure of reh. 3) can be described as the stage in which the structural integrity of the initial bassoon solo is gradually blurred. Its second appearance (measures 3–6 of reh. 1), unlike the first, does not contain the phased repetition of the initial melodic figure. The third appearance (measure 1 of reh. 3) is compressed down to the concluding one and a half measures. In the lower textural layer, elements **4** (the fourth) and **8** (the minor second) blend into the morph of chromatically parallel fourths. Its descending and ascending movement, interrupted by pedal stops, emphasizes the improvisational nature of the musical development. The process of approaching frequently starts then stops at fermatas, searching for its way in the right direction.

The morph of the chromatically parallel fourths serves as the textural basis on which

both the fragments of the bassoon solo and the new melodic figures that grow out of its polymorphic elements are layered. Especially indicative, in this sense, are the bassoon and piccolo clarinet lines in measures 1–3 of reh. 1. Using element **8** (the minor second), they transform it into a descending sequence based on element **1** (the trichord). We can also classify the English horn ostinato in reh. 2 as another figure, changing the interval foundation of element **1** (in this instance, major second + minor third). Wrapping up the first phase are the final one and a half measures of the introductory melody, accompanied by descending chromatic lines in the bass clarinets, polymorphically transforming element **8** (the minor second). These lines play an important role in the subsequent development, as do intervallic mutations of trichord figure.

The starting point of the *second* phase is underlined with an accelerated tempo (*più mosso*). The sequence of contrasting episodes symbolizes the entry into the forest grove. In the first episode (measures 2–6 after reh. 3), the chromatic fourths in the bassoons again go spiraling. With that in the background, the horn continues the rhythmic and melodic-melismatic transformations to the morph of element **1** (major second + minor third). The dynamic aspiration of the beginning episode makes it possible to view it as a sort of retransition to the music recreating the noises and voices of the forest's inhabitants (reh. 4 – measure 4 of reh. 6).

The sound-descriptive static quality of the second episode is based on the use of harmonic pedals of the horn and trills in the clarinets and flutes. The atmosphere of vibrating silence they create is permeated with orchestral voices that imitate the sounds of living nature. These include:



– the rhythmically irregular repetitions of the $d\sharp^2$ in the oboe at reh. 4 (element 7, the repeating tone);

– the triad figure with a flickering $e^2-e\sharp^2$ minor-major third scale degree in the oboe at reh. 5 (elements 2, the triad, and 8, the minor second);

– the “cooing” bass clarinet solo as a hybrid of three elements: 7 (the repeating tone), 10 (the reverse-melodic version of the sequence of two sixths), and 3 (the fifth).

The other textural lines remain acoustically in the background, and play an enhancing role, thickening and expanding the musical fabric. Nevertheless, there are interesting details to be found in their intonational relief, which are important in terms of the form as a whole. For example, the flute line in measures 1–2 of reh. 5 is based primarily on elements 3 (the perfect fifth) and 4 (the perfect fourth). Its purpose is to expand the sound space by encompassing the second and third octaves. Elements of mirror-image symmetry are present in the construction of this line. The sounds before and after the pivotal tone $d\sharp^2$ at the start of measure 2 of reh. 5 relate to each other as rhythmically altered retrogrades (see Example No. 4).

Example No. 4 Igor Stravinsky. *The Rite of Spring*. Introduction, reh. 5

The piccolo clarinet line starting at reh. 4 is born out of melodically embellished, chromatically descending melodic motion (a morph of element 8, the minor second), which is used at the start of the second phase in one of the bassoon lines. The piccolo clarinet transforms this motion into a melodic figure based on the compressed to a major third (minor second + minor third) and expanded to a tritone (major second + major third) morphs of element 1 (the trichord). In the last repetition, the starting major second $e^2-f\sharp^2$ of the tritone mutation is replaced by a minor second $e^2-e\sharp^2$. This is the composer’s way of melodically preparing for the flickering major-minor third in the following oboe solo.

The contralto flute line at reh. 6 deserves special attention. As a morph of element 5 (the filling of the lower tetrachord of the natural minor with the adjacent natural seventh step), it mutates into the melodic figure, which can be heard as a foretelling of the horn solo at reh. 25 of *The Augurs of Spring. Dances of the Young Girls*. Played in a relatively sparse textural environment, it is clearly audible. The horn pedal in the second episode can be interpreted as an autonomous consonant component of the musical fabric (the E major second inversion at reh. 4). It transforms to a sharply dissonant structure responding adroitly to changes in the textural environment (at reh. 5). Layered on top of the major-seventh foundation $A\sharp-a$ (the morph of element 9, the diminished-octave false relation), there is a third line, the melodic minor second f^1-e^1 that constitutes yet another diminished-octave false relation with the flickering tertian tone of the oboe solo (see Example No. 4).

The intermediary role played by the *third* phase (measures 5–10 after reh. 6) is emphasized by a change in texture. This series of compact three-tone or four-tone chords results from superposing two narrow-



range melodic ostinatos over the circular, spiraling line of chromatic-parallel fourths (brought in for the third time). One of those ostinatos (in the first flute) is the compressed morph of element 5 (here, the filling-up of the lower tetrachord of the natural minor without the adjacent natural seventh step). The distinguishing characteristic of the second ostinato, in the English horn, is an inner constructive repetition which brings the tones of the minor second $f^1-f^{\#1}$ in turns (a morph of elements 7, repetition, and 8, the minor second). In terms of imagery, this fragment is similar to the beginning of *The Nightingale*: probably, the motion of clouds, or, perhaps the rustling of treetops. From a gradually approaching point of view, the third phase can be interpreted as a brief halting point in the glade, providing the time to cast a glance at the sky and the nature all around. The similarity of these landscape analogies stems from related approaches to composition. The intervallic sequences in the orchestral introduction to the opera group around the repeated perfect fifth. The compact three-tone or four-tone chords of the ballet are layered periodically with consonant *D major/minor* triads. Despite its brevity, the third phase is handed over for development. Its concluding four measures demonstrate clear signs of rhythmic retardation (duplets rather than triplets in the flutes) (see Example No. 5).

Example No. 5 Igor Stravinsky. *The Rite of Spring*. Introduction, mm. 5–10 after reh. 6

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Flute 1 (Fl.), Flute 1 in C major (G) (Fl. c.a. (G)), Clarinet in G (C. ingl.), and Violin I (V-nl I). The score consists of four staves. The Flute 1 part features a melodic line with a chromatic-parallel fourth structure. The Flute 1 in C major part has a similar melodic line. The Clarinet in G part has a more complex, rhythmic pattern. The Violin I part has a simple, sustained line. The score is in 2/4 time and shows measures 5-10 after rehearsal 6.

The *fourth* phase takes up the developmental thread that appears in the first episode of the second phase. The motion deeper into the forest at reh. 7 is based on an alternation between saturated and sparse textural fragments (representing the forest and the copse). Stravinsky recreates the tutti-solo dialogue, originating in baroque music, using the contrast between ten-line and three-line constructions. In the saturated (ten-line) constructions, there are eight pedals and two-tone ostinatos that temporally prolong the harmonic vertical entity consisting of five degrees of the whole-tone scale from $f^{\#}$ with the added tone $d^{\#}$. The dissonant acoustic environment absorbs the oboe and piccolo clarinet voices. Their intonational profile is based on musical material which previously sounded in both episodes of the second phase. The oboe repeats, in condensed form, the morph of element 7 (the repeating tone). Once again (for the third time) piccolo clarinet plays a morph of element 8 (the minor second). In the sparse (three-line) construction, Stravinsky uses two more elements from the second phase: the initial segment of the English horn line at reh. 3 (element 1, the trichord figure) and the first measure of the contralto flute line at reh. 6, foreboding the horn solo at reh. 25 of *The Augurs of Spring. Dances of the Young Girls*. The dialogue between the saturated and sparse constructions is in an inverse proportional relationship: the condensed repetitions in the former lead to expanded repetitions in the latter.

The second episode of the fourth phase (reh. 8) is constructively monolithic. Its underlying layer (one pedal and four two-tone ostinatos) absorbs the melodically individuated lines in the alto flute and piccolo clarinet. Within that underlying layer, the ostinato line in the bassoons, a morph of element 6 (the sequence

$c^2-a^1-d^2-a^1$) deserves special attention. The alternation of major third and minor third ($d^1-bb-c^\sharp-bb$) can be heard as a vital step in the melodic preparation for the ticking minor third – perfect fourth ostinato ($db^1-bb-eb^1-bb$), which is one of the main expressive means in *The Augurs of Spring. Dances of the Young Girls*. The piccolo clarinet line includes a three-time repetition of the morph of element 8, the minor second (its fourth appearance). In the alto flute, the morph of element 5 (the filling of the lower tetrachord of the natural minor with the adjacent natural seventh step) repeatedly, in a rhythmically altered and constructively expanded form, initiates a sequence that extends into the initial episode of the *fifth* phase, which is crossing through the forest proper.

The beginning of the *fifth* phase (measure 1 after reh. 9) contains a new intonational element. The oboe solo can be seen as one additional morph (along with the chromatic-parallel fourths) of element 4. Its initial melodic figure, paradoxically, resembles the trochaic syncope, an Italian Baroque musical mannerism, based on a descending leap from the downbeat to a syncopated note. The trochaic syncope would also be incorporated in works from the 1920s and 1930s, markedly influenced by the stylistic features of the Baroque era. In *The Rite of Spring*, its sounding is continued in a melodic line primarily built on fourths. This line serves as a kind of constructive antipode, a horizontal projection of the chromatic parallel fourths. Aside from the new morph of the fourth, the musical fabric of the first episode contains its inverse imitation in the piccolo clarinet. Serving as a third element is a rhythmically changeable sequence (a morph of element 5, the filling of the lower tetrachord of the natural minor with the adjacent natural

seventh step), which has its beginning at the end of the fourth phase.

The second episode of the fifth phase (reh. 10–11), a patch of forest which is difficult to cross, is marked by the highest level of textural density. Its psychologically enriched tone painted statics are grounded in the nine-measure pedal point of the cellos and double-basses. The pitch foundation of that pedal point is provided by a most powerful dominant harmony, the major-minor seventh chord from e! Its relations with the ballet's initial bassoon solo, marked by a predominating A minor, and also with the variable *D major/minor* in the third intermediary phase are obvious. They point in an unambiguous (though fairly veiled) manner to the classical functional-harmonic (*T – S – D*) foundation of the musical development. Looking ahead, the resolution of texturally and dissonantly complicated layering of the dominant pedal not at *T (A minor)*, but rather at the *A-flat minor* of the concluding, sixth phase, can be seen as a special type of interrupted cadence. Its nonstandard quality, increasing the intensity of formational energy which cannot find a natural way out, leads to the appearance, at the very end of the “Introduction,” of the main thematic elements from the following *The Augurs of Spring. Dances of the Young Girls*.

The textural lines that weave through the dominant pedal in the low strings play various roles. For instance, the ostinatos in the contrabassoon and the horns, inheriting the tradition of the flickering major-minor third in the oboe solo from the second episode of the second phase, attempt to make use of the minor second $g-g^\sharp$ they create to put in doubt whether the third degree in the major-minor seventh chord is indeed major. The lines in the English horn, piccolo clarinet, and clarinet in



A, reproducing the morphs which have already been heard, gradually drown in the growing volume of background, coloristic counterpoints. In the last measures of reh. 11, there are as many as 15 of them. The result of this is that the oboe horizontal morph of element 4 (the fourth), which is intonationally contoured and begins with trochaic syncopation, can be heard in the thickly saturated sound texture thanks to its doubling by the piercing timbre of the piccolo trumpet (see Example No. 6). The violas playing *divisi* carry an important role in shaping the overall character of the sound. Their dual-layer *glissandi sul C*, while playing harmonics based on their 2–8 overtones, can be interpreted as a new synthetic morph combining element 2 (in this case, stepwise movement along a major triad) and the characteristic modal detail of element 5 (in this case, the low Mixolydian seventh degree of natural major). In the sense of both construction and imagery, this morph directly follows the tradition that harkens back to measure 14 of the “Introduction” to *The Firebird*, and

indirectly to the border between rehearsal marks 1 and 2 of the “Introduction” to *The Nightingale*. The idea that the imagined traveler is now inside the forest (inside the object) is emphasized by one more background contrapuntal line, which recreates the “cooing” bass clarinet solo from the landscape-imagery episode of the *second* phase of the approach.

Example No. 6

Igor Stravinsky. *The Rite of Spring*.
Introduction, reh. 11



The *sixth* and final phase of the approach heralds the moment the folk musician playing his horn comes into view. Stravinsky reproduces the original bassoon solo in a structurally condensed form transposed a minor second down. The absence of any horn counterpoint here speaks for itself: attention focuses exclusively on the source of the sound, and not on anything else (see Example No. 7).

Example No. 7 Igor Stravinsky. *The Rite of Spring*. Introduction, mm. 1–5 of reh. 12

The “Introduction” of the ballet can be considered a manifesto for a new, **object-descriptive creative method**, rejuvenating the linguistic norms of European music. Within that method, the thematic development peculiar to the classical and romantic traditions becomes only one individual case of polymorphic mutations of the musical fabric. New compositional techniques arise: figurative hints, intervallic forebodings, multilayer ostinato complexity (instead of chordal or harmonic condensation), structural analogues (instead of intonational similarity), textural and functional dialogic quality, and the migration of elements between the sections.

The dynamic profile of the shape in the “Introduction” to *The Rite of Spring*, based on alternating phases of expansion and contraction of the musical fabric, can be likened to the way a jellyfish swims. Jellyfish use cyclical changes to the shape of their bell-like bodies to move forward. When the

bell contracts, water in front of the jellyfish is sucked inside, propelling it forward. As a rule, the expansion phase of the bell is longer in duration than the contraction phase. The jellyfish analogy more precisely describes the cycle of expansion and contraction than does Asafiev’s definition of “form as the process of growth in the musical fabric:”

It is difficult to describe this type of form, because here, the chief thing is motion, the unceasing filling, branching, and inflating or “contracting” of the fabric, and also its retrenchment, in the inflow and outflow of sounds (quantitatively, in terms of numbers actually obtained, and not only through the amplification or reduction in the power of the sound). As if it is breathing, the fabric fills with air and expands, then shrinks to one or two lines <...> The form of the introduction to The Rite of Spring is the process of growth in the musical fabric [my bold print. – V. G.]. This is achieved by the filling and branching described above...¹¹

Although in describing the process of shaping, the author applies the contrast between branching, inflating and contracting, the definition of the form as a “process of growth” includes only the first, “branching and inflating” phase.

Forms based on the alternation of phases of expansion and contraction can be seen as the textural implementation (or morphs) of the *jellyfish* morpheme. Underlying this morpheme are the cyclical changes to the sound construction. The process is predicated on the growing role that textural, timbral, and dynamic elements of the musical fabric play in shaping the form. The introductory sections of *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and *The Rite of Spring* are brilliant examples of jellyfish morphs. Each of them is individually characteristic in terms of subject, genre,



and stylistics. At the same time, in all three cases, the dynamic profile shapes a gradual growth in the texture. The area of the densest texture suddenly, with no connecting ties or transitions, contracts into the concluding section, which is based on the material heard at the very beginning. This section cannot be defined as a reprise in the simple three-part form. This is, in fact, the contraction phase. Its functional role comes down to concentrating energy for a new expansion. Resuming cycles of expansion and contraction provide the most natural form for modeling the subconscious emotions which make up the foundations of the figurative world in Stravinsky's music. The morpheme of the *jellyfish*, its structural basis, and its specific textural incarnations can be described as the most vivid case of the Russian master's innovation in musical form shaping.

Stravinsky's **object-descriptive polymorphism** in the "Introduction" to *The Rite of Spring* is what Schoenberg did not want to hear, or was not able to hear in Stravinsky's music. He frequently laments the absence of thematic material, in Stravinsky, that would be capable of serving as a foundation for developing variation.¹² These complaints point to Schoenberg's unfamiliarity with this unique solution to the

perennial problem of the *Grundgestalt* of a musical work, a solution based on completely different artistic and aesthetic preconditions. I wish to point out that Stravinsky's object-descriptive polymorphism appears in *The Rite of Spring* a decade before the Austrian master's first dodecaphonic compositions. Today, nobody doubts that *The Rite of Spring*, as well as several other works by the Russian composer, are superior – in terms of artistic mastery, influence on worldwide musical processes, and, finally, popularity among a large listening audience – to any work by Schoenberg or other composers of the past century.

Stravinsky's artistic discoveries, continued and developed by Prokofiev and Shostakovich, help us see the **St. Petersburg Classical School** as a central, key phenomenon in 20th century music. We now must reconsider our overall picture of that century and its artistic achievements. The techno-centric and Teutono-centric fetters that, up to now, have hindered theoretical and historical musicology must be discarded. The artistic legacy of these three great St. Petersburg composers, reproduced every day in the auditory experience of the modern listener, must finally be granted the description, and appreciation, it deserves.

Notes

¹ This Russian musical term refers to the structural logic of a musical fabric: [4, p. 151].

² Stravinsky's melodic themes as invariant pitch structures are analyzed in: Jarzębska A. *Stravinsky: His Thoughts and Music*. Berlin, Peter Lang, 2020, pp. 244–255.

³ The author of the article analyzes the relationship between the features of symphonic and suite principles in Tchaikovsky's piano concertos.

⁴ See: Tumanina N. *Tchaikovsky: The Path to Mastery. 1840–1877*. Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1962. P. 357. (In Russ.)

⁵ See: Tchaikovsky P., and Taneyev S. *Letters*. Moscow: Goskul'tprosvetizdat, 1951. P. 32. (In Russ.)

⁶ Ibid. P. 33.

⁷ Characteristics of different types of dance steps are provided in: Popova T. *The Foundations of Russian Folk Music*. Moscow: Muzyka, 1977. P. 84. (In Russ.)

⁸ See: Asafiev B. *A Book of Stravinsky*. 2nd Edition. Leningrad: Muzyka, 1977. P. 44. (In Russ.)

⁹ See: Vershinina I. *Stravinsky's Early Ballets*. Moscow: Nauka, 1967. P. 154. (In Russ.)

¹⁰ Boulez P. *Stocktaking from an Apprenticeship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, pp. 60–62.

¹¹ Asafiev B. Op. cit., pp. 43–44.

¹² For more on this, see: Schoenberg's Program Notes and Musical Analyses. *Schoenberg in Words*. Vol. 5. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. P. 91.

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