

## Contemporary Musical Art

Original article

UDC 78.082.4

<https://doi.org/10.56620/RM.2026.1.104-118>

EDN XYUXCO



### Time, Tradition, Author: Artistic Concepts of the Piano Concerto by Alexey Krasheninnikov

Anna G. Chupova

*V.V. Vereshchagin Cherepovets College of Arts and Crafts,  
Cherepovets, Russian Federation,  
schuvalova.anna2011@yandex.ru<sup>✉</sup>, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7891-2320>*

**Abstract.** The article analyses the Piano Concerto by the St. Petersburg composer Alexey Krasheninnikov, performed as part of the 2nd Rachmaninoff International Competition for Pianists, Composers and Conductors in June 2025. The subject of the study is the artistic concept of the composition and the mechanisms of its implementation in the musical text. The study is focused on the three key concepts of Time, Tradition and Author, which are placed in the cultural and historical context of the “end of composers’ time” (Vladimir Martynov). The synthesis of these conceptual lines identifies the author’s central reflection: an understanding of the place and role of the composer in the contemporary world. Fundamental oppositions (personality — world; creator — clamour of everyday life, etc.) become instruments for researching two modes of human existence: external (interaction with reality) and internal (path to oneself). In the present article, the form of the concerto is interpreted as an image schema based on Krasheninnikov’s commentary and current research into “individual musical projects” from the perspective of cognitive science. The cognitive model is the visualisation of data on digital devices, coupled with the action of scrolling. Determining the tempo-rhythmic organisation of the work, the montage technique of “gaps” becomes a tool for realising this image schema. The analysis also focuses on the main themes of the concerto and the logic of dramatic development through the lens of the stated conceptual lines.

**Keywords:** music of the 21st century, Alexey Krasheninnikov, Sergei Rachmaninoff, piano concerto, conceptuality Time, tradition, image schema, scrolling

**For citation:** Chupova A.G. Time, Tradition, Author: Artistic Conception of the Piano Concerto by Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Russian Musicology*. 2026, no. 1, pp. 104–118.

<https://doi.org/10.56620/RM.2026.1.104-118>

---

Translated by Thomas Alexander Beavitt, Laboratory for Scientific Translation (<https://nauka-perevod.ru/eng>).

© Anna G. Chupova, 2026

## Время, традиция, автор: художественные концепты Концерта для фортепиано с оркестром Алексея Крашенинникова

Анна Гурьевна Чупова

*Череповецкое училище искусств и художественных ремёсел им. В.В. Верещагина,  
г. Череповец, Российская Федерация,  
schuvalova.anna2011@yandex.ru<sup>✉</sup>, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7891-2320>*

**Аннотация.** В статье анализируется Концерт для фортепиано с оркестром петербургского композитора Алексея Крашенинникова, прозвучавший в рамках II Международного конкурса пианистов, композиторов и дирижёров им. С.В. Рахманинова в июне 2025 года. Предметом изучения выступает художественная концепция сочинения и механизмы её реализации в музыкальном тексте. Исследование фокусируется на трёх ключевых концептах — Время, Традиция, Автор, — помещённых в культурно-исторический контекст «конца времени композиторов» (Владимир Мартынов). Синтез этих концептуальных линий позволяет выявить центральную авторскую рефлексию — осмысление места и роли композитора в современном мире. Фундаментальные оппозиции (личность — мир, творец — шумы бытия и др.) становятся инструментами исследования двух модусов человеческого существования: внешнего (взаимодействие с реальностью) и внутреннего (путь к себе). Отталкиваясь от комментария Крашенинникова и опираясь на актуальные исследования «индивидуальных проектов» в музыке с позиций когнитивистики, автор статьи интерпретирует форму концерта как образ-схему. Когнитивной моделью служит визуализация данных на цифровых устройствах, сопряжённая с действием скроллинга. Монтажная техника «разрывов» становится инструментом реализации этой образ-схемы, определяя темпо-ритмическую организацию произведения. В фокусе анализа оказываются также основной тематизм концерта и логика драматургического развития сквозь призму заявленных концептуальных линий.

**Ключевые слова:** музыка XXI века, Алексей Крашенинников, Сергей Рахманинов, фортепианный концерт, концепт Время, традиция, образ-схема, скроллинг

### Introduction

*Homo universalis* (universal man) refers to the so-called Renaissance Man, whose activities and cognitive interests fell beyond a single sphere and included a wide range of areas: intellectual, artistic, social, material and spiritual. In the contemporary socio-cultural paradigm, a priority is focusing strategies that involve narrow professionalisation, including in the field of artistic creativity. In this context, individuals with multi-creative potential are of

particular research interest, since their creative activity provides an opportunity to study the mechanisms of integration and mutual influence of different types of artistic practice within the framework of an individual, authorial method. Music history knows many examples of composers who demonstrated talent in various fields: for example, Mendelssohn, Čiurlionis, Gershwin and Schoenberg were talented artists; Weber, Schumann and Prokofiev possessed exceptional literary abilities; Hoffmann, the creator of the first Romantic opera, went

down in history primarily as a writer and artist, although he spent most of his life practicing law.

Like the creators listed above, St. Petersburg composer Alexey Krasheninnikov has successfully pursued various artistic endeavours over the years. For over 20 years he has been working as a violinist in one of Russian leading orchestras, the Mariinsky Theatre Symphony Orchestra. However, the scope of his creative interests is not limited to music. Krasheninnikov is a talented writer whose individual literary style is characterised by a clearly expressed musicality. He is the author of the short story collections *Waltz for Saint-Germain* (2023) and *Half-Erased Character* (2025). The illustrations for the first book were done by the composer himself. These drawings demonstrate the skill of a graphic artist and portrait painter, who sensitively reveals the image of the model. Thus, Krasheninnikov's artistic world represents an organic and complex system of interaction between expressive means inherent in music, literature and fine arts.

Alexey Krasheninnikov was born in Almaty in 1976. He studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, graduated in 2004 from the violin class under Alexander Stang and in 2011 from the composition class of Professor Alexander Mnatsakanyan. Since 2011, Krasheninnikov has been a member of the Union of Composers of Russia and the Union of Composers of St. Petersburg, where he also holds the post of board member and chairman of the chamber section. He has received numerous awards, including the first prizes at the All-Russian Composer Competition named after A. Petrov (2012) and "AVANTI" All-Russian composer competition (2020). A highlight was his participation in the 2nd Rachmaninoff International Competition for Pianists, Composers and Conductors, which took place in June 2025 in Moscow. Krasheninnikov's competition works include Variations on the Theme *Dies Irae* for piano,

a romance for soprano and piano *Rodnoye* on a poem by Dmitry Merezhkovsky, and a Piano Concerto. The composer received second prize and a silver medal at the competition.

In recent years, Krasheninnikov's work has attracted particular interest from researchers. Let us first note the works of Ekaterina Okuneva and Darya Semko. [1; 2] The attention of these authors is attracted by both the works (the opera *Cursed Days* (based on a work by I. Bunin), the Saxophone Concerto) and the principles of the composer's artistic thinking in the syncretic unity of musical and literary elements.

The present article continues the line of scholarly understanding of Krasheninnikov's work to focus on the figurative-semantic and compositional-dramatic features of the Piano Concerto. This is not the composer's first turn to the instrumental concerto genre. His creative arsenal includes three more works with a direct reference to the genre model: Concerto for Clarinet and Strings (2006), Concerto for Violin and Percussion (2007), Saxophone Concerto (2022).

As is well known, the genre of the instrumental concerto has undergone a significant evolution over its more than three-century history, from the formation of a genre canon in the 18th century through its renewal in the 19th century to the experimental searches of the 20th century, as a result of which "the genre has lost its integrity and became essentially variant-multiple." [3, p. 112] In the 21st century, despite changing cultural paradigms, interest in the concerto remains relevant. An analysis of the works created by our contemporaries furnish insights into the metamorphoses that are currently taking place in this genre.

#### **From Intention to Text: Mechanisms of Musical Embodiment**

Alexey Krasheninnikov's Piano Concerto was written specifically for the Rachmaninoff

International Competition. As the composer himself noted, the work was created in an extremely short time frame.

A brief commentary by the composer on his personal page in the social network VKontakte provides insight into the concept and idea behind the composition: “The main component of this concerto’s form is the constant and unexpected change of episodes, like the change of frames in a film. We live in a time of mosaic thinking, when people do not linger on the perception of something for long, but, on the contrary, tend to turn the page mid-sentence, hence the concept of ‘many letters’; no one wants to read long texts or watch long videos. Our era is the scrolling era.”<sup>1</sup>

The composer’s expressed thoughts should not be thought of as constituting a programme for the concerto, but are better seen as a figurative analogue to its structural features. The phenomenon of mosaic thinking is realised in musical composition through a system of constant contrasting switches. While the one-part composition of the concerto fails to fit into typical patterns, it does contain formal features of classical form-building: the periodic appearance of the introductory theme is functionally similar to a refrain; moreover, the very peculiar return of the original material at the end resonates with a recognisable reprise, although more at the level of sensation. However, these principles do not become defining, since the semantic “idea” is built on top of the structure to determine both the architectonics and development process. The “individual project” (the Yuri Kholopov’s term) of this concerto seems to fit organically

into the theory of musical form considered within the paradigm of cognitive science — that is, a concept based not on the material aspect of the text, but on the factor of mental structuring. Summarising the works of contemporary composers, Anna Amrakhova notes that “cognitive models structure both the visual imagery of a composition and its compositional structure. Understanding of the *form* turns into *understanding* in the literal sense.” [4, p. 48] In the classification proposed by Amrakhova, the structure of Krasheninnikov’s Piano Concerto corresponds to an image schema. The cognitive model here is the image of presenting information on digital devices and, at the same time, the action (scrolling through the content), as if performed by the “user.” The montage principle<sup>2</sup> becomes the means of realising this image schema, determining the rhythm and dynamics of the listener’s perception. For Krasheninnikov, this method of structuring makes it possible to convey a specifically experienced sensation of time, its discontinuity, tension, curvature, ability to compress, and everything that, in the words of the composer, distances us “from a full perception and empathy with anything.”<sup>3</sup>

The composer uses the principle of “gap” as a way of organising contrasting fragments. The deliberate emphasis on the “gap” is achieved through its timbral isolation. The “switching” function is entrusted to a whip, which effectively becomes the second main “hero” of the concerto. It is interesting that the function of “gaps” in the score was initially distributed between the woodblock and the whip. However, just before the premiere,

<sup>1</sup> URL: <https://vk.com/alexkrash15> (accessed: 04.02.2026).

<sup>2</sup> In the second half of the 20th century and in the 21st century, montage acts as a universal principle of thinking, which is reflected in any form of artistic creativity. For more information on the montage principle in music, see Olga Sinelnikova’s article. [5]

<sup>3</sup> The quote is taken from the composer’s commentary on his personal VKontakte page. URL: <https://vk.com/alexkrash15> (accessed: 04.02.2026).

at the suggestion of pianist Sergei Oskolkov Jr., Krasheninnikov dedicated the percussion part entirely to the whip. The composer noted that the sharp sound of the whip is reminiscent of film frame clicking, which perfectly matches the concept of an abrupt change in musical episodes.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the absence of formal programmatic features (title, subtitles, epigraphs, etc.) and the composer's generally ambiguous attitude toward the verbal concretisation of musical meanings, which simplifies the underlying ideas, Krasheninnikov's works, including the analysed concerto, use various ways of clarifying the substantive aspects of music, namely: they possess a vivid, in a certain sense "visible" imagery, increased associativity of the musical text and use elements of instrumental theatre. The subtle interaction of musical and extra-musical principles gives birth to an unspoken word. While remaining within the framework of "pure" instrumentalism, this music entertains a possibility of various exploratory interpretations.

The concerto is written for a large symphony orchestra with an expanded percussion section. The piano acts as an absolute soloist, revealing its cantilena potential and rich timbre palette. This instrument becomes the embodiment of the creative principle, and its leading role is determined not so much by the presence of a cadenza or an abundance of solo fragments, but by its function as a carrier of the "author's word." The whip claims the role of the second, "side"<sup>5</sup> soloist. Its nature is fundamentally opposite to the piano: the whip (*frusta*) is a noisy percussion instrument that produces a sharp

clap without a specific pitch. However, despite the obvious timbre limitations in comparison with the colourful piano, it is precisely whip that subjugates both the piano and the entire orchestra, unceremoniously and indifferently cutting off lyrical outpourings, dramatic build-ups and accumulation of chaotic processes. The piano and whip parts create a semantic opposition: on the one hand, the creative sphere, on the other — the overwhelming vanity of life, the incessant "clamour of everyday existence."

The main idea of the concerto can be described as follows: an existential search for creative self-identity and spiritual guidelines in an era that proclaimed "the death of the author" (Roland Barthes) and the "end of composer's time" (Vladimir Martynov). The stated idea is revealed in conditionally programmatic lines that represent the understanding of both the nature of time perception (1) and the continuity aspect of artistic tradition (2). These vectors form a complex layer of self-reflection (3), which becomes a kind of mirror for the creative personality.

Let us consider the main themes of the concerto and relate them to the disclosure of the indicated lines.

### Existential Experience of Time Perception

The dramatic sphere of the work is connected with the presentation of the image of Time. This dramatic layer includes several themes united by common means of expression, among which the leading role is played by various forms of ostinato. The first theme of Time (reh. 1) has the following type of embodiment: a sound repeated in a rehearsal manner at a fast

<sup>4</sup> Now the author plans to make changes to the score and give the complete part of the blows to the whip.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the presence of an opponent "character," a timbre antagonist, is a specific dramatic element of Krasheninnikov's concerto thinking. Thus, the Saxophone Concerto, despite the title, is also essentially double, since the button accordion plays the most important dramatic role in it (see more about the concept of this work: [2]). The situation is similar in the Concerto for Violin and Percussion, which contains a cadenza for a duet of violin and timpani.

tempo to serve as a kind of space axis and a background where sound points randomly “flash” (Example No. 1). Supported in the first and second performance by a string and wooden section, respectively, they create the illusion of sonic chaos. A sense of chaos also arises at the vertical level, as the points form clusters of atonal consonances.

The toccata movement, the nature of the performance (the author’s remark: “mechanistically and very rhythmically”), the neutrality of the material and the logic of its development (the accumulation of entropy) — all this connects the image of Time with a negative context. This is not just the inexorable passage of time in the outside world, but the uncomfortable feeling experienced by the lyrical hero of his own existence in the flow of the surrounding reality. It is no secret that contemporary man perceives the conditions of his existence in time as too fast and tense. Psychologists attribute this to the density of the information environment in which we live

and to the increased speed of communication due to the invention and improvement of virtual communication platforms. A person is unable to comprehend and emotionally perceive incoming information and unfolding events. The toccata theme is a representative of such an “existential gap.”

However, the impression of chaos in the developing material turns out to be imaginary. The scattered sound points eventually come together to form a two-voice theme (reh. 2) with pitch anarchy opposed by a strict rhythmic organisation that establishes rigid time parameters for the relationship between the voices: the lower line is always one sixteenth note behind the upper one. It feels like the lyrical hero of the concerto is trying to tame the sound chaos, collecting disparate fragments of musical matter and language into a new, alternative order. In reh. 4, this theme is heard in the retrograde (Example No. 2), which symbolises an unsuccessful attempt to turn back time.

Example No. 1

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Piano Concerto*.  
Piano part, mm. 13–17

The musical score for Example No. 1 is a piano part in 4/4 time. It features a complex, rhythmic texture with many sixteenth notes. The upper staff has a melodic line with some grace notes, while the lower staff provides a dense accompaniment. The tempo marking is 'meханистично и очень ритмично' (mechanistically and very rhythmically) and the dynamic is 'p' (piano).

Example No. 2

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Piano Concerto*.  
Piano part, reh. 4, mm. 55–62

The musical score for Example No. 2 is a piano part in 4/4 time, showing a two-voice theme in retrograde. The upper staff has a melodic line with some grace notes, while the lower staff provides a dense accompaniment. The tempo marking is 'meханистично и очень ритмично' (mechanistically and very rhythmically) and the dynamic is 'ff' (fortissimo).

The image of Time is complemented by two more themes performed by the soloist (rehs. 7 and 9). Their sound realisation is also connected with ostinato textural formulas (Examples Nos. 3a and 3b).

They are also brought together by their modal organisation as limited by the scale in the volume of a diminished fifth: *a, h, c, d, es*. This intonational isolation creates a special artistic impression: in contrast to the sound anarchy of the orchestral environment, reaching a culminating point (from m. 111, the composer instructs the woodwinds to “play any notes”); the music in the soloist’s part seems to lose its vector of movement, gets stuck in a narrow space, creating an image of aimless marking time, a painful search for a way out. The cumulative effect finds its resolution in a chain of arpeggiated passages

built according to the strict structural model of minor third — minor sixth. However, the technical methods at this stage rather symbolise the futility of efforts to “verify harmony with algebra.”

### The Phenomenon of the Author’s “I” and Strategies of Creative Reflection

All the above material sounds in the soloist’s cadenza (rehs. 17–18) and, up to a certain point, is also limited by the framework of the scale *a, h, c, d, es*. The choice of these particular sounds seems to hold the key to the hidden program of the concerto, namely to that line which is connected with the process of the author’s reflection. The point is that these sounds form the composer’s monogram introducing the author’s “I” into the narrative: KRASCH<sup>6</sup> (Example No. 4).

Example No. 3a

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Piano Concerto*.  
Piano part, reh. 7, mm. 82–87

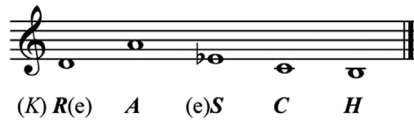
Example No. 3b

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Piano Concerto*.  
Piano part, reh. 9, mm. 104–106

<sup>6</sup> Krasheninnikov is the organiser of the Krash Club — a union of creative people of St. Petersburg. The aim of the Krash Club is indicated on its “VKontakte” page ([https://vk.com/krash\\_club](https://vk.com/krash_club)): “The aim of the Club is to unite the creative intelligentsia of St. Petersburg, to create a ‘point of attraction’ for musicians, artists, writers, and all people who in one way or another belong to various fields of art.”

Example No. 4

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Monogram*



In personal correspondence, Alexey Krasheninnikov admitted that he had no specific intention of introducing any monogram, but that it rather came about intuitively.

The artistic form of realisation of the author's "I" and the problem of creative reflection in the concerto becomes the lyrical figurative sphere including a number of important themes.

The key role is played by the *introductory theme* performed by the soloist (Example No. 5). The composer designated the music of the introduction as elegy and noted that, unlike all the other material, it was written as a separate work.

The theme sounds in the key of *B-flat major* and has the character of calm reflection. The monorhythmic nature of the melodic line and its small range give the sound a meditative quality that establishes a special, introspective narrative plane. The theme is deliberately simple in both textural and harmonic terms. Its melodic

and rhythmic pattern is reminiscent of romantic themes, sometimes evoking unexpected associations, for example, with the theme of the terzetto of Eleanor, Manrico and the Count from the opera *Il Trovatore* by Giuseppe Verdi (Example No. 6).

Example No. 6

Giuseppe Verdi. *Il Trovatore*.  
Terzetto of Eleanor, Manrico and the Count, mm. 1-4



In the dramaturgy of the work, the elegy plays a significant role: it runs through the entire concerto in the form of a series of lyrical piano solos, which allows it to be interpreted as the voice of the concerto lyrical hero or rather as the "author's word." Without entering into a direct dialogue with the themes of Time, it nevertheless sensitively reflects their influence by losing its tonal stability and distorting its intonation pattern with echoing clamor of everyday life invading it. The latter becomes possible due to the monorhythmic basis of the melody (Example No. 7). The technique used by Krasheninnikov is similar to the concept

Example No. 5

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Piano Concerto*.  
Piano part, mm. 1-8



Example No. 7

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Piano Concerto*.  
Piano part, reh. 5, mm. 67-70



of “windows” by Salvatore Sciarrino (for more details see: [6]). Similar to the Italian composer, the point of space-time disruption generates a crack with alternative time-space bleeding through. This technique serves a dual function: it demonstrates the multidimensionality of the narrative and enhances the dramatic tension.

The elegy has the last word — the work ends with a large piano solo, in which the theme sounds as if “beyond the framework” of the concerto, in full, without traumatic breaks, enthusiastically jubilant, radiant and expanding the space and absorbing all the orchestral colours, as if it had finally broken out of the intermittent, crazy flow of reality into a new spatial-temporal dimension.

An important dramatic stage of (rehs. 15–17) the concerto is connected with another lyrical theme. This is the theme of the Russian folk song *A Path in the Damp Forest* (Example No. 8). Known from its arrangements by Anatoly Lyadov and Alexander Gretchaninov, this song is often performed by choirs at a brisk tempo and with a humorous character. Krasheninnikov used the version presented in the collection of melodies for singing, compiled by the famous teacher, Honoured Worker of Culture of Russia Margarita Reinish.

According to the composer, he was attracted by the lyrical potential of the melody, the concentration in it of that *toska* (Russ.,

melancholy) that carries within itself a certain specific “code” of the Russian mentality. The researcher of the Russian linguistic picture of the world, Alexey Shmelev, wrote: “Many foreigners who studied the Russian language drew attention to the untranslatability of the Russian word *toska* and the national specificity of the mental state it denoted. It is difficult even to explain to a person unfamiliar with *toska* what it is. <...> *toska* is what experienced by a person who wants something, but does not know exactly what it is, and only knows that it is unattainable <...> In a sense, any *toska* could be metaphorically presented as a longing for the heavenly homeland, for the lost paradise.” [7, p. 55]

In this context, the choice of key for the song is non-accidental: *F minor* has long been associated with “unaccountable *toska*” (Rimsky-Korsakov), “the highest expression of pain” (Justin Knecht), “deep sadness” (Christian Schubart). The theme has a simple melodic and rhythmic basis; its range is limited to a fifth; repetition and descending sequential movement make it easily remembered and recognisable. The harbingers of this *toska* theme in the form of an ascending fifth intonation appeared repeatedly in the sound chaos of the first section.<sup>8</sup>

At the insistence of the author, the theme of the song should be performed on a recorder

Example No. 8

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Piano Concerto*.  
Recorder part,<sup>7</sup> reh. 15, mm. 168–175



<sup>7</sup> Composer’s remark in the score: “If it is impossible to use a recorder, it is permissible to play the piccolo flute.”

<sup>8</sup> See the part of the bell and piano in reh. 3 and 3 bars before reh. 4, as well as the part of the 2nd flute reh. 7 + 7 measures.

during the first performance. This timbre solution emphasises the fragility and naivety of the image, giving it childish features<sup>9</sup> on the one hand and imparting a national flavour on the other. The motif of childhood brings in an introspective perspective, giving the image of Time a personal touch as a past and memory in the artist's life.

The lyrical culmination of the concerto (rehs. 24–30) is connected with the development of the theme *A Path in the Damp Forest*. This section can be called a masterpiece of lyrical and psychological landscape painting. The background for the theme is made up of the first and second violins, which perform clustered harmonics, with the woodwinds, which imitate birdsong. The composer uses a simple technique that creates an incredibly naturalistic effect: the oboes and bassoons play a descending intonation only on the reed, without forming a specific pitch, while entering in a random order. The theme is started again by the recorder, which is joined by the piccolo to form a canon. The further development is based on the picking up of the theme by new instruments so that a five-voice canon is formed in reh. 29.

#### **Interaction with Artistic Tradition: Dialogue with Rachmaninoff**

In composing his piece specifically for the Rachmaninoff International Competition, Krasheninnikov could not ignore the legacy of the great composer, whose name is associated with the culmination in the development of the Russian piano concerto genre. The dialogue with Rachmaninoff is constructed in three aspects: through direct contact with Rachmaninoff's themes and the principles of their development, by rethinking of the structural-genre model of Rachmaninoff's concerto and as a way of "seeing the world" and talking about it.

Regarding the first aspect, Krasheninnikov twice introduces a very recognisable quote into his concerto. In reh. 13 of the piano part, against the background of continuous orchestral clamor, a transformed introduction theme from the first movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 (Examples Nos. 9a and 9b) sounds. The discrepancy of the harmonic vertical does not prevent its recognition due to its textural and metro-rhythmic presentation.

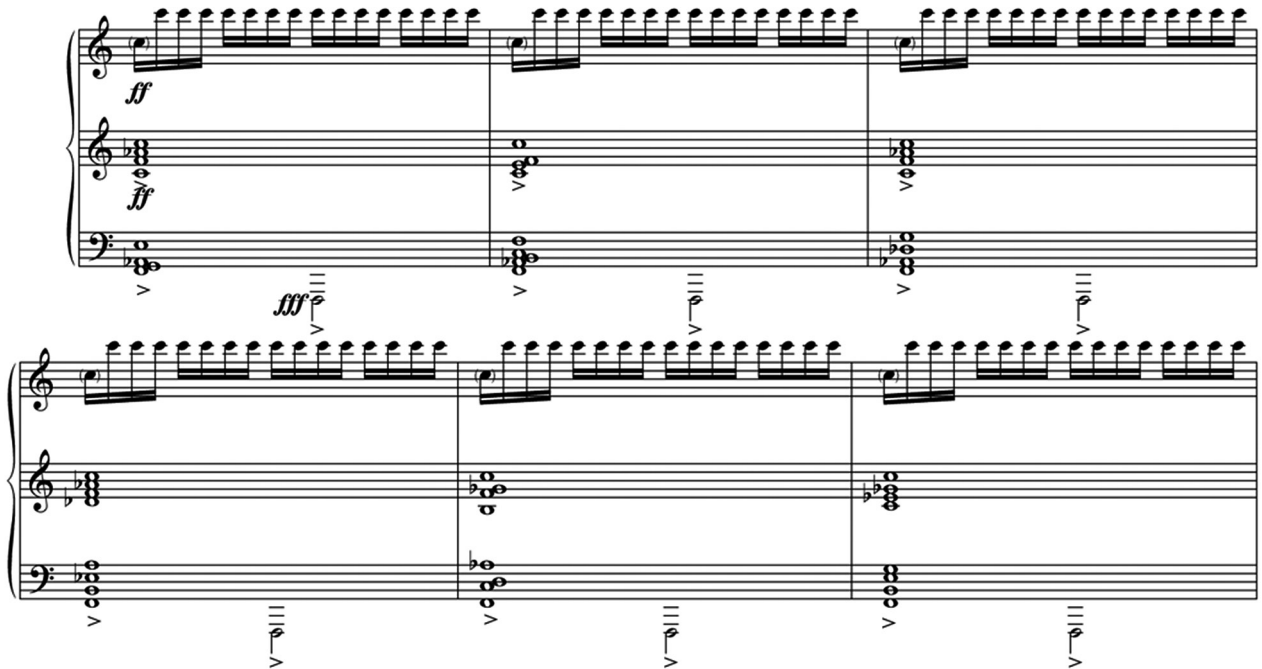
The introduction of this quasi-quotation is non-accidental, since it allows the image of Time to be presented in a different context, namely as a dialogue with the past and artistic tradition. In the literature about Rachmaninoff, the characterisation of this theme as a "calling and solemn alarm" has become established. [8, p. 210] The polyphony of the chord vertical, echoing and measuredly repeating in the bass *F* contra octave, truly creates a pre-storm image, as if predicting the difficult trials that await Russia in the first half of the 20th century. Krasheninnikov's choice of this theme likely has a symbolic meaning: it emphasises the connection between historical periods in the fate of our country. This guess is confirmed by the new appearance of Rachmaninoff's theme (reh. 22), which this time quite accurately follows the chord chart, but sounds in the context of a fantastically grotesque waltz, which makes one recall the scene of Bulgakov's ball at Woland's.

It is also impossible to ignore the allusiveness of the musical material, which produces a vague effect of *déjà vu* (or rather, *déjà entendu*). Thus, the mentioned waltz evokes associations with the ghostly scherzo episode from the second part of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3, and the rehearsal-toccata motif found there in the piano part seems to have served as a prototype for Krasheninnikov's Time theme (Example No. 10).

<sup>9</sup> As is known, the recorder is an instrument that preschoolers use when learning to play wind instruments.

Example No. 9a

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Piano Concerto*.  
Piano part, reh. 4, mm. 151–156



Example No. 9b

Sergei Rachmaninoff. *Piano Concerto No. 2*.  
First movement, piano part, mm. 1–8



Example No. 10

Sergei Rachmaninoff. *Piano Concerto No. 3*.  
Second movement. Piano part, mm. 135–140



Some analogies with a specific work by Rachmaninoff can be found in *Symphonic Dances*, as the closest one to Krasheninnikov's concerto in terms of figurative and semantic content, with their logic of hidden programmatic signs interpreting the Rachmaninoff's work in autobiographical, historical and mythological keys. The genre-style (demonic danceability, toccata rhythms, waltz-like, "ball at Satan's") and figurative-programmatic (the theme of Time, the folklore theme as a generalised and at the same time very personal expression of Russian *toska*, the revelation of the author's "I") components of both works reveal a certain similarity.

Alexey Krasheninnikov's composition offers an original interpretation of the genre compositional model. On the one hand, the composer generalises the new historical experience; on the other hand, with a hint of nostalgia, he appeals to the artistic tradition, which is associated in the concerto primarily with the name of Rachmaninoff. Thus, in Krasheninnikov's concerto, the principle of developing thematic material characteristic of Rachmaninoff is reflected. The essence of this principle lies in the gradual "flourishing" of the lyrical theme with each subsequent performance, as a result of which it achieves a powerful, hymn-like sound. A striking example of this technique in Krasheninnikov can be observed both in the development of the theme of the Russian folk song *A Path in the Damp Forest* and in the final version of the elegy sound.<sup>10</sup> In general, the interpretation of the concerto as a lyrical genre, based on the "return-to-soil" principle linking musical expression with national and cultural roots, is undoubtedly akin to Rachmaninoff's model.

Both composers are brought together by the similarity of their lyrical worldview and open emotionality. As for Rachmaninoff, the Krasheninnikov's music is, first of all, an expression of beauty and spirituality, a sphere of self-expression. The main thing that unites Krasheninnikov with the great Russian composer is their belonging to the generation that is essentially the turning point. The creative path of both composers crossed the border — the change of centuries, accompanied by a fundamental transformation of worldview paradigms under the influence of large-scale social-cultural processes. For Rachmaninoff, this was the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the collapse of imperial Russia and emigration; for Krasheninnikov, this was the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the collapse of the Soviet Union and complex transitional processes of the post-Soviet period. Therefore, the music of both becomes a kind of testimony of the era: a longing for what was lost, a fear of impending changes and an attempt to maintain value orientations in a crumbling world can be heard. Rachmaninoff's music imbued with nostalgia captures the boundary between the beautiful "past" and the lonely "present" in emigration; Krasheninnikov's music captures the boundary between a bygone era and an uncertain future. For both composers, the lyrical is a saving island, a healing space: where history destroys, music preserves humanity.

**In Place of a Conclusion.  
In Search of Harmony:  
Between the World and Oneself**

Let us return to the concept of Krasheninnikov's concerto and sum up the above. The synthesis of program lines

---

<sup>10</sup> However, the difference is also noticeable. While in Rachmaninoff, the competition/confrontation between the soloist and the orchestra implies the achievement of *agreement* in the finale, the radiant light of the elegy, as well as the rapture and delight remain the prerogative of the soloist in Krasheninnikov: the orchestra is silent, and its silence emphasises the isolation of the lyrical statement.

identifies the author's central reflection — an understanding of the place and role of the composer in the contemporary world. This understanding is realised through a series of fundamental oppositions: personality — world, creator — clamor of everyday existence, spiritual — worldly, own — alien. The composer reveals the content of the theme in two aspects: the interaction of the individual with the environment and the identity crisis.

The first aspect is associated with the representation of an existential “gap,” reflecting the loss of the ability to fully experience the current moment in time in the rush of everyday life. The scientific and technological revolution of the second half of the 20th century, the rapid development of information systems and the discovery of virtual reality turned against humanity, enslaving it and launching a process of dehumanisation. An infinite scrolling syndrome has become one of the symptoms of these metamorphoses. Along with a persistent behavioural addiction, it provoked more fundamental changes: the transformation of true values and their gradual disappearance from what is truly significant to a person. The musical embodiment of the conflict in the concerto goes beyond a simple juxtaposition of lyrical themes and the image of Time, which sets the rhythm of the frantic race. The very structure of “gaps” (the image schema as a cognitive model) turns into an active-dramatic factor. In turn, each of the two lyrical themes in the concerto has a specific function in the artistic whole. The development of the elegy theme

forms a chain of monologues reflecting the author's thoughts about the goals and meanings of existence in the world and the possibility of preserving one's true self under conditions of chaos. The theme *A Path in the Damp Forest* embodies the ideal of eternal, timeless beauty, an affirmation of the ethical standard of simplicity and naturalness. As a symbol of the once possessed heritage, it stands in opposition to the mad pursuit of false values and the all-consuming “clamour of the world.” It seems to contain the memory of what was lost and, at the same time, the hope of returning to the origins.

The second semantic perspective of the composition is determined by the fact that the lyrical hero of the concerto appears not simply as a person, but as a creator for translating the problem of the interaction between the individual and the world into the plane of existential and artistic search. Through the image of a creative Personality, the author manages to reveal a painful paradox of contemporaneity: on the one hand — the need to find a unique voice, on the other — the pressure of cultural tradition in a world where “everything has already been written.” In this reality, the creator risks to become a shadow: his figure loses social and cultural significance, and his right to originality is called into question.

The metaphor of a “half-erased character” — an image borrowed from Krasheninnikov's story of the same title<sup>11</sup> — becomes the key to understanding the hero of the piano concerto. In this stylistic, almost an oxymoron figure, the subject of experience and the form of its

---

<sup>11</sup> *Half-Erased Character* by Krasheninnikov was inspired by *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, which belonged to the American artist, representative of pop art and conceptual art Robert Rauschenberg. Reflections on the boundaries of art led Rauschenberg to carry out a provocative art experiment through destruction: having received a fresh sketch from Willem de Kooning, the artist erased it, leaving only ghostly hints of the former image. This object provokes reflection in the viewer: is this a full-fledged work of art or merely a symbolic frame enclosing emptiness and embodying the idea of creative impotence?

(non)existence or, within the framework of the concerto concept, the need to be heard and blurring of personality contours are paradoxically combined. The hero of the story accidentally meets a similar half-erased stranger, with whom they search for a transparent or ghostly world erased by the artist. “I almost don’t exist,” “A pale reflection of a great plan,” “I almost don’t have a face either, but that’s a good thing. Now there is no need to have your own face.” [9, p. 83] It seems that these phrases characterise not only the character, but also every artist, who at times acutely experiences his own powerlessness, as well as the era in which the individual painfully realises the loss of his identity. Isn’t this ghostly (or transparent) world, where the half-erased character goes, the very same authenticity that we once had and irrevocably lost in pursuit of the deceptive mirages of the vain world? Isn’t this the very “lost paradise” to which the soul of an artist, tired of the fragmentation of contemporary existence, aspires?

However, other questions remain. If, at the end of the concerto, the hero still manages

to escape from the intermittent, chaotic flow of time into another dimension (as indicated by the ecstatic, jubilant sound of the elegy on the solo piano, devoid of the previous traumatic breaks), then is this world a true reality or just an illusion generated by a tired consciousness? The silence of the orchestra enhances the semantic ambiguity of the finale. Does it emphasise the absolute loneliness of the hero, which became the price of his acquired freedom? Does it symbolise the artist’s true liberation, or does this silence signify the soloist’s imaginary victory, merely an illusion of overcoming, behind which a new form of alienation is hidden? It seems that the finale of the concerto leaves room for different interpretations. And in this ambiguity and multiplicity of answers, the great power of his influence on listeners lies. Ultimately, the “half-erased character” is not only the hero of a story or a concerto, but also each of us who in search of ourselves, balances on the edge of true existence and its imaginary semblance, reality and illusion, between the desire to be understood and the fear of exposing our “I.”

## References

1. Okuneva E.G., Semko D.S. Alexey Krasheninnikov’s opera-reading “Cursed Days”: genre poetics and dramaturgy. *South-Russian Musical Anthology*. 2025, no. 2, pp. 36–51. (In Russ.) [https://doi.org/10.52469/20764766\\_2025\\_02\\_36](https://doi.org/10.52469/20764766_2025_02_36)
2. Okuneva E.G., Semko D.S. “A friend among strangers, a stranger among his own”: paradoxes of the genre in the Saxophone Concerto by Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Journal of the Music Theory Society*. 2025, no. 1, pp. 68–77. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.26176/otmroo.2025.49.1.006>
3. Lobanova M.N. D. Shostakovich’s concert principles in the light of the problems of modern dialogistics. In: *Problems of musical science: collection of articles*. Issue 6. Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor Publ., 1985, pp. 110–129. (In Russ.)
4. Amrakhova A.A. How is the musical form without music possible? *International Journal of Cultural Research*. 2017, no. 3, pp. 45–51. (In Russ.)
5. Sinelnikova O.V. Editing principle and musical form. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* (Tomsk State University Journal). 2009, no. 319, pp. 68–72. (In Russ.)
6. Chupova A.G. The concept of the window form and its representation in the oeuvre of Salvatore Sciarrino. *Music Journal of Northern Europe*. 2022, no. 3, pp. 112–134. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.61908/2413-0486.2022.31.3.112-134>

7. Shmelev A.D. The breadth of the Russian soul. In: Zaliznyak A.A., Levontina A.B., Shmelev A.D. *Key ideas of the Russian linguistic picture of the world: collection of articles*. Moscow: Yazyki slavyanskoi kul'tury Publ., 2005, pp. 51–63. (In Russ.)

8. *Russian musical literature: a textbook for music schools*. 6th ed. Leningrad: Muzyka, 1985. Issue 4. 264 p. (In Russ.)

9. Krasheninnikov A. *The half-erased character*. St. Petersburg: Amplituda, 2025. 148 p. (In Russ.)

*Information about the author:*

**Anna G. Chupova** — Cand.Sci. (Arts), Head of the Department of Additional Education, V.V. Vereshchagin Cherepovets College of Arts and Crafts, Cherepovets, Russian Federation.

*Информация об авторе:*

**А.Г. Чупова** — кандидат искусствоведения, заведующая отделом дополнительного образования, Череповецкое училище искусств и художественных ремёсел им. В.В. Верещагина, г. Череповец, Российская Федерация.

Received / Поступила в редакцию: 03.02.2026

Revised / Одобрена после рецензирования: 18.02.2026

Accepted / Принята к публикации: 25.02.2026