ISSN 3034-3836 (Online)

Contemporary Musical Art

Original article
UDC 78.01
https://doi.org/10.56620/RM.2026.2.051-073
EDN DGSLDE

Chamber and Instrumental Music by Alexey Krasheninnikov: Experimental Poetics

Ekaterina G. Okuneva[1], Darya S. Semko[2]

[1, 2]Petrozavodsk State Glazunov Conservatoire,
Petrozavodsk, Russian Federation
[1]okunevaeg@yandex.ru✉, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5253-8863
[2]dasalodocnikova@yandex.ru, https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8725-2167

Abstract. The article considers the study of the experimental direction in chamber instrumental music by the St. Petersburg composer Alexey Krasheninnikov (b. 1976). This line of creativity focuses on explorations related to the expansion of the timbre resources of instruments, mixing of different compositional techniques and use of instrumental theatre elements. The article examines a number of works created by Krasheninnikov over the past 10 years: *Flight from Oneself* (2018), *The Seasons* (2019), *The Path of the Star* (2019), *The Ring* (2022), *Angel at the Holy Sepulchre* (2022), *Bedroom Scene* (2023), *Memory* (2025) and *Self-Portrait* (2025). All of these works are introduced into the scholarly circulation of Russian musicology for the first time. The performed analysis characterises the methods of extended performance techniques and features of the stage implementation of instrumental opuses and identifies features of the composer's writing as individually refracting the principles of seriality, cryptophony and combining deterministic and aleatory methods of organising musical material. The role of extra-musical factors in the formation of the artistic concept and form of the compositions is revealed, and parallels are drawn with the compositions of Western European authors. The example of *Memory* establishes the humanising direction of Krasheninnikov's experimental searches. It is emphasised that the specificity of the composer's approach is determined by dialogue with other forms of art, attempts at their intersemiotic translation and by the expansion of the medial possibilities of musical art.

Keywords: music of the 21st century, Alexey Krasheninnikov, instrumental theatre, extended performance techniques, seriality, cryptophony, aleatoric music, experiment

For citation: Okuneva E.G., Semko D.S. Chamber and Instrumental Music by Alexey Krasheninnikov: Experimental Poetics. *Russian Musicology*. 2026, no. 2, pp. 51–73.
https://doi.org/10.56620/RM.2026.2.051-073

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

© Ekaterina G. Okuneva, Darya S. Semko, 2026

Камерно-инструментальная музыка Алексея Крашенинникова: поэтика эксперимента

Екатерина Гурьевна Окунева[1], Дарья Сергеевна Семко[2]

[1, 2]Петрозаводская государственная консерватория имени А.К. Глазунова, г. Петрозаводск, Российская Федерация
[1]okunevaeg@yandex.ru✉, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5253-8863
[2]dasalodocnikova@yandex.ru, https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8725-2167

Аннотация. Статья посвящена исследованию экспериментального направления в камерно-инструментальной музыке петербургского композитора Алексея Крашенинникова (р. 1976). В этой линии творчества сосредоточены поиски, связанные с расширением тембровых ресурсов инструментов, смешением разных композиторских техник, использованием элементов инструментального театра. В статье рассматривается ряд произведений, созданных А. Крашенинниковым за последние 10 лет: «Бегство впереди себя» (2018), «Времена года» (2019), «Путь звезды» (2019), «Звонок» (2022), «Ангел у гроба Господня» (2022), «Сцена в спальне» (2023), *Memory* (2025), «Автопортрет» (2025). Все они впервые вводятся в научный обиход отечественного музыкознания. В ходе анализа характеризуются приёмы расширенных исполнительских техник, особенности сценической реализации инструментальных опусов, выявляются черты композиторского письма, индивидуально преломляющего принципы серийности, криптофонии и сочетающего детерминированные и алеаторные способы организации музыкального материала, раскрывается роль внемузыкальных факторов в формировании художественного замысла и формы сочинений, проводятся параллели с композициями западноевропейских авторов. На примере *Memory* устанавливается гуманизирующая направленность экспериментальных поисков А. Крашенинникова. Подчёркивается, что специфику композиторского подхода определяет диалог с другими видами искусств, попытки их межсемиотического перевода, расширение медиальных возможностей музыкального искусства.

Ключевые слова: музыка XXI века, Алексей Крашенинников, инструментальный театр, расширенные исполнительские техники, серийность, криптофония, алеаторика, эксперимент

Introduction

Contemporary composing work characterised by a pluralism of ideas and stylistic heterogeneity actualises the problem of individual artistic strategies in the context of metamodernist thinking balancing between all sorts of opposites and striving for the fusion of all kinds of cultural practices. In this perspective, the figure of a composer with multi-creative potential is of particular research interest. The mutual influence of various activities often stimulates experiments in the field of musical language, genre and form and leads to original artistic results.

Such a multi-creative personality is the St. Petersburg composer Alexey Krasheninnikov (b. 1976). He graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory with a double major in violin and composition and has worked in the Mariinsky Theatre Symphony Orchestra for over 25 years. In addition, he was engaged in literary activity,

publishing collections of stories[1] about music and musicians; moreover, he is excellent at drawing[2] (for more details, see: [1]).

Although spanning a wide range of genres, the composer's creative work demonstrates two distinct lines of artistic exploration. Thus, Krasheninnikov's list of works includes, on the one hand, creations within the framework of classical genres of academic music (operas, concertos, symphonies, symphonic poems, etc.) and, on the other hand, pieces of experimental nature, demonstrating a synthesis of different types of art and contemporary compositional techniques. In the first case, remaining within the framework of the academic genre sphere, the composer strives to renew it; in the second, compositions within "de-objectified" genres arise. [2, p. 236] The present article considers the second of these lines.

Extended Performance Techniques and Instrumental Theatre

The experimental element is most clearly manifested in the sphere of Krasheninnikov's chamber instrumental music. From this perspective, *Flight from Oneself* (2018), *The Seasons* (2019), *The Path of the Star* (2019), *The Ring* (2022), *Angel at the Holy Sepulchre* (2022), *Bedroom Scene* (2023), *Memory* (2025) and *Self-Portrait* (2025) are most indicative. The composer's endeavours are primarily connected with the expansion of the instrument timbre resources, new performance techniques and intermedial interaction of arts. The composer also willingly turns to elements of instrumental theatre, electroacoustics and experiments with various methods of notation. All the works mentioned include string instruments, which is no coincidence. Krasheninnikov is a professional violinist with excellent command of the instrument and knowledge of its specific features.

The composer's search for new timbral sounds is largely determined by extra-musical pulses. Thus, in the one-part piece *The Seasons* for 14 strings,[3] the variety of sound production methods is connected with the desire to capture the sounds of nature. In the "Summer" section, glissandi, trills, ricochets, and playing behind the bridge and at the bridge are used to depict the chirping of birds; in the "Autumn" section, the musicians drum their fingers on the top of the instrument as if reproducing the sound of rain. Perhaps the most unusual way of playing is presented in the "Winter" section: striving for purity and transparency of sound, associated with the icy surface, the composer makes some of the performers move their bows across crystal glasses with different pitches (d^2, e^2, g^2, a^2 and c^2).[4]

Specific performance techniques, however, are also encountered in works of strictly academic genres. For example, the imitation of birdsong is present in the *Piano Concerto* (2025)

---

[1] In 2023, the Amplituda Publishing house produced a book of his stories *Waltz for Saint-Germain*; in 2025, the collection Half-Erased Character was published.

[2] The composer posts his drawings and paintings on his personal page on the social network "VKontakte."

[3] The composition was first performed on April 24, 2019 on the stage of the St. Petersburg Documentary Film Studio ("Lendok") under the baton of Mikhail Tatarnikov.

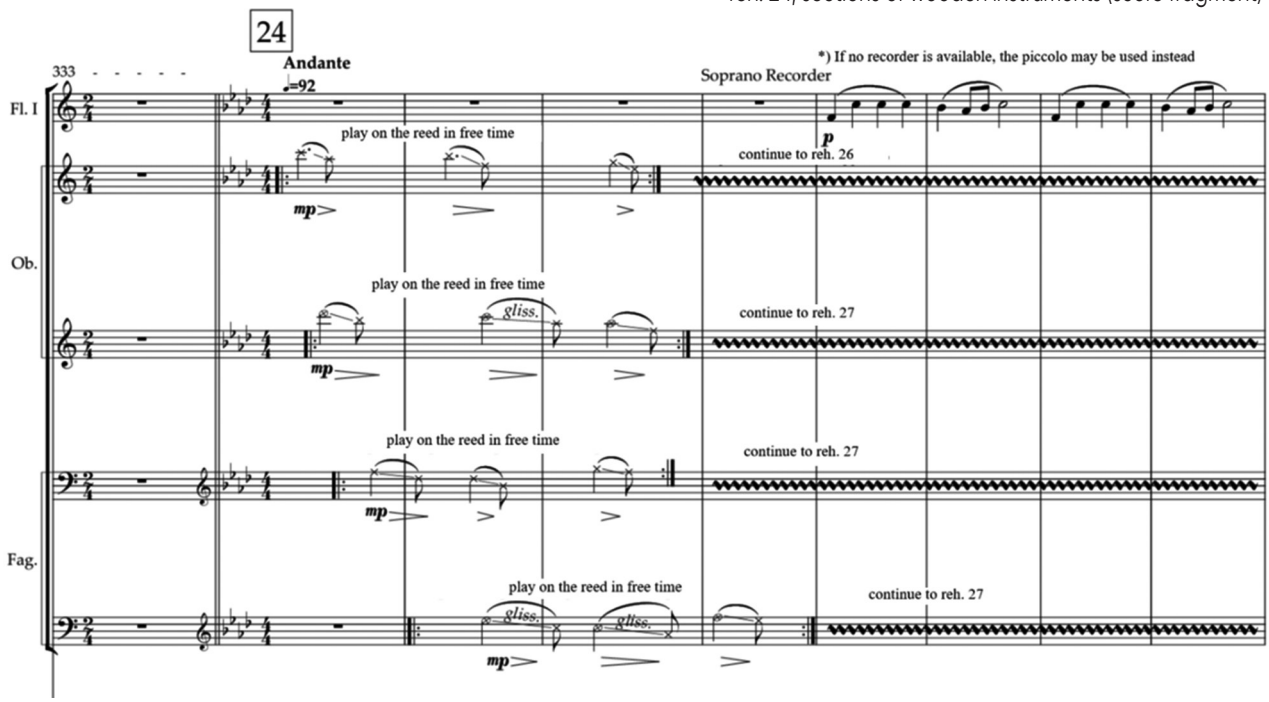
[4] Krasheninnikov also resorts to a similar technique in the symphonic picture *The Constellation of Orion* (2025), which premiered on May 14, 2026 in St. Petersburg as part of the Musical Spring Festival. At the end of the composition, the sound of string harmonics is added with glasses, as well as the vibraphone and crotales, with the bow of the double bass moving across their keys and body. All together this creates a cool, truly unearthly ("cosmic") sound.

written for the 2nd Rachmaninoff International Competition for Pianists, Composers and Conductors.[5] Its lyrical culmination (reh. 24–30) is connected with the theme of the Russian folk song "A Path in the Damp Forest," performed on the recorder (for more details on the concerto concept, see: [3]). The accompaniment is given to the violins, sustaining a quartal-quintal sonority in harmonics, and to the woodwinds (oboes and bassoons), playing a reed glissando, thereby producing an almost naturalistic effect of a clamour of birds (Example No. 1).

In the piece *Angel at the Holy Sepulchre* (2022) specially created for the *Wiener Collage* ensemble, Krasheninnikov turns to microchromatics and makes the musicians play and sing at the same time. The composition is intended for bass clarinet, violin, viola, cello, accordion and piano. The programmatic concept was based on one of the key episodes of the Gospel story about the resurrection of Christ, namely, the appearance of an Angel to the myrrh-bearing women who came to the tomb of Jesus for anointing. The microchromatic melodic writing of the strings — embodying, according to the composer's conception, the three Myrrh-bearing women — draws on the Russian lament (prichet), while the bass clarinet theme displays features of Middle Eastern music (the theme is based on variant diatonicism, combining elements of the Phrygian, Ionian, Lydian, and hemiolic modes), and the accordion and piano create an organ-like sonority. The singing of the musicians is used primarily in the final part of the piece, which corresponds to the Angel's good news of Jesus' resurrection. The timbre of the human voice, with its warmth and spirituality, literally brings

Example No. 1

Alexey Krasheninnikov. Piano Concerto, reh. 24, sections of wooden instruments (score fragment)



[5] The concerto was performed on June 24, 2025 on the stage of the Moscow Philharmonia (S.V. Rachmaninoff Hall) by the Novaya Rossiya Orchestra under the baton of Alexey Rubin with Sergei Oskolkov Jr. as a soloist. The composer was awarded second prize at the competition.

to life the instrumental ensemble. Its addition is perceived as an acoustic metaphor of light, joy and triumph of life over death.

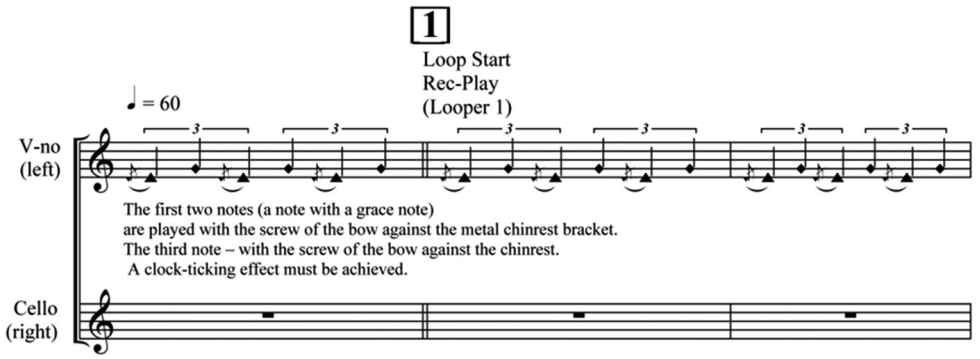
Krasheninnikov similarly turns to extended performance techniques in the *Bedroom Scene* piece.[6] Here, in addition to using microchromatics and glissando, the musicians produce sounds by using the bow screw on the iron chin rest, as well as play on the tailpiece. This entire arsenal of techniques is designed with a specific purpose in mind: to reproduce the squeak of a mosquito against the backdrop of the measured ticking of a clock. The piece is intended for violin, cello, objects and a loop machine for performing in the dark. The musical "sketch" (as the composer himself designates the genre of his work) represents a humorous scene of a banal, but familiar to everyone everyday situation — the nighttime torment of a fighting between a person falling asleep and a mosquito. In this regard, the performance also presupposes certain theatrical actions: musicians clapping on various parts of the body, falling objects (chairs, stools, aluminium mugs), noisy breathing, cries of "Beast! Bastard!" etc.

The violin and cello must be equipped with microphones; the sound from them is fed into the stereo channels of the loop machine: left and right for the violin and cello, respectively. The performers are synchronised with a metronomic click transmitted into the earphone (one beat equals one second). The violinist is responsible for operating the device (BOSS RC-30 or equivalent). Its rhythmic cycle (loop) is strictly fixed and lasts 16 seconds.

The musical fabric of the composition is built on the counterpoint of several layers. The foundation is a permanent rhythmic ostinato (Example No. 2), performed by the violin and then reproduced by a loop-machine loop, which conveys the monotonous ticking of a clock. On top of this seam, a layer that imitates the squeak of a mosquito is developed: quarter-tone intervals with trills appear on the cello and then on the violin (Example No. 3).

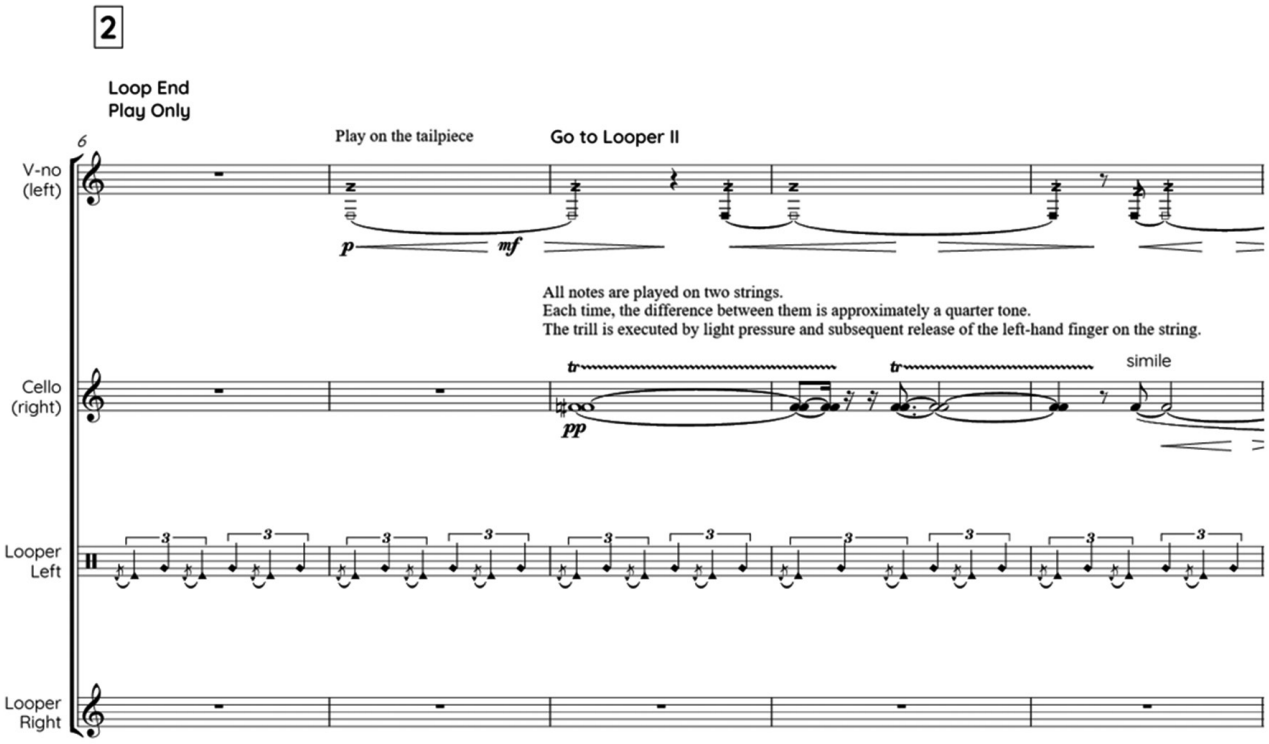
With the help of a loop machine that records and gradually reproduces the instrumental parts, a double 13-voice canon gradually emerges to enhance the sense of obsession and phantasmagoria of what is happening. In total, Krasheninnikov achieves the effect of a semantic rift: the intellectual, ordering principle of writing turns into its opposite — an irrational picture reflecting nervous excitement.

Example No. 2 Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Bedroom Scene*



[6] The premiere of the work took place on October 29, 2023 at the Krash Club. The violin part was performed by the composer himself, and Maxim Gonchar pieced the cello part. The composition was also performed at the 57th Leningrad Musical Spring Festival on May 11, 2024.

Example No. 3 Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Bedroom Scene*, reh. 2



The piece is written with a great sense of humour and evokes genuine laughter from the audience. The author's performance also contains elements of *mise en abyme*: for example, at the Krash Club premiere, the cellist kills a mosquito by swatting it with the score of *Bedroom Scene*.

The Ring[7] piece, the genre of which is designated by the composer as a "thriller quintet," also provides for theatricalisation of the performance process. Mobile phone calls during music performances have become an integral part of concert life. Despite persistent requests to the audience to turn off the sound signals of their devices, there will always be those who ignore this. Krasheninnikov's composition is designed as a humorous *memento mori* for such "guilty" listeners; it refers to the iconic Japanese horror film *The Ring* (*Ringu*, 1998). Let us remember that the film is about a cursed videotape, after viewing which a telephone call is heard warning of imminent death. The punishment is carried out by a long-haired ghost crawling out of the television screen.

Krasheninnikov's piece is designed for violin, cello, piccolo flute, clarinet, piano and a phonogram containing the sounds of a metronome, a telephone ringtone, a child's singing and laughing voice. In addition, the piece includes a stand-in character in the audience. During the performance, the mobile phone first rings for the flutist, who hides behind the raised

[7] The composition was performed at the New Music Offline festival on May 19, 2022. The performance featured musicians from the St. Petersburg New Music Ensemble: Tatyana Rezetdinova (flute), Alexander Oskolkov (clarinet), Nikolai Mazhara (piano), Mikhail Krutik (violin), Elena Grigorieva (cello). The author himself, Alexey Krasheninnikov, acted as a proxy spectator.

lid of the piano with a frightened look. After some time, a bell rings in the hall near a fake spectator, at whom the musicians turn and "drill him with their eyes" (a remark in the score). Next, the lid of the piano falls with a crash and a flutist wearing a wig put on backwards appears to emerge from the instrument, so that the hair covers his entire face. The piece ends with a frightened cry from the stand-in and children's laughter from the soundtrack.

The composition is based on the juxtaposition and combination of different material types — microchromatic (quarter-tone glissando intervals) and tonal-associative (figurations based on triads), as well as different themes — purely diatonic and simple in the children's voice on the soundtrack and atonal-expressive in the piccolo flute. The structure of the piece unfolds in accordance with the logic of the scenario described above; however, it displays features of a concentric (arch) form of the type A–B–C–B_1–A_1: at the outer extremes lies the children's song (Example No. 4), followed by the piccolo theme (Example No. 5); section C is the emotional reaction to the ring.

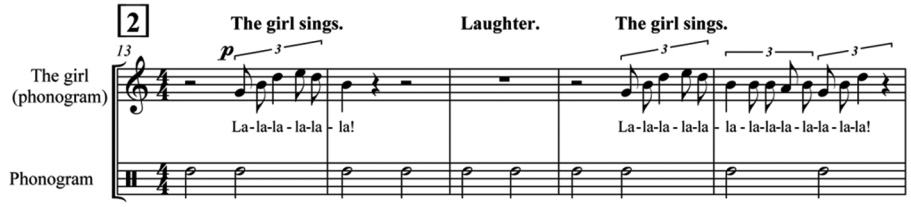
Memory — a Humanising Experiment

However, Krasheninnikov has not so many humorous pieces in the line we have designated as experimental (they also include, for example, *Self-Portrait*, which will be discussed below). Most of the works are based on a deeply conceptual idea. Such is, first of all, the piece *Memory* for a discarded violin and electronics.[8] The reason for writing it was again an extra-musical pulse. For many years, the composer kept an old violin that his father had once found in a garbage bin and brought home. It had no strings, no bridge and no tailpiece. Looking at the instrument, Krasheninnikov often wondered what this violin contained, whether any traces of musical memory were left in it. These thoughts led him to write the piece.

Memory relies on the genre of instrumental theatre, the synthetic nature of which and, above all, the visual series "expands the semantic
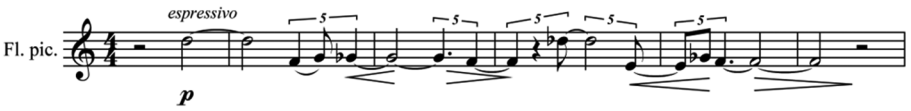
Example No. 4

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *The Ring*, reh. 2, mm. 13–17 (score fragment)



Example No. 5

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *The Ring*, reh. 5, mm. 28–33, piccolo flute theme (score fragment)



[8] The premiere of the work performed by the author took place on May 14, 2025.

sphere" [4, p. 3] and helps the listener to decipher the meanings laid down by the composer. The composition begins and ends with a soundtrack of Gluck's famous *Melody* from the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*, presented in an arrangement for violin and organ and combined with the sound of rain. On a table placed on the stage there is to be an old violin, with only a single peg, around which a broken string is wound. Beside the instrument (right there on the table) lie a tailpiece, a bow with its screw undone and its hair slack, and a pencil. The performer first brings the bow into working order and draws it across the violin's top plate (using both the hair and the stick), as if imitating playing it. In this gesture lies an attempt to "resurrect" the body of the instrument and make it respond to the performer's actions. At this moment, the sounding of Gluck's *Melody* ceases, and the sound of rain transforms into applause. The rustling sounds of the bow are recorded and then reproduced by a loop machine, while the musician, in the meantime, attaches the tailpiece to the violin and stretches the string over it. Then, by applying pressure to the bow, he draws rasping sounds from the instrument. In the subsequent stages of the piece, the performer taps the body with the pencil, slips it under the string — thus creating a kind of substitute bridge — which helps the violin to find its "voice." On a single string (!), the musician plays various parts of the accompaniment of Gluck's *Melody* and, finally, the melody itself. Each of these stages constitutes the content of a separate loop on the loop machine. The layering of the loops one upon another produces a staggering effect — from scraping, cracking, tapping, and other noises, music is born. Its semblance is a faint glimmer of the unearthly beauty and serenity of Gluck's original, for the melody, played on a violin without a chinrest, with a single string, with a pencil in place of the bridge, and without the possibility of prior tuning, naturally sounds out of tune. And yet it is precisely this distortedness that produces a deeply moving effect. Resurrected to life by a "blessed shade,"[9] this sound breaks through the moans and creaks, proclaiming the strength of the spirit that prevails over matter.

The concept of Krasheninnikov's piece partly corresponds with the concept of the piece *In spite of, and Maybe Even Therefore* (2007) by the Danish composer Simon Steen-Andersen (b. 1976), a contemporary of the St. Petersburg author. In this work, a trio of musicians (flute, clarinet and French horn) act in the opposite way: they take their instruments apart, trying to reproduce fragments of Beethoven's *Bagatelle*, Op. 126 on their individual parts (mouthpieces, valve levers, knees, valve pipes, etc.). Analysing the piece, Tatiana Tsaregradskaya writes: "After a certain amount of time, the sounds disappear, paving way to that 'choreography of motions' that is indispensable for their performance. Out of these 'musical ruins,' the music attempts to build new relationships and new paths of construction of continuity, but the sought for coalescence is slowly destroyed by the interruptions, which continuously become lengthier in time." [5, p. 73] According to the apt observation of the researcher, the "thinned out matter" of the instrument becomes a symbol of the victory of spirit over matter, which truly brings together the pieces of both composers. However, a similar idea is expressed by purely opposite methods: in Steen-Andersen — through destruction, *dismantling* of instruments and *deconstruction* of Beethoven's text; in Krasheninnikov —

[9] Let us remember that Gluck's *Melody* is included in the *Dance of the Blessed Spirits* added to the second, French, edition of the opera in 1774.

through *restoration*, instrument assembly and a kind of *reconstruction* of Gluck's melody.[10] In these oppositely directed vectors, a fundamental difference in the author's positions can be seen: when ruining the instrument, Steen-Andersen, by his own admission, focuses on the "beauty of the destroyed" [Ibid., p. 74] in order to *radically transform* the tradition, while for Krasheninnikov, cultural memory has an enduring value and is capable of *spiritualising* and *humanising* any, even the most radical, experiment.
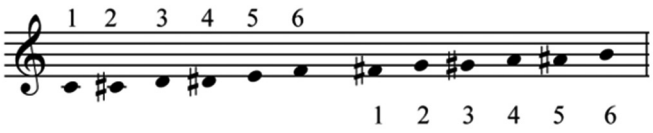
The Path of the Star — a Mono-Element Composition

Analogies with the works of Western European avant-garde artists can also be found in the composer's other works. This is *The Path of the Star* piece for seven string instruments. It was created in 2019 on the initiative of Anna Adzhemova, curator of the "Games with the Classics" Festival.[11] For two years, Krasheninnikov actively participated in this event both as a composer and a performer. Adzhemova suggested he accompany the writing process with detailed comments on his personal blog. Indeed, the creation of the piece was documented in five videos that Krasheninnikov posted on his official page on the social network VKontakte.

The work began with the formation of the main intonational core of the composition, designated as the leitmotif of the star. It was obtained using aleatory procedures, by throwing a dice. This creative act acquired conceptual significance in the context of the festival for which the piece was intended, since Krasheninnikov literally played with its title ("Games with the Classics"), resorting to the playful method in the process of creating the work.

As working material, the composer used a twelve-tone chromatic scale divided into two segments (Scheme 1). The die was thrown 8 times. The number of throws was determined by one of the key ideas of the piece about the continuity and infinity of the star flight.

Scheme 1. Alexey Krasheninnikov. *The Path of the Star*. Pre-compositional material

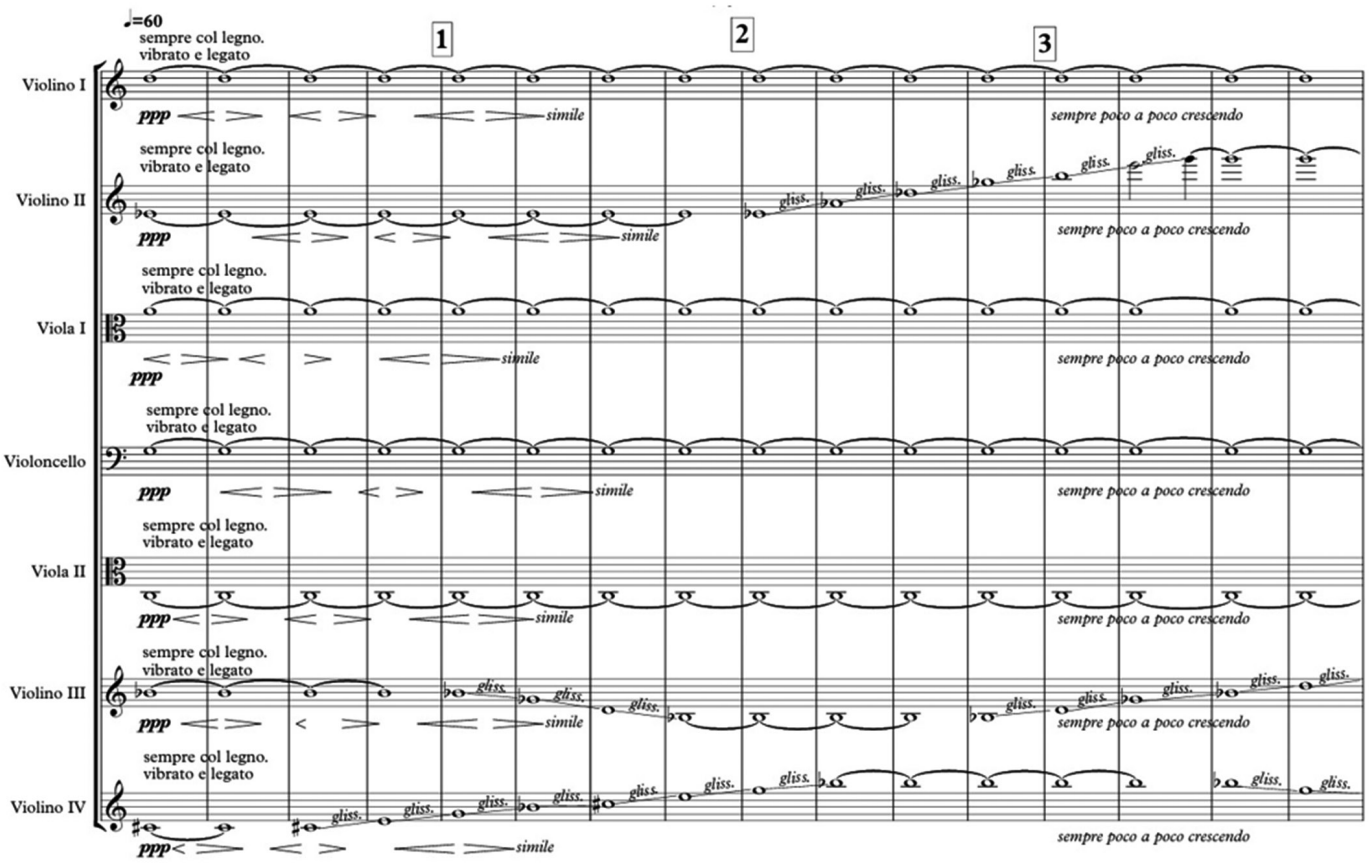


As a result of the game procedure, the following numerical series emerged: 1-2-2-4-4-5-3-5. From the segments of the chromatic scale presented in Scheme 1, Krasheninnikov alternately selected sounds corresponding to the dropped numbers. Due to the fact that one of the notes (*A♯*) was repeated (the number 5 from the numerical series), the resulting intonation cell included only seven unique sounds: *C–G–C♯–A–D♯–A♯–D*. This sequence was verticalised into the chord that opens the piece (Example No. 6).

[10] In this case, reconstruction can be understood as an attempt to return the original source to its value and aesthetic meaning. No prize for guessing that the freshness of the perception of Gluck's *Melody* under the influence of its wide dissemination in popular and academic culture is gradually being levelled out and "erased." Although the music reconstructed by Krasheninnikov from individual parts turns out to be only a pale imitation of the original, it makes the listener feel its beauty anew, as if the Gluck's melody is heard for the first time. It is significant that the soundtrack makes its strongest impression not at the beginning, but at the end of the piece, in comparison with the distorted version of the discarded violin.

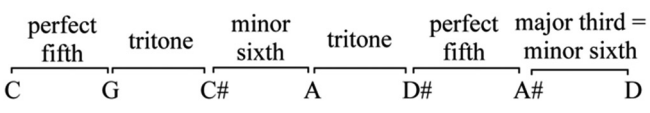
[11] The festival was held in St. Petersburg from 2014 to 2019.

Example No. 6 Alexey Krasheninnikov. *The Path of the Star*, mm. 1–16



The composer paid special attention to the intervals of the resulting series; their number was limited to a perfect fifth, tritone and minor sixth (Scheme 2). This sound structure can be more accurately terminologically defined as a leitmotif complex.

Scheme 2. Alexey Krasheninnikov. *The Path of the Star*. Intervals of the Sound Leitmotif Complex



The composition belongs to the mono-element category (for more details see: [6]), since it is entirely built on a leitmotif complex, which is transformed through a change in articulation and texture.

The artistic concept is based on a large-scale astrophysical process — the final evolution stage of a star completing its life cycle. The musical representation of this plot is distinguished by its strict and well-thought-out dramaturgy.

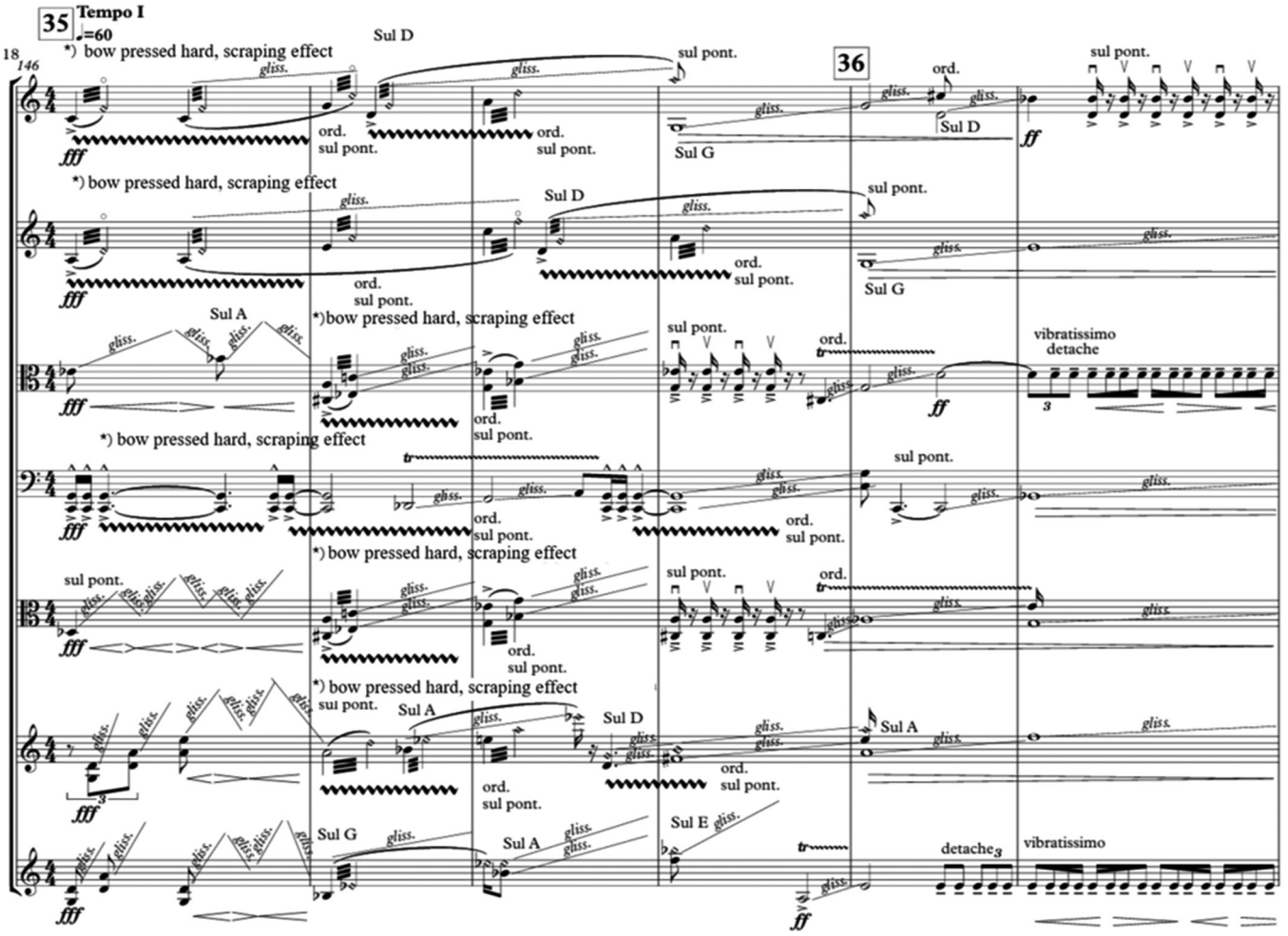
Krasheninnikov paid special attention to the problem of musical form. At the conceptual level, in terms of vector motion, he considered two options. The first assumed a static form intended to convey the illusion of uniform movement of the star. The second option, which was ultimately selected, relied on a dynamic process reflecting the transformation of a celestial body. The composer found this approach to be more successful, as it ensured the construction of a tense dramaturgy with a clear development and climax.

The main means of "visualising" the cosmogonic plot becomes the transformation

of articulation and textural forms, representing a finely constructed transition from statics to dynamics. Thus, the piece begins with a motionless sonorous band (see Example No. 6) symbolising the statics of boundless cosmic space. From its thickness, the first signs of life — slow glissandos and flickering dots *pizzicato* — gradually begin to emerge. The choice of glissando used asynchronously in different directions (ascending and descending) by all performers is determined by purely artistic goals: in this way, the effect of extreme smoothness and sonic continuity, permanent pulsating movement and shimmering is achieved.

The transition from stasis to kinesis is accomplished through a series of interpenetrating textural transformations. The glissando speeds up; tremolos and trills are added to the musical texture to generate a turbulent, swirling texture that conveys the buildup of internal energy and temperature (special sound production techniques also play a significant role in this process, for example, playing with the shaft and the hair of the bow simultaneously and pressing hard on the bow, resulting in crackling and creaking). By reh. 35, all seven string parts are concentrated in a zone of dense pulsation, reaching its apogee at the moment of "explosion." In this case, textural transformations are both audible and "visible." It is significant that the score also visually takes on "chaotic" features (Example No. 7).

Example No. 7 Alexey Krasheninnikov. *The Path of the Star*, mm. 146–151
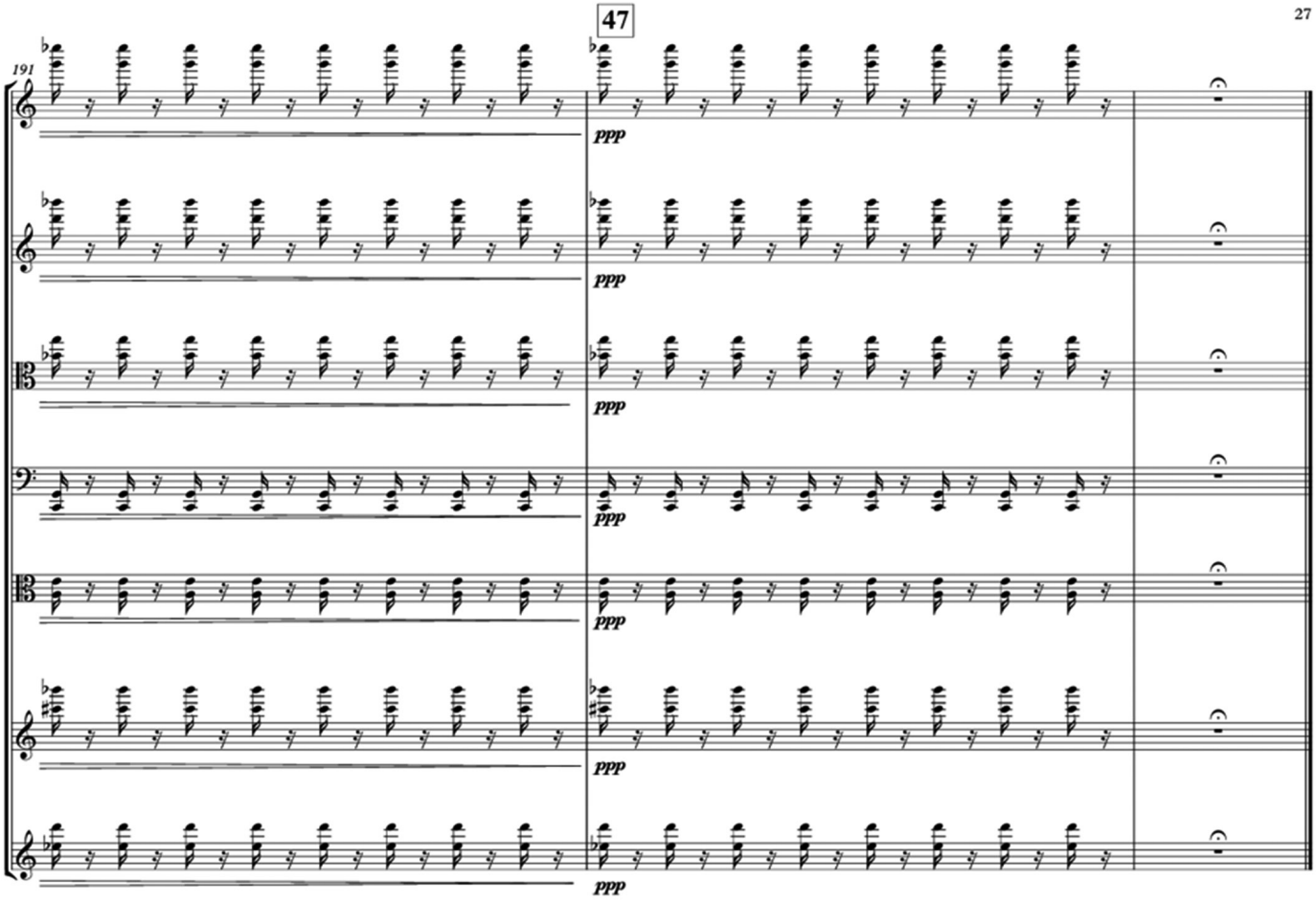


In the final section, the instrument voices diverge, dissolving into the sacred silence of cosmic space. In the sound void, only a rhythmic pulsation remains to be based on the harmonic leitmotif of the composition — an acoustic image of the residual radiation of a star (Example No. 8).

In this case, the composer offers an acoustic interpretation of the pulsar[12]: the powerful compression of the star leads to the emission of radio waves, which, when translated into the range of audible sound, are perceived as a monotonous pulsating signal. This final gesture becomes a sonic metaphor for non-existence, essentially an acoustic image of the death of a star.

In order to create a specific "cosmic" sound atmosphere, Krasheninnikov uses microphone amplification of the strings. The use of equipment makes it possible to detail

Example No. 8 Alexey Krasheninnikov. *The Path of the Star*, mm. 191–193



[12] A pulsar is an astronomical object, a rapidly rotating neutron star that emits strictly periodic pulses of electromagnetic radiation (radio waves, X-rays or gamma rays). Pulsars are formed by the gravitational collapse of the core of a massive star after its supernova explosion. A characteristic feature of pulsars is the high stability of the radiation period due to the conservation of angular momentum and a powerful magnetic field, which can be trillions of times stronger than the Earth's magnetic field. The radiation of pulsars is registered on Earth in the form of short pulses that follow with precise periodicity.

quiet and extraordinary playing techniques (for example, noise effects), which are difficult to discern in acoustic performance conditions. As the author himself notes in the explanatory note to the score, this technology is necessary for a more vivid depiction of the explosion, created with the help of "noises generated in the immediate vicinity of the microphone." The proposed by the composer non-traditional symmetrical seating arrangement for the performers also becomes an important component in the concept implementation: Violin I – Violin II – Viola I – Cello – Viola II – Violin III – Violin IV.

The idea of constructing a composition based on a harmonic leitmotif complex transformed in texture and timbre is reminiscent of the concept of Stockhausen's vocal sextet *Stimmung*, which is known to be played with one consonance — the ninth chord from the sound *B* ♭.[13] The fundamental difference between the pieces lies primarily in the concept of form. Krasheninnikov relies on the "deductive dynamic form," [7, p. 280, 293] constructing a clear linear dramaturgy that depicts the stages of the birth of a star and its evolution, while Stockhausen implements the idea of a moment-form that has no vectoral movement. The status of the musical text is also different: Krasheninnikov uses traditional notation, which assumes a relatively precise reproduction of the composer's intent; Stockhausen develops a model — a system of rules and materials — that grants performers a greater degree of freedom.

Experiments in Intermedial Transposition

Krasheninnikov's creative process is often influenced by other forms of art. A good example is the piece for violin and loop machine *Flight from Oneself* (2018).

The composition was created for the festival "Games with the Classics". It was announced in the program before its appearance, which predetermined an extremely tight deadline of one month for the work.

The inspiration for writing the piece came from the eponymous drawing by Paul Klee (1929), given to the composer for his birthday (Il. 1).[14]



Il. 1. Paul Klee. *Flight from Oneself*, 1931

The picture shows a running man overtaking himself. The split figure is created using the monoline technique, a continuous pencil stroke, without lifting the hand from the sheet of paper. The image is filled with deep meaning; it makes thinking about the transience of time, existential duality and the loss of an authentic experience of the present in the whirlwind of everyday life.

[13] Another source is the Scriabin's poem *Prometheus*. It is known to be based on the "Prometheus six-sound system." However, Scriabin's technique of central consonance presupposes the transposition of the leading harmonic complex, its variations and transformations. Stockhausen and Krasheninnikov have no sounds of any other pitch than those making up the original complex.

[14] Painting inspired both Krasheninnikov's compositional and literary work. Thus, his story *Half-Erased Character* was written under the impression of *Erased de Kooning Drawing* by the American conceptual artist Robert Rauschenberg.

It was in this artistic and philosophical way that Krasheninnikov interpreted the drawing. The composer noted: "This drawing is a metaphor for the contemporary pace of life, when people try to do everything and succeed, forgetting about the main thing — eternity, which is becoming more and more illusory and inaccessible. And, having stopped once, we understand that nothing can be returned back, we rushed somewhere in pursuit of false values, and now we see with bitterness how much we have lost through our own fault..."[15]

The given quotation in a certain sense serves as a program for the work. The piece is differentiated into two contrasting sections related with the principle of the golden ratio. The first (mm. 1–220) occupies two-thirds of the work and embodies the image of a chaotic pursuit, vanity and inner anxiety; the second (mm. 221–340) represents the realm of lyrical reflection, nostalgia for the "bright and eternal."

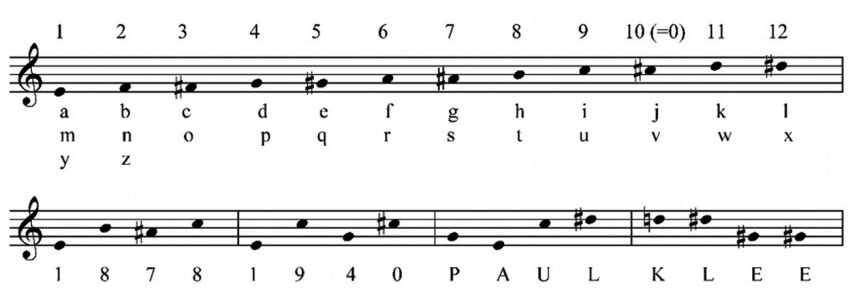
The piece begins with an image of a man running. To achieve this, the composer resorts to special techniques: the violinist must strike the soundboard with his fingers in an ostinato rhythm and blow into the f-holes of the instrument at regular intervals to imitate the breathing of a running person. The piece ends with a chorale, which includes both the sounds of the violin and the timbre of the human voice (the performer is required to sing part of the chorale notes).

The technical basis of the composition is a loop machine with two independent pedals forming and superposing sound loops. The total duration of the piece (12 minutes) is realised through twelve one-minute loop cycles: eight in the first section and four in the second.

The choice of instrumentation turns out to be "symbolic," as it reflects the concept of the piece: the timbre and texture of the violin, as well as the human voice, are contrasted with the mechanical, cyclical nature of the loop machine sound. In addition, the loop machine can create a multi-layered composition by layering audio tracks. The "reproduction" of the same material acts as a kind of analogue of the double image in Klee's drawing.

Elements of seriality and cryptophony find individual refraction in the compositional technique. As in *The Path of the Star*, Krasheninnikov turns to pre-compositional procedures for obtaining the main thematic material. Once again, he starts from the chromatic scale this time built from the sound *E*. Initially, on this basis, the composer recodes the dates of Klee's life — 1879–1940. From the chromatic scale numbered from 1 to 12, he selects individual sounds according to the digital sequence 18791940. The resulting sound sequence is: $E-B-A\sharp-C-E-C-G-C\sharp$ (Scheme 3).

Scheme 3. Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Flight from Oneself*. Pre-compositional material of the piece: recoding of the dates of life and name of the artist



[15] New music: composers on Radio Kultura. Issue 29. Alexey Krasheninnikov. URL: https://www.unioncomposers.ru/projects/474/?ysclid=mkshszd5n9717399178 (accessed: 15.04.2026).
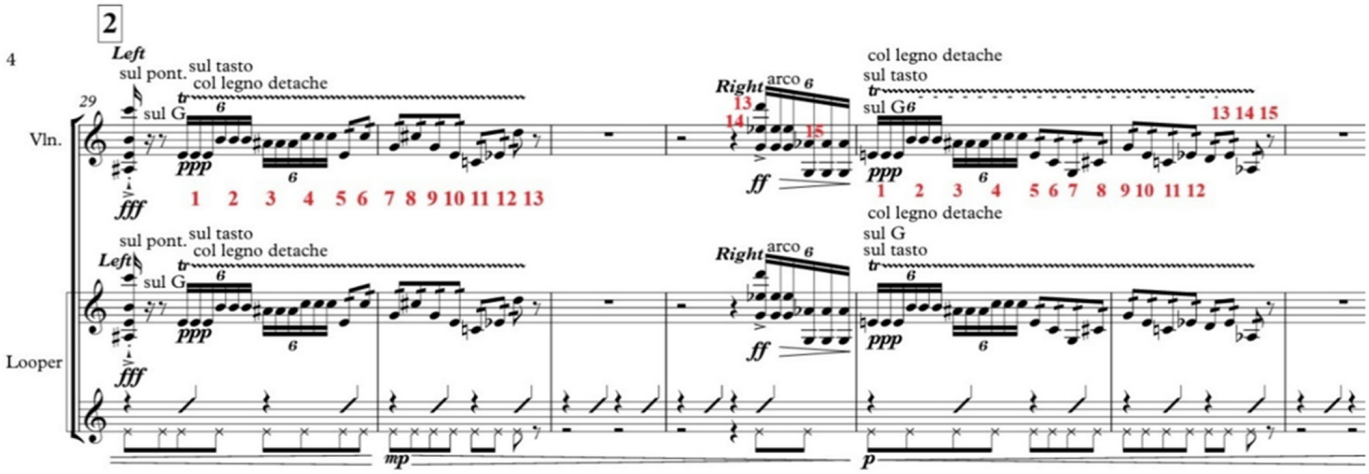
The artist's name is then recoded. The chromatic scale from *E* is correlated with the letters of the Latin alphabet (Scheme 3), after which the sounds forming the name Paul Klee are selected from it. This is how a new eight-sound model is created: *G–E–C–D♯–D–D♯–G♯–G♯*.

These complexes are represented in the second loop[16] to serve as the foundation of the pitch system for the entire work. Thus, the high-pitched material of the piece is determined by the dates of life and the name of the artist on the basis of tone-numerical and musical-letter encryption, which undoubtedly brings Krasheninnikov's approach closer to cryptophonic technique. However, being subject to other laws, coded elements only partly determine the structure of the musical fabric, which is typical for cryptophonic compositions.

The organisation of pitch material is determined by the principles of individually interpreted serial technique. Thus, two eight-tone complexes combined together essentially function in the piece as a 15-tone series (the final sound *G♯* is not always repeated when realised in the musical fabric). Its fundamental difference from orthodox serial constructions lies in the repetition of tones within a row, the absence of full chromaticity and the presence of tonal associativity (in *E*). However, the principles of operation are the same — development of serial rows one after another, one above the other and division of the row into segments and recombining them. This is easy to verify by looking at the beginning of the second loop (Example No. 9).
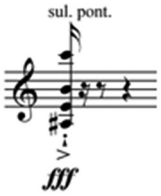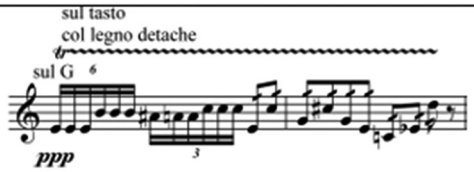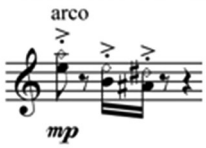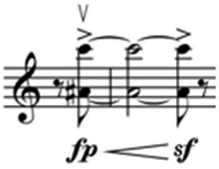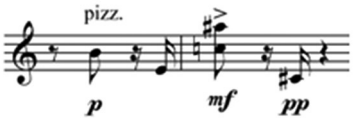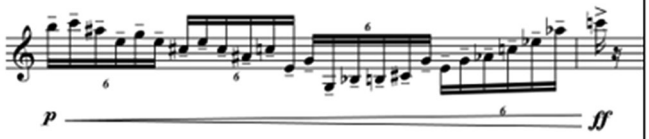
The structural basis of the composition is six motives or, more precisely, sound objects differing in performance technique (Table 1).

Example No. 9 Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Flight from Oneself*, mm. 29–34



[16] The material of the first loop consists of blows on the deck and breathing in the f-holes.
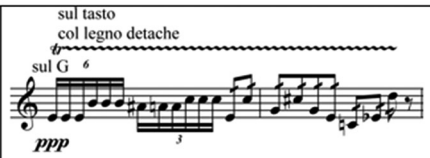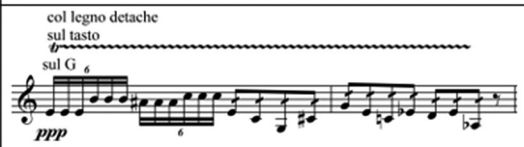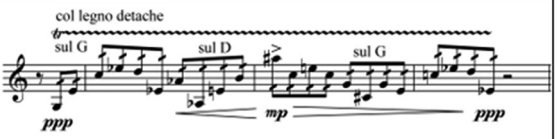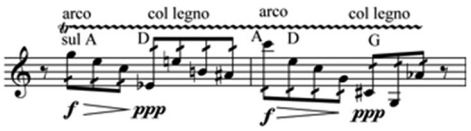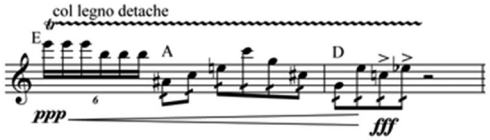
Table 1. Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Flight from Oneself*. Sound objects of the piece

№	Objects	Designation
1		Chord
2		Détaché with trill
3		String harmonics
4		Long double notes
5		Pizzicato
6		Sextuples

These sound objects are developed first within the second loop and then throughout the entire piece. Let us demonstrate the features of the composer's work using the example of the "détaché with trill" object. In the second loop, it appears 5 times (Table 2).

In the first case, the "tone row" is partly presented; the motif unfolds *ppp* in the range of the ninth, and its graphic design begins with an ascending movement. With the new appearance of the object, the full tone row is completed; some sounds have changed their register location, expanding the range towards the small octave. In the third development, the motive is presented in its most expanded form; it begins and ends with the second half of the "series" (that is, with the sound complex associated with the name of Klee); its range

Table 2. Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Flight from Oneself*. Development of the "détaché with trill" sound object in the second loop

1st development (mm. 29–30)	
2nd development (mm. 33–34)	
3rd development (mm. 37–40)	
4th development (mm. 44–45)	
5th development (mm. 51–52)	
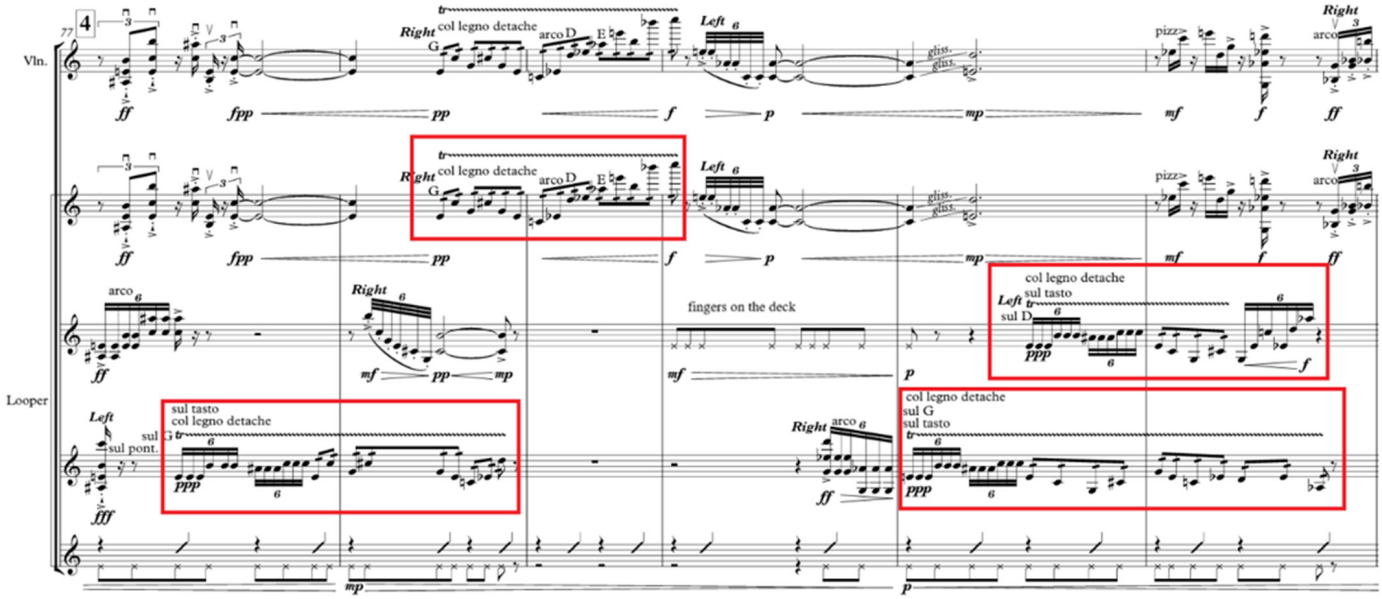
is further expanded, the dynamic nuances are changed (a small *crescendo* and *decrescendo* appear within the first half of the "series"). From a pitch point of view, the fourth development is a shortened version of the third, but the graphic line is inverted (the object begins with a downward movement), the dynamics is significantly transformed (moves from *f* to *ppp*), the sound volume is expanded from *g* to c^3, the way of playing changes (alternation of *arco* and *col legno*). The final development approaches the two initial ones; however, graphic contours are different, the motif is shifted to the upper register, the dynamics unfold from *ppp* to *fff*.

As new loops are formed, the given sound object continuing to vary is temporary distributed in such a way that its imitation appears when the loops are superimposed. The composer considered this technique as analogous to the splitting of the figure in Klee's drawing. Example No. 10 presents the "détaché with trill" motif in a cross-section of four loops. It should be noted that the same "splitting" effects are characteristic of other sound objects.
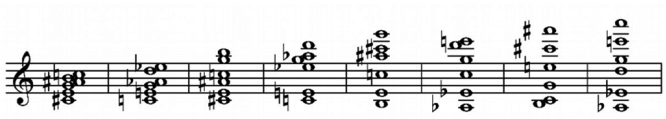
The distribution of "long double notes" (object No. 4 from Table 1) across the loops was subject to a special harmonic design. At the pre-compositional level, Krasheninnikov created eight alternating consonances from two eight-sound complexes with different register arrangements of sounds, the range of which expanded from one to five octaves (Scheme 4).

Example No. 10

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Flight from Oneself.*
"Détaché with trill" sound object in the cut of four loops[17]
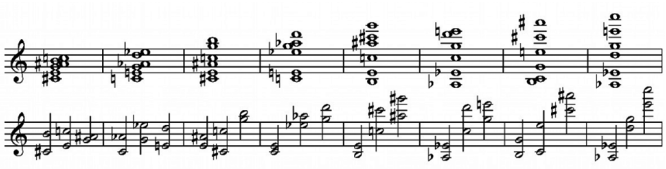


Scheme 4. Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Flight from Oneself.* Harmonic plan of "long double notes"



These chords were then broken down into "double notes" taking into account the octave position of the tones in the consonances of the harmonic plan (Scheme 5).

Scheme 5. Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Flight from Oneself.* Isolation of "double notes" from the consonances of the harmonic plan



The appearance of "long double notes" in the loops was carried out in such a way that these sound objects were summed up in the resulting sound (when all the loops are superimposed) into metachords of the harmonic plan (Example No. 11).
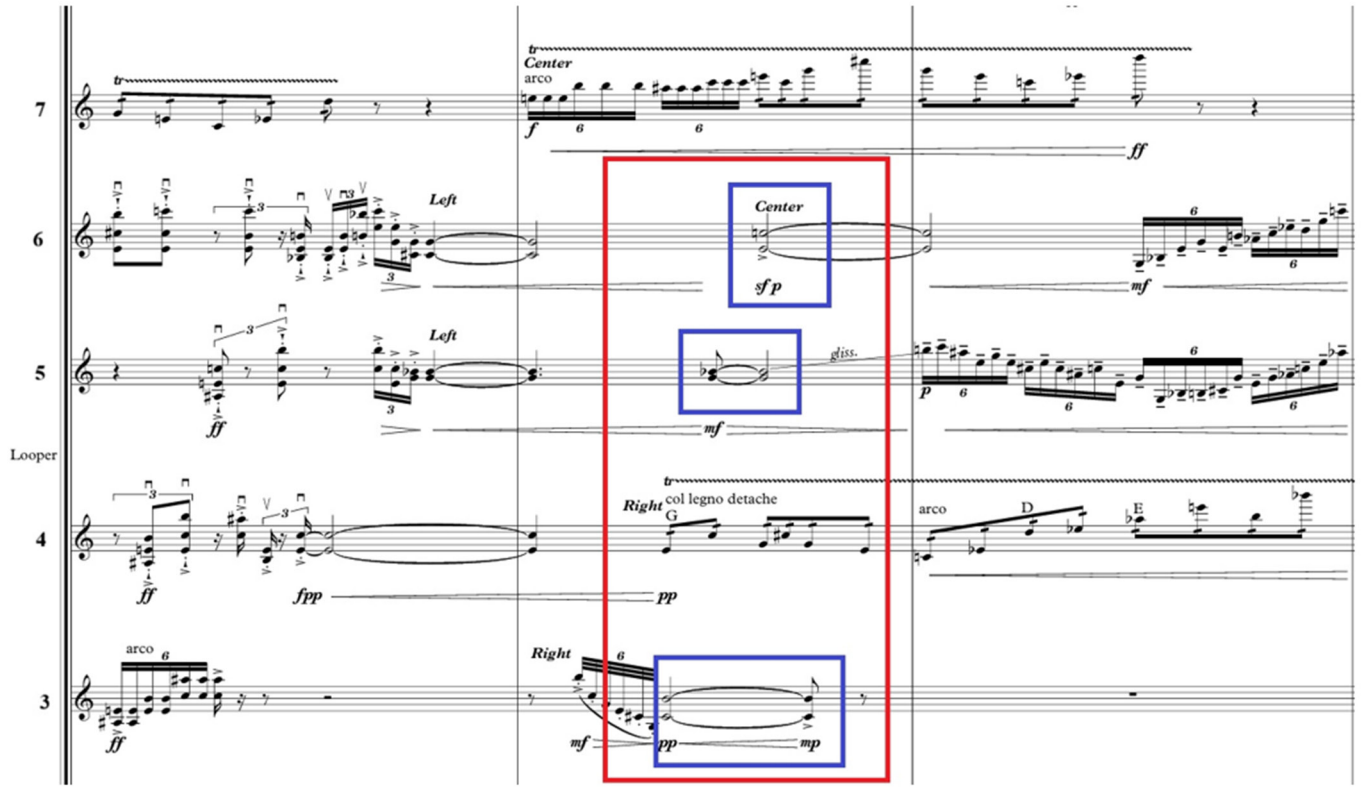
Five sound objects (chord, détaché with trill, string harmonics, long double notes, pizzicato) are represented in the second loop, while the sixth (sextuple) appears for the first time only in the fifth loop. From the moment of its appearance, it acquires an increasingly dominant meaning in the musical text, practically displacing all other sound elements. This decision was driven by the composer's desire to give the piece a natural acceleration linked to the concept of the race of life.

The second, choral section of the work is essentially based on the same pre-compositional material as the first one. Initially, Krasheninnikov

[17] In Example No. 10, the loops go from bottom to top, that is, the bottom row represents the first loop.

Example No. 11

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Flight from Oneself*.
reh. 9, mm. 197–199, loops 3–7 (score fragment)[18]



intended to emphasise the antithesis of everyday vanity and eternity not only through genre, texture, tempo, rhythm and timbre juxtaposition, but also through intonational contrast. Therefore, the chromaticism of the first section is contrasted with the diatonicism of the second. Wishing to preserve the unity of the musical material of the piece, the composer took the eight-note complexes formed from Klee's name and the dates of his life as a basis and removed the accidentals from them. The performer voices the outlines of the original motifs, while the violin plays the missing notes (Example No. 12).

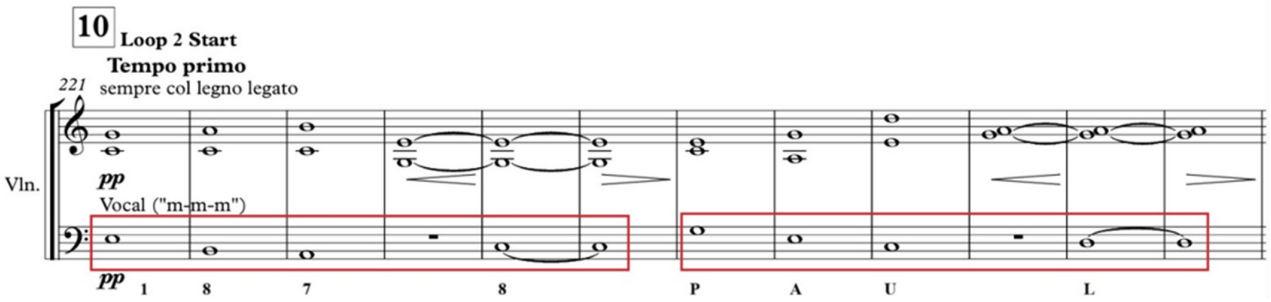
The static, introspective nature of the choral sound is contrasted with the preceding dramatic tension and creates the effect of stopping time. Thus, the dramatic "chase" of life ceases, and the listener is immersed in a sacred-lyrical space to feel the value of existence.

The piece *Flight from Oneself* can be seen as a fascinating example of intermedial transposition, an attempt at an intersemiotic translation of one art form into another. A more radical approach connected with the expansion of the medial space of music is presented by a joke piece for violin and piano *Self-Portrait* (2025). The composition was created especially

[18] In Example No. 11, blue rectangles highlight the long double notes, and the red rectangle marks the first meta chord. Compared with the first bar of Scheme 4.

Example No. 12

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Flight from Oneself*
Section 2, reh. 10, mm. 221–232



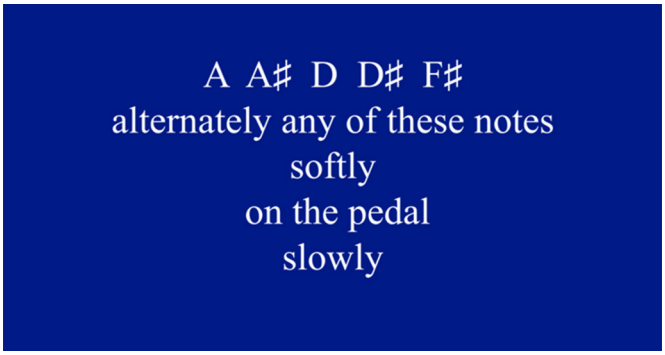
for the festival "Sergey Oskolkov and His Friends."[19]

The composer here turns to the technological possibilities of *video score*. Each performer plays their part according to a video file containing verbal instructions regarding the musical material and the actions of musicians. Video must be launched simultaneously. If precise synchronisation is impossible, minor time differences are allowed.

The instructions included in the video score offer performers the opportunity to improvise within the given parameters. For example, the piece begins with the pianist producing the sounds suggested on the screen in any order and at any rhythm; however, the articulation, dynamics and tempo are prescribed (Example No. 13). Similarly, the violinist plays combinations of double notes from a given set of sounds, also guided by tempo and dynamic instructions. Let us note that the volume level is regulated by changing the background colour of the screen: blue, green and red for *piano*, *mezzo-forte and fortissimo*, respectively.
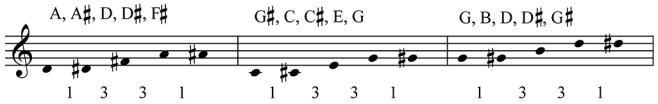
Example No. 13

Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Self-Portrait*.
Beginning of the pianist's part



At first glance, the composer allows the utmost degree of performing freedom, but this is not so. The set of notes offered to the pianist for improvisation — initially *A*, *A♯*, *D*, *D♯*, *F♯*; then *G♯*, *C*, *C♯*, *E*, *G*; and finally, *G*, *B*, *D*, *D♯*, *G♯* — can be reduced to a single symmetrical interval model: 1–3–3–1 (Scheme 6).

Scheme 6. Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Self-Portrait*. Interval model of note sets in the pianist part



[19] The premiere took place on June 4, 2025 in the performence of Nikolai Mazhara (piano) and Mikhail Krutik (violin). Later, on November 12 of the same year, the piece was performed again as part of a Krash Club concert at the Benois Apartment Museum. This time the parts were performed by Nikolai Mazhara (piano) and Alexey Krasheninnikov (violin).

The programmed complex of sounds ensures harmonic consistency of the piece. The indicated interval model, vaguely reminiscent of Roslavets' synth chord technique or Hauer's tropes, functions like a modal scale, which is transposed in different fragments of the composition. Two new models in the violinist's part (one of them is whole-tonic) are periodically superimposed on it, leading to polymodal diversity.

Despite the radical format of the score and the significant role of improvisation, the piece has a strict, almost classical structure — it relies on a three-part reprise. The central section of the composition is associated with a performative act: while the pianist improvises given sound complexes, the violinist is proposed to draw his self-portrait. For this, a small plywood board with a sheet of paper and a pencil is placed on the music stand in advance. During the process, regardless of the artistic merits of the drawing, the violinist must shout out the phrases: "Amazing!", "Magnificent!", "Crazy!", "Brilliant!" After this, he takes up the violin again and improvises virtuoso passages, arpeggios and chords, pausing for yet another round of self-praise ("Bravissimo!", "Inimitable!").

The reprise clearly perceived by ear due to both the sound material and the methods of its articulation is enriched with a new element: the melody improvised in the exposition based on the whole-tone scale must now be whistled by the violinist. The final line "Brilliant!" is accompanied by a demonstration of a self-portrait created during the performance. When performing the piece at the Krash Club, the composer depicted himself in a playful, cubist manner (Il. 2).



Il. 2. A drawing by Alexey Krasheninnikov during the performance of the piece *Self-Portrait*

It should be noted that the work contains a considerable amount of irony, which can also be found in the literary works of A. Krasheninnikov. For example, *Glinka*, the hero of his short story, is a composer (the story is told in the first person), confident in his talent, but not averse to hack work, which, in his opinion, is what current musical practice (based, by the way, on experiments) encourages. "It should be said", the hero reasons, "that contemporary music has come so far that, taking into account all the complexities of its performance, and most importantly, its perception, the author can always count on at least a certain reverence from an audience that understands little. But in my case, when a name has long been made and people flock to concerts, it is possible (let's be honest — thanks to promotion) to sometimes do some extra work: throw in a few more special tricks (extended playing technique, for example, a prepared piano, tapping on the violin and other crap that goes down so well and without which it is now impossible to appear in the party scene). In fact, my new brilliant work was not without a little hack work, of course. By and large, it consisted entirely of such tricks. But, on the whole, this did not in any way affect the overall picture — the public was delighted, the feeling of spiritualised unclear emptiness and 'ironic all-permeation into the metaphysical

plane of existence' remained for a long time." [8, p. 127] It is no surprise that the Glinka monument, which came to life on Theatre Square after being introduced to the score of the hapless composer, who unfortunately fell into one of St. Petersburg manholes, not only fails to help him escape, but also closes the hatch. *Self-Portrait* with its lines "Brilliant!", "Inimitable!" seems to appeal to the image of the story hero. Therefore, in this joke piece, the composer both experiments with new forms of representing the material and ironically distances himself from his own searches.

Conclusion

Summarising the consideration of the experimental branch of Alexey Krasheninnikov's work, we can highlight the main features of his compositional approach. The works of the St. Petersburg author quite organically combine the random and the determined. Aleatory procedures concern both the creative process and performative freedom. However, Krasheninnikov always uses them in "dosed amounts." He permits "chance" only at the stage of pre-compositional work (typically for the generation of sound material, which is then organised with rational understanding), while at the level of musical text, he prefers to use the techniques of limited aleatoricism. The latter, despite the sometimes-significant degree of performance freedom (for example, in *Self-Portrait*), leaves the composer's ideas about the type of sound stable due to the "programmed" nature of harmonic complexes, dynamics and articulation.

Krasheninnikov freely uses a wide range of different compositional techniques (tonality, modality, sonorism, aleatoricism, seriality, cryptophony), individually refracting and combining them with each other, and readily turns to technical devices (for example, a loop machine, sound amplifiers). At the same time, the experiment is nothing but the end in itself for him, since aimed not so much at expanding the boundaries of expressiveness (which is incidentally also important for him), as rather serving the adequate realisation of artistic ideas.

The compositional structure of Krasheninnikov's works is oriented towards an "individual project" (Yuri Kholopov's term) determined by the author's intention. According to the classification of Anna Amrakhova, who examines compositional models in the optics of cognitive science, [9] it can be argued that the St. Petersburg author is inclined to image schemes in his work; however, traces of classical form creation can be found in the architectonics of some of his pieces.

The predisposition to image schemes can be explained by the personality traits of Krasheninnikov as a performer, composer, writer and artist. The specificity of the composer's approach determines the dialogue with other forms of art, attempts at their intersemiotic translation and the expansion of the medial possibilities of musical art. Instrumental theatre, electroacoustic instruments, and expanded performance techniques become integral components of Krasheninnikov's artistic expression, revealing the synthetic and synesthetic nature of his musical thinking.

Thus, the poetics of experiment in the composer's work is determined by the paradoxical balance between the random pulse of the creative process and the determinism of the structure, between intellectual play and simplicity of thought, between a "serious" statement and a "jokingly ironic" gesture, between the musical and extra-musical principles. Krasheninnikov constantly asks himself the question: "What if...?" — and every time he finds an aesthetically convincing answer.

References

1. Okuneva E.G., Semko D.S. The creative worlds of Alexey Krasheninnikov. *Opera musicologica*. 2026, no. 1, pp. 126–153 (In Russ.) https://doi.org/10.26156/operamus.2026.18.1.006

2. Korobova A.G. The destiny of the phenomenon and the concept of "genre" in the musical culture of the contemporary times. *Problemy muzykal'noi nauki / Music Scholarship.* 2013, no. 1, pp. 233–237 (In Russ.)

3. Chupova A.G. Time, tradition, author: Artistic concepts 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

4. Petrov V.O. *Instrumental theatre of the twentieth century: History and theory of the genre: Thesis of Diss. Dr.Sci. (Arts)*. Saratov, 2014. 48 p. (In Russ.)

5. Tsaregradskaya T.V. Simon Steen-Andersen — a composer of the postmodernist era. *Russian Musicology*. 2024, no. 4, pp. 69–76. https://doi.org/10.56620/RM.2024.4.069-076

6. Molchanov A.S. Mono-element compositions in the musical art of the twentieth century. In: *Music science in the context of culture. Musicology and the challenges of the information age: Materials of the International scientific conference on October 27–30, 2020*. Moscow: Gnesin Russian Academy of Music Publ., 2020, pp. 330–338. (In Russ.)

7. Kyuregyan T.S. Musical forms. In: *Theory of modern composition: a textbook*. Moscow: Muzyka Publ., 2005, pp. 266–312 (In Russ.).

8. Krasheninnikov A.A. *Waltz for Saint Germain*. St. Petersburg: Publisher Sadilov A.V., 2023. 152 p. (In Russ.)

9. Amrakhova A.A. Essay on the classification of individual projects in modern composition. *Zhurnal Obshchestva teorii muzyki / Journal of the Music Theory Society*. 2022, no. 3, pp. 14–25. (In Russ.) https://doi.org/10.26176/otmroo.2022.39.3.002

Information about the authors:

Ekaterina G. Okuneva — Dr.Sci. (Arts), Professor at the Department of Music Theory and Composition, Petrozavodsk State Glazunov Conservatoire, Petrozavodsk, Russian Federation.

Darya S. Semko — Student at the Department of Music Theory and Composition, Petrozavodsk State Glazunov Conservatoire, Petrozavodsk, Russian Federation.

Информация об авторах:

Е.Г. Окунева — доктор искусствоведения, профессор кафедры теории музыки и композиции, Петрозаводская государственная консерватория им. А.К. Глазунова, г. Петрозаводск, Российская Федерация.

Д.С. Семко — студентка кафедры теории музыки и композиции, Петрозаводская государственная консерватория им. А.К. Глазунова, г. Петрозаводск, Российская Федерация.

Received / Поступила в редакцию: 18.03.2026
Revised / Одобрена после рецензирования: 27.04.2026
Accepted / Принята к публикации: 29.04.2026