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Mono-Element Compositions in the Musical Art of the 20th Century*

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the study of two types of mono-element compositions in 20th century music: those based on a single pitch and on a single chord. The author of the article ties their significance with the achievements of avant-garde music, the search for new “sound ways,” and the emancipation of particular means of the musical language. The article focuses on the works of Siberian composers Askold Murov and Sergei Tosin, who created original sound conceptions based on single pitches and single chords. The article notes the evolution of one-pitch compositions in academic music, from the idea of demonstration of various capabilities of sound to its symbolic interpretation (Alban Berg, Ivan Wyschnegradsky, and Giacinto Scelsi). It is emphasized that in Askold Murov’s composition *Monophony Re* the idea of unisonance expands towards creating the setting of historical and stylistic dialogue. The development of chordal mono-element structures can be traced from the late period of Alexander Scriabin and the music of Nicolai Roslavets and continues in musical works by Alfred Schnittke and Sergei Tosin. The analysis of Tosin’s composition highlights the use of textural-timbral, rhythmic, dynamic, and electroacoustic means, the introduction of “open” material by pianists, which demonstrates the tendency to multivariate functioning of musical works. It is emphasized that Siberian composers Askold Murov and Sergei Tosin, as the result of their interest in new techniques, have made a perceptible contribution to the dissemination of sound ideas pertaining to the avant-garde trend in Russian culture and were able to demonstrate the immense micro-world of sound.

Keywords: compositions based on one pitch, variations on one chord, the musical avant-garde, sonoristics, Siberian composers

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Современное музыкальное искусство

Научная статья

Моноэлементные композиции в музыкальном искусстве XX века

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Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются два вида моноэлементных композиций в музыке XX века: на один звук и один аккорд. Их развитие связывается с достижениями авангардного искусства XX века, поиском новых «звуковых путей», эмансипацией отдельных средств музыкального языка. Особое место уделяется произведениям сибирских композиторов Аскольда Мурова и Сергея Тосина, создавших оригинальные звуковые концепции в общем тренде музыкального авангарда. В статье прослеживается эволюция однозвуковых композиций в академической музыке XX века от идеи показа различных возможностей звука до символической его трактовки (Альбан Берг, Иван Вышнеградский, Джачинто Шельси и др.). Отмечается, что в сочинении Аскольда Мурова «Монофония *Re*» идея однозвучия направлена в сторону создания ситуации историко-стилевого диалога. Развитие аккордовых моноэлементных структур обнаруживается от позднего творчества Александра Скрябина и Николая Рославца к сочинениям Альфреда Шнитке и Сергея Тосина. В анализе сочинения Тосина отмечается применение фактурно-тембровых, ритмических, динамических, электроакустических средств, привлечение «открытого» материала пианистами, что демонстрирует тенденцию к многовариантности бытования опуса. Подчеркивается, что сибирские композиторы Аскольд Муров и Сергей Тосин своим интересом к новым техникам внесли заметный вклад в распространение звуковых идей авангарда в российской культуре, сумели показать огромный микромир звуков.

Ключевые слова: композиции на один звук, вариации на один аккорд, музыкальный авангард, сонористика, сибирские композиторы

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The problem of organization of a musical composition is one of the most relevant issues in contemporary scholarship. This pertains especially to 20th century avant-garde art and the post-avant-garde styles presented by various techniques of writing and cross-entity connections of music both in the plane of its presentation and from the side of the immanent principles of construction. Certain aspects of this problem range have been outlined in the works devoted to the music of separate composers. Thus, for example, Andreas Wehrmeyer in his article about Ivan Wyschnegradsky¹ demonstrates the chief peculiarities of the composer's musical thinking. He substantiates the appearance of quarter-tone pieces at the turn of the 1920s by the emergence within the system of semantic preferences of the idea of the pitch continuum as a universal principle which played the role of a starting point towards the further division of the 12 steps of the chromatic scale into micro-intervals. Thomas DeLio, when analyzing Giacinto Scelsi's works for violin from the position of the Spectralist approach, raises even more broadly the issue of the nature of the musical sound and its compositional resources, and emphasizes the elaborate character of the acoustic sound of each separately played note.² Benjamin Levy in his works on György Ligeti's music from the 1950s and

1960s, among other moments, touches upon the important aspect of pitch organization in musical compositions, formulating the crucial question, most likely, just as topical for any one of Ligeti's contemporaries: "What can I do with a single note?"³

In the scholarly literature of the last five years we can also observe the tendency towards elaboration of separate qualities of the sound of the musical pitch from the position of its expressive peculiarities of its timbral characteristic features. Natalie Herold undertakes the attempt of a complex comprehension of the category of timbre, examining methods of timbral analysis with the consideration of the assemblage of the musical texts to which they are applied and, touching upon electroacoustic compositions, Spectral music and the theoretical questions of study of timbre in the 20th century,⁴ among other things. For Riccardo D. Wanke of primary importance is the ecstatic-materialistic perspective of sound as a particular material mass unfolding in time. He also substantiates the position of perception of this quality of sound by the listener in academic, electronic and experimental music.⁵ The interpretational aspects of contemporary musical composition become determinative for Kira Maidenberg-Todorova. [1] The author emphasizes, among other things, the significance of such techniques as the aleatory

¹ Wehrmeyer A. Kontinuum, zvuk i dvenadtsatizvuchie [The Continuum, Sound and the Twelve-Note Pitch Spectrum]. *Music Academy*. 1992. No. 2, pp. 156–159.

² DeLio T. Composing a Sound: Giacinto Scelsi's *L'Âme Ailée / L'Âme Ouverte* for Violin Solo. *College Music Symposium*. 2017. Vol. 57. DOI: 10.18177/sym.2017.57.sr.11365

³ Levy B. *Metamorphosis in Music: The Compositions of György Ligeti in the 1950s and 1960s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. 291 p.

⁴ Herold N. Le timbre face à l'hétérogénéité musicale: conceptualisation, enjeux, pertinence. *Entre théorie et analyse musicale: corpus et méthodes*. Dir. Marie-Noëlle Masson. Delatour: Sampzon, 2020, pp. 189–211.

⁵ Wanke R. D. *Sound in the Ecstatic-Materialist Perspective on Experimental Music*. London: Routledge, 2021. 176 p. DOI: 10.4324/9781003132387

and the sonoristic trends, which “remain at the foreground of compositional innovations.” [Ibid., p. 122] Another angle of this work is expressed by the problem of interpretation of “the open text” in contemporary composition examined in the context of the processes of emancipation of the authorial text and endowing the performer with a greater amount of freedom in the manifestation of his or her own individual element. [Ibid., pp. 127–134]

The present-day setting is supplemented by research activities carried out by Russian scholars. The initial starting point here we can determine to be the collective monograph *Teoriya sovremennoi kompozitsii* [*The Theory of Contemporary Composition*],⁶ which provides generalization of a broad complex of questions in the organization and understanding of music created since the second half of the 20th century, including the forms of existence of sound and the functions of sound material, their interpretation in various compositional techniques, as well as the aesthetical tendencies of the music of that time period. During the present-day stage, the indicated aspects are elaborated on in new publications, which include such materials of the Russian journal published by the Russian Society for Music Theory as *Muzyka XXI veka: pervye itogi* [*Music of the 21st Century: First Results*], [2] in which a group of scholars discusses the questions of postmodernism, the relevance of avant-garde art, the comprehension of musical space and time, as well as the peculiarities of form generation; the journal *Muzyka epokhi*

postpostmodernizma [*Music at the Period of Post-Postmodernism*] [3] raises questions of musical material, the role and the fate of the composer in the contemporary world, the artistic leaders and the role of personality in the present world. Various aspects of contemporary compositional techniques and compositional personalia are also presented in separate research works by Levon Akopyan, [4] Tatiana Tsaregradskaya,⁷ [5] Marina Pereverzeva,⁸ Ekaterina Okuneva and Natalia Maltseva, [6] and other scholars.

This presented overview, on the one hand, demonstrates the tendency for generalizing the comprehension of a broad range of issues related to contemporary music, and on the other hand, shows the possibility of accentuating separate qualities and structural peculiarities of musical composition connected with the nature of musical sound, the emancipation of its acoustical features and the aspiration towards unique paradoxical forms of utterance. In this context, of special interest are the mono-element compositions in the 20th century art of music, where the role of the leading component of form (or a segment of it) is played by only one element, which becomes one of the chief organizing forces of the entire sound space.

The variants of construction of a musical composition or of a segment of it on the basis of domination of a singular parameter raise questions about the means of organization of an integral structure, variants of the interpretation and the semantic profuseness of one element. The insufficient amount of

⁶ *Teoriya sovremennoi kompozitsii* [*The Theory of Contemporary Composition*]. V. S. Tsenova executive editor. Moscow: Muzyka, 2005. 624 p.

⁷ Tsaregradskaya T. V. *Muzykal'nyi zhest v prostranstve sovremennoi kompozitsii* [*Musical Gesture within the Space of Contemporary Composition*]. Moscow: Kompozitor, 2018. 364 p.

⁸ Pereverzeva M. V. *Kompozitory n'yu-iorkskoi shkoly, ili Eksperimental'noe napravlenie v muzyke SShA XX veka* [*The Composers of the New York School, or the Experimental Direction in the Music of the USA in the 20th Century*]. Moscow: RGSU Publishing House, 2020. 226 p.

initial informational content of such musical compositions also raises the question of the role and the meaning of repetition in the forms of this type, since it presupposes in advance its abundance and, consequently, the ground for the compensating function and the artistic meaning.

When this problem range is disclosed, it turns out to be that of great methodological importance are the works of Western researchers especially those devoted to repetition as the central object of study in the context of various musical-theoretical and practical approaches. We shall name among them the monograph of Adam Ockelford,⁹ which provides a substantiation of the theory of cognitive modeling of the musical structure (labeled as zygonic) and in which repetition (with consideration of the principles of structuralism and cognitive linguistics) is determined as the key component in the processes of cognitive recognition of musical connections and relationships arising between the discreet features of musical texture. Among the more recent research works, we must highlight the work of Elisabeth H. Margulis,¹⁰ which is written at the junction of psychology and musicology, and, with repetition forming a central element of discourse, interpretation is given to various sides of human behavior, both in the context of the art of music and beyond its confines (performance at a concert, practicing a musical composition at a rehearsal, children's play, ritual, mass forms of music making, the effect of self-arbitrarily repeating music which it becomes difficult to rid oneself of, etc.). All of them make use of the experience of repetition in various degrees

and help disclose the various psychological aspects connected with the perception and comprehension of repetition in music.

The present work provides a concise historical overview of the development of mono-element compositions in the art of the first and the second waves of the avant-garde direction in music, so as to pass onto the evaluation of the qualitative characteristic features, the capacity of resource and the expressive significance of the present structures, accentuating the works of professional composers from Siberia little known to the broad circle of researchers in the West.

The article demonstrates the two most illustrative varieties of mono-element structures: compositions based on one pitch and on one chord. The first of them attract, first of all, by their paradoxical quality, since the crucial parameter of musical organization — namely, pitch — is compressed here to one tone, while the latter present as an expansion of the possibilities of mono-element composition, when the role of the main attribute of a musical work is played by an integral harmonic structure — a chord.

The emergence of mono-element structures in music is connected with the search for new “sound ways” which has led to the emancipation of certain particular means of musical language. The first discernible demonstrations of musical compositions of this type can be found in the 1920s. They appear in the atonal expressive and constructive ideas of the composers of the Second Viennese School (Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern),

⁹ Ockelford A. *Repetition in Music: Theoretical and Metatheoretical Perspectives*. Royal Musical Association monographs; No. 13. London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005. 168 p.

¹⁰ Margulis E. H. *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 210 p.

as well in the quests of the composers pertaining to the first avant-garde movement from the early 20th century (Nikolai Roslavets, Efim Golysheff, Alexander Mosolov, Ivan Wyschnegradsky, etc.), who exerted a considerable amount of attention to new means of pitch organization and the formation of complex pitch structures. The two most completed examples of mono-element compositions can be found by us in the music of Alban Berg (1885–1935) and Ivan Wyschnegradsky (1893–1979).

In the second scene of Act 3 of the opera *Wozzeck* known as the *Invention on the Pitch 'B'* Berg combines the complex expressive musical material with a concisely constructive ostinato basis. In this fragment, the pitch *B* acquires the status of a peculiar leit-tone of a “fatal pedal” (according to Mikhail Tarakanov), the main significance of which consists in its constant presence in the context of sound and pitch and its intensification towards the end of the scene. Its insistent repetition outlines prominently the intonational development and the motion of events in the drama. At the same time, the constant return to one and the same pitch does not bring in any limitations regarding incorporation of any other pitches, sounds or noises, whereas the suggested constructive idea is merely a component of the overall sound context saturated with events. In another composition — *Seven Variations on the Pitch 'C'* — Wyschnegradsky presents the idea of varying, albeit, realized in the special context of microtonal space which affects the quality of the initially asserted materials and broadens its boundaries from within. The pitch center serves rather as a certain sphere of attraction, the boundaries of which gradually become undermined,

enrichening the palette of sound in the context of the quarter-tone piano. “*C* is not static, but by itself dynamic and constantly changeable. On the one hand, *C* does not cease from sounding, but, on the other hand, it creates something different — a tritone. The concept of the nonidentical within the identical is extended here and turn into a unity of opposites. Thus, the distinctly separate pitch is recognized as a metaphor of the emanating and reintegrated One.”¹¹ In this manner, despite the differing artistic goals, we observe the obvious similarity in the interpretation of composition based on a single pitch in the works of Berg and Wyschnegradsky.

Elaboration of chordal mono-element structures during this period of time stems from the late works of Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915), who relied on the system of the double-mode in the guise of varying identical altered dominant chords at the interval of a tritone. An important position in this set of chordal constructions was assumed by the dominant ninth chord with the interval of the fifth decoupled, spread into a whole-tone pitch set, which made it possible to achieve a mutual integration between the horizontal and the vertical elements. Nicolai Roslavets (1881–1944) can be considered as the direct continuer of this tendency, since in his musical compositions of the 1910s (such as, for instance, the *Three Compositions for Piano* from 1914) elaborated the technique of the “synthetic chord” — a sound complex on the basis of which an entire musical composition is created with the consideration of the chain of transpositions of the initial material. Genetically, his system is close to dodecaphony, however “in contrast to the technique of serial rows, here the order of

¹¹ Wehrmeyer A. Op. cit. P. 159.

the appearance of the pitches is not fixated – the return of the harmonic complex is comprehended as the compositional principle.”¹² The synthetic chord presented in its original vertical position frequently appears as the central element of the system. Essentially being a stable element, it appears in the pivotal moments of a musical composition and at the end of the form. However, this technique may still be examined only as a background for future chordal mono-element compositions, since in Roslavets’ music it did not achieve a state of unification in the sense that the composer chose to construct most of his compositions on the interaction of several such chordal complexes.

Thereby, in the compositions pertaining to the first wave of the avant-garde direction in music the chief principles of work with the sound material of this type were determined. Nonetheless, the maximal concentration of the overall attention towards the mono-element forms occurred already during the time of the postwar avant-garde trend (the 1950s and the 1960s). “The innovation of the indicated period was the sonoristic interpretation of sound in a nonfunctional context representing the timbral and color-based traits of the musical material and predestining the paths of its possible transformations.”¹³ In this connection, the musical compositions of Krzysztof Penderecki, Gyorgy Ligeti, Giacinto Scelsi,

Alfred Schnittke, Sergei Slonimsky, Askold Murov, and similar composer, are well-known, and one of the main ideas in them is realized in the demonstration of various textural-timbral forms of a single sound.

This idea is realized on a much larger scale in the *Quattro Pezzi per Orchestra* (*Four Pieces for Orchestra*, each one based on a single pitch) by Italian composer Giacinto Scelsi (1905–1988). Thomas DeLio writes about them that “in each of these pieces he [i.e. the composer] places one pitch under a microscope, disclosing its bustling inner life, making all the oscillating overtones, the bellowing of an attack and the deviations of pitches heard...”¹⁴ Levon Hakobian (Akopyan) emphasizes the large scale of the design, discovering in it a comparison with the conceptions of the radical sound artists: the Austrian Friedrich Cerha and the American La Monte Young.¹⁵ However, the uniqueness of Scelsi’s approach consisted in the fact that, while making use of timbral means and minimizing the parameter of pitch, he was able to compose a cycle of several contrasting movements commensurable by the level of its elaboration and dramaturgy to an entire symphony. The idea proposed by the Italian composer turned out to be quite progressive and forestalled to a certain degree the experiments of the American minimalists and the French Spectralists (Terry Riley, Gerard Grisey, Tristan Murail).

We shall focus a greater amount of

¹² Vysotskaya M. S., Grigoryeva G. V. *Muzyka XX veka: ot avangarda k postmodernu: uchebnoe posobie* [20th Century Music: from the Avant-garde to the Postmodern: Textbook]. Moscow: Moscow Conservatory, 2014. P. 68.

¹³ Molchanov A. S. Fenomen odnozvukovykh kompozitsii v muzyke XX veka [The Phenomenon of Compositions Based on One Pitch in 20th Century Music]. *South-Russian Musical Anthology*. 2016. No. 4 (25). P. 36.

¹⁴ DeLio T. Ibid.

¹⁵ Hakobian (Akopyan) L. O. Dzhachinto Shel'si [Giacinto Scelsi]. *Iskusstvo muzyki. Teoriya i istoriya* [The Art of Music. Theory and History]. 2011. No. 1–2. P. 169.

attention towards the works of Siberian composer Askold Murov (1928–1996), who is, in all probability, not very well-known to a broad circle of researchers. In 1967 Murov wrote his Third Symphony, which also possesses a second genre-related title – Concerto in the Form of Eight Inventions. The seventh movement of this symphony — *Monophony Re* — presents a mono-element composition based on a single pitch. Unlike his Western colleagues, Murov does not derive his conception solely from the physical characteristic features of sound, but aspires to compensate the initial single-componentness with other expressive means, to enrich the musical structure with a search for genre-related prototypes.

In the first section of the *Monophony* the pitch *D* (indicated by the syllable “Re” in the title of the work) is equivalently reflected in different octaves, appears in the sound elucidation of rare timbres (the marimba, the vibraphone, the *D* carillon) and is surrounded by percussive-noise effects. The spectrum of the initial *D* expands continuously. However, at the same time, the principle of the unity of elements, likewise, does not lose its signification, which is fortified by the pitch-related repetition of the sounds pertaining to the pitch-class *D*. More radical changes occur in the second section, where the customary perspective of perception of sound changes abruptly. An

unusual contrast appears, a rhythmic noise-generated element is brought in, which displaces the hitherto predominating pitch *D* for a certain period of time. The genre-related model of a military march is organized in the sound with the typified assortment of attributes: the repeated rhythmic figure in the snare drum and its varied reflection on the pitch *D* in the piccolo and the trumpet (f. 17–18, Example No. 1).

The dynamicity of motion in the present fragment is insured by the swiftness of the changes of the repeating components, the introduction of discreetness into the march tempo and rhythm. A historical-stylistic

Example No. 1

Askold Murov. *Monophony Re*. March Episode

The musical score for Example No. 1, titled "Tempo di Marcia", is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 17 and 18, and the second system covers measures 18 and 19. The instrumentation includes Piccolo, Trumpet in B, Tamburo, T-tom, Triangle, C-ne, Piano, and Violins (I-4). The score features various dynamic markings such as *p*, *f*, *pp*, and *ppp*, as well as performance instructions like "con corde", "con Ped.", "sempre p", "sub", and "articolato". The Piccolo part shows a rhythmic pattern of repeated notes, while the Tamburo and T-tom parts provide a steady march rhythm. The Piano part features a complex accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The Violins (I-4) part in the second system shows a rhythmic pattern of repeated notes.

contingence of the military march with the contemporary timbral-sonoristic context of sound appears in the artistic dimension. As a result, a bright expressive effect appears — the interaction between the historical and the contemporary dimensions. This is also characteristic for all the symphony's movements, where a turn towards well-known models of genres of previous epochs and their organic interpretation in the contemporary sound context occurs regularly. This is stated eloquently by the titles of some of the movements (*Wind Hexaphony*, *Quarter-tone Chorale*, *Minuet*, and *From the Russian Chants*). Monophony *Re* is only one boundary of that stylistic dialogue semantically replete with contrasting images. It resembles a link with the later compositions of this type where the processes of conceptualization of musical creativity are activated. It is a regular occurrence that the purely experimental context of applying one-pitch inventions is gradually overcome.

In the chamber works of Alexander Knaiifel (b. 1943) and Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931) from the 1980s, single-pitch composition appears already as a part of a semantically more extensional sound context that comprises an important aspect of artistic utterance. In the first interlude from Knaiifel's stanza-dedication *Vera* single-pitch writing becomes connected with the idea of transitivity between the changing planes of human consciousness, being framed with a chorale, which personifies the universal, inclusive element, and the monologues, which disclose the sphere of the personal. In Gubaidulina's *Second String Quartet*

through various variants of a single sound the idea of the correlation between two worlds is realized: the heavenly "world of essences" and the earthly "world of passions." The meaning of these metamorphoses with sound is commented by the composer herself: "I was especially fascinated by the idea of the transition of an ordinary, trivial sound into a harmonic... [where] the main tone turns into an overtone by means of another type of touch. The metaphor of this transition is very transparent and attractive: sound may be expressive in an earthly fashion, 'all too human.' But it suffices only to touch lightly the same spot on the string, to change the angle only slightly, and we pass from earth onto heaven."¹⁶

Thereby, it becomes apparent that the compositional idea of writing on the basis of a single pitch provided with interesting diversified figurative-semantic variants of realization. Most of them were permeated with the pathos of construction, the aspiration to disclose new, previously unexplored possibilities, to expand the boundaries of artistic creativity. Naturally, this could not do otherwise than lead to the projection of the idea of mono-element writing on other sound structures, in particular, the chord.

Undoubtedly, the chord, in comparison with a single pitch, presents a much more abundant and developed structure, possessed with a perceptible inner capaciousness of resources depending directly of the pitch content and its displacement. It is apparent, that there is much less level of restriction here and more variants of presenting one and the same concordance of pitches in various ways. It is possibly not by chance

¹⁶ Kholopova V. N. *Interv'yu Entso Restan'o — Sofiya Gubaidulina [Enzo Restagno's Interview — Sofia Gubaidulina]*. In: *Sofiya Gubaidulina: monografiya [Sofia Gubaidulina: Monograph]*. Moscow: Kompozitor, 1996, pp. 37–38.

that the variation form becomes the main form of presentation of the present structure. Obviously, the overall variation tendency in the work with chordal structures has been observed prior (in particular, in those examples that were discussed earlier here), but in the second half of the 20th century it received a very legitimate form-generating signification. For example, the *Variations on one Chord* by Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998) is well-known, and in it the initial pitch complex appears as a twelve-tone structure scattered throughout different registers, which, nonetheless, never sounds anywhere together, but falls apart into a number of sub-chordal sets and textural segments, which form the variations. Nonetheless, there is still a form of restriction present, and it consists in the fact that each separate pitch is applied only in the octave in which it was introduced initially. At the same time, the “predetermined abstract-pointillistic premise is overcome by Schnittke, by bringing a genre-related and stylistic associativity into the chosen material.”¹⁷ As a result, a thoroughly original composition is created, saturated with contrasts, various genre-related semantic statements that effectively make use of the initial pitch structure presented by the composer. But its very looseness in the domain of pitch invites to such a broad interpretation to the fullest degree.

Nonetheless, how should we fare in the other case, when the makeup of the chord is discernibly simpler and does not presume such an initial multiplicity? Let us turn to the

music of the other Siberian composer Sergei Tosin (b. 1953), who wrote the *Variations-Interludes on a D Major Triad* for piano (1993). The composition presents a set of relatively completed pieces (Interludes), which may be interchanged with works by any other composers. At the same time, the *D major* triad itself is interpreted by the composer rather strictly, it is taken solely in close position in various octaves and registers, being interspersed with pauses and various rhythmical groups (Example No. 2).

Example No. 2 Sergei Tosin. *Variations-Interludes on a D major Triad*. Fragments of Interludes No. 1, 2, 4

Interlude No. 1

Interlude No. 2

Interlude No. 4¹⁸

¹⁷ Kholopova V. N., Chigareva E. I. *Alfred Shnitke: ocherk zhizni i tvorchestva* [Alfred Schnittke: a Sketch of His Life and Creativity]. Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1990. P. 29.

¹⁸ In the notes of Interlude No. 4 there is an indication: “The pianist, while in a standing position, presses a triad on the keyboard with his left hand, holding onto it, while sweeping through the strings of the piano with a plectrum with his right hand, reproducing the indicated rhythm.”

Interlude No. 4 introduces the additional technique of variation of timbre — playing with a plectrum on the piano strings with a chord held by the fingers in one of the registers. In *Interlude No. 5* and the Coda involves another original innovation, — attaching means of electronic amplification and sound processing to the piano, which provides for the emergence of the effect of an echo with various levels of delay and transfer of the sound in a panorama. The second dimension of the composition is passed on entirely to the interpretation of the performer, thereby virtually elevating the latter to the rank of a coauthor. Lada Pylneva asserts: “Sergei Tosin’s scores demand a much greater amount of fantasy and creative approach of the performer, since the composer insists on heuristics as its basis.”¹⁹

At the present day two performances of this composition are known, both by pianists from Novosibirsk — Elena Popovskaya and Ekaterina Pedvechnova. It must be noted that each one of them has realized her own co-authorial approach to Tosin’s idea absolutely differently. But these approaches illustrate in the best possible ways the most logical variants of interpretation in the choice of the inclusion of “other composers” music in Tosin’s variations. Popovskaya went along the path of stylistic unity, having selected a number of pieces of baroque and early classical music in the keys of *D major* (or *minor*) from works by J. S. Bach, Handel, Henry Purcell and Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. Pedvechnova’s approach, on the

other hand, accentuates stylistic contrast with the involvement of classical (Haydn) and contemporary music (Shostakovich, Stockhausen, Mozart Camargo Guarnieri). In these conditions, the opposition of the major triad is perceived as a certain stable perfection incontestable by the introduced contrasts.

Ultimately, the composer solves the problem of presenting the simple chord, aspiring to avoid satiation of pitch upon its repetition by textural-timbral, rhythmical, dynamic and electroacoustic means. Obviously, the resource of one triad as a vertically sounding chord turns out to be insufficient in itself. So the “open” material suggested by the pianists is also brought in. But, at the same time, the dependence on the performer’s artistic thinking and his or her school remains in the composition, as well. It is not by chance that Tosin himself writes that “...for a traditionalist pianist the ideas proposed in this composition are too unfamiliar.”²⁰ And he remains faithful to his course, in which one of the chief attitudes is “the aspiration towards the poly-variance of existence of the musical oeuvres, towards expansion of the level and the extent of changeability of the musical fabric.”²¹

Thereby, the context of examination of single-pitch and single-chord composition shows both the common features of their organization and the various aspects of interpretation and semantic interpenetration in the case of different composers. One of the chief ideas – the demonstration of the possibilities of one pitch (or chord) — is

¹⁹ Pylneva L. L. Sergei Tosin: tvorcheskije podkhody sovremennogo kompozitora [Sergei Tosin: the Creative Approaches of a Contemporary Composer]. *Aktual'nye problemy vysshego muzykal'nogo obrazovaniya* [Actual Problems of High Musical Education]. 2018. No. 1. P. 36.

²⁰ Tosin S. G. *Sem' semerok. Avtocherk* [Seven Groups of Seven. Auto-Essay]. 2nd edition, supplemented. Novosibirsk: AGRO-SIBIR, 2004. P. 35.

²¹ Pylneva L. L. Op. cit. P. 33.

usually realized in the sonoristic plane and vividly demonstrated in the compositions of Penderecki, Ligeti and Scelsi. In the latter's works accentuation is made on the interaction of the static and the dynamic components generated in immanent sound vibrations. The developed and many-faced structure of one chord in Schnittke's work is directed towards overcoming the initial static condition and access to the genre-related associative set. In the example from Berg, the main meaning is concentrated on the drama, as the result of which the constructive form of the invention is concentrated, first of all, on intensification of the tragic aspect of the action. Wyschnegradsky realizes the aspiration towards the development of the possibilities of variation within the framework of the conception of the *One*. Knaifel and Gubaidulina provide a symbolic interpretation of the single-pitch. In the music by Siberian composers Askold Murov and Sergei Tosin the idea of demonstrating the possibilities of one element (respectively, the pitch and the chord) was expanded to the signification and the scale of a historical-stylistic dialogue. In Murov's case, it is characterized by an overall programmatic context of all the symphony's movements and the special genre-related synthesis within them, while in Tosin's work, it apparently is endowed with an open character and is relegated to the disposal of the performer.

The other crucial aspect of mono-element compositions is their sound resource. The most rigorous adherence to one pitch (which is most vividly demonstrated among the composers from the second half of the 20th century) leads to a substantial limitation of informational space, its quick saturation by means of one element at the boundary of overabundance. This requires a significant amount of compensation on the part of the other means of expression (texture, register,

rhythm, dynamics, timbre, tempo), their heightened role in the context of the whole, as well as the use of means of disturbance of the inertia of motion. Composers make active use of this, applying timbral specification of orchestral and ensemble instruments in new combinations (Penderecki, Scelsi, Murov), or they intensify the timbral-registral and dynamic factors in their piano music (Wyschnegradsky, Ligeti, Tosin, Schnittke).

Correspondingly, in the interpretation of the mono-element itself two approaches become distinguished. According to the first of them, the note (or chord) is comprehended as an individual pitch (an integral structure) with an identical equivalent reflection in different octaves (Berg, Ligeti, Knaifel, Tosin). In the second case, the mono-element appears as a multiple spectrum, a mobile microstructure or a pitch dimension, which frequently incorporates changes of intensity of vibrato, microintervals, diverse shadings, sounds and noises with indefinite pitches (Wyschnegradsky, Penderecki, Gubaidulina, Scelsi). It is also possible to note the changeability of the point of view of one pitch within the form of the *Monophony* at Murov — from the concise presentation of the prescribed pitch *D* to the multiple spectrum of the mobile sphere enriched by sounds and noises that are undifferentiated in pitch.

At the same time, the answer to the question of how to overcome the inertia of motion is found according to the principle of changeability for the *n*-th time. For example, this may be an abrupt cessation of sound of one of the elements (Penderecki), bringing in unusual accents and rhythmic progressions (Scelsi), or adding a single new pitch at the end of the form (Ligeti). In the music by the two aforementioned Siberian composers we must note the original device of bringing in the rhythmic march-like motive in the snare-drum in the middle of Murov's composition, and

the combining by the conjunction of pauses of various durations and the electroacoustic development of the signal in Tosin's piece.

The problem of repetition requires specific solutions in musical works of this type. Virtually in all the compositions we observe the tendency towards enlargement and integration of isolated elements into more extended structural formations (motives or phrases). In the orchestral compositions repetitiveness, obviously, becomes enriched by the timbral element and the possibilities of the textural-registral organization of sound, as well as its special directedness of sound. This naturally predetermines the changeable configuration of musical space (from the pointillistically sparse to the homogenous and the extremely saturated). It is particularly repetition that serves as the indispensable prerequisite for the release of energetic potentials of the musical sound, and henceforward — “the comprehension of the dynamic perspective of the entire musical composition.”²² The psychological, categorizing component of pitch repetitiveness is apparent here, however, it is discernibly enriched by a complex of various means of musical expressivity. At the same time, repetitiveness may overcome the informational threshold numerous times. So it occurs in Tosin's interludes, where it is not the number of repeated chords or the motives

comprised of them which are counted, but the real time indicated by the composer on several of the musical lines for the sake of forming a single wave of accumulation or abatement of sound generated solely as the result of repeating one major triad.

Thereby, all the musical compositions examined above, undoubtedly, pertain to the creative pole of the disclosure of the idea of mono-element, imbued with the spirit of experimentation and inventiveness. While not initially presenting any kind of mass phenomenon, the musical compositions of this type have left a rather vivid trace in the versatile sound palette of the 20th century. They were conducive to the development of a polyvalent comprehension of separate elements of music, their expansion and saturation with symbolic content. Siberian composers Murov and Tosin with their interest in the techniques of avant-garde art have made a perceptible contribution to the dissemination of its sound ideas in Russian culture, aided the enrichment of the overall sound palette of professional Siberian music in the 20th century. As the composers listened attentively to the pitch combinations of isolated tones, this made it possible for them to discover an immense, abundant micro-world of sounds, the interest in which is continuing up to the present day.

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