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Musical Thanatos: The Theme of Death in Vladimir Martynov's and Alexander Bakshi's Music

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Abstract. The article examines the interpretation of death and dying in the music of contemporary Russian composers Vladimir Martynov and Alexander Bakshi. The relevance of the indicated subject is stipulated by the fact of the musicians turning to the most crucial philosophical issues of humanity and the necessity to trace the forms which the comprehension of the present theme takes on in the history of the art of music. The methods applied in this research include both the general scholarly ones (a systematic approach, comparative analysis, the biographical method), and those pertaining to art studies (narrative-thematic, motivic analysis) and, to a certain degree, the musicological means proper. As a result of the undertaken study, the conclusion is arrived at that the tradition of the philosophical-musical interpretation of the thanatic problem range has found original interpretations in the compositions of Martynov and Bakshi. Martynov's music is based on an authorial philosophical conception of "the end of composers' time" and contains Christian theological and eschatological connotations; it is characterized by an aspiration towards minimalism, simplicity, and an artlessness of artistic expression, static character of development, a rejection of striking effects and a rational simplicity of musical language featuring "repetitive" musical techniques reducing the level of complexity and semantic complicity of musical discourse. The thanatic ideas in Bakshi's music take on increasing importance by means of traditional and innovative approaches: misterial quality and a directedness towards archaic musical elements and subject matter, animism and ritualism, pre-historical patterns and archetypes.

Keywords: Thanatos, Requiem, the theme of death in music, Vladimir Martynov, Alexander Bakshi

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Музыкальный Танатос: тема смерти в музыке Владимира Мартынова и Александра Бакши

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается преломление темы смерти и умирания в творчестве современных российских композиторов Владимира Мартынова и Александра Бакши. Актуальность заявленной темы обусловлена обращением музыкантов к одной из важнейших философских проблем человечества и необходимостью отследить формы, которые принимает осмысление данной темы в истории музыкального искусства. Методы, использованные при проведении исследования, включают как общенаучные (системный подход, компаративный анализ, биографический метод), так и искусствоведческие (сюжетно-тематический, мотивный анализ) и, частично, собственно музыковедческие. В результате проведённого исследования сделан вывод о том, что традиция философско-музыкальной интерпретации танатической проблематики нашла оригинальное развитие в творчестве Мартынова и Бакши. Музыка Мартынова опирается на авторскую философскую концепцию «конца времени композиторов», содержит христианско-богословские и эсхатологические коннотации; ей свойственны стремление к минимализму, простоте и безыскусности художественной выразительности, статичность, отказ от ярких эффектов и разумная простота музыкального языка, «репетитивные» музыкальные техники, снижающие степень сложности и смысловой запутанности музыкального дискурса. Танатические идеи в творчестве Бакши актуализируются с помощью традиционных и инновационных подходов: мистериальность и обращение к архаике, анимизму и ритуализму, доисторическим паттернам и архетипам.

Ключевые слова: Танатос, Реквием, тема смерти в музыке, Владимир Мартынов, Александр Бакши

Introduction

The issue of death appears as a crucial topic over the course of the successive millennia of the history of humanity, its culture, religion, philosophy, and science. Back in the times of classical antiquity, Cicero asserted that the preparation for the departure of life comprised the very essence of philosophical knowledge, incidentally, as any other type of knowledge (since it is particularly philosophy that was placed by the ancient Greeks at the basis of all types of knowledge). After all,

dying, the departure beyond the boundaries of the existence familiar to us, constitutes not simply a special stage in the life of a human being, but an absolutely unique one. It is the final phase of life, its end and conclusion, after which comes either Nothing or, in the best case, a completely unfamiliar type of existence. The fear of this uncertainty lies at the core of all the existential disquietudes of the human race.

Although death in itself is an irrevocable fact of any life, most living beings prefer not to think about it, thereby banishing this fundamental existential terror of its inevitability

out of their consciousness — into the sphere of the subconscious, among other things, or, to use Carl Gustav Jung's terminology, the "collective unconscious." Nonetheless, during the course of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, the science of psychology has demonstrated in a sufficiently convincing manner that such an "expulsion" of potentially traumogenic problems into the subconscious does not liberate the psyche, but, on the contrary, burdens it maximally, implanting states of neurosis and pathology into the psychic processes. Stemming from the understanding of this fact, present-day psychology and philosophy follow the strategies of honest admission and comprehension of death. Only in the face of death, as St. Augustine once said, does the human being acquire true birth.

Such an acceptance is characteristic for the concept of "catharsis," popular in contemporary psychology. The Greek word κάθαρσις itself means "cleansing," and psychologists apply it in a meaning quite close to that — as the "cleansing" of the psyche from the impact of traumatizing material driven out into the subconscious. Psychological catharsis presumes the discharge of accumulated tension, a sort of "explosion" liberating the psychic setup from trying pressure of driven-out affective formations and leading towards relaxation.

According to one long-established opinion, the achievement of psychological catharsis may be aided not only by stable psychotherapeutic activities, but also by art. The cathartic potential of the famous Greek tragedies was written about by Aristotle in his work *Poetics*: the audience member "by means of compassion and fear" achieves "cleansing of similar affects." [1, p. 47]

In the 20th century, on the wave of the noticeable "psychologization" of research dealing with art studies and culturology — under the influence of psychoanalysis,

and later, Jungian analytical psychology and the philosophy of existentialism, — the attention to the cathartic potential of works of art acquired an especially impressive scale. Up to the present time, in humanitarian research outside of Russia immense popularity and authority have been maintained by a rather extravagant conception of British sociologist Tony Walter, *The Revival of Death* (which is also the title of his most famous work, published in 1994 simultaneously in the United Kingdom and the United States). [2]

"For millennia," Walter writes, "death has disrupted communities and the language of death has been the communal language of religion. In the modern era, however, the human encounter with death has been split — on the one hand into expert medical discourse and associated bureaucratic procedures, and on the other hand into an intensely personal sense of loss. This chapter describes the historical and contemporary development of this split." [2, p. 11] However, quite paradoxically, it is particularly this "double nature" of the contemporary ("neo-modernist," in Walter's terminology) attitude towards death that presents an important factor for its "revival" — since the contemporary human being in his heart perceives a serious deficit of that support in existential questions that previously he could hope to receive from religion. The necessity of humanization and individualization of the attitudes towards the problem of death on the part of society, of taking into consideration the deep emotional-psychological "load" of this problem comes out to the forefront; "the enormous variety in individual experiences of death and bereavement and demands that people be allowed to die and grieve in their own ways." [3, p. 44]

Particularly the acceptance and realization of death as a final, concluding state of life and, thereby — as one of its most important components, the realization of the finiteness

of one's own being, as religious and philosophical thinkers have asserted for centuries, cause this life to be “completed” (i.e., stemming from the etymology of the present lexeme, fully “accomplished”). Such a comprehension endows life with a natural profundity, which in other conditions is simply inaccessible to our reasoning.

And, undoubtedly, one of the leading positions in the transmission of such a humanistic, “individualized” perception of death, to such a degree oriented on human emotions, is assumed by art. This includes the art of music.

The Theme of Death in the Art of Music

The “manifestation” of the theme of death in musical compositions, of course, does not present any type of novelty characteristic only of the contemporary period. The themes of death and dying, their constant presence in human lives and their inevitability are so “eternally acutely relevant” for every human being and in this connection have such a powerful emotional charge, that, obviously, music, being the most emotionally saturated of all the arts, could hardly avoid endowing them with attention. “The conflict between life and death, their struggle, the transition from one state into the other, these are expressed by various musical means and techniques,” Olga Putecheva notes. “Composers become attracted to critical situations, watershed moments, mutual obliteration, diametrically opposed states indicating the limits of our lives. On the one hand, there is life, full of activity and energy, and on the other hand — the unavoidability of death, the ups and downs, the spiritually uplifting and the mundane, the inspirations, desires, passions, and the law of fate...” [4, p. 199] The art of music around the world is familiar with numerous classical masterpieces directly devoted to these themes; we may briefly enumerate the composers who

created some of them: Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Hector Berlioz, Anton Bruckner, Johannes Brahms, Giuseppe Verdi, Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Modest Mussorgsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Igor Stravinsky, Dmitry Shostakovich, Benjamin Britten, etc. Among them are creators of requiems — this is how the *missa pro defunctis* (“masses for the dead”) were originally called. As Lyalya Kandaurova writes, “subsequently, the word *Requiem* appeared, having been taken from the first line of the conventional text ‘*Requiem aeternam*’ — ‘eternal rest.’” [5, p. 76] It must be considered, however, that most often requiem masses were endowed practically with “applicative” characters, since they served as illustrative material to the relevant canonical church text. Already in the 20th century, the genre of requiem underwent a fundamental reinterpretation, particularly in the plan of its philosophical, worldview, psychological component (for example, Britten’s *War Requiem*). However, in the list provided above there are composers of such musical works that formally do not present requiem masses, nonetheless, the subject matter of death and dying is the essential element for these compositions.

For the music of a whole number of composers, thanatic motives have gone so far as to assume the position of the leading subject matter. Among such figures, one can name, for example, Gustav Mahler, the outstanding “post-Wagnerian” Austrian composer and conductor of the late 19th and early 20th century, the musical legacy of whom at the present time has been undergoing yet another revival, arousing more and more interest among wide audiences. As Andrei Galkin writes, “Mahler, who personified the type of an artist-philosopher, could not have avoided in his music the eternal issue of death. Mahler tirelessly struggled with the task of solving one of the chief sanguinary questions of humanity during the course

of his entire life, turning to the subject of death with an enviable persistence. At various stages of his creative path, a composer finds different answers to it..." [6, p. 21]

Among his most popular works is the song cycles, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, set to poems by German Romantic poets Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano (1906–1908) and *Kindertotenlieder* set to poetry by Friedrich Rückert (1901–1904). The poems included in the latter cycle were created by the poet in memory of his two children who died; the inconsolable grief Rückert felt found an almost visible manifestation in the work of Mahler, all of whose musical output was immensely influenced by Fyodor Dostoyevsky's philosophy and especially his famous saying — "The happiness of all the world is not worth the tear of a tormented child..." [7, p. 163]

In his other cycle, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, the composer included three songs, in which by means of Arnim's and Brentano's disclosed his own perspective of the lot awaiting man upon death and after his expiration: *Urlicht*, *Es singen drei Engel*, and *Das himmlische Leben*. The importance and the "programmatic" character of these songs and the authorial (both the poetic and the musical) messages conveyed in them were reflected for the composer, in particular, in the fact that the former of them later became a constituent movement of the Second Symphony, the second was included in the Third Symphony, and the third — in the Fourth Symphony.

Most likely, the most exemplary in regards to the discussed topic is the first

of the aforementioned songs — "Urlicht." In its very essence, it presents a prayer created for recitation and profound insight on a person's deathbed. According to Lawrence Bernstein, its devotional effect appears from the initial motto, in which a red rose is mentioned (the symbol of the blood of Christ upon his crucifixion), followed by music in the style of a Lutheran chorale. The protagonist of the song expresses in it his pain and his hope for salvation. He embarks upon a path leading to the heavens, albeit, obstructed by an angel — over whom he demonstratively gains the upper hand, heading directly towards God, led by the Primeval Light. This serene movement presumes that immortality may be achieved through traditional Christian eschatology. However, there are important questions remaining here — about the signification of the angel, about the disobedience of the main character, as well as the meaning of the fragment of the anomalously sensual music,¹ accompanying the unification of the protagonist with God. These questions wait for their solution in the finale. [8, p. 44]

In compositions similar to those highlighted by us, as a rule, two foundational and meaning-generating motives sound in "mutual overlapping" — on the one hand, the motive of pain and the grief of dying, and on the other hand, a veritably cathartic motive of conciliation and resignation, possible enlightenment, addressing oneself to the higher forces, to God and the divine. The composers, thereby, see "death not only in a tragic vein, it also appears as a formative element — a boundary, beyond

¹ As for the "anomalously sensuous music accompanying the unification of the protagonist with God," here, in our opinion, Mahler's well-known fascination with Eastern philosophy found its reflection. Its influence is distinctly perceptible in such works of his as *Das Lied von der Erde*, set to the poems of Chan poets of the Tang era. Chinese Chan-Buddhism, as it is known, was formed as a synthesis of the ideas of classical (Indian) Buddhism and the Chinese religion of Taoism, within the framework of which special attention was given to the practices of transformation of physical sensuality and unification with the true Tao. Similar tendencies are also characteristic for other Asiatic religious-philosophical practices, first of all, for Hinduist and Tibetan Buddhist Tantrism.

which there occurs the reunification with the Divine, the deliverance of the vale of life and a dispensation of suffering.” [6, p. 22]

For example, this is how researcher Olga Moskvina describes the interaction of these two fundamental motives in Richard Strauss’ programmatic work — the symphonic poem *Tod und Verklärung* created by him in 1889: “In the poem *Tod und Verklärung* two independent tendencies interact: one of which is the agony of the person in the face of death; the other is the presentiment and a delicate tracing out of the upcoming transfiguration. This is expressed even on the level of the tonality, which presents motion from an initial *C minor* to *C major* in the coda, symbolizing the levitation of the spirit over the material world. These two trends constantly succeed each other, at the same time, the first remains without changes, while the second is presented in a multi-faced manner, since it is formed of different sources...” [9, p. 157]

Thanatic Motives in Vladimir Martynov’s Music

Vladimir Ivanovich Martynov is a contemporary Russian composer, musicologist and representative of such an extravagant direction of philosophy as musical philosophy. In the latter role, he develops the conception of the end of the composers’ time, which directly “intercrosses” with the declared subject of our work. Martynov’s philosophical book of the same title [10] may serve as a reliable key for the interpretation of all of his compositional output. The “composers’ time,” estimated as lasting for many centuries and epochs, has come to its final stage, at least, in the Western world — along with the entire Western culture of that variety established back in the Early Modern Period. At present, in the conditions of the approaching of the decline (“death”) of this culture, “the composers’ time” is gradually being replaced by a totally different era,

in which the role of the composer as an individual personality is almost entirely fading away, instead of which his significance as a “guide” through particular ideas is growing, — not only purely musical ideas, but also philosophical ones.

The present conception presents itself as a sort of expansion of the sphere of the application of Roland Barthes’ famous universal cultural concept of “the death of the author” to the art of music — albeit one that presents such an “extension” within the framework of which, contrary to Barthes’ “original,” extremely great significance is obtained by spiritual-religious connotations. According to the composer’s perceptions, “death” and dying are waiting in a rather close prospect for all human culture, including music; whenever humanity shall finally arrive to a true understanding of its own essence, only stillness and silence will be able to reflect this essence in a worthy manner; while music always and in any case, shall remain too individualized, a personal and subjective phenomenon, for which reason it would not be capable of such a “reflection.” The composer’s destiny and mission in this connection are determined as death, the dissolution in the Integral for the sake of adequate conveyance of meanings generated not by the individual-personal authorial element, but by this very Integrality. At the same time, musical creativity, as a form of self-expression of an ingenious personality, shall find itself irrelevant, becoming simply useless, unsolicited by the auditorium, devoid of any interest for the latter.

It is absolutely obvious that this authorial position is influenced by Eastern philosophy, the fascination with which is traced in such of Martynov’s works as *Asana*, *Hexagram*, and *Ecstatic Dances of Kali-yuga*. This influence, as it seems, must be acknowledged as being no less — or possibly even more — significant than the influence of the postmodernist European ideas about “the death of the author”

which nonetheless, themselves had undergone the impact of Eastern philosophy with its perceptions of the dissolution of the individual in the impersonal (“Atman” dissolving itself in “Brahman”) and anonymity as the highest ideal of the creative personality. And once again, just as in the case of Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde*, the impact of Chan Buddhist ideas and the aesthetics of Chan can be traced especially apparent, the latter being so characteristic for its attention towards stillness, pauses, and silence, symbolizing, according to the Chan Buddhists, Absolute Emptiness that lies at the basis of creation. At the same time, relating to the subject of our article, it must be reminded that the same perceptions of the impersonal “Brahman” or the Absolute Shining Emptiness lie at the basis of the Eastern perspective of the processes of death and dying.

Vladimir Martynov’s entire musical output serves as an example of incorporation of philosophical material into the fabric of music as its ideal foundation and substantiation; in his works, the most imperious philosophical questions of human existence — which, of course, also include the question of death as the pivotal and culminating issue, — in themselves become objects of research with the help, among other things, of musical means, as well.

The “death” of composers as personalized units within the frameworks of the conception of the artist is also inseparable from the perception of their resurrection, but already on a new level, “at a new whorl of the spiral.” And, correspondingly, in a new quality — that of transpersonal “transmitters” of the contents acquired by them from the Integral.

An interesting approach is demonstrated by the composer in his work *Opus Posthumum* (Latin: posthumum — “post-human”). Usually this Latin adjective is related to posthumously published works; the irony lies in the fact that this “opus” was created by Martynov back

in 1993, at the peak of his creative activity. Nonetheless, special significance is acquired by the title in the overall context of his conception of “the end of the composers’ time.”

Such an approach explains the peculiarities of Martynov’s musical aesthetics. Among these peculiarities the following must be mentioned:

- the aspiration towards minimalism, simplicity and an artlessness of artistic expression;
- the static character of development, a rejection of vivid effects or fancifulness of musical writing;
- “repetitive” musical techniques (the utilization of frequent repetitions, which decreases in a natural way the level of complexity and semantic abstruseness of the musical texts).

Martynov has been called the key figure in the circle of contemporary Russian minimalists. As Margarita Katunyan notes, “Martynov’s ‘New Simplicity’ was born under the sign of minimalism — stylistically universal, making it possible to operate with the semantic and lingual categories of the past as with the realities of today, to an equal degree relevant for our days.” [11, p. 148] Hence arises the composer’s viewing of his musical compositions, including the programmatic ones, “outside” of their presumed narrative or thematic content; he rather tends to relate them to the category of fiction. Martynov’s minimalist approach is perceived even in a certain sense as paradoxical, considering that the composer’s musical output is distinctive for its extreme diversity — from his experiments with dodecaphonic music in his early period (when he was strongly involved in avant-garde music, the adherence to the principles of which he later flatly rejected) to numerous examples of the synthesis of orchestral, folkloristic, and rock aesthetics, as well as a broad utilization of the potential of contemporary electronic music.

Minimalism in Martynov’s compositions is not merely a technique: it presents itself as a

musical analogy of spiritual ascetics, which is specifically called for to facilitate the particular “rejection” by composers of their own imperfect personalities with the ambitions intrinsic to the latter (in music reflected by excessive complexity, ornateness and extravagance) and their achievement of a trans-personal level.

As working instruments for such ascetics, Martynov makes use of the repetitive technique, minimalism and silence. The repetitiveness based on constant recurrence of similarly sounding melodic structures is understood by him as creation of forms analogous to repetition of mantras or Jesus’ Prayer in spiritual practices that lead to self-abandonment in the face of the Absolute, to a sort of “death” of the personality and its dissolution in the Integral. “Mortification” is what human personality and its ambitions are subjected to, but during the process of this “mortification,” music is reborn as eternal Truth, Beauty, and Revelation. Finally, most crucial roles are allotted by Martynov to stillness, pause, and silence: they become a sign of the described processes of death and resurrection, presuming a birth of Reality in the “afterlife,” but in this case, not a cultural, but a spiritual one. This goal, — namely, of forming a “new sacred space” — is particularly what Martynov’s main efforts are devoted to, not only in his philosophical works, but also in his compositional activities, such as, for instance, in his *Exercises and Dances of Guido*, which are directed towards the medieval epoch, the time when music played not an entertaining, but, primarily, a religious role.

Among Martynov’s works directly devoted to these processes, the first that must be mentioned, of course, is, once again, his Requiem, written for chamber chorus and strings. It continues and develops the lengthy tradition of musical requiem masses established by the great composers of the past. As Lyalya Kandaurova writes, “the requiem is particularly a Roman Catholic mass for the deceased performed

in Latin: the music for funereal services in the other Christian denominations may be closely connected with the ‘classical’ requiem, but are not identified by this appellation.” [5, p. 76] Martynov, while not being a Catholic, adheres to the canonic approach in his choice of texts — they are written in Latin and include the classical elements of the structure of the requiem, such as the *Introitus*, *Kyrie*, *Dies irae*, *Offertorium*, *Agnus Dei*, and *Lux aeterna*. The composer’s choice of the major tonality for a composition of such a genre as requiem is quite paradoxical; however, it may appear as such only to such people who are not familiar either with Martynov’s philosophy or with its significance for his music. If after our death, the *Lux aeterna* [Eternal Light] is disclosed to us, then sorrow and grief are merely temporary and illusory occurrences — this is what Martynov’s Requiem attempts to convey to the listeners.

Thereby, notwithstanding all the canonicity of the conception of Martynov’s Requiem, in this work the composer sharply departs from the very tradition he is continuing and developing. While previously requiem masses addressed the subject of the sufferings of a dying person before and after his death (“the Last Judgment”), the main theme of Martynov’s Requiem (as, most likely, of many of his other musical compositions, even if in a slightly covert form) is the Christian’s supplication for eternal rest.

His *Stabat Mater*, likewise, describes the same phenomenon. Even though there is a prevalence of the minor mode here, it is necessary to note the overall motion of the music from profound and sincere sorrow of the first few movements to the sacramental address of the female chorus to *Virgo Virginum* [The Virgin of Virgins], to Her glorification and eulogy, moreover, particularly in the context of consolation and peace that She brings to those who believe in Her and Her Divine Son...

Thanatic Motives in Alexander Bakshi's Music

Alexander Moiseyevich Bakshi is a famous Soviet and Russian composer, a Laureate of the State Prize of the Russian Federation in 1994. His musical output, which also includes music for various theatrical productions and television shows, is literally permeated with innovative and even revolutionary tendencies. Thus, Bakshi's artistic creed can be expressed as the perception of a potential "orchestral theater" or a "Theater of Sound," within which the musical imagery is presented by sounds — for instance, those of footsteps, sighs, falling drops, etc. Bakshi himself is the artistic director of a theatrical and research association that was founded by him together with his wife Liudmila Bakshi, called the "International Laboratory of the Theater of Sound."

The innovativeness of the artistic solutions is also characteristic for the manifestation in Bakshi's musical compositions of the thanatic problem range (which by itself, as we have seen, have long since presented itself in classical music as quite a natural and customary phenomenon). We can cite as an obvious example of the composer's profoundly personal, individualized attitude towards the theme of death his "Shakespearean" composition *Hamlet is Dying*. According to Olga Putecheva, "the meaning of it is derived from the succession of musical 'snapshots' of visions appearing just before death, separate emerging pictures of life, the tragedy of the non-acceptance of death, struggle, and defeat. Only when being left by himself solely before the face of death does a human being contemplate the meanings of life, the opposition between Life and Death, he is frightened of the descent into the other world. Hamlet, who poses the eternal question of what lies beyond the boundary of existence, through his personal experience discloses the existential problem

of human powerlessness before the face of death..." [4, p. 200]

It is illustrative that the subject of death in the reception of this composer combines markedly "new" trends with a turn to tradition, not as much to the Christian theological and eschatological type, as in Martynov's case, as to a pagan, folkloristic, and "profound" one. Archaicism, animism, an immersion into prehistorical (or even "ahistorical") patterns and archetypes, mysterial qualities (music as a mystery, similar to mystical, visionary practice) — these are the main distinctive features of thanatic reception in Alexander Bakshi's works.

The "mysterial" character of Bakshi's music is its programmed characterization; it is not by chance that the term "mystery" is used by the composer himself, for example, defining as a "musical mystery" one of his most significant compositions — *Polyphony of the World* (2001), the premiere of which took place at the Third World Theater Olympiad in Moscow. The mystery as "one of the most ancient musical-dramatic genres," [12, p. 84] basing itself on the consistent realization of the dichotomy of Life and Death, counts thousands of years of lengthy history, however, it seems to have been acquiring a new "revival" at the threshold of the third millennium. The choice of the subject matter for the composition is essentially "mysterial" in itself: the ancient cosmogonic myths (in addition to a symphony orchestra, the list of performers even includes a "shaman"), the Ancient Greek legends of the magical musician Orpheus who descended into Hades after Eurydice... Incidentally, the latter of the aforementioned plotlines has always been of special interest for Alexander Bakshi, which is demonstrated, among other cases, by two compositions, written approximately during the same period as the mystery *Polyphony of the World*: namely, *Orpheus and Eurydice* (2001) and *Orpheus* (2001).

“Of the two known chief forms of the mystery (as an ancient pagan Eastern action and as a medieval religious theater), in this rendition the composer bases himself on the oldest sources, accentuating the Eastern peculiarities of the genre,” as Olga Putecheva asserts. “The mystery demonstrates itself as a form of exposure to the internal sacrosanct enigmas of being and concentrates on the ritual of the trajection, i.e., initiation. The motive of the testing by means of the elements (water, fire) and sounds is also present in Bakshi’s mystery...” [12, p. 84]

Correspondingly, Bakshi’s approach towards death expressed in music, just as in the case of Martynov, postulates the importance of the following moment: presenting itself as the phenomenon of the individual life of a concrete human being, death presents not an Absolute End, but the beginning of something absolutely new, which refers rather to the ancient ideas of the eternal wheel and the circle of life, rather than the definiteness of Heaven or Hell.

As for Hell and Purgatory, they may very likely turn out to exist on earth and within earthly life. In any case, particularly such an interpretation of Dostoyevsky predominates in Valery Fokin’s theatrical production, *The Karamazovs and Hell*, which makes use of Bakshi’s music. For the transmission of this “earthly infernality,” the composer turns once again to his favorite artistic means — the “sound-theatrical” approach. As a theater critic of the newspaper *Kommersant-Daily* recorded the event on “hot scents”: “Fokin’s regular coauthor, composer Alexander Bakshi created a delicate and enigmatic sound palette. Mysterious voices resound at times from the mezzanine, at times from the stage, and at other times from somewhere from the lobby. Clatters give way to groans, petty laughs — to church

chanting, whistles — to feverous breathing. Sound interjections merge together into a single rustling compulsion neurosis, and a minute later resound into measured dribble...” [13, p. 7]

Conclusion

Thereby, it may be asserted that in the works of some composers Thanatos demonstrates itself as a thematic dominant idea. This may be observed, in particular, on the example of Vladimir Martynov’s music. Being not only a composer, but also a philosopher, Martynov applies his own philosophical constructions as the conceptual basis of his musical works (namely, the conception of the end of the composers’ time). He postulates the “death” of composers of authorial musical works as ingenious individuals and their “resurrection” as transmitters of the ideas of the transcendent Integrality. For the musical means demonstrating such an approach, Martynov makes use of minimalism, static motion and “repetitive” musical techniques.

The music of Alexander Bakshi is permeated with innovative discoveries, including those applicable for thanatic subject matter. In a paradoxical way, it is also based to a considerable degree on traditional approaches; however, while in the case of Martynov, the turning to tradition is marked by Christian theological and eschatological connotations, Bakshi’s music is directed towards the sphere of archaic-ritualistic mysterial attributes (the musical mystery *Polyphony of the World*, repeated incorporations of the plotline of Orpheus descending into Hades, etc.). In the music of such contemporary Russian composers as Martynov and Bakshi, the century-old tradition of philosophical-musical comprehension of the problem range of death and dying acquires a vivid type of continuation and development.

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