

POLYSTYLISM AND NARRATIVE POTENTIAL
IN THE MUSIC OF ALFRED SCHNITTKE

by

JEAN-BENOÎT TREMBLAY

B.Arts (éducation musicale), Université Laval, 1999

B.Mus (mention en histoire), Université Laval, 1999

M.Mus (musicologie), Université Laval, 2001

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the narrative potential created by polystylism in selected works of Alfred Schnittke. "Polystylism," the combination of many styles in a single work, is Schnittke's answer to a compositional crisis that he experienced as a young Soviet composer. Polystylistic works often present blunt juxtapositions of styles that cannot be explained by purely musical considerations. I argue that listeners, confronted with those stylistic gaps, instinctively attempt to resolve them by the construction of a narrative. Three works, each showing different approaches to polystylism, are examined. The Symphony No. 1, which constitutes a kind of polystylistic manifesto, presents a number of exact quotations of Beethoven, Grieg, Tchaikovsky and Chopin among others. It also makes use of the *Dies Irae* and of various stylistic allusions. The result is a work in which Schnittke, asking how to write a Symphony, eventually kills the genre before resurrecting it. Elaborated from a fragment of a pantomime by Mozart, *Moz-Art* is a reflection on the opposition between the old and the new, between the past and the present. The work builds upon the plurality of styles already present in Mozart's music. For the Concerto Grosso No. 1, Schnittke devised a program, albeit a secret one. The piece is at the center of a complex network of references, some unveiled in the work's sketches, others originating from the film music of the composer. A story involving the Jungian concepts of animus, anima and collective unconscious is developed around musical elements as diverse as the BACH musical motive, a folk tune, a dodecaphonic waltz and a tango. The tango, which periodically reoccurs in Schnittke's work, is the topic of the last chapter. Over the

course of several works, the tango accumulates diverse meanings in Schnittke's music. In the Symphony No. 1, it is an easy solution to a composer's problem; in *Agony*, it is a lure appealing to Rasputin's inner demons; in the Concerto Grosso No. 1, the tango takes part in a stylistic Utopia; in *Die Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, it is the feminine; in *Life with an Idiot*, it is the violence present in everyone.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Whenever possible, the transliteration of Russian names and titles in this thesis complies with the ISO 9:1995 standard. The only exception to that rule pertains to familiar names like Stravinsky, Prokofiev or Shostakovich, for which the traditional English spelling has been preserved. In the bibliography and footnotes, in the case of publications using the Roman alphabet, the spelling of Russian names has been kept as published. The table below summarizes the most commonly used transliteration systems.

	ISO	GOST	ALA	BS		ISO	GOST	ALA	BS
А, а	a				Р, р	r			
Б, б	b				С, с	s			
В, в	v				Т, т	t			
Г, г	g				У, у	u			
Д, д	d				Ф, ф	f			
Е, е	e			e, ye	Х, х	h		kh	kh
Ё, ё	ë			yo	Ц, ц	c		ts̄	ts
Ж, ж	ž		zh	zh	Ч, ч	č		ch	ch
З, з	z				Ш, ш	š		sh	sh
И, и	i				Щ, щ	š̄	šč	shch	shch
Й, й	j		ï		Ъ, ъ	"			
К, к	k				Ы, ы	y			
Л, л	l				Ь, ь	'			
М, м	m				Э, ю	è	è		é [è]
Н, н	n				Ю, ю	û	ju	iû	yu
О, о	o				Я, я	â	ja	iâ	ya
П, п	p								

ISO: International Standards Organization 9:1995, used in this thesis.

GOST: Gosstandart Rossii 1983, used in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd ed.

ALA: American Language Association, used by the Library of Congress.

BS: British Standards 2929, used in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed.

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À mon père

INTRODUCTION

By his death in 1998, Alfred Schnittke had become one of the most performed, commissioned, and recorded living composers. Despite the Soviet oppression, since the late 1970s and the early 1980s his works gradually became known to the West. As the number of performances of his music quickly rose, several newspaper and magazines published articles about him.¹ Commentators alternatively attributed to him a “cult following” or proclaimed him to be Shostakovich’s heir.² This relatively sudden rise in popularity was due to many factors. The “romantic” aura of a politically-persecuted composer who had suffered for so many years under the Soviet Regime had enough appeal in itself, even more so considering that after the fall of the USSR, Westerners—and Russians alike—could only be relieved that “real” music had endured in spite of years of

¹ As an example of the relative anonymity of Schnittke before the 1980s in the West, and especially in the United States, the first article to mention his name in the *New York Times* appeared in 1982, and its first sentence states that the composer is “hardly known outside of his homeland.” Edward Rothstein, “Evening With a Lively Composer From Soviet,” *New York Times* (8 January 1982), C24.

² Too many authors adopt these points of view on Schnittke to be enumerated here. As three examples, among many others, see Anthony Tommasini, “A Schnittke Tribute to Berg Echoing ‘Happy Birthday,’” *The New York Times* (22 May 1999), B14; Will Crutchfield, “An Evening of Chamber Works by Alfred Schnittke,” *The New York Times* (29 May 1988), 48, and Matthias Kriesbergamsterdam, “Schnittke, an Iconoclast, Becomes an Icon,” *The New York Times* (23 May 1999), AR25. Ivan Moody, in what is one of the first introductory articles on Schnittke published by a scholarly periodical, considers Schnittke as the “natural successor” of Shostakovich, “the point of focus [...] in Russian music which has been absent since the death of Shostakovich in 1975.” Ivan Moody, “The Music of Alfred Schnittke,” *Tempo*, 168 (March 1989), 4-11.

official censorship.³ This interest may be explained also by the fact that for Western audiences, the last few decades of Soviet rule have produced a void when only a few works made it to the West. Schnittke's music was conveniently ready to fill this gap. History, like nature, abhors a vacuum.

That Schnittke's works could play such a role does not explain his popularity all by itself. He was more than a simple commodity, and his music truly fascinated scholars, musicians and listeners. What drew attention was his compositional technique known as polystylism, the combination of two or more styles in a work. For most critics, the technique was perceived as a manifestation of postmodernism.⁴ For the general public, the combination of Baroque and Classical idioms in a modern setting made contemporary music accessible, something else than an onslaught of dissonance, oddness, or randomness.⁵ Moreover, the overt references to various styles and all their respective implications created a space for interpretation that even people with little knowledge of

³ For further information on the political situation in the USSR during the 1960s and 1970s, see Margarita Mazo, "The Present and the Unpredictable Past: Music and Musical Life of St. Petersburg and Moscow Since the 1960s," *International Journal of Musicology* 5 (1996) and Peter Schmelz, "Listening, Memory, and the Thaw: Unofficial Music and Society in Soviet Union, 1956-1974," PhD Thesis (University of California, Berkeley, 2002).

⁴ In this thesis, I will not view Schnittke exclusively through the lens of postmodernism. There are elements in his works that concur with notions of postmodernism, such as musical borrowings for instance. There are other elements that are modernist in nature, like the strict use of serial techniques. For more information on the postmodern guise of Soviet music after 1945, see Wolfgang Gratzner, "'Postmoderne' überall? Aktuelle (In-)Fragestellungen im Blick auf sowjetische Musik nach 1945," *Wiederaneignung und Neubestimmung der Fall "Postmoderne" in der Musik*, edited by Otto Kolleritsch (Vienna: Graz, 1993), 63-86. More specifically about Schnittke, see Reinhard Oehlschlagel, "Über und für Alfred Schnittke: Die unabänderliche Qualität seiner ganz anderen Postmoderne," *Wien modern: Ein internationales Festival mit Musik, Film, Theater, Literatur und bildender Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts — 18. Oktober bis 24. November 1991* (Vienna: Wien Modern, 1991), 91-93.

⁵ The alienation of the general public caused by modernism, and its continuation even after its "post-modern demise," is aptly described in Richard Taruskin, "How Talented Composers become Useless," *The New York Times* (10 March 1996), H31.

music history could fill on their own.⁶ That specific space is precisely the subject of this thesis.

In its most basic form, polystylism is characterized by the use of two or more styles in a single composition. Schnittke's music, though, warrants a definition that is more specific: polystylism involves the contrast of two or more styles, which are evoked through techniques of musical borrowing, particularly by either quotation or allusion.⁷ The concept of style in Schnittke's music is very broad, and depends in part on what Zofia Lissa described as "the historical awareness of music," the capacity that listeners have to recognize a particular style.⁸ Accordingly, the definition of style is to be taken in its broadest sense. Schnittke refers to a set of musical elements, techniques and processes shared by the music of an epoch, a country, a genre, or a composer. Under that light, jazz, tango, serialism, Baroque sequences and Classical phrases can all be called styles. Schnittke's polystylism also relies on the contrast between stylistically opposed compositional techniques, such as the tonal and atonal idioms or the contrast between "natural" and "artificial" organization of sounds: the series of natural harmonics versus

⁶ That point of view is shared by Constantin Floros: "Schnittke's language is understood by countless people throughout the world because his music contains a high emotional potential and because it is expressive, suggestive and associative. [...] It is a suggestive musical language, rich in associations, readily understood by many because it contains experiences relevant to us all." Constantin Floros, "Remarks on Alfred Schnittke," *Alfred Schnittke: A Complete Catalogue* (Hamburg: Musikverlag Hans Sikorski, 2000), 5, 7.

⁷ V. A. Howard suggests that an allusion is "quotational" if, and only if, it specifically denotes the original, by appealing to standard conventions of reference. In other words, a quotation involves both replication and reference. V. A. Howard, "On Musical Quotation," *The Monist* 58 (1974), 310. I consider that condition as excessively restrictive.

⁸ Zofia Lissa, "The Historical Awareness of Music and its Role in Present Day Musical Culture," *Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 4 (June, 1973), 17-32. On the semiotic role of style in music, see also, Jan LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Warren: Harmonie Park Press, 1992) and Robert Hatten, "Toward a Semiotic Model of Style in Music: Epistemological and Methodological Bases," Ph.D. Thesis (Indiana University, 1982).

twelve-tone rows.⁹ Finally, references to a specific style can be abstracted so that a unison on C refers to tonality, or that the BACH monogram,¹⁰ rendered as a theme with a tonal harmonization, refers to the Baroque composer.¹¹ As I will later demonstrate, the juxtaposition, the combination or the opposition of those styles creates gaps in the musical flow of a piece, spaces that ask to be filled or explained. In doing so, the listener develops a narrative.

The taxonomy of musical borrowings is admittedly much richer than just quotation and allusion. In this thesis, those two terms act as the endpoints of a spectrum ranging from the exact reproduction of a given material, designated as “quotation,” and the general evocation of a style, or of some of its characteristics, referred to as “allusion.” For example, the exact reproduction of the melodies, harmonies and orchestration of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony in Schnittke’s First Symphony is a direct quotation, whereas the evocation of a waltz rhythm in the same work is a more subtle allusion to the waltz as a genre. Schnittke used similar definitions. For him “quotation” includes a whole series of devices “ranging from the quoting of stereotypical micro-elements of an alien style, to exact reworked

⁹ In the strictest sense, it would probably be incorrect to say that Schnittke “quotes” those styles or that his music “denotes” them; Schnittke rather “evokes” or “exhibits” them. Howard, “On Musical Quotation,” 309.

¹⁰ The BACH monogram describes a motive based on the pitch-class series <B_b, A, C, B₄>. I use the term “monogram” because it is used by Schnittke and Ivashkin among others.

¹¹ Such abstracted elements are what Robert Hatten would describe as “tokens of more general types ... encompassed by a style,” or unique events which dialectically define a style and are defined by it. Robert Hatten, “Grounding Interpretation: A Semiotic Framework for Musical Hermeneutics,” *The American Journal of Semiotics* 13, 1-4 (Fall 1996), 27.

quotations or pseudo-quotations,” while “allusion” encompasses “subtle hints and unfulfilled promises that hover [on] the brink of quotation but do not actually cross it.”¹²

The styles used by Schnittke are carefully put together and play an important role in the form and narrative content of his works. In the notes to the Concerto Grosso No. 1, Schnittke offers a glimpse of the aesthetic vision guiding his technique—that of the representation of an inclusive musical reality—and provides an example of one form that polystylism can take:

I dream of the Utopia of a united style, where fragments of ‘U’ (Unterhaltung) [entertaining] and ‘E’ (Ernst) [serious] are not used for comic effect but seriously represent multi-faceted musical reality. That’s why I’ve decided to put together some fragments from my cartoon film music: a joyful children’s chorus, a nostalgic atonal serenade, a piece of hundred-percent-guaranteed Corelli (Made in the USSR), and finally, my grandmother’s favorite tango played by my great-grandmother on a harpsichord. I am sure all these themes go together very well, and I use them absolutely seriously.¹³

As we will see, Schnittke’s interests were shared by other musicians. Not only did borrowing play a prominent role in music since the 1960s, but also, some composers used borrowing to explore Utopian ideals.¹⁴

Schnittke’s approach to polystylism evolved over time. Overall, his first polystylistic works present very strong juxtapositions, often with exact quotations, but the technique becomes less and less strict in later works: exact quotations disappear and are replaced by

¹² Alfred Schnittke, “Polystylistic Tendencies in Modern Music (C. 1971),” in *A Schnittke Reader*, ed. Alexander Ivashkin (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 88. For a broader explanation of Schnittke’s terminology related to borrowing and its evolution, see Kirsten Peterson, “Structural Threads in the Patchwork Quilt: Polystylistics and Motivic Unity in Selected Works by Alfred Schnittke,” Ph.D. Thesis (University of Connecticut, 2000), 12-24.

¹³ Schnittke’s notes are reprinted in Alexander Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, ed. Norman Lebrecht (London: Phaidon Press, 1996), 140.

¹⁴ Schnittke’s Utopia will be addressed in Chapter 3.

broad evocations or remote allusions of styles.¹⁵ For example, works like the Violin Sonata No. 2 and the Serenade for Five Musicians, both from 1968, make extensive use of direct quotations. They create shocking contrasts and strong stylistic clashes which break conventional musical continuity. In contrast, late works like the last four symphonies (from 1993 to his death in 1998) present ethereal textures in which the tension is constant and moments of relief few. Unison pitches and simple triads, which appear only occasionally in earlier works, become much more frequent, as aspects of a new simplicity. Overall the language is still modern but less dense, almost pointillistic. Schnittke's style of this period has been described as synthetic: typical elements from the 1970s, like unexpected transitions and the layering of many diverging styles, are still present but they are subdued by the economy of means; they are no longer thrust upon the listener but more subtly introduced.¹⁶

The works I have chosen for discussion place polystylism under various lights. As a result, each of the following chapters will adopt a different approach toward the evaluation of their narrative potential. The Symphony No. 1 (Chapter 1) is a compendium of quotations, including symphonies of Beethoven and Mahler, the Dies Irae, and improvised jazz passages. In this case, the sheer dimensions of the work as well as the nature of the borrowed materials are more aptly addressed by the definition of an immanent narrative, the expression of a single general idea through different angles. There can be no single story, no definite characters, no precise location, only an embryonic plot. Narrative ideas in the Symphony are conveyed by connotations and by the large-scale combination of

¹⁵ Ibid., 138.

¹⁶ Ibid., 212.

borrowings. Conversely, *Moz-Art à la Haydn* (in Chapter 2) is based on the sole remaining part, the solo violin, of a Mozart pantomime. There is almost no new material in the work; everything is by Mozart but arranged, juxtaposed and treated in very new ways. *Moz-Art* illustrates how a composer can use the fragmentation of pre-existent material to navigate between two styles—18th century and modern—in an almost continuous flow. The narrative is of a more abstract nature, resulting from the choice of fragments and their organisation. The processes applied to the materials are the center of attention and the cause of numerous interrogations. It is the sequence of developments, deployment, and superimposition techniques that creates meaning.

Furthermore, a different kind of narrative results from Schnittke's use of the tango. In Schnittke's music the tango appears almost as a leitmotiv: in the Concerto Grosso No. 1, in *Polyphonic Tango*, in various film soundtracks, the "Faust Cantata" and one of his operas, *Life with an Idiot*. In all those occurrences, it is set in opposition to more "serious" styles, like dodecaphonism or Baroque idioms. Because the dance comes from a specific location and context, it carries strong cultural associations, particularly those of the exotic and erotic. Schnittke mines those associations in his evocation of the tango.

Finally, the Concerto Grosso No. 1 presents many interacting styles, but very few direct quotations can be identified. Fortunately, I have discovered among the composer's papers conserved at the Schnittke Archive at Goldsmiths College (University of London), a hitherto completely unknown source that helps elucidate the meaning of this piece: a programmatic note from the composer. The existence of this program creates the opportunity for a reading of the score "informed" by plot elements from sketches and the

composer's comments. Most importantly, those characteristics create the conditions for a narrative in a more traditional sense.

Literature

The greater part of the existing literature on Schnittke consists of recollections, interviews, and collections of the composer's own writings.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the composer was much more voluble on his life than he is on his music; if he voluntarily gave out glimpses of his general philosophy of art and music, he was rather terse when it came to specific details about the compositional strategies he employed. Scholarly interest on Schnittke's life and music has grown rapidly in the last 10 years, and a compilation of some of the most important interviews and writings by and on him has recently been published.¹⁸ While a few extended studies address the issue of polystylism, most of them almost completely neglect to discuss its narrative implications.

Of the two biographies, one is by a close friend of the composer, Alexander Ivashkin, and the other, by two Russian scholars, Valentina Holopova and Evgenija Cigareva.¹⁹ Tamara Burde published an introductory book on the composer's life and discussed a few selected works. A chapter on the Symphony No. 1 describes the general form of each movement and enumerates the quotations. Her analysis of polystylism,

¹⁷ For a list of interviews and recollections on and by Schnittke, please refer to the Bibliography.

¹⁸ Alfred Schnittke and Alexander Ivashkin, *A Schnittke Reader* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002). Most of the content has been published in other languages. See Alfred Schnittke and Alexander Ivashkin, *Besedy s Al'fredom Šnitke* (Moscow: RIK "Kul'tura," 1994), later published in German as *Über das Leben und die Musik* (Munich: Econ, 1998); or in Alfred Schnittke and Musikverlag Hans Sikorski, *Alfred Schnittke zum 60. Geburtstag: Eine Festschrift* (Hamburg: Sikorski, 1994).

¹⁹ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*. Valentina Holopova and Evgeniâ Cigareva, *Al'fred Šnitke: Očerki Žizni i Tvorcestva* (Moscow: Sovetskij Kompozitor, 1990).

however, does not consider the narrative layers of the work.²⁰ Finally, a two-day international conference in January 2001 resulted in the publication of a collection of scholarly writings on Schnittke; only one article addresses musical symbolism to some extent.²¹

There have been three dissertations dealing with Schnittke's polystylism. Two focus on the same work, the *Viola Concerto*,²² and the other presents a succinct history of the technique before narrowing its focus to pitch-class set analyses of a few works.²³ While not addressing polystylism in particular, Peter J. Schmelz's thesis on the Russian musical scene between 1956 and 1974 dedicates one chapter to the creation and reception of the Symphony No. 1. He also situates the serialist experiments of Schnittke within the context of other composers' works, but again, polystylism plays a secondary role.²⁴ Other publications consist of general introductions to the unique aspects of Schnittke's music²⁵ or

²⁰ Tamara Burde, *Zum Leben und Schaffen des Komponisten Alfred Schnittke*, Musikgeschichtliche Studien, 1 (Kludenbach: Gehanu, 1993).

²¹ Valentina Kholopova, "Alfred Schnittke's Works: A New Theory of Musical Content," *Seeking the Soul*, edited by George Odum (London: Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2002), 38-45.

²² Eliyahu Tamar, "Polystylism and Coherence in Alfred Schnittke's Viola Concerto," PhD Thesis, Composition (University of Pittsburgh, 2000) and Michael Lawrence Hall, "Polystylism and Structural Unification in the Alfred Schnittke Viola Concerto," DMA Thesis (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2000).

²³ Peterson, "Structural Threads in the Patchwork Quilt." Peterson also historically situates Schnittke's polystylism in the framework of current researches in postmodernism, borrowings and semiology.

²⁴ Schmelz, "Listening, Memory, and the Thaw."

²⁵ One of the first articles on Schnittke in English was by Ivan Moody, "The Music of Alfred Schnittke." Hugh Collins Rice provides a few more observations in the same issue of the periodical in "Further Thoughts on Schnittke," *Tempo*, 168 (March 1989), 12-14. Valentina Holopova presents a more comprehensive account of Schnittke's output in "Alfred Schnittke," *Kunst und Literatur* 36, 2 (1988), 250-71.

the study of one particular feature.²⁶ A few articles adopt a more critical approach by exploring the symbolism of specific passages, like the imitation of the ticking of a clock in the "Faust Cantata."²⁷ Others place Schnittke's music in a historical perspective, comparing his music to that of Mahler or Shostakovich, for instance.²⁸

More appropriate to the narrative aspect of polystylism is Lisa Robinson's description of defamiliarization. She demonstrates how Schnittke's use of fragments from Mahler's unfinished Piano Quintet in his Symphony No. 5/Concerto Grosso No. 4 disables the "autonomism of perception" by placing "tonal material in a post-tonal

²⁶ For example, Grigorij Pantijelew exposes the German roots of the composer's music and gives a special importance to appearances of the BACH monogram and its inherent symbolism. Grigorij Pantijelew, "Das Deutsche in der Musik von Alfred Schnittke," *Das Deutsche in der Musik*, 186-90 (Dresden: Zentrum für Zeitgenössischer Musik, 1997). He also discusses the general form of the first five symphonies in "P'jat' Simfonij Al'freda Šnitke." *Sovetskaja Muzyka*, 10 (1990), 81-86. Hans-Joachim Erwe briefly describes improvisational features of Schnittke's music in "Spuren der Improvisation in jazzinspirierter Kunstmusik," *Jazz und Avantgarde* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1998), 194-221.

²⁷ Arsen Kamaev discusses the social factors surrounding the composition and the performance of the Symphony No. 1, which he sees as being musically embodied in the work. Arsen Kamaev, "Normativnoe' Iskusstvo i Avangard: Social'nye Aspekty Kritiki na Primere I-j Simfonii A. Šnitke," *Voprosy Sociologii Muzyki*, edited by Evgenii Viktorovich Dukov (Moscow: Muzykal'no-Pedagogiceskij Institut imeni Gnesinyh, 1990), 119-36. Klaus Angermann talks about the inevitability of fate as portrayed in the Faust Cantata in "Das Stundenglas vor den Augen: Zur Faust-Historia von Alfred Schnittke," *Musikwissenschaft zwischen Kunst, Ästhetik und Experiment: Festschrift Helga de la Motte-Haber zum 60. Geburtstag* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1998), 11-16. Maria Kostakeva associates the devil in the same work with the totalitarian system of the Soviet era in "Der Teufel als Symbol des Totalitären Systems: Die neuen Mythen der Sowjet-Ära am Beispiel von Alfred Schnittkes Faust-Kantate," *Europäische Mythen der Neuzeit: Faust und Don Juan. Gesammelte Vorträge des Salzburger Symposions 1992*, vol. 2 (Anif & Salzburg: Müller-Speiser, 1993), 611-20.

²⁸ Alexander Ivashkin sees Schnittke as the symphonic heir of Shostakovich in "Shostakovich and Schnittke: The Erosion of Symphonic Syntax," *Shostakovich Studies*, edited by David Fanning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 254-70. Georg Borchart draws many parallels in the musical practices of Schnittke and Mahler in "Alfred Schnittke und Gustav Mahler," *Gustav Mahler: "Meine Zeit wird kommen" — Aspekte der Mahler-Rezeption* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 1996), 61-73.

context.”²⁹ The methodology she uses, rigorous technical analysis informed by literary criticism, proves inspiring.³⁰ On a different level, Wolfgang Gratzner describes how Schnittke’s musical treatment of the Faust story alters the meanings put forth by traditional interpretations of the legend. The author insists on the close association between the narrator and the satanic characters, thereby creating what one might call a negative Passion.³¹ Both Robinson and Gratzner adopt approaches that go beyond purely musical aspects and develop extra-musical implications; as I will describe below, my thesis strives in the same direction.

Publications on musical borrowing typically mention Schnittke, but there is no in-depth study of his use of polystylism.³² In fact, even the bibliographical database on musical borrowing, created by J. Peter Burkholder, Andreas Giger, and David C. Birchler,

²⁹ Lisa Brooks Robinson, “Mahler and Postmodern Intertextuality,” Ph.D. Thesis (Yale University, 1994), 178, 220. Robinson’s observations on defamiliarization are indebted to Viktor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique,” in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 5-24.

³⁰ Robinson sees the process of defamiliarization as playing an essential role in Schnittke’s music. As detailed later, that process is also at the center of my approach. She explains how Schnittke used Mahler’s fragment as “neutral” material so that the structure of the movement “is not primarily determined by an overriding intertextual reference.” It is probably because she sees Schnittke’s borrowings as “neutral material” that she never addresses their referential or narrative implications. Robinson, “Mahler and Postmodern Intertextuality,” 220.

³¹ Wolfgang Gratzner, “‘Eine negative Passion’: Alfred Schnittkes Faust-Kantate als Paradigma postmoderner Mythenrezeption,” *Europäische Mythen der Neuzeit: Faust und Don Juan. Gesammelte Vorträge des Salzburger Symposions 1992*, vol. 2 (Anif and Salzburg: Müller-Speiser, 1993), 595-610

³² The place of Schnittke in many books on quotations or borrowings goes from a few pages in Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage From Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994) to a whole chapter in Wolfgang Gratzner and Siegfried Mauser, *Mozart in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts: Formen, ästhetischer und kompositionstechnischer Rezeption*, Schriften zur Musikalischen Hermeneutik, 2 (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1992).

is almost silent about Schnittke.³³ In his thesis on the “new quotation” as employed in the works of more than sixty composers, Michael Hicks barely discusses Schnittke; nonetheless he helpfully defines seven types of borrowings that can transmit symbolic meanings, thus providing a valuable methodology (see below). He also describes how Bach’s “Es ist genug” chorale can take on a range of different meanings in different contexts. My study of the tango in Schnittke’s works shares a similar goal.³⁴ As well, Burkholder’s study of Charles Ives’s quotation practices presents lines of inquiry that I take up in my research: the author distinguishes between different types of musical borrowings in Ives’s works and describes how the process evolved across his oeuvre.³⁵

Methodology

The study of the narrative potential of Schnittke’s polystylism can be approached through many different channels. In fact, it might be possible that each work demands its own critical apparatus as it creates different qualities of narrative. Nevertheless, a few common methodological steps can be stated here. In each of the four chapters, the first stage is to describe how polystylism manifests itself. For each work, I demonstrate the way in which the composer presents specific styles, or abstractions of such styles, what meaning they carry and how they carry that meaning. The second stage is to assess the narrative potential

³³ [Http://www.music.indiana.edu/borrowing](http://www.music.indiana.edu/borrowing) (Accessed 15 August 2006). Searching for “Schnittke” in any of the fields returns only one result: Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre*. According to the website, the bibliography contains more than 1200 entries.

³⁴ Michael Dustin Hicks, “The New Quotation: Its Origin and Functions,” Ph.D. Thesis (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1984), 46-64.

³⁵ J. Peter Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

of polystylism by ordering the different meanings in a single thread. As each work presents polystylism in contrasting ways, the characteristics of the resulting narrative will differ.

The process of “defamiliarization” is central to the first stage of the methodology used here. Over time, certain phenomena become more and more familiar, in such a way that we tend not to pay special attention to them. They become part of the ordinary, and our perception of them becomes automatized.³⁶ However, their expressive potential can be re-established by “removing the ‘film of familiarity’.”³⁷ In regards to music, when a stylistically coherent passage is abruptly interrupted by another section cast in a totally different style, that second style is strongly emphasized, presented out of context and thus “defamiliarized.” This process is closely related to what literary theorist Jan Mukarovsky has called foregrounding: the deliberate and conscious violation of a usually automatized scheme.³⁸ In a text, this process could consist of the use of stylistic devices like alliteration, rhyme, or, at the grammatical level, such gestures as inversion and ellipsis.³⁹ In a musical work, stylistic contrast is one the most striking processes that can result in foregrounding. For example, the inclusion of a tango in Schnittke’s Concerto Grosso No. 1 is impossible to justify as the consequence of musical developments. This is explained by the fact that

³⁶ Robert Morgan is probably the first writer to have applied the concept of defamiliarization to music in “Ives and Mahler: Mutual Responses at the End of an Era,” *19th-Century Music* 2/1 (1978), 72-81. The idea was later reprised by Rudolf Stephan in “Zur Deutung von Strawinskys Neoklassizismus,” *Musik-Konzepte* 34/35 (1984), 80-88. See also Robinson, “Mahler and Postmodern Intertextuality,” 178-185.

³⁷ Morgan, “Ives and Mahler,” 77.

³⁸ Jan Mukarovsky, “Standard Language and Poetic Language,” *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style*, edited by L. Garvin (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1964 (1932), 17-30, especially 19.

³⁹ David S. Miall and Don Kuiken, “Foregrounding, Defamiliarization, and Affect: Response to Literary Stories,” *Poetics* 22, 5, 389-407.

before the tango happens, it is completely unexpected and also because it can be identified as a borrowing. This section of the work is detached, it is brought to the foreground, or simply, it attracts the attention of the listener in a more acute way than its surroundings. The tango is defamiliarized.

The contrast between foreign stylistic units and their new surroundings results in the creation of a gap, the disjunction between the foregrounded borrowings and the background.⁴⁰ Recent research shows that readers when confronted with foregrounding—words or phrases that unpredictably stand out from the norm of the text—attempt to “refamiliarize” by re-evaluating the context. For instance, they could read the same sentence again in hope that the defamiliarized elements would become more understandable.⁴¹ Only a few critics have studied the nature of stylistic disjunctions in music, or elsewhere for that matter. For Peter McQuallum, conventional analysis has been unable to deal with what he calls “third order articulations,” such as stylistic reference and parody with any sophistication.⁴² One of the best accounts of the possibilities created by textual disjunctions is to be found in the works of Maurice Blanchot. Not only has the French author and literary theorist described and exploited the process of fragmentation and the potential of disjunction in his own works, but he has also provided inspiring

⁴⁰ The presence of gaps in the textual surface can be related to what theorists of postmodernism have described as discontinuity. It is widely accepted that quotation, and the disjunction that results from its presence, is indeed a prevalent characteristic of postmodernist music. See for example Jonathan D. Kramer, “The Nature and Origins of Music Postmodernism,” in *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought*, edited by Judy Lochhead and Joseph Auner (New York: Routledge, 2002), 13-26.

⁴¹ Miall and Kuiken, “Foregrounding, Defamiliarization, and Affect,” <http://www.ualberta.ca/~dmiall/reading/foregrd.htm> (Accessed 20 August 2006).

⁴² Peter McQuallum, “Classic Preoccupations: Instruments for the Obliteration of Analysis?” *Music Analysis*, 9 (1990), 206.

insights into the role of stylistic gaps.⁴³ For Blanchot, the juxtaposition of fragments accentuates the distance existing between them, creating an open space where the *parole*, the speech that comes not from the text but from the reader, creates relationships. That space is open to signification.⁴⁴ He sees fragmentation as the exploration of the infinite space of the work, the refusal of closure or unity. Blanchot wants readers, when confronted with fragmentation, to experience its fragmented nature; in other words, he does not believe that fragments need to be unified in any sense, let alone resolved in a narrative. Moreover, if fragments are materially unrelated, because they were never part of the same whole, for example, they can nevertheless be subjectively related by the effort of the reader/listener. Schnittke's works offer such a different experience of the fragments, which often carry cultural associations with them in the new context. I believe Blanchot is right when he says that fragments may be experienced as such, but that does not prevent the elaboration of a narrative by a willing human being.⁴⁵

Schnittke's polystylism also evokes fragmentation. For example, by morphing pseudo-Corelli with thick clusters in the Concerto Grosso No. 1, or by placing the very process of fragmentation under the spotlight in *Moz-Art*, he effectively disturbs the sense of unity and continuity, making it hard for listeners to reconstruct a larger whole. However,

⁴³ Some of Blanchot's own writings juxtapose many different styles: novelistic narratives, philosophical exposés, unidentified quotations, dialogues and aphorisms are used in quick succession. See, for example, Maurice Blanchot, *Le pas au-delà* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973) and *L'attente l'oubli* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962).

⁴⁴ Robert Samuels described Mahler's music as functioning in a similar fashion. According to him, Mahler's music cannot be "analyzed" in the traditional sense, because there is no longer a pattern of sender – message – addressee, and thus there is no longer such thing as a "finished work." Robert Samuels, "Music as Text: Mahler, Schumann and Issues in Analysis," *Theory, Analysis and Meaning in Music*, ed. Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 152-163.

⁴⁵ The relation between fragments and narrative will be addressed in Chapter 2.

contrary to Blanchot, I argue that the natural reaction of the listener is to explain the disjunction, to fill in the blank by the elaboration of a narrative. In the Concerto Grosso No. 1, for example, the interlacing Baroque sequences of the two violin lines quoted from the movie *Butterfly* could become the dance of two lovers, and the dissolve of the two lines into chaotic texture, their separation. As in Blanchot's own novels, Schnittke's borrowings and fragments are so blunt that they simply cannot be ignored; they are to be recognized as such. They create disjunctions and place the reader in an uncomfortable position, an unbalance which is only resolved by his formation of a meta-story through *parole*, a filled-in narrative.

This study is based on the assumption that listeners when confronted with discontinuities intuitively tend to resolve them by filling in the space between fragments. In fact, that impulse toward constructing continuity even when there is none has been described in many areas of art and thought. In literature, Wolfgang Iser sees readers actively bridging holes in stories in an attempt to construct a narrative unity, thereby constantly modifying their own representation of the text.⁴⁶ In his "archaeology of knowledge," Michel Foucault acknowledges the natural attraction toward unity in the writing of history. He describes the desire of historians to reach "the ideal limit, the non-difference of perfect continuity" when they are confronted with disjunctions in the flow of events. Foucault thought that those differences should not necessarily be resolved and that historians often engineered an artificial continuity because it seems less threatening.⁴⁷ In

⁴⁶ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), see especially 107-134.

⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 169.

music analysis and history, Kevin Korsyn applies the same reasoning as Foucault by drawing a parallel between “the repression of discontinuity in history” and “the repression of heterogeneity in analysis.” Korsyn wants historians to resist the impulse of using narrative in what he calls a privileged context, which creates artificial continuity where none exists. According to him, “we need paradigms that will accommodate discontinuity.”⁴⁸ Leonard Meyer too underlines the idea that humans naturally direct their attention toward evident changes, and that this tendency demonstrates that change “is what calls for explanation.” He considers that an “axiom of constancy underlies not only historical interpretation but almost all forms of human comprehension.”⁴⁹ Fulfilling the desire for continuity is precisely what narrative involves, even if that might mean constructing a second work—that is a new layer of meaning—on top of the open space provided by fragmentation.

Umberto Eco’s conception of the dual pairs of listener/readers supports the idea of a narrative impulse. According to him, there are not one but two different authors and readers for every text: the empirical author effectively wrote a text in order to produce its model reader, while the model author is imagined by the empirical reader as to coincide

⁴⁸ Kevin Korsyn, “Beyond Privileged Contexts: Intertextuality, Influence, and Dialogue,” in *Rethinking Music*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 67, 70-71. Korsyn supports this argument by quoting Hans Kellner: “Narrative exists to make continuous what is discontinuous; it covers gaps in time, in action, in documentation, even when it points to them.” Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 55.

⁴⁹ Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 88.

with the intention of the text.⁵⁰ In the case of polystylism, the natural reflex of the empirical “listener,” when confronted by the challenges put forward by the empirical composer, is to imagine a model composer, to try to penetrate his or her thoughts in order to explain what seems, at first sight, to be unexplainable, to render continuous what is discontinuous. In short, the listener attempts to reconstruct the conceptual network surrounding the work. Indeed, according to Raymond Monelle, a musical text is an “epistemic nexus” that can point to all kinds of signification. Each stylistic element connotes extra-musical concepts to a certain degree. In turn, those connotative meanings become the seeds of the narrative. Consequently, the space of stylistic gaps is not sterile. On the contrary, it is the fertile ground upon which the narrative can be erected.

The referential aspect of music is perhaps nowhere more evident than with musical borrowing. As Christopher Ballantine has explained, borrowings can take place anywhere along a continuum: at one end, the original meaning of the quoted material is unimpaired; at the other end, it can be totally stripped away from it.⁵¹ Borrowings can carry out diverse functions. Michael Hicks has defined seven such functions: simple puns, text painting, commentary on another work, idea-carrier, an appeal to the personal circumstances of an “old” composer, the relationship to a specific condition of the “new” composer’s life, and

⁵⁰ “A text is a device conceived in order to produce its model reader. [...] The empirical reader is only an actor who makes conjectures about the kind of model reader postulated by the text. Since the intention of the text is basically to produce a model reader able to make conjectures about it, the initiative of the model reader consists in figuring out a model author that is not the empirical one and that, in the end, coincides with the intention of the text.” Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 64.

⁵¹ Ballantine explains that a complex dialectic is involved between the quoted fragment, its new treatment, and its new context; in fact, he sees the new composition as being this dialectic. Christopher Ballantine, *Music and its Social Meaning* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1984), 73-74.

an appeal to the “acquired associations” of an older work in a new one.⁵² Pursuing a different goal, Roland Barthes valued connotation as the principal source of meaning.⁵³ The semiotic relationship he describes is determined by two different spaces which my analysis of Schnittke’s music will account for. The first is of a sequential nature and is established by the succession of sentences, by the context. The second is of an agglomerative nature in which “certain areas of the text [correlate] other meanings outside the material text.”⁵⁴

Having recognized the borrowings in a work and described their symbolic functions, the next step is the elaboration of a narrative. As Vera Micznik points out, there seems to be a consensus on the minimal conditions for a narrative: it entails a representation of at least two events in a temporal order by at least one narrator.⁵⁵ In Schnittke’s polystylism, each style is a “represented event.” In all the works studied in this dissertation, there are more than two events and as music is temporal in nature, two of the minimal conditions are met.⁵⁶ The presence of a narrator is more difficult to ascertain,⁵⁷

⁵² Hicks, “The New Quotation,” 52-61. More specifically, the evocative possibilities of styles have been addressed in Robert Hatten, “Toward a Semiotic Model of Style in Music: Epistemological and Methodological Bases,” Ph.D. Thesis (Indiana University, 1982), see especially 204-213.

⁵³ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 8-9.

⁵⁴ Monelle adds that the network of signification is infinite; I doubt it is, as there is always the need to be rooted in the plausible. Raymond Monelle, “What is a Musical Text?,” *Musical Semiotics in Growth*, edited by Eero Tarasti (Ithaca and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, International Semiotics Institute, 1996), 255-256. For a survey of the interpretation limitation, see Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

⁵⁵ Vera Micznik, “Music and Narrative Revisited: Degrees of Narrativity in Beethoven and Mahler,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 126 (2001), 194.

⁵⁶ As with literary texts, musical time could consist in two layers: the story-time, the causal order of events, and the discourse-time, the actual reading time. Micznik, “Music and Narrative Revisited,” 194.

and on that issue, as well as on the premises of musical narrativity in general, there are many points of view.⁵⁸ At one extreme, Jean-Jacques Nattiez states that narrative does not reside in music, that it is the result of the listener's "narrative impulse"; for him, musical narrativity "is nothing but superfluous metaphor."⁵⁹ I argue that if the narrative may not reside in the music, the "narrative impulse" does reside in it. Whether the metaphors resulting from it are "superfluous" or not does not negate their existence. At the other extreme, Fred Maus, Leo Treitler, and Robert Samuels all argue for a certain narrative quality of music.⁶⁰ Naturally, their positions on the topic are closer to mine.

⁵⁷ The musical narrator is a loosely defined concept. For Lawrence Kramer, the musical narrator is not a function of the music itself but rather a "shadow" cast by the listener. Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 119-120. For Eero Tarasti, the musical narrator is "the intentional subject emerging from the cooperation between composer, performer, and listener, and living in the no-man's land between them, who is the subject properly speaking and who programs musical actors on the textual level." Eero Tarasti, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 111. For more on the musical narrator see Vincent Meelberg, "A Telling View on Musical Sounds: A Musical Translation of the Theory of Narrative," in: *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, edited by Mieke Bal (London: Routledge, 2004), 287-316.

⁵⁸ For a survey of opposing views on musical narrativity see Micznik, "Music and Narrative Revisited," 194-197.

⁵⁹ Jean-Jacques Nattiez, "Peut-on parler de narrativité en musique?," *Canadian University Music Review*, 10 (1990), 68-91.

⁶⁰ Fred Maus claims that narrative theory can be applied to any piece of music in "Music as Narrative," *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (Spring-Fall 1991), 1-34. For Robert Samuels "codes of thematic continuity, motivic development and formal scheme conflict in a way which leaves as the only way of 'making sense' [...] the resort to a code of 'musical narration'." Samuels, "Music as Text," 156. See also Leo Treitler, "Language and the Interpretation of Music," *Music and Meaning*, edited by Jenefer Robinson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 23-56. See also Scott Burnham, "How Music Matters: Poetic Content Revisited," *Rethinking Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 193-216, especially 215: "In short, precisely because music is musical, it can speak to us of things that are not strictly musical. This is how we hear music speak: not by reducing it to some other set of circumstances, [...] but by allowing it the opacity of its own voice, and then engaging that voice in ways that reflect both its presence and our own, much as we allow others a voice when we converse with them."

Even if the presence of a narrative is admitted, the question of its exact nature remains. Again, there are divergent points of view on the subject. In a comment about Mahler that applies equally well to Schnittke, Anthony Newcomb states that the narrative quality of music is probably best described as formal paradigms or plot archetypes that are “often better thought of not as paradigmatic spatial structures but as paradigmatic temporal procedures, operations, or transformational sequences.”⁶¹ It seems that the meaning conveyed by stylistic units is most forcefully generated by their interrelationships. For example, the tango conveys a precise meaning, as does the *Dies Irae*, but the passage from one to the other, the type of transition between the two, is equally significant. The way in which a specific stylistic material is absorbed in or juxtaposed against another one is paradigmatically related to other schemes from the extra-musical sphere. In other words, the interaction between the various symbolic functions of musical borrowings can, as Micznik claims, “present resemblances of situations analogous to those presented in [verbal] stories.”⁶²

Music does not denote as a text does, but it can mirror archetypical processes, like synthesis, conflict or resilience. As a consequence, rather than presenting a single definitive story, the evocative potential of polystylism is such that, as Schnittke said, it “creates new possibilities for the musical dramatization of ‘eternal’ questions — of war and peace, life and death.”⁶³ If those questions are indeed “eternal,” they are also very general. In fact, as I

⁶¹ Anthony Newcomb, “Narrative Archetypes and Mahler’s Ninth Symphony,” *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries*, edited by Steven Paul Sher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 119.

⁶² Micznik, “Music and Narrative Revisited,” 244.

⁶³ Schnittke, “Polystylistic Tendencies,” *A Schnittke Reader*, 90.

will show, Schnittke usually avoids treating them in any precise way, perhaps in order to preserve their “universality.”

Outline

This thesis is divided in four chapters; the first three are each oriented around a single work while the fourth one focuses on a specific style and how it is used in several pieces. The first chapter examines the origins of Schnittke’s polystylism as they are reflected in the Symphony No. 1. The work is massive and bluntly exposes direct quotations. Although the Symphony does not have a program, a careful analysis of the score will show how a kind of immanent narrative emerges out of the stylistic gaps, and how Schnittke confronts the symphonic genre, which, during the course of the work, dies and resurrects. The second chapter endeavours in a more theoretical direction. *Moz-Art à la Haydn*, a work built on the ruins of a little known fragment of Mozart, appeals to the fragmentary in order to deal with ideas such as the old, the new, the past and the present. The work asks many more questions than it answers. Consequently, its narrative potential depends less on the few inherent musical connotations, and more on the individual listeners’ contributions. The situation is notably different in the case of the Concerto Grosso No. 1, the subject of the third chapter. Unlike the previous two works, this one has a program, which can be related to the music and to the various musical borrowings. Distinct characters and a plot can be grasped and are actually supported by the composer in his sketches. The narrative is more story-like, even if it is still loose enough to allow multiple interpretations. Nevertheless, for once, helped by an examination of the sketches and of Schnittke’s self-borrowings, it is possible to affix detailed significations to precise passages in the work. The last chapter looks at the tango in many of Schnittke’s works, using a scene of his opera *Historia von D.*

Johann Fausten as a case study. The implications of the genre, which Schnittke employs in different works over a long period, are examined in order to determine how they change or stay the same depending on the contexts in which they appear. For Schnittke, the tango always implies the idea of duality, especially that of the opposition between evil and good. However, different contexts can develop the concept in various directions. The tango can symbolize a lure or a temptation which should be resisted, or it can be the banal and the popular under which the Devil hides.

Schnittke's polystylism confounds interpretations that value continuity and unity. All four chapters emphasize the stylistic gaps and disjunctions that must be explained. This is the space of the narrative, a space which asks to be filled but which offers no promise of truth. As Schnittke once said: "When you start talking about it [music], all your attempts to explain it in more or less precise terms are a complete failure. But you still have to try to explain, you still have to try to come closer to what you cannot actually grasp, in the hope that this time you might manage to get a little closer to it."⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Schnittke and Ivashkin, *A Schnittke Reader*, 12.

CHAPTER 1:
(ANTI-)SYMPHONY NO. 1
AND THE GENESIS OF POLYSTYLISM

For Soviet composers, the symphony never lost its status as a fundamental genre. That status was upheld by both the Communist Party—the State Purchasing Committee paid the most money for symphonies—and by artistic idealism, and many composers considered the symphonic genre to be the most suitable for the expression of “conceptual” ideas.¹ After Perestroika, most Russian composers felt—or were allowed to feel—the need to address the individual rather than the collective. That sentiment, however, had shaped Schnittke’s works for over two decades. Larger genres were a privileged way to acknowledge what he called the “polyphonization of human consciousness,” or the multiple streams of information which flow through in the individual’s mind at any given time.² As Ivashkin explains, the concept inspired an understanding of form, not as a realization of organic unity but rather as creating a musical environment in which the listener is involved and that he or she can interpret on his or her own.³

It is inhabited by these considerations that Schnittke decided to compose his Symphony No. 1, which could be called an anti-symphony. A preliminary sketch of the

¹ Mazo, “The Present and the Unpredictable Past,” 385. See also David Haas, “Boris Asafyev and Soviet Symphony Theory,” *The Musical Quarterly* 76 (1992), 410-411.

² Schnittke, “Polystylistic Tendencies,” 89.

³ Alexander Ivashkin, “Letter from Moscow Post October Soviet Art: Canon and Symbol,” *The Musical Quarterly* 74 (1990), 316.

work bears the title: “Eine Symphonie — keine Symphonie, ili [or] (k)eine Symphonie.”⁴ Schnittke’s analytical commentary on Stravinsky’s *Symphony in C* sheds some light on this designation: “The irony of both the formal conception (“Symphony”) and the tonal conception (‘in C’) is obvious: this is only the shell of a symphony, filled with surrogate thematic and tonal development. A quasi-symphony. A quasi-tonality.”⁵ At the time, Schnittke noted that it was impossible to repeat classical models without falling into absurdity.⁶ Indeed, if attempting to compose a symphony was a logical step in his career, for him, success was impossible. To use his words, “it is clear that [...] logically it is pointless.”⁷ The reasons behind such a conclusion are complex, but, as I will argue, the Symphony No. 1 seems to have been written in order to support it.⁸ Schnittke’s work also emerged as the solution to a different problem: that of a young Soviet composer asking “how to write a symphony?”

Schnittke’s Symphony No. 1 is also a study in musical borrowing, including quotations of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto, waltzes by Johann Strauss, the Dies Irae, Grieg’s *Peer Gynt*, and Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony. Schnittke also includes stylistic allusions to the fox trot, jazz improvisation, military

⁴ Valentina Holopova, *Kompozitor Alfred Šnitke* (Čelâbinsk: Arkaim, 2003), 105.

⁵ Schnittke, “Paradox as a Feature of Stravinsky’s Musical Logic,” *A Schnittke Reader*, 170.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Alex Ross, “A Shy, Frail Creator,” *New York Times* (10 February 1994), C17.

⁸ Admittedly, it would not be the last time that Schnittke composes in a “self-contradicting” genre. He would go on to write *Mozz-Art* (1975) for which two of the envisaged titles were *Kein Mozart* and *Keine Variationen zu Theme W. A. Mozarts*, and *(K)ein Sommernachtstraum* (1985), taking the extra step of adding “nicht nach Shakespeare” on the title page. The complete list of working titles for *Mozz-Art* is reproduced in Schnittke and Ivashkin, *Über das Leben und die Music*, 319-320. This exhibition of contradictions is patent in most of his works. See Richard Taruskin, “A Post-Everythingist Booms,” *New York Times* (12 July 1992), H20.

marches, and Baroque dances. In addition, large spans of the work are pure dodecaphonism. Other moments have strong tonal implications, particularly the full-orchestra unisons on C, A and E. Elements of scenography are also specified in the score, like the late entry of the conductor at the beginning and the exit of the winds in the second movement.

In bringing together such disparate materials, some have argued the Symphony may have been influenced by the third movement of Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia*. Schnittke's work, however, was most likely conceived of without any knowledge of Berio's piece.⁹ Of course, other composers, during the late 1960s, had integrated quotations into their music. Schnittke especially recognized the influence of Pousseur's *Votre Faust* and Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten*.¹⁰ Both operas include "polystylistic" passages, and Schnittke was able to study the scores during the Khrushchev Thaw.¹¹ Schnittke noted how Pousseur and Zimmermann used stylistic blends to project contemporary problems onto other epochs,

⁹ Schnittke said that he heard a recording of Berio's *Sinfonia* in 1969 but that by that time the formal design of his Symphony was completed and that it was already polystylistic. For precedents, he points out to his own *Serenade* (1968). The date Schnittke provides implies that he conceptualized the Symphony No. 1 after Penderecki's *Stabat Mater* (1962), or Pousseur's *Votre Faust* (1961/1968), but before Berio's *Sinfonia*. Dmitrij Šul'gin and Alfred Schnittke, *Gody neizvestnosti Alfreda Šnitke* (Moscow: by the author, 1993), 27. Galina Grigorieva states that Schnittke's Symphony No. 1 is "a result of the composer's careful study in the sixties of Berio's unpublished symphony." Considering Schnittke's words, and the great difficulty for young Russian composers to obtain modern music scores—especially unpublished ones—this otherwise unsupported statement seems false. Galina Grigorieva, "Stylistic Aspects of Soviet Music," *Current Musicology*, 52 (1993), 45.

¹⁰ Schnittke probably managed to obtain the scores of Penderecki, Zimmerman and Pousseur. He later recognized their influence on the Symphony inception. Solomon Volkov, "The ABCs of Alfred Schnittke," *Tempo* 206 (1998), 36 and Mazo, "The Present and the Unpredictable Past," 376-7. Ivashkin notes that, during the Khrushchev Thaw, Nono, Ligeti, Stockhausen and Pousseur sent scores directly to Russian composers, including Schnittke. Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 85. See also Burde, *Zum Leben und Schaffen*, 74.

¹¹ Schnittke and Ivashkin, "From Schnittke's Conversations," *A Schnittke Reader*, 17.

and how they could relate one period, be it past or present, to another.¹² Schnittke later saw the concurrent interest in borrowing as an expression of the *Zeitgeist*, many minds grabbing on to an idea which was “permeating the air.”¹³ Whereas the extent to which earlier quotation pieces influenced him remains unknown, one thing is clear: Schnittke’s Symphony No. 1 is a unique work, not an imitation.

Before the première of the Symphony No. 1 in 1974, Schnittke had already composed an oratorio, two violin concertos, a piano concerto, numerous chamber works, a two-act opera, and music for films, television and plays.¹⁴ This intense activity emerged in part from financial necessity and played an important role in the development of polystylism. At that time, Mosfilm studios were quite generous and the income earned from his work there allowed Schnittke to buy his first apartment in Moscow.¹⁵ But it came at the expense of long, strenuous hours, which left him little time to devote to his own projects after 1967. Nonetheless, the experience of scoring films provided creative inspiration. Schnittke said he could not “remember how many marches for brass band and banal waltz tunes, how much chase music, gunfight music, landscape music [he] wrote.”¹⁶ At the same time, he acknowledged that the “inferior material” could be transferred to other compositions, acquiring a new role in the process. This became increasingly

¹² Gunter Bialas and Alfred Schnittke, “Gunter Bialas im Gespräch mit Sofia Gubaidulina und Alfred Schnittke,” *Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste Jahrbuch* 5 (1991), 254.

¹³ Schnittke expresses his belief in a *Zeitgeist* regularly in the interviews reproduced in Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 3-37, in particular 13-20.

¹⁴ During the four years of the composition of the Symphony No. 1 (1968-72), Schnittke composed the soundtrack for more than sixteen films, documentaries, plays or cartoons.

¹⁵ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 108.

¹⁶ Schnittke, “On Film and Film Music,” *A Schnittke Reader*, 51.

important in later works, where Schnittke juxtaposed the same waltzes, foxtrots, and chants he wrote for films with modern styles. Moreover, censorship was much more lenient for feature films than it was for concert works, and sometimes non-existent for cartoons, allowing relative freedom in using modern idioms alongside more conventional ones.¹⁷ Film composition offered Schnittke a laboratory. As he explained: “one day I would write something, the next day listen to the orchestra play it, not like it, change it on the spot, although I might have tried out a certain device, an orchestral technique, or something else. In this respect, I gained a great deal from the cinema.”¹⁸

Among the movies Schnittke scored were *The World Today* (*Mir segodnâ*, 1968-74), a documentary by Mihail Il'ič Romm,¹⁹ and *Glass Harmonica* (*Steklânnââ Garmonika*, 1968), an animated movie by Andrej Hržanovskij.²⁰ The music of both directly influenced the Symphony and the latter, the Concerto Grosso No. 1.²¹ From *The World Today*, Schnittke was influenced by the eclectic mix of images assembled to comment on contemporary life, including scenes of China's Cultural Revolution, Communist parades, the Vietnam War, starvation in Africa, drug abuse, and environmental problems. He said: “If I had not seen

¹⁷ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 111.

¹⁸ Schnittke, “On Film and Film Music,” 51.

¹⁹ This documentary is also known under the title *And Yet I Believe* (*I vse-taki â verû*). As Romm died before its completion, the film was later completed by two of his pupils: Elem Klimov and Marlen Huciev in 1974.

²⁰ Schnittke and Hržanovskij collaborated on many animated films from 1968 until 1981. *Glass Harmonica* was deemed ideologically disturbing by Soviet censors, and consequently the film was shelved until after Perestroika.

²¹ Grigorij Pantelev later saw a parallel between the Symphony and a movie by Frederico Fellini, *Prova d'Orchestra* (1978), the story of a turbulent rehearsal ending in complete chaos. While this is a compelling analogy, there is no documentary evidence to support the claim. Pantelev, “Pât' Simfonij,” 83.

all these shots in the film, I would never have written this symphony.”²² From the latter film, he was inspired by the collage of paintings from Brueghel to Magritte interspersed throughout the movie. Working on films was for Schnittke both a positive and negative experience. As he explained, the work came at a time when he was facing a crisis in his own artistic development. Having to compose waltzes and marches for the cinema, Schnittke did not know which place, if any, those idioms should occupy in his work “at the desk.” He was becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the demands of film directors, and the strict stylistic limits imposed by each movie.²³ As he said, he had to drop one or the other.²⁴ He dropped neither.²⁵ Instead, what he first perceived to be a problem became a solution.

The Symphony No. 1 was premièred in Gorky, a city closed to foreigners because of the presence of military research facilities, to an audience comprised of musicians and critics who made a special trip from Moscow, 450 kilometres away.²⁶ On 9 February 1974, six years after Schnittke first started the piece and two years after its completion, the Gorky Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Gennadij Roždestvenskij performed the Symphony. In order to get the work played, Schnittke had to obtain permission from either Tihon Hrennikov, president of the Soviet Composers’ Union, or Rodion Šedrin, head of

²² Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 118.

²³ Burde, *Zum Leben und Schaffen*, 51.

²⁴ Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 17.

²⁵ The influence of film music on Schnittke’s works could be the topic of a thesis. Accordingly, only the films which had a direct and important influence on the works discussed here will be addressed.

²⁶ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 118.

the Russian Composers' Organization.²⁷ As Schnittke's relations with Hrennikov were strained at best, he turned the score over to Šedrin, who quickly approved it apparently under pressure from Roždestvenskij.²⁸ It was stipulated that the performance would take place not in Moscow but rather in Gorky, where the work had less chance to attract the attention of party officials and foreign journalists.²⁹ Schnittke recalled the tensions surrounding the concert and the overall negative official reaction, but for him, it was a positive experience. He was most impressed by the enthusiastic response of the average concertgoers, who attended both the première and even rehearsals.³⁰ After a review of a live tape by the Secretariat of the Composers' Union, during which Hrennikov harshly criticized both the work and the composer, the VAAP, the agency responsible for collecting publishing and distribution rights, was instructed not to allow further performances.³¹ Accordingly, the Moscow première would have to wait until 1986.

Polystylism

As a young composer living under the Soviet regime, Schnittke had little encouragement to develop polystylism, let alone any new challenging idiom. Foreign scores were hard to obtain, and even in conservatory libraries, special permission was required in order to consult the works of Stravinsky or Schoenberg. Students caught possessing modern pieces

²⁷ Ibid., 119.

²⁸ Ibid., 118. See also John Warnaby, "Obituaries: Alfred Schnittke," *Musical Opinion* 122 (Autumn 1998), 4.

²⁹ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 118-119.

³⁰ Ross, "A Shy, Frail Creator," C17.

³¹ In 1976, the Symphony No. 1 was played once in Estonia, which had always managed to keep a certain autonomy. Eri Klas and Gidon Kremer played a role in putting on the performance. Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 122-123.

faced reprimands or disciplinary consequences.³² Only during a small window of opportunity provided by the Khrushchev Thaw from 1959 until about 1964, did works by Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Ligeti, Xenakis, and Boulez, among others, become accessible to Soviet composers.³³ Another opportunity to become familiar with new music from the West came from Edison Denisov, who could arrange visits of foreign composers. Beginning in 1962, Denisov was allowed to travel to the Warsaw Festival of New Music, where he secured scores by Penderecki, Berio and Nono. Of course, he shared them with his colleagues.³⁴ As for concert life in Moscow, there were, as Schnittke recalled, two venues for the performance of new music: the Composers' Union which programmed few, if any, cutting-edge works, and concerts organized by performers like Nataliâ Gutman, Gidon Kremer, Oleg Kagan and Ūrij Bašmet, or conductors like Eri Klas, Gennadij Roždestvenskij and Dmitrij Kitaenko, all of whom played new music.³⁵ Luigi Nono was officially invited by the Composers' Union in 1963, a visit eased by the fact that he was a member of the Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party. None of the young composers was invited; they could only listen to whatever filtered through the closed doors of the Conservatory.³⁶ It was only at Nono's insistence that he was permitted to meet with Schnittke and others.³⁷ Schnittke was impressed by the "impulsivity" and the "great

³² Mazo, "The Present and the Unpredictable Past," 377.

³³ Ibid., 377. See also Schmelz, "Listening, Memory, and the Thaw."

³⁴ Mazo, "The Present and the Unpredictable Past," 376.

³⁵ Bialas and Schnittke, "Im Gespräch," 255.

³⁶ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 85.

³⁷ Ibid., 86.

sensibility” of the very first “avant-gardist” he could meet.³⁸ Nono listened to Schnittke’s opera *The Eleventh Commandment* and did not like what he considered to be a naïve mixture of styles.³⁹ The work was a real “collage,” even if Schnittke did not know the word at the time.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it is under Nono’s advice that he began to study carefully works by Western composers, especially Webern.⁴¹ Contrary to Nono’s expectations, Schnittke did not study Webern or other composers’ works so that he could write pieces more firmly rooted in European modernist idioms; rather, he wanted to learn their styles and techniques so that he could adapt them to suit his own needs.⁴² Schnittke would go on to collect many compositional voices. For instance, in 1984, after being asked if he had any interest in American composers, he answered that he would like to obtain “anything by Philip Glass,” not because he liked his music, not because he had a fascination about minimalism, but because he “should simply like to grasp the technique.”⁴³ In addition, his interests were not restricted to the avant-garde but rather encompassed music in a variety of styles. Whenever possible, he sought to find correspondences among them.⁴⁴ Schnittke’s musical horizon never shrank.

³⁸ Burde, “Zum Leben und Schaffen,” 39.

³⁹ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 86.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴¹ Nono saw “historical awareness” as an essential skill for a composer in order to achieve “a ‘personality’ which characterizes one particular moment of history.” See Luigi Nono, “The Historical Reality of Music Today,” *The Score* 27 (1960), 42.

⁴² Alfred Schnittke and Claire Polin, “Interviews with Soviet Composers,” *Tempo*, 151 (December 1984), 12-13.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Bialas and Schnittke, “Im Gespräch,” 254.

The combination of the diverse styles that he learned is the defining idea behind polystylism, which for many has become the foremost characteristic of his proper style. Of course, neither “polystylism” nor “musical borrowing” in a general sense are Schnittke’s inventions. Quoting from other people’s works has long been a compositional practice.⁴⁵ As for polystylism, Schnittke was well aware of precedents. He described how Guillaume de Machaut used themes of different origins, sometimes in different languages, in his works; which, for Schnittke, was the 14th-century equivalent of polystylism.⁴⁶ Among more recent composers, he valued how Mahler, Shostakovich and Ives could bring together different materials in their works.⁴⁷

Schnittke learned about Ives relatively late in his career. He always recognized Mahler as a seminal influence. In a sense, all three composers saw the symphony as a multi-layered musical universe, encompassing music from all spheres of society.⁴⁸ Schnittke attended concerts of Mahler’s music when he lived in Vienna as a boy.⁴⁹ The fact that

⁴⁵ J. Peter Burkholder provides a “Tentative Chronology of Uses of Existing Music” beginning with the “ageless” process of centonization, and including 14th century cantus firmus to quodlibet and jazz contrafacta in “The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing As a Field,” *Notes* 50 (1994), 869-70. Tamara Burde also provides a list of 20th century works which extensively rely on musical borrowings in “Zum Leben und Schaffen,” 69-70. A survey of borrowings practices from the Renaissance onward can be found in Kirsten Peterson, “Structural Threads in the Patchwork Quilt,” 15-33. Finally, Schnittke’s own article, “Polystylistic Tendencies,” enumerates recent works—the oldest are Stravinsky’s *Pulcinella* (1919-1920) and Shostakovich’s Piano Trio (1923)—which use musical borrowing.

⁴⁶ Ūliâ Makeeva and Gennadij Cypin, “Al’fred Šnitke: Real’nost’ kotoruû ždal vsû žizn’,” *Sovetskaâ Muzyka* 10 (October 1988), 18. Burde, “Zum Leben und Schaffen,” 66-67. Ronald Weitzman, “Schnittke’s ‘Gesualdo’ in Vienna,” *Tempo* 194 (October 1995), 31.

⁴⁷ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 121. See also Morgan, “Ives and Mahler,” 73.

⁴⁸ See also Taruskin, “A Post-Everythingist Booms,” H20.

⁴⁹ As of 1945, Alfred’s father worked for the Soviet newspaper *Österreichische Zeitung*, published by the Russian occupation forces in Vienna. Schnittke moved there in 1946 and returned to Moscow in 1948, he was then 14 years old. Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 27, 36.

Mahler rejected the stylistic purism of his time triggered a real admiration on the part of the Russian composer. Schnittke, as Ives and Mahler before him, opened himself to his whole musical environment.⁵⁰

From Schnittke's point of view, the commercial abyss, the gap between light and serious music, needed to be bridged.⁵¹ It would be necessary for both listeners and composers to experience all types of music and to bring them into a synthesis, inclusive of low styles—he names jazz, pop, rock, and serial music—all of which, according to Schnittke, can be used to manipulate listeners and composers alike. Through the combination of those idioms with more serious ones, polystylism strips materials of their conventional, even politically-reinforced, connotations.

An artist has only one possible way of avoiding manipulation—he must use his own individual efforts to rise above materials that are taboo, materials used for external manipulation. In this way, he will gain the right to give an individual reflection of the musical situation that is free of sectarian prejudice, as, for example, in the case of Mahler and Charles Ives.⁵²

Schnittke saw this kind of synthesis as a lifelong task, a goal he wanted to attain “even if [he] broke [his] neck in the process.”⁵³

Symphony or... Anti-Symphony?

At first glance, Schnittke's Symphony No. 1 would seem to be like any other large-scale symphony: four movements, very large orchestra, a few soloists, and the whole thing dedicated to a well established conductor, Gennadij Roždestvenskij. But the apparent

⁵⁰ Burde, “Zum Leben und Schaffen,” 67.

⁵¹ Schnittke and Polin, “Interviews,” 11.

⁵² Schnittke, “On Concerto Grosso No. 1 (Late 1970s),” *A Schnittke Reader*, 45.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

similarities end there. From the opening note to the last, the Symphony frustrates almost every single expectation of the genre. The first movement builds up to a point of chaos, and then initiates what appears to be a first-movement allegro, sometimes interpreted as a sonata form,⁵⁴ built around quotations from Beethoven, which stand alongside waltzes, marches and clusters. The second movement, Allegretto, includes Baroque figurations interrupted by an extended “fight” cadenza in a free jazz style. The third movement, Lento, is serially organized. Finally the fourth movement, also Lento, juxtaposes still more quotations in what becomes a funeral procession ending with the last bars of Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony played from a recording, all this after the musicians have left the stage. Only when silence is finally achieved do the instrumentalists return to the stage, starting over the Symphony which is interrupted one last time by the conductor with a final unison C.

Program or Anti-Program?

According to Schnittke, the Symphony No. 1 was written with no program in mind, although he did concede that there is a certain “documentary” feeling to it.⁵⁵ That the composer says he did not give a program to his work does not necessarily mean that it is devoid of extra-musical connotations, or that the listener cannot construct his or her own

⁵⁴ Victoria Adamenko argues that the first thematic group of an eventual sonata-form would begin with the opening unison C, and the second thematic group could be described as “variation on one pitch centering on the pitch G.” Her observations rely on Schnittke’s comments as reported in Sul’gin’s book. However, both the unison C and the variations on G are fairly short passages which are set along many other themes, some of which like the march are used to a much greater extent. Victoria Adamenko, “‘Faith through Skepticism’: Desacralization and Resacralization in Schnittke’s Symphony No. 1,” paper read at the 2005 American Musicological Society Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁵ Schnittke and Polin, “Interviews,” 12. See also Schnittke, in the preface of the Symphony’s score, quoted in Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 118.

program. In fact, Schnittke openly acknowledged the play of associations that develops in his works. He recognized that, although he was not thinking of any specific events at the time of the Symphony's composition, "some connection with events is of course possible."⁵⁶ I would argue that many connections are indeed possible, not only toward contemporary events but also toward such general concepts as conflict, frustration, death and resurrection. For listeners, Schnittke's Symphony, like many of his works, simply cannot hide the suggestion of a program, even if one is not prescribed by the composer.⁵⁷

Although Schnittke did not give his Symphony a programmatic narrative, we have to acknowledge the work's particular proprieties in that it constitutes a text that refers strongly to other texts and some of these relations can trigger extra-musical considerations. In fact, the stylistic shifts in the Symphony No. 1 are so unequivocal, and the exact quotations and stylistic allusion so pronounced that, in almost all cases, they are easy to notice, even for relatively untrained ears. They are impossible to ignore. In this context, to paraphrase Monelle, quotations and styles function as signification nexuses that point outside the work.⁵⁸ In the Symphony, they serve to establish a number of meaningful associations: for example, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony as an emblem of the past glory of the symphonic genre, or dodecaphonism as the modernist solution to formal difficulties.

⁵⁶ Ross, "A Shy, Frail Creator," C17.

⁵⁷ The suggestion of a program has been described in the Introduction. See also Edward Rothstein, "Masur Introduces Schnittke," *New York Times* (February 12, 1994), 11: "Yet they [Schnittke's comments at the effect that there is no program] can't hide the sense of a program—political, spiritual or autobiographical—that exists in his works."

⁵⁸ Monelle's "epistemic nexuses" designate "musical texts" which refer to all kind of signification, indexical, iconic, or symbolic. I use the term on a more local level. Monelle, "What is a Musical Text?" 255-256.

The borrowings inserted in the Symphony create gaps in the musical fabric. As I have explained in the Introduction, the natural human impulse is to bridge them through the elaboration of a narrative. In semiological terms, the interaction between styles and their context must be considered on two different planes. First, the time sequence results in a syntagmatic ordering, the chronological succession of stylistically diverse events. This plane will be explored through a more or less chronological study of the score, emphasizing the succession of styles and events. Second, the repetition of borrowings, their appearances in different places and the transformations they undergo, results in a paradigmatic ordering. It is mostly because fragments are used in different contexts that they acquire a signification which can then be related to the syntax; like the words of languages, their signification depends on the history of their usage. The combination of these two planes allows a narrative to emerge.⁵⁹

Interpretations of the Symphony

Different interpretations have been advanced in order to explain Schnittke's Symphony No. 1. Many draw upon extra-musical elements but none proposes a narrative. For Richard Taruskin, the symphony suggests dismissal, the notion that nothing matters anymore.

Mr. Schnittke's tower of Babel proclaims not universal acceptance but more nearly the opposite, an attitude of cultural alienation. Post-modernism here reduces simply to post-ism, after-everything-ism, it's-all-overism. The symphony comes to rest on a note of desperate irony. A childishly banal violin solo, reminiscent of the crooning idiot at the end of Mussorgsky's 'Boris Godunov,' is followed by a reprise of the opening unstructured freakout, finally giving way to a sudden unison C – simplicity itself. [...] But a simplicity so unearned and perfunctory suggests no resolution, merely dismissal. The world of early Schnittke is Dostoyevsky's world without God, where everything is possible (and nothing matters). Within the

⁵⁹ As mentioned in the introduction, a narrative consists of two or more events placed in a time-sequence, a condition which is easily met by Schnittke's Symphony No. 1.

administered world of Leninist dogma, where nothing was possible and everything mattered, this was sheer subversion.⁶⁰

Taruskin builds upon ideas of cultural alienation, desperate irony, simplicity, dismissal, and subversion. The conceptual scope of his interpretation is wide, but he concentrates on the last moments of an hour long work. The key idea is that “nothing matters,” that the fear of taking risks has been overcome, that everything is possible and devoid of consequences, at least musically speaking.⁶¹ As mentioned above, the politically subversive sense of the Symphony touched upon by Taruskin may have been perceived by the officials who banned performance of the work. The paradox consists in that even if Schnittke’s stylistic audacities may suggest that compositional freedom has been fought for and won, his music relies precisely on the barriers between styles, without which polystylism would not exist. For Taruskin, the Symphony takes those boundaries apart, but the result is no “resolution,” it is “dismissal,” it is the notion that “nothing matters.”

Valentina Holopova and Peter Schmelz offer extra-musical interpretations, even if they resist putting forward a narrative.⁶² Holopova notes that the Symphony “[captures] a tremendous chronicle of the contrasts of contemporary life.”⁶³ Holopova’s description of the Symphony as a survey of its time is apt. The work does not tell a story but rather presents a “chronicle,” a series of snapshots.⁶⁴ As Schmelz appropriately notes, the

⁶⁰ Taruskin, “A Post-Everythingist Booms,” H20.

⁶¹ Luigi Nono, a composer Schnittke met a few years before the composition of his Symphony, expressed a similar idea regarding music of contemporary composers: “A self-indulgent and naïve apathy has replaced the agony of thought, saying quite simply: ‘nothing matters’.” Nono, “The Historical Reality of Music,” 42.

⁶² Schmelz, “Listening, Memory, and the Thaw,” 625.

⁶³ Holopova, *Alfred Schnittke*, 75

⁶⁴ Holopova, *Alfred Schnittke*, 75.

Symphony also became “a musical summary of the many tendencies confronting the young composers as they had tried to catch up with Western modernism.”⁶⁵ After a succinct analytical commentary of the third movement, he concludes that the strictness of the calculations and of the pre-compositional planning governing its musical development “underscores the fact that for Schnittke, the ongoing sense of narrative within the Symphony was most important.” Schmelz admits the possibility of a narrative, but he never attempts to define it.⁶⁶ Both Holopova and Schmelz provide good starting points for a narrative interpretation; their views are consistent with the score, the composer and the context. However, they arise from a general impression produced by the music and not from a detailed analysis of the score. Only a systematic exploration of the score can help to establish a narrative that goes beyond the surface qualities of the work and accounts for its many surprises and audacities.

Borrowings and References

The borrowings in Schnittke’s Symphony No. 1 can be classified in four general categories: direct quotations (Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, *Dies Irae*), allusions to styles (Baroque,

⁶⁵ Schmelz, “Listening, Memory, and the Thaw,” 622.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

jazz), modern compositional techniques (dodecaphonism), and organizational principles (prime numbers).⁶⁷

During the course of the Symphony, the four categories play a role in nine specific features that create gaps which can be filled in by a narrative.⁶⁸ Each of these features, be it a short quotation or a rather long section in a foreign style, carries rich external associations (fig. 1-1). Consequently, borrowings automatically imply a certain degree of reference; they bear an implicit meaning. Using the nine features as the pillars of a narrative, I will discuss their role in the work and the thoughts that they arouse. In trying to explain their presence in a single work, I will bridge the gaps that separate them by constructing a narrative.

1. In the beginning, there is the long build-up, which culminates with the entrance of the director and a unison C.⁶⁹
2. Popular styles infiltrate the work in various places, creating strongly differentiated combinations of heterogeneous materials.

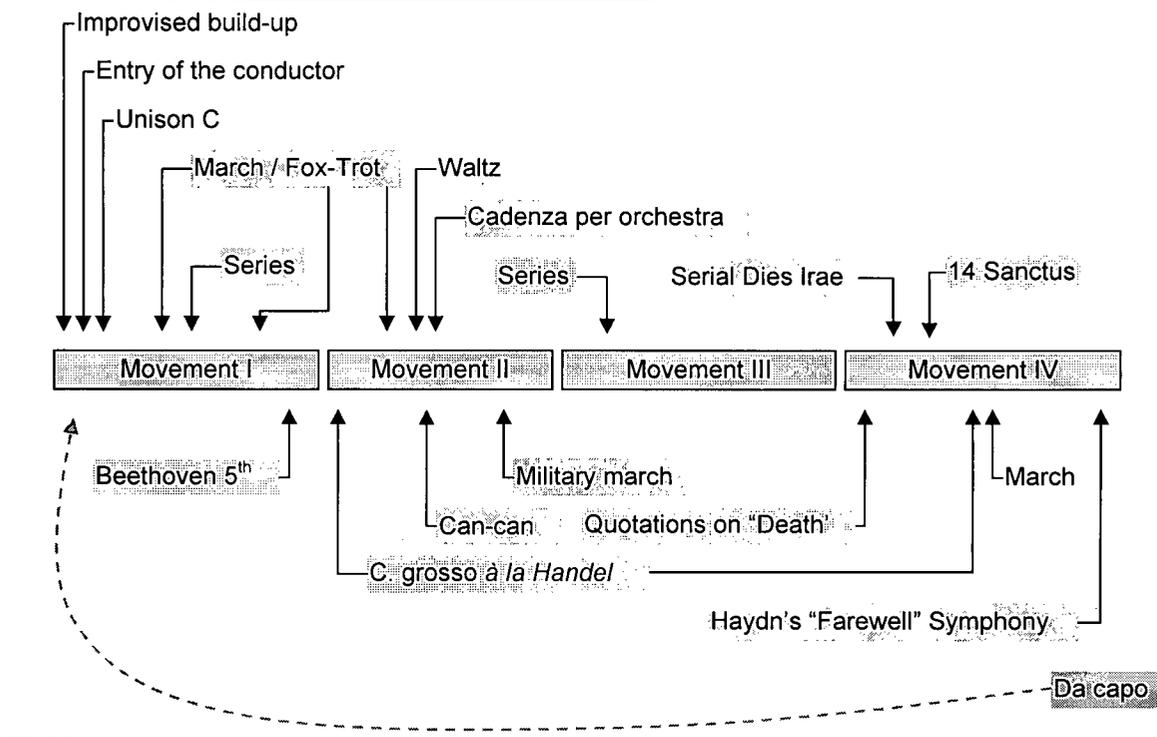
⁶⁷ In mathematics, a prime number is a natural number that has exactly two distinct natural number divisors, which are 1 and the prime number itself. The organization of musical material according to the prime numbers sequence may not appear as a stylistic borrowing as such; it is more the strictness and almost mathematical precision of Schnittke's use of the principle which indirectly refers to the similarly deterministic approach of integral serialism. Although they are not related to polystylism in a direct fashion, theatrical cues can relate to music from the past in some ways. For example, the exit of all the players is clearly reminiscent of Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony, which is indeed played from a recording after the last player has left.

⁶⁸ The identification of those nine events is the result of a choice. Another listener might not choose the same events, but to me, they represent the major stylistic disjunctions which need to be explained.

⁶⁹ Schnittke carefully notated each part, but added a note in the score: "To (33) completely free improvisation by all performers is possible."

3. Excerpts from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony are heard toward the end of the first movement.
4. Important sections of the work are in the style of a concerto grosso à la Handel.
5. There is a fight between instrumental groups in the "cadenza per orchestra" set in a free jazz style.
6. A military march persistently interrupts the Symphony and, along with other popular styles, dominates the end of the second movement. It is followed by the "exit of the wind players."
7. A dodecaphonic series is exposed in the first movement and serves as the basis for the third movement, together with formal groupings based on prime numbers.
8. The fourth movement juxtaposes quotations of works related to the idea of death. It also subjects the Dies Irae to dodecaphonic principles before superimposing fourteen versions of the Sanctus.
9. Finally, the entire work "dies" like Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony before being resurrected "da capo" with a return of the opening passage.

Figure 1-1. Principal features and characteristics creating stylistic gaps



From the above list, two main developments emerge. First, the Symphony exhibits a strong cyclic nature shaped by the intervention of the conductor: the work literally begins again after it has ended, and the same conductor gesture which started the work after the build-up now ends it.⁷⁰ Second, “high” styles, like Baroque and Classical idioms, contrast with “low” styles, marches and jazz.⁷¹ The two are juxtaposed and no attempt to synthesize them is made by the composer. The narrative derived from the work will further develop from these two main ideas.

⁷⁰ The cyclic nature of the Symphony is also supported by the reprises of many thematic features heard before in the fourth movement.

⁷¹ Schnittke uses the words “low” and “high” as synonyms for “banal” and “recherché” in Schnittke, “Polystylistics Tendencies,” 90.

(1) Beginning – Consonances and Dissonances

The Symphony begins with only one performer on stage, the tubular bells player, who starts with a ghostly improvisation-like passage. He is joined by a solo trumpet player, who walks on stage and takes a seat. For close to two minutes, other orchestra members individually join in, each of them playing a different line which has been written down by Schnittke.⁷² The textural complexity increases to the point of chaos (3/1/1).⁷³ The last person to enter is the conductor (9/1/1). After a general pause, one more chaotic burst, and a pointillist passage, the conductor puts an end to the disorder with an orchestral unison C (10/1/1), which is almost immediately replaced by a twelve-tone cluster played by the strings.

Schnittke described the beginning of the work as “unreal,” a possible reference to the eerie sound of the tubular bells.⁷⁴ It is a false beginning, enacting the warming-up of instrumentalists before a standard classical music concert. The whole scene, it should be kept in mind, is composed. Chaos is deliberately created, or, at least, portrayed. Only with the conductor’s intervention does the music begin for real; in a sense, anarchy has been replaced by submission to authority. Indeed, it is rather hard to imagine a better opposition to chaos, than the orchestra’s unison C.⁷⁵ The opening establishes the authority of the

⁷² Schnittke also adds on the score: “With the exception of the passages in parentheses, fragments from the relevant part and from every movement can now be played at will.”

⁷³ Since there are no measure numbers in Schnittke’s score, I use the following identification system: ([page]/[system]/[measure].[beat]). All numbers refer to Schnittke’s autograph, available for rent from Sikorski Edition.

⁷⁴ Weitzman, “Alfred Schnittke: Symphony No. 1,” CD Booklet, Chandos 9417 (1996), 5.

⁷⁵ The choice of C is certainly not fortuitous. For example, every time Schnittke uses the series of natural overtones, he begins with C. In the context, it is easily understood as the basis, or an abstraction, of the tonal system.

conductor, who has the power to stop the chaos and to impose order. Within the first few minutes, from the “pre-work” beginning to the “real” one, Schnittke’s work has already encompassed two extremes: chaos and uniformity. The rest of the work oscillates between those two poles.

Throughout the work, unisons and clusters are juxtaposed. For instance, the opening C unison imposed by the conductor is immediately followed by 12-tone clusters. Conversely, clusters are sometimes followed by unexpected unisons. Later in the movement, for instance, a strings cluster dissolves on unison E \flat (26/1/1). The serial third movement ends on a unison E (125/3/5) which is prolonged in the last movement. When the series exposed in the first movement returns in the last, it begins with four unison notes (190/1/2). Finally, toward the end of the work, a dissolving cluster in the strings and the organ meets a unison A in all other instruments (210/1/1).

Besides a vague sense of unity, there is no definite meaning for the unisons. Their presence in the work’s predominantly dissonant texture is nevertheless striking. Whereas they may not have a clear meaning, they have a precise function, acting as resting points, axes around which other developments occur. In other words, they are punctuation marks.⁷⁶ Moreover, they establish one end of the musical and conceptual spectrum. Were they isolated, they would be the simplest expression of music, but in the Symphony they dominate the structure and are pivotal points. In this light, it is revealing that both the “real” beginning of the work, and its very last moments, are unison Cs. For Schnittke, who often associated the natural series of harmonics (which he always bases on C) with the

⁷⁶ For example, in the first movement, a unison C separates the introduction from the real beginning (10/1/1), while a unison C \sharp marks the first climax (21/1/5).

natural aspect of music and life in general, the unison Cs could symbolize the ground on which the symphonic edifice is built.

(2) The Popular and the Banal

Scattered throughout the Symphony are bits of popular styles, including a march, fox-trot, waltz, and can-can. The inclusion of these styles is one of the main constituents of Schnittke's ideal of being free of "sectarian prejudice." They are the "expression of a multifaceted reality."⁷⁷ Their presence in a symphony clearly points back to Mahler, whose incorporation of folk music set a precedent. Because of the role they play in the Symphony, the styles acquire a specific function: they portray the force of the banal that the artist must acknowledge, fight, and eventually triumph over. Given the context of a work written by a Soviet composer and the inspiration provided by Romm's documentary, the marches strongly suggest the authoritative and repressive nature of the political regime. The waltz and can-can belong to a more mundane world, one governed by the sensual and one that Schnittke will associate with evil in later interviews.

After a long improvisatory passage, the late arrival of the conductor, and four finely organized orchestral waves functioning as defective tuning chords, the first movement seems to begin with a rather tacky march (11/1/3). For the brief seven measures of the passage, the brass, woodwinds and piano superimpose inconsistent rag-like melodies and

⁷⁷ For Schnittke, popular styles are part of the reality and, as such, he cannot ignore them. However, he never considered popular styles as the equivalent of more "serious" ones. His music includes popular styles as the world includes evil; that does not make evil better. Schnittke, "On Concerto Grosso No. 1," 45.

accompaniment figures on top of each other.⁷⁸ If a precarious sense of coherence is created by the shared genre, it ends with it. Each instrument plays in its own key and seems to quote a distinct work.⁷⁹ The rag is interrupted by brass partial clusters (E, F, D, E \flat , and C \sharp over a low G, 12/1/4). Similarly, later in the movement, at the first real climax (as the full-orchestra 97-voice cluster reduces to a 41-voice dissonant collection in the strings) the winds launch a new popular episode (33/1/3), again interrupted by clusters (35/1/1-2).⁸⁰ March and rag motives return, once again interrupted by clusters, this time reaching a summit in terms of harshness and dissonance (46/1/1). At that point, the dissonant masses of the clusters serve a specific purpose: to interrupt the cacophonous mix of the march-pattern. They suddenly interrupt the movement, as if someone had pulled the emergency brake. The clusters take the role of the composer's eraser on the manuscript of the score; they force a new beginning by momentarily obliterating the banal.

Throughout the first movement, the orchestra does not allow popular styles to settle in. The second movement gives them more room, but ultimately, the outcome is the same: popular styles will be rejected. Different motives are superposed the end of the Baroque-like section. Shortly afterwards, a drum waltz pattern cuts off the cadences of the Handelian music (58/1/8). Solo string instruments play short atonal phrases which happen to be derived from the series presented in the first movement.⁸¹ Schnittke combines the

⁷⁸ As all instruments seem to play from a different work, the global style is uncertain. However, the alternating bass of the piano, the syncopated rhythm of the trumpet and the dotted figures of the clarinet seems to plead for a kind of ragtime. This impression is reinforced by the fact the orchestration consisting of 12 solo instruments, perhaps to evoke a small jazz orchestra.

⁷⁹ Only the piano is given a key signature of D \flat major.

⁸⁰ Both 97 and 41 are prime numbers. The relevance of that fact will be made clear below.

⁸¹ The series will be addressed in more details below.

traditional waltz rhythm with atonal melodies.⁸² Various motives are punched in and out in the same fashion as before. Trumpets and trombones punctuate the episode with dance-like cadential figures. When the concerto grosso momentarily returns, this time with a theme that could be a bridge with modulatory sequences (60/2/5), individual stylistic layers are piled on top of each other. Each instrumental line plays in a different style: horns and trombones play a can-can; the soprano saxophone laments; the concerto grosso continues in the strings; while the electric guitar's line could have been borrowed from an early romantic opera, although there is apparently no real quotation (61/1/1). As before, the texture builds up and is then abruptly cut off (63/1/1).

Schnittke offered a blunt opinion of popular styles: "Nowadays what is often called 'pop culture' is the most direct manifestation of evil in art. ... So I can see no way of expressing evil in music other than by using elements of pop culture."⁸³ He claimed that popular music passages "stick out because they are vivid examples of 'infection'."⁸⁴ From the first appearances of rag-like figures and fox-trot formulas to the presence of a waltz in the second movement, a certain sense of banality infiltrates the Symphony. The styles

⁸² Schnittke also combines waltz with atonal series in the Concerto Grosso No. 1. It is hard to tell whether the two similar occurrences are coincidental or bear a deeper signification. Schnittke also employs waltz rhythms in other works like the Symphony No. 7, the Piano Quintet, the String Trio, and in various film scores.

⁸³ Schnittke and Ivashkin, "From Schnittke's Conversations," 22.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 22. Admittedly, that affirmation is taken from an interview given years after the composition and does not necessarily mean that dance fragments in the Symphony No. 1 solely imply evil. However, by examining how popular material is introduced in the work and the role it plays by opposition to other styles, it becomes clear that this peculiar interpretation is quite appropriate to the context.

come across as extraneous to the work.⁸⁵ Their appeal to easiness, to commodity confronts the artist. In other words, their presence symbolizes the danger of the artist who is always on the verge of giving in to the facile. But Schnittke refuses to take that path. This is probably why, at least until the end of the second movement of the Symphony, popular styles are temporarily overwhelmed by clusters.⁸⁶

(3) Beethoven

Soon after the last march statement of the first movement, another passage relevant to the narrative proposed here is heard. A sustained F major chord on a G pedal is animated by tremolos, and soon becomes a G⁷ chord which is sustained by a crescendo (49/1/1). The pedal tone and chord unmistakably quotes the transition between the third and fourth movements of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. The strong similarity does not stop there as the pedal leads into a quotation of the beginning of the fourth movement. At first, the quotation is almost exact but it becomes rapidly distorted with the addition of dissonant pitches and shifting meters. Like most of what occurred before, the Beethoven passage is transformed into a cluster, or, to be more precise, successive clusters played by different instrumental groups. On a low unstable pedal tone played by two trombones and the harp, wind and brass instruments are added in groups of three, forming an 11-tone cluster, three semitones at a time (from 52/1/5). A solo trumpet plays an improvisatory line which contains the twelfth tone F#. It concludes on that pitch while the rest of the instrumental parts fade out. Thus ends the first movement.

⁸⁵ Allusion to "art music," like the Handelian section, also seems extraneous to the work. As we will see, they will also be rejected by Schnittke.

⁸⁶ The march in the second section of the second movement will be addressed below.

That Schnittke choose to include the transition between the two concluding movements from another composer's work as the finale to the first movement of his symphony is connotatively rich. Beethoven's Fifth—in particular this exact moment—has often been interpreted as portraying some kind of victory. Of what kind, of which hero is open to debate, but the heroic narrative unquestionably reaches a climax with the transition between the last two movements.⁸⁷ In Schnittke's Symphony, the triumph is undercut; it is either a dream of the future or a deceptive illusion. The fact that it happens precisely after the marches insistently try to infiltrate the movement texture, also implies that the artist has won his first battle against the banal and the easy. However, as we will see, the war is not yet won. The composer still faces the problem of finding his own voice, and although he has rejected the easiest solutions, that of the servile submission to the facile aesthetics of popular styles, he still has not found his way.

(4) Concerto Grosso à la Handel

After so many stylistic shifts and unexpected contrasts, it is hard to predict what Schnittke will give us for a second movement. True to fashion, what comes next is a surprise. Schnittke reduces the orchestration to the size of a chamber music ensemble and goes back almost 300 years to a Handel-like concerto grosso. At first, the pastiche is perfect: the instrumentation consists of a divided string section plus oboe and harpsichord. The initial bars present phrases in a clear D major (56/1/1). But after 23 measures, while the Handel D major layer continues in the strings, a second stylistic layer appears, consisting of bells

⁸⁷ For a more detailed interpretation of Beethoven's work, see Burnham, "How Music Matters," 193-216, especially 207. Burnham also examines the historical interpretations of the Fifth Symphony, especially the heroic connotation given to the work by commentators, in his book *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), especially 107-109.

and harp figurations in a conflicting implicit meter which could be articulating a $\frac{3}{8}$ meter in E \flat major (57/1/4). When an E \flat clarinet is added shortly afterwards, this layer (including bells and harpsichord) shifts to another implied meter ($\frac{12}{16}$) and key (E minor) (57/2/3). The Handel layer itself grows texturally more dense, with each phrase now being successively introduced, and transposed, in a compact canon. The initial $\frac{2}{4}$ meter, so squarely established at first by the oboe and harpsichord is further weakened by the piano, which plays eighth notes in a 4:5 ratio. The entry of the brass ensemble, with its characteristic march idiom, ends the building mayhem.

The Handel melody returns as a refrain during the course of the movement, and one last time in the fourth movement.⁸⁸ Each time, it pops up in sections of greater stylistic complexity and resembles a memory, each time slightly more distant. It opens a window of the past and refers, not without nostalgia, to a period where Schnittke's stylistic problems would easily have found an answer. Schnittke's solution, however, cannot be to imitate past composers or their styles. Like the popular idioms and the Beethoven passage before, the Handelian theme is never allowed to settle in completely. The strict meter of the concerto cannot be synchronized with other materials. It is as if the style cannot adapt to today's musical reality. The accumulation of layers of conflicting rhythms accentuates the distance between the ideals of the past and those of the present.

After the first statement, the Handelian style gives way to marches, waltzes and clusters (58/1/8). It returns afterwards with a melody that could have been an appropriate B section to the Handel (60/2/5). In fact, everything that happened between the two

⁸⁸ The last occurrence of the Handelian melody, toward the end of the fourth movement, will be discussed below.

Baroque excerpts is strongly foregrounded. The marches, waltzes and clusters constitute an interlude unconnected with the surroundings. Soon, can-can figures in the brass, jazz licks in the flute and saxophone, and the electric guitar lyrical theme crowd the Handelian strings, again disrupting a precarious stylistic uniformity (61/1/1). The Baroque idiom will eventually give up (63/1/1). It later returns at three different places, each time after outbursts of march fragments and military drums. At last, appears to be from a more and more distant past, progressively buried under layers of other materials (87/1/2). Obviously, a return to the past will still not be the answer for Schnittke.

(5) Battle of the Cadenza

Certainly one of the most unusual moments in the Symphony is the second movement “cadenza per orchestra” (81/2/1). Unlike a traditional cadenza, it does not come at the end of the movement, but rather near the middle. Improvisation is based upon short motives provided by Schnittke, some from the Symphony and some newly composed. Instead of a full-orchestra improvisation, many performances adopt the solution suggested at the bottom of the page: “Completely free improvisation of any chosen combination is also possible here (e.g. jazz combo: 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, saxophone and rhythm section). Whatever happens, there must be a contest between the different groups.” In Roždestvenskij’s 1988 recording at the Moscow Conservatory, Alexej Lûbimov and Tat’âna Grindenko elaborate on jazz and classical themes, which are all intertwined in a free manner. They only partly obey Schnittke’s call for a “contest.” Exchanges between the two soloists are numerous and result more in a friendly collaboration than in a fierce competition. There is no “Free cadenza by the ‘victor’ of the competition,” as noted in the score (83/1/1). The score is not very clear as to what should really happen here. Page 83 is

entirely devoted to the “solo of the victor,” which should be played over a *pppp* cluster; but the duration is unspecified. From page 84 onward, the solo line seems to drop out, but the cluster continues and gets louder and louder until the snare drum intervenes to start the final march (87/1/1).

The cadenza forms a counterpart to the opening of the Symphony. At the very beginning of the work, the instrumentalists develop a scene of complete chaos, which the conductor ends with his arrival. The passage is carefully choreographed by the composer: instrumental lines are improvised and the late arrival of the conductor is specified in the score. The outcome is thus, from the composer’s point of view, almost entirely predictable. In the case of the free cadenza, the composer creates the conditions for an unpredictable development. Even if he does provide a scenario, he does not specify which instruments will play, nor does he specify what or when they will play. In doing so, in a certain sense, he forfeits a great part of his role; he transfers the responsibility of the composer to the orchestra members who must fight each other in order to win the “cadenza per solo.” This episode of freedom, in which neither the conductor nor the composer is present, nevertheless has to come to an end. The work must go on after all. The orchestra does return with a sustained cluster underlying the cadenza of the victorious instrument. If the Symphony is indeed the quest the composer’s voice, it seems that he refuses to leave it in the hands of the orchestra. He has to come to terms with it all by himself.

(6) Triumph of the Banal

As we have seen before, marches and other popular styles routinely infiltrate the first two movements only to be rejected. They are interrupted by clusters, obliterated under sonic masses. In the middle of the second movement, the cluster following the “cadenza of the

victor” is abruptly stopped by a military snare drum. After only two measures, the Handel theme is superimposed in the strings (87/1/3). More instruments are added, creating a complex texture in which no particular style clearly dominates: clarinets play a theme of folkloric color; the double basses play what looks like a jazz walking bass pattern; the harpsichord alternates two tonal chords (A minor and E major) in a childish fashion; and the horns evoke waltz figures. When the trumpets enter with the march theme, it seems that the balance is shifting to one side: the banal will triumph. From that point on, the winds completely overwhelm the Baroque strings (89/1/5). Just as before, the huge build-up culminates in a massive cluster (91/1/6).

However, this time, instead of simply discarding the march as if nothing has happened, the movement ends with a section called: “Exit of the wind players” (91/1/1). Starting with a percussion pattern, a solo flute plays a simple oscillatory motive around D, which, after nine measures, is imitated by the second flute (92/1/1). Wind instruments are then added, one by one, with each one improvising a line that mimics the previous one. Only the first solo flute is notated throughout, so it can constantly provide new material to its followers. The wind players are expected to stand up and walk off stage to the beating of the toms, so that when the third movement begins, only percussion and strings are present. Their departure should prevent any further intrusions of popular styles and, as far as the third movement is concerned, that will hold true.

From a listener’s, and in this particular case, a viewer’s point of view, the events that lead to the exit of the wind players are rich in connotations. At first, there is the layering of styles in a stratified texture, in which instrumental groups neither cooperate nor fight against each other. They are shown to be the many forces or influences occupying a

single space. Except for the strings, the other parts more or less relate to popular style, an avenue that was previously rejected by the composer. By the end of the passage, the popular styles in the winds are clearly put forward over the strings which are completely overwhelmed (from 87/1/3 to 91/1/6). In a sense, the banal wins. Yet, the composer sends the winds off stage at the end of the movement (from 92/1/1). He refuses them the victory.

(7) *Series, Series, Series, and Primes*

A dodecaphonic series is presented in the first movement (13/1/4), which can be called the “principal series”: C E \flat D B A \flat G F F \sharp B \flat A D \flat E (fig. 1-2). Although its importance is not clear for the duration of the first two movements, it will return prominently later in the Symphony, notably in the third movement which is the most stylistically coherent section of the work. With a slow tempo (*lento*) in $\frac{4}{4}$, the third movement is almost entirely dodecaphonic. Schnittke described it as a “dynamic triangle” where, by the strict application of serial principles, he made sure that no unison appears until the climax.⁸⁹ Schnittke also claimed that he did all that was possible to quash the sense of meter in the movement.⁹⁰ As I will demonstrate, he succeeded on both counts.

⁸⁹ The third movement is effectively built like a triangle. It starts with only two instruments playing a unison C and builds up until the climax—the triangle summit—featuring the A major and C minor chords succession. The movement then progressively thins out until the final unison E.

⁹⁰ Šul'gin and Schnittke, *Gody neizvestnosti Al'freda Šnitke*, 66.

Figure 1-2. Principal series of Schnittke's *Symphony No. 1*



		Inversions													
		I_0	I_3	I_2	I_{11}	I_8	I_7	I_5	I_6	I_{10}	I_9	I_1	I_4		
Primes	P_0	C	E \flat	D	B	A \flat	G	F	F \sharp	E \flat	A	C \sharp	E	R_4	Retrogrades
	P_9	A	C	B	A \flat	F	E	D	E \flat	G	F \sharp	B \flat	C \sharp	R_1	
	P_{10}	B \flat	C \sharp	C	A	F \sharp	F	E \flat	E	A \flat	G	B	D	R_2	
	P_1	C \sharp	E	E \flat	C	A	A \flat	F \sharp	G	B	B \flat	D	F	R_5	
	P_4	E	G	F \sharp	E \flat	C	B	A	B \flat	D	C \sharp	F	A \flat	R_8	
	P_5	F	A \flat	G	E	C \sharp	C	B \flat	B	E \flat	D	F \sharp	A	R_9	
	P_7	G	B \flat	A	F \sharp	E \flat	D	C	C \sharp	F	E	A \flat	B	R_{11}	
	P_6	F \sharp	A	A \flat	F	D	C \sharp	B	C	E	E \flat	G	B \flat	R_{10}	
	P_2	D	F	E	C \sharp	B \flat	A	G	A \flat	C	B	E \flat	F \sharp	R_6	
	P_3	E \flat	F \sharp	F	D	B	B \flat	A \flat	A	C \sharp	C	E	G	R_7	
	P_{11}	B	D	C \sharp	B \flat	G	F \sharp	E	F	A	A \flat	C	E \flat	R_3	
	P_8	A \flat	B	B \flat	G	E	E \flat	C \sharp	D	F \sharp	F	A	C	R_0	
		RI_8	RI_{11}	RI_{10}	RI_7	RI_4	RI_3	RI_1	RI_2	RI_6	RI_5	RI_9	RI_0	Retrograde-Inversions	

The beginning of the movement is built upon manipulations of the principal series. Schnittke successively introduces twelve separate groups of row forms, all derived from the matrix of the principal series. The first row of each group, which I will call the “group row,” begins with its corresponding pitch in the principal series. That is to say, in the second group, the group row begins by the second pitch of the principal series, E \flat (P_3); in the third group, the group row begins by the third pitch of the principal series, D (P_2), and so on. The process is used in a cascading fashion such that all instruments added in a group play from their own row. For example, the second instrument of any group plays a row beginning by the second pitch of the group row, and so on.

With a few exceptions caused by note doubling, the composer determined the number of instruments playing in each group by the sequence of prime numbers: 1 2 3 5 7 11 13 17 19 23 29 31.⁹¹ For example, the first group includes only one instrument, whereas the fifth group comprises seven instruments (fig. 1-3).⁹² As each instrument is playing a distinct row, there are as many different row forms as there are instruments in a group. The length of the row forms is also governed by the sequence of prime numbers. The instrument of the first group presents only the first pitch of the row, both instruments of the second group play two pitches of their respective row, and the same principle is rigorously applied until the final group, in which each instrument uses special row forms of 31 pitches.⁹³ All instruments of a group play the same number of pitches. Since they are successively introduced yet end at the same point, progressively shorter rhythmic values are used in later entries.⁹⁴

⁹¹ In interviews, Schnittke refers to the prime numbers sequence as Erasthenes's row. See Šul'gin and Schnittke, *Gody neizvestnosti Al'freda Šnitke*, 63.

⁹² Rhythms and orchestration groupings based on prime numbers are used extensively by Schnittke. Other examples are given below.

⁹³ As it will be explained in more details below, the principal series first and last intervals are two minor thirds, a semitone apart. As a consequence, the last two pitches of any given row are also the first two pitches of another one. This way, by flowing from one row to the next, a 120-pitch long sequence can be constructed. The first 31 pitches are used in the present case.

⁹⁴ That principle is respected until the ninth group inclusively; the next ones are spread over a longer period.

Figure 1-4 summarizes the organizational principles in play by taking the fifth group as an example. Since it is the fifth group, the number of instruments it contains is determined by the fifth element of the prime number sequence, or in this case, seven.⁹⁷ The first row exposed in that group begins with the fifth pitch of the principal series, that is A_b (I₈): A_b F F# A C D_b E_b D B_b B G E.⁹⁸ The second instrument plays a row that begins with the second pitch of the group row, F (I₅). The same principle applies to all seven instruments in that group.

⁹⁷ Some groups, but not all of them, add a pedal tone. This is the case here.

⁹⁸ There seems to be no way to predict whether Schnittke will use a transposition or an inversion; however, he will seldom use the same series in two superimposed instruments. In larger groups, he will also use retrograde and retrograde inversion.

Figure 1-4. Details of the fifth group, 96/2/2 to 96/2/8

Prime Meas.	Series	Instr.: example rhythms
7		
7	I ₃ E \flat C D \flat E G A \flat B \flat ... [A F F \sharp D B]	Vln I, 5: ♩ septuplets
6	P ₁ D \flat E E \flat C A A \flat F \sharp ... [G B B \flat D F]	Vln I, 6: ♩ quintuplets
5	P ₀ C E \flat D B A \flat G F ... [F \sharp B \flat A D \flat E]	Vln I, 7: ♩ triplets
4	P ₉ A C B A \flat F E D ... [E \flat G F \sharp B \flat D \flat]	Vln I, 8: ♩
3	I ₆ F \sharp E \flat E G B \flat B D \flat ... [C A \flat A F D]	Vln I, 9: ♩
2	I ₅ F D E \flat F \sharp A B \flat C ... [B G A \flat E D \flat]	Vln I, 10: ♩
1	I ₈ A \flat F F \sharp A C D \flat E \flat ... [D B \flat B G E]	Vln I, 11: ○
1	I ₈ A \flat [pedal]	Vln I, 12: ○

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The ending of each group is delineated by the appearance of short solo fragments in a contrasting style.⁹⁹ The first fragment reprises the same military drum pattern that closed the second movement (96/1/1). The following inserted passages feature celesta

⁹⁹ Schnittke uses a special notation for the inserted fragments: an ossia line marks the point of insertion and an arrow points to the main orchestral score.

arpeggios, timpani glissandos, Baroque sequences on the harpsichord, and piano clusters. From the sixth group onwards, groups of series overlap. A new group begins before the previous one has ended by an increasing number of measures following the prime number sequence. For example, the sixth group begins one bar before the fifth group has ended; the seventh group begins two bars before the sixth one has ended, and so on, until the twelfth group, which begins thirteen bars before the eleventh one has ended. Even with the overlap, an inserted fragment still appears in every case but the last.

Most of the instruments in the twelfth and the final thirteenth groups successively abandon the row forms and begin to play arpeggios that culminate with an A major triad, the last three pitches of the principal series (113/1/3). The triad, too, quickly moves to a C minor chord played by the entire orchestra, including the winds, which are still standing in the wings (114/1/1).¹⁰⁰ The wind blast dies out quickly, but the strings dissolve in figurations based on row forms that all start with the pitches of the C minor triad. Triadic sonorities briefly predominate as figurations emphasise the last three pitches of P and I row forms or the first three pitches of the RI row forms (from 114/1/3 to 118/1/1). Each of the instruments drops out until only the solo double bass is playing in m. 120/1/1. On the whole, four clusters, each shorter than the previous one, build and diminish, overlapping by a proportion directly taken from the prime numbers series.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ In fact, it is the third time in the Symphony that this chord succession, A major followed by C minor, is heard: in the first movement, it came right after the exposition of the series (14/1/7) and toward the end after the Beethoven quotation (50/1/7).

¹⁰¹ The second cluster begins at 118/1/1, 11 measures after the first one has begun. The third cluster begins at 120/1/2, 7 measures after the second one has begun. The fourth cluster begins at 122/1/1, 5 measures after the third one has begun.

The rest of the movement is organized around the creation of sonorities based upon specific intervals, ranging from the semitone to the perfect fifth.¹⁰² Schnittke starts with the brass which, still from the wings, play a cluster containing all twelve pitch classes (122/1/3). The effect is echoed by another brass cluster, this one based on whole tones (123/1/2.3). Minor third based sonorities are played by keyboard instruments and strings (123/1/4), to whom the brass responds. The two alternate, with each statement using chords based on larger intervals, until the augmented fourth is reached (125/2/3). The last interval, a perfect fifth, is played in the strings, followed by a unison E after a general pause (125/3/2). That final pitch, which is also the last pitch of the main series of the Symphony, ends the movement, and also opens up the concluding movement.

For the third movement, then, Schnittke chose what he called a “statistical” approach.¹⁰³ From the description above, it is clear that a relatively restrictive set of rules governs the movement. Series are chosen according to a cascading principle, the principal series determining the group rows, and the pitches of each group row determining the rows played by each instruments. The number of instruments in each group and the length of each sub-section are determined by the sequence of prime numbers.¹⁰⁴ In short, at least

¹⁰² In an interview, Schnittke explains that all this development results from the application of calculation based on prime numbers. He was especially influenced by his meeting with the Romanian composer Anatol Vieru (1926-1998). Vieru showed Schnittke how he combined prime numbers in order to obtain new series, mostly by multiplication. While Schnittke said he used the technique in the Symphony, by nature, those calculations are impossible to trace in the score. Šul’gin, *Gody neizvestnosti Al’freda Šnitke*, 64.

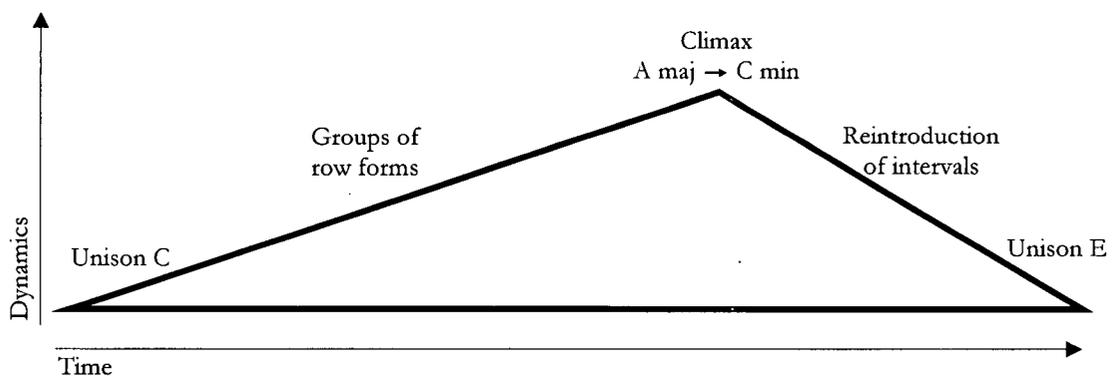
¹⁰³ For Schnittke, the “statistical method” is a synonym for integral serialism. He learned the technique by studying the scores of Stockhausen, Boulez and Nono, and adapted it to suit his own needs. Schnittke, “A New Approach to Composition: The Statistical Method,” *A Schnittke Reader*, 125-130.

¹⁰⁴ Other musical factors like the number of instruments in a cluster and significant rhythmic motives are also governed by the sequence of prime numbers. They will be discussed below.

until the climax on the C minor chord (114/1/1), the presence of the triad is obviously unexpected. However, there is some reason for its appearance. If most stylistic excursions heard so far have been rejected by clusters, it seems logical that in order to reject dodecaphonism one must oppose it with elements of tonality. After the triad, the texture is slowly thinned out through a succession of clusters until it reaches a point of near silence, from which to build up again. In the build-up, intervals from the semitone to the perfect fifth will govern the inner structure of the sonic masses.

Schnittke's description of the movement as a dynamic triangle is apt. The first section of the movement slowly builds up to an extreme (fig 1-5). Entirely devised from one series and the prime numbers sequence, it is totally dissonant, with no sense of meter beside the regular stratification of voices. However, the summit it reaches is not a cluster, but rather a C minor triad; once again, Schnittke's goal seems to be the exact opposite of the natural conclusion and tonal sense emerges from chaos. From there on, through a succession of clusters and answering chords, all intervals from the semitones to the augmented fourth are obtained.

Figure 1-5. Dynamic Triangle of the Third Movement



Serial procedures are used in the third movement to produce a state of stasis where tonal and metric senses are avoided altogether.¹⁰⁵ In a paper he wrote in the 1970s, Schnittke explores how Nono, Boulez and Stockhausen used complex superimpositions of rhythms to overcome a sense of meter.¹⁰⁶ Schnittke applies the same technique throughout the first part of the movement by dividing the measures and the beats in each measure into varied numbers of units. Nevertheless, a sense of both meter and tonality re-emerges in the second half of the movement. The sense of stasis created by the first part of the movement suggests that the flow of time has been paused in order to make a meditation on serialism. On the other hand, from the climax of the movement onward, the listener witnesses the reintroduction of triadic sonorities, and later of interval-based harmonies until the perfect fifth returns. Is the turn to tonal elements the confession of failure? It is hard to tell, but the musical development of the Symphony closely follows that of its composer who experimented with dodecaphonism in the 1960s. In the 1970s, Schnittke expressed his dissatisfaction with the rigidity of the technique, saying that the method is too sterile and too rational, and modified it in many ways.¹⁰⁷ In spite of this, noting that “the period when serial music seemed hopelessly out of date is now coming to an end,” he later conceded that the “final verdict on it still lies in the future.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Šul'gin, *Gody neizvestnosti Alfreda Šnitke*, 66.

¹⁰⁶ Schnittke, “Using Rhythm to Overcome Meter,” *A Schnittke Reader*, 139-146.

¹⁰⁷ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 135.

¹⁰⁸ Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 19.

Interlude: Prime Numbers

Structures based on prime numbers, such as rhythmic groupings and durations, can be found throughout the third movement and elsewhere in the Symphony. Schnittke found many advantages in that sequence as opposed to other arithmetic structure principles: doubling numbers gave large results too rapidly; proceeding by addition was “dull”; and even proportions based on multiples of the Golden Mean (*Phi* or 1.618) gave “wild numbers” too soon.¹⁰⁹ In contrast, the prime numbers sequence, according to him, produces infinitely variable forms and effective progressions.¹¹⁰ But since none of the prime number groupings or rhythms can be heard as such, most listeners cannot intuitively include them in the elaboration of a narrative. However, even as an abstract feature, their presence cannot be ignored by scholars and others working closely with the score. After all, they are a choice made by the composer.¹¹¹

The phrasing from m. 26/2/1 [62] to 33/1/1 [76] presents one of the best examples of structural organization achieved through the use of prime numbers (fig. 1-6). Throughout the section, the lengths of the phrases and rests are governed by two interlocking prime-number sequences whose orders are the reverse of each other. For example, the first trumpet successively plays groups of 11, 7, 5, 3, 2, and 1 triplet eighth

¹⁰⁹ Šul'gin, *Gody neizvestnosti Al'freda Šnitke*, 64.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ The question here is what importance, if any, should be given to the presence of prime numbers. To stay coherent with the principles to which I have adhered to so far, I prefer not to ignore them, even if doing so actually means that my narrative discourse about Schnittke's Symphony can be shared by a relatively small group of people.

notes, which are separated by rests of 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 11 triplet eighths' duration respectively.¹¹² The principle is repeated for each instrument of the brass section.

Figure 1-6. Rhythmic organization of *Symphony No. 1*, 1st movement, section 4

Instruments	Unit	Rhythmic groupings [<i>silences</i>], from 26/2/1 [63]
Trumpet 1		11 1 7 2 5 3 3 5 2 7 1 11 continues: 13 13 13 11 1 7 2 5 3 ...
Trumpet 2		13 1 11 2 7 3 5 5 3 7 2 11 1 13, 1 11 2 7 3 5 5 3 7 2 11 1 ...
Trumpet 3		7 1 5 2 3 2 5 1 7, 13 7 1
Trumpet 4		5 1 3 2 2 3 1 5, 13
Trombone 1		3 1 2 2 1
Trombone 2		2 1 1

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Prime numbers appear in all kinds of structures.¹¹³ Rhythmic structures based on prime numbers figure among the technical means used by Schnittke to overcome a sense of meter. Prime numbers also govern the number of instruments in each group of row forms, the number of pitches from any row form played by each instrument, the number

¹¹² At first, each of the first six brasses instruments uses basis values of different lengths; and the shorter the value, the longest the first group is. However, as the build up progresses, other types of organization appear where notes and rests can augment or decrease simultaneously, like for the electric guitar. After a first utterance of the series, the succession of rhythmic groups is getting progressively freer but, with only a few exceptions, these are still prime numbers.

¹¹³ Prime numbers can be found in the following guises: (1) the number of instruments in each group of series in the third movement; (2) the number of voices in clusters at mm. 23/1/1 (71 voices), 24/1/5 (41 v.), and 33/1/1 (97 v.); and (3) the number of note figures in rhythmic groupings at mm. 63/1/1 (various instruments), 70/1/7 (saxophones), 133/1/1 (percussion), 134/1/2 (wood sticks), 146/1/6 (brass and woodwinds), 153/1/1 (strings), 159/1/2 (woodblocks), 163/1/1 (piano), and 209/1/1 (keyboards).

of instruments in the large orchestral clusters, and the division of some measures in rhythmic units. The ultimate meaning of their presence is a matter of speculation. Since they are concentrated in the third movement and since they structure elements which could not be defined by dodecaphonism (at least as it was employed by Schnittke), prime numbers are part of the deterministic effort featured in the movement. They are one of the tools employed by Schnittke to carefully calculate all parameters in a manifestation of the control vs. chaos opposition.

(8) Death

With the change from the third to the fourth movement, serial complexity gives way to a funeral procession. The horn players walking back on the stage are joined by the other wind players, all performing motives from famous funeral marches, including the third movement from Chopin's Sonata Op. 35 and the "Death of Åse" from Grieg's *Peer Gynt*.¹¹⁴ Other quotations offer a striking contrast: Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Johann Strauss's waltz, *Tales from the Vienna Woods*.¹¹⁵ As we will see, like before, the vulgar and the banal are soon rejected, to be replaced by the Dies Irae, another "high" sign of death.

¹¹⁴ Schnittke explained that he had the idea of combining funeral pieces when he attended the burial of Mark Lubockij's father in 1967. As he recollected, when they arrived at the cemetery a thunderstorm surprised them, forcing two different processions, with two brass bands, to wait until it would stop. When the rain ended, the two brass bands started to play two different marches simultaneously. Šul'gin and Schnittke, *Gody neizvestnosti Al'freda Šnitke*, 63.

¹¹⁵ Although Schnittke generally admired the works of Tchaikovsky, especially the symphonies, he was probably aware of the famous incident concerning the creation of the Piano Concerto. After hearing the work, Nicolai Rubinstein, the intended dedicatee and performer, qualified the work as trivial, bad and vulgar. After the incident with Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky changed the dedication in favour of Hans von Bülow.

Before we get to the *Dies Irae*, we need to discuss the special properties of the series in this movement. We have seen how the sonorities of A major and C minor triads, which have been heard three times before, emerge from the last three pitches of P_0 and I_4 in the twelfth group of row forms of the third movement.¹¹⁶ Those two chords are featured once more after the introductory episode of the fourth movement which superimposes all the different quotations (from 129/1/2, see fig. 1-7). However, this time, Schnittke exploits a 120-pitch long row spun out from P_0 . Indeed, since the principal series begins and ends with an ascending minor third (at least as initially presented), the last two pitches of any row transposition are also the first two of another one. Moreover, since the last two pitches of the principal series are a semitone higher than the first two, twelve transpositions can be placed in a cycle creating a single 120-pitch long “perpetual” row. Schnittke draws attention to the two triads by lengthening the pitches of the A major triad in half-notes, and the pitches of the C minor triad to quarter-note, all the others pitches making grace-note appoggiaturas, with the result that the A major/C minor complex slowly emerges. The same process will be used to emphasize the pitches of the *Dies Irae*.

¹¹⁶ As a reminder, A major and C minor sonorities are features in the first movement, after the exposition of the series (14/1/7), toward the end after the Beethoven quotation (50/1/7) and in the third movement, after the twelfth and last group of row forms (113/1/3).

Figure 1-7. Emergence of chords from series, from 129/1/2

$\text{♩} = \text{C min.}; \text{♩} = \text{A maj.}; \text{others} = \text{appoggiaturas}$

Oboe 4:

P₁₀: 10 1 0 9 6 5 3 4 7 11 2

P₁₁: 11 2 1 10 7 6 4 5 9 8 0 3

P₀: 0 3 2 11 8 7 5 6 10 9 1 4

P₁: 1 4 3 0 9 8 6 7 11 10 2 5

P₂: 2 5 4 1 10 9

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Following the same principle, the Dies Irae emerges from the perpetual row (133/1/2). As seen in figure 1-8, the double bass 1, starting with P₈ (134/1/1), plays all pitches preceding the initial E of the Dies Irae in grace-notes. The next pitch in the row is the expected D \sharp of the chant melody which too is played as a half note duration, but more grace-notes are needed before the following E appears again. Difficult to hear at first, it is only when played by the trumpets that the Dies Irae becomes unmistakable (139/1/1). A set of variations on the distorted theme follows. After an exposition of the series in string glissandos, the Dies Irae is presented another time by the percussion (145/1/4).

Figure 1-8. Emergence of the Dies Irae from series, from 134/1/1, example

Bold: notes from the Dies Irae



Dbl. bass:

P₈: A♭ B B♭ G E E♭ C♯ D F♯ F A C

P₉: A C B A♭ F E D E♭ G F♯ B♭ C♯

P₁₀: B♭ C♯ C A F♯ F E♭ E A♭ G B D

P₁₁: B D C♯ B♭ G F♯ E F...

... A A♭ [P₀] C E♭ D B A♭ G F F♯ B♭ A C♯

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Fourteen superimposed melodies for the Sanctus are heard next in the strings, borrowed from a copy of the *Graduale de Tempore et de Sanctis* published in 1877 (147/1/1).¹¹⁷ All of the chants use only the pitches of the C major scale. Like many of the musical materials presented before, the episode ends with a cluster. This time the sonority is progressively introduced in the wind instruments, starting with the pitches of the C major scale and adding chromatic pitches until the cluster includes all twelve tones (149/1/3). The string instruments end their statement of Sanctus melodies and join the cluster four measures later. The texture slowly dissolves to a general pause (150/1/13).

More variations on the Dies Irae follow the break, this time presented by alternating pairs of dissonant chords (151/1/1). Slightly later, the roles of the series and the theme are inverted. Whereas the theme emerged from the series in the first part, the series now emerges from the theme. As seen in figure 1-9, each new pitch from the Dies Irae gives birth to a row form, derived from the matrix and spread out across twelve wind

¹¹⁷ The origin of the Sanctus melodies is identified in Holopova and Cigareva, *Alfred Schnittke*, 84. I would like to thank Victoria Adamenko for pointing that out to me.

The reciprocal relation between the Dies Irae and twelve tone series, giving birth to each other, demands an explanation. At first, the Dies Irae emerged from the series as Schnittke prolonged the value of the melody notes. Later, each pitch of the Dies Irae gives birth to a row. In this case, the pitches of the Dies Irae are often the shortest of the melodic line. The emergence of the requiem sequence from the series suggests that the modern compositional technique can be travestied so much as to obtain a result which is completely foreign to the expectations. Conversely, when it is the row forms which come out of the Gregorian chant, the terms change as the serial technique emerges from the death of something else, maybe the death of the Symphony. In fact, for the first time since the beginning of the work, Schnittke synthesizes two opposite styles, and he specifically chose two of the most extreme: Gregorian chant and dodecaphonism. The result is paradoxical. On the one hand, Schnittke succeeds in his goal of finding a new path which would include both the past and the present. On the other hand, the Dies Irae does not suggest “achievement” or “success,” but rather “death.” Perhaps the episode needs to be looked at from a different angle. By building such a strong association between modernism and death, the Symphony proclaims that serialism—once seen by the composer as the future of composition—is doomed.

The presence of the fourteen Sanctus melodies is more puzzling. The Sanctus, in contrast to the Dies Irae, is sung in almost every Christian rite. It is one of the earliest elements of the liturgy, and its presence in the Symphony gives a religious tone to the episode, if not to the Symphony. When it begins, in spite of the superimposition of so many separate lines, it still presents the most consonant texture of the fourth movement. The long note values enhance the contrast with the surrounding sections. A massive cluster

interrupts the chants and leads to the dissolution of the texture until complete silence. The Dies Irae returns, stronger and louder than before. Considering all the stylistic hesitation and compositional frustration portrayed in the previous movements, the Symphony itself appears to be dead and to play at its own funeral procession.

(9) Resurrection

The last moments of the fourth movement, from which the Dies Irae is now absent, present a rapid sequence of different stylistic elements, many of them heard earlier in the work: vague reminiscences of the tango theme alternate with march rhythms (178/1/1); a build-up of march patterns (182/1/1); a short cadenza by the timpani, over a sustained C# minor chord played by the organ, is interrupted by an improvised string cluster spreading out in all directions (184/1/1); all the instruments briefly end on a unison C (190/1/1); the first four pitches from the P₀ series (C, D, E_b, B), in whole-note unisons played by the entire orchestra (190/1/2-5); the remainder of the series is vertically set in a chord and continues into P₁ (191/1/1); a solo trumpet initiates an orchestral cadenza centering on pitches from A minor and C major scales (192/1/7); a C major/E_b minor triad sonority (195/2/1); a second canon, using exclusively pitches from the C major scale (196/1/2); the 76 voices of the canon settle on pitches from the C major triad (202/1/2); a strings cluster eventually evaporates while low brass play a unison A (210/1/4).

The organ is the only instrument still playing when more reminiscences appear: the concerto grosso melody played by the harpsichord, row forms in the strings, and march patterns in the winds (211/1/2). The musicians then walk off stage to the sound of a sustained cluster (213/1/1). With the stage empty, the last fourteen bars of Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony are played from a recording, like a souvenir of a distant past. When

all seems finished, the Symphony begins again, from the first movement—with the musicians walking back on stage playing the opening music—up to the entrance of the conductor, and ending with the final unison C.

Regarding symphonic form, Schnittke said that his models were Mahler and Tchaikovsky, especially concerning the role of the finale. No longer was the last movement supposed to provide closure, to be rational, to “explain everything;” rather, last movements have become “irrational, personal codas.”¹¹⁸ Schnittke’s last movement does provide a momentary sense of closure as reminiscences of previous moments accumulate. That feeling is soon diminished by the peculiar ending—or non-ending—of the Symphony: it has to start all over again. In fact, the finale of the Symphony is “irrational” because it is unexpected, and it is “personal” because it is unique. Like the finales of Mahler before him, the content of Schnittke’s movement is unpredictable; it does not provide closure in the traditional sense. For Schnittke, “the finale, which might have explained everything, no longer exists.”¹¹⁹ It instead asks more questions. There is no triumph, no definitive conclusion, only the sense that nothing has really ended. After a supposed death announced by the “Farewell” Symphony and the earlier *Dies Irae* and funeral marches, the work is only to be as born again, the exact repetition of the opening moments of the work proclaiming the “resurrection” of the work, and of the genre.

Schnittke’s initial plan was to have to Symphony end with the Haydn quotation. For him, that ending was connected to the idea that “the music is going off somewhere, the

¹¹⁸ Schnittke was then referring principally to the unique ending of Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony. Ivashkin, “The Paradox of Russian Non-Liberty,” 554.

¹¹⁹ Ivashkin, “Shostakovich and Schnittke,” 258-259.

musicians taking their music with them.”¹²⁰ During the rehearsals, Roždestvenskij asked where they were going. Since Schnittke could not find a satisfactory answer, the conductor suggested starting the work over.¹²¹ The Symphony was becoming suddenly much less “serious,” to use Schnittke’s expression. However, the re-beginning is more than a simple “joke.” Schnittke, by “resurrecting” the Symphony, asserts that the genre simply cannot be put to death; it cannot be destroyed, even by a young Soviet composer in his first serious attempt. If he thought that writing a symphony was “logically [...] pointless,”¹²² the fact that the work begins all over again evokes the perseverance that the composer must demonstrate, not in order to attain a goal, but rather to come closer and closer to it.

Conclusion

With references to the symphonies of Haydn and Beethoven, Schnittke places his Symphony No. 1 in the long tradition of the genre. That a still young and relatively unknown composer like Schnittke chose to firmly position himself in the symphonic tradition is audacious, even daring. He does so not by reproducing pre-established models, nor by making a post-romantic ersatz, but instead by trying to redefine the parameters of the genre, in terms of both content and form.

Schnittke’s Symphony No. 1 is not an exercise in subtlety. The many references stand out. They are placed in the foreground of the work, become the point of focus, and create a distinct ground upon which the musical edifice is erected. A narrative can bridge the stylistic disjunctions created by the references. Quotations, borrowings and stylistic

¹²⁰ Schnittke, *A Schnittke Reader*, 76.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ross, “A Shy, Frail Creator,” C17.

allusions establish poles of signification. The history of music from the Baroque to jazz to serialism is evoked; quotations of Beethoven and Gregorian chant evoke memories. Such structural means as prime numbers groupings and symmetries play significant roles. For most listeners, there has to be an explanation behind such a plurality of styles and elements. That the composer had, or did not have, a program in mind for the Symphony No. 1 at the time of composition is irrelevant. Listeners will feel the need for one anyway.

In the case of the Symphony, the narrative resides in the listener's mind. Moreover, the sequence of events is important but not always essential to a possible meaning. In general, the work creates a kind of "immanent" narrative where a single main idea—How to write a symphony?—is expressed from many different angles. The nine features enumerated above have a narrative significance which is summarized below as one potential plot:

The Symphony portrays the difficulties faced by a young Soviet composer looking for his own compositional voice. [1] The work begins as if in a "dream," where musical thoughts are coming from all directions, until they are organized under the will of the conductor in a full orchestra unison C. The work's boundaries have been set: clusters vs. unisons, chaos vs. uniformity. [2] Popular styles soon appear, like uninvited guests at a dinner; they force themselves in the score, but the composer repeatedly manages to close the door on them. [3] The victory over the banal is celebrated by the quotation of Beethoven's Fifth, but the triumph is brief, almost ironic, since the passage is such a cliché. [4] Maybe the solution to writing a symphony is to imitate masters of the past? A Handelian concerto grosso looks so easy to compose as opposed to contemporary music. Yet, this is not a solution either. [5] The composer faces a brief moment of discouragement

and is tempted to leave the musicians to themselves: "Fight each other! The winner keeps the work!" [6] The military march returns, stronger than before. For a Soviet composer, might marches for the masses provide greater success than more serious music? Ultimately, he refuses the facileness of the proposition and is left with no other choice but to send the winds—which played the march—off stage. [7] Time seems to stop for a meditation on the possibilities of serialism. The technique is pushed to extremes. For the first part of the third movement, a long build-up ensues in which the chaos is, beneath the surface, finely organized; however, precisely where the movement should attain its climax, tonality returns in the form of a triad. Harmonies based on intervals from the minor second to the perfect fifth are progressively reintroduced and the third movement fades down to a single pitch. The possibilities offered by serial procedures are not enough for Schnittke, who needs tonality and a more diverse stylistic palette. [8] Is the symphony a dead genre? Is it impossible to compose one anymore? The fourth movement asks those questions and, at first, answers "yes" to both. The Symphony slowly dies over the contorted sounds of the *Dies Irae*. All that will remain is a memory of the great past of the genre, available on a recording. Haydn already said "Farewell," and Schnittke says it too. [9] When all hope seems to be gone, ideas return, the musicians return to their seats, and the composer makes a new attempt. The symphony is resurrected.

CHAPTER 2:

MOZ-ART À LA HAYDN:

THE OPEN SPACE OF FRAGMENTATION

In the mid 1970s, Schnittke composed *Moz-Art*, the first of many works based on fragments left behind by other composers.¹ As Schnittke wrote, *Moz-Art* employs the solo violin part of Mozart's pantomime KV 446 (416d), "as heard in dream in an extraordinary fashion by his most devoted admirer, Alfredus Henricus Germanus Hebraeus Rusticus, in the night of February the 23rd to the 24th in Moscow, and transcribed with the utmost precision while being decorated with little complements corresponding to the taste of present time fashion."² Schnittke uses the sole remaining violin part of a pantomime

¹ While *Moz-Art* is certainly the most extreme example of a work based on fragments, the Concerto Grosso No. 4/Symphony No. 5 (1988) and *Hommage à Grieg* (1990) also draw upon fragments by Mahler and Grieg, respectively. Moreover, Schnittke composed "original" fragments: *Three Fragments* (1990), and *Five Fragments Based on Paintings by Hieronymus Bosch* (1994). Although the Symphony No. 7 was not based on fragments, when Schnittke found the thematic material he had composed before illness after his discharge from the hospital, he had no recollection of it. In a sense, he resumed work from his own fragments after his near death experience. David Denton, "Classical Recordings: Schnittke – Symphony No. 7; Cello Concerto No. 1," *Fanfare* 24, 2 (2000), 339.

² Alfred Schnittke, on the title page of Gidon Kremer's copy of the work's duet version, reproduced by Dominique Sohet in the liner notes for Alfred Schnittke, *Kremer Plays Schnittke*. Perf. Gidon Kremer and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, CD (Deutsche Grammophone 445 520-2), 7.

composed by Mozart as the basis for a wholly new work, first performed by Gidon Kremer and his friends at a New Year's Eve concert.³

The collaboration between the violinist and the composer was very intense during the 1970s and their paths often crossed. Schnittke secretly dedicated his Second Violin Sonata to Kremer, "in the hope of one day hearing something of my work" performed by the famous violinist. When Kremer called up Schnittke and asked to hear his music, Schnittke gave him the work and Kremer performed it as often as he could.⁴ A long and enduring friendship began. *Moz-Art* was written specifically for Kremer who performed the many versions at various occasions, sometimes wearing masks in the style of those worn during Italian carnival season.⁵

Many aspects of *Moz-Art* are unique. First, with only rare exceptions in the accompaniment parts, all the material from the work comes from Mozart's fragment. Second, the work incorporates scenic indications. Musicians have to move between two seating plans, and there are lighting cues in the score. The stage actions relate to Mozart's pantomime which, as usual in the commedia dell'arte, also included cues to direct the play of the actors. In the Mozart work, the directions provided scenarios upon which the actors had to improvise. According to a letter Mozart wrote to his father, he himself played the

³ Ivashkin gives 1975 as the year of performance, while Schnittke does not remember exactly and says 1976 or 1977. Since Kremer commissioned a new version of the work in 1976, it must have been 31 December 1975. Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 221. Makeeva and Cypin, "Alfred Šnitke," 19. The score of the first version for fourteen instruments has never been published, and the version was never performed subsequently.

⁴ Gidon Kremer, "Gidon Kremer on Schnittke (1989)," *A Schnittke Reader*, edited by Alexander Ivashkin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 232.

⁵ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 183.

part of Harlequin in the production.⁶ Third, some ideas used in the First Symphony are reprised here in a slightly different way. The musicians are successively introduced, playing short excerpts from the rest of the work, until the conductor comes in and restores order. At the end, they progressively leave the stage, leaving the conductor directing empty chairs. Finally, while the work has no program, it explicitly refers to the Classical musical tradition, to the *commedia dell'arte* and to the notion of fragmentation. It bridges the old to the new and, as such, adds to the reflections on time and music made earlier by Zimmerman, Stockhausen and Rochberg. It does so with humour, so much so that it is difficult to take Schnittke's stance on the topic completely seriously.

The work exists in five versions. The instrumentation of the first is for fourteen instruments (flute, clarinet, three violins, viola, cello, double bass, organ and percussion), a scoring determined in large part by the instruments available for the original New Year's Eve performance. Kremer commissioned two other versions of the work, one for two violins (1976) and the other one for six instruments (oboe, harp, harpsichord, violin, violoncello and double bass, 1980). Schnittke also produced two other versions on his own initiative, *Moz-Art à la Haydn for two violins, two small string orchestras, double bass and conductor*

⁶ Although pantomimes were usually staged by professional actors, this was certainly not the case here. In a letter to his father dated 12 March 1783, Mozart wrote: "On Carnival Monday we performed our Masquerade at the Redoute.—It consisted of a Pantomime that we did during the half hour of intermission.—My sister-in-law played Colombine, I was Harlequin, my brother-in-law Piero, Merk, an old dancing master, played Pantalon, and a Painter (by the name of Graßi) played the Dottore." Mozart explains the creation process: "The idea of the Pantomime and the Music for it both came from me.—Merk, the dancing master, was kind enough to coach us, and I can tell you, we played quite charmingly.—[...] The verses, some simple rhymed couplets, could have been better; but they were not my creation; Müller, the actor, had scribbled them down in a hurry.—" *Mozart's Letters, Mozart's Life: Selected Letters*, edited and translated by Robert Spaethling (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 344-345.

(1977) and *Mozz-Art à la Mozart* for eight flutes and harp (1990). Of the five versions, *Mozz-Art à la Haydn* is the most frequently performed and consequently the best known by the public. It is also the most interesting on a narrative level, and for that reason, it is the version which will be discussed here. Although Schnittke finished the composition in 1977, *Mozz-Art à la Haydn* waited six years for a performance, being premièred in Tbilisi on 30 December 1983 by the Georgian Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Liana Isakadze.⁷

The scholarly literature on *Mozz-Art* is scant. In an article about Mozart quotations in recent Soviet works, Wolfgang Gratzner presents the version for two violins, which he mistakenly considers as the first one.⁸ Bernd Wilms provides a succinct analysis of the work, mainly to suggest its use in secondary school classrooms.⁹ In interviews, Schnittke did share some insights on *Mozz-Art*. It is, however, the composer's ideas on general concepts such as fragments and the relation between the past and the present that will prove the most illuminating in discussing *Mozz-Art*.

I will address four questions raised by *Mozz-Art*. (1) What are the possibilities created by fragmentation and how are they exploited in this peculiar work? (2) How is Schnittke

⁷ The work was programmed for a performance at a chamber music festival in which Gidon Kremer and Tatiana Grindenko took part in Tallinn shortly after its composition, but it was ultimately not performed. Apparently, someone felt that the end of the work was "disappointing." Makeeva and Cypin, "Al'fred Šnitke," 20.

⁸ Gratzner, "(K)eine Vorbereitung auf den Sozialismus: Zur Mozart-Rezeption in jungerer sowjetischer Musik," in *Mozart in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts: Formen ästhetischer und kompositionstechnischer Rezeption*, ed. Siegfried Mauser (Laaber, Germany: Laaber-Verlag, 1992), 245-256.

⁹ Bernd Wilms, "'...von seinem treuesten Schüler und ergebensten Verehrer': Alfred Schnittkes Moz-Art für zwei Violinen im Unterricht der Sekundarstufe I," *Musik & Bildung* (2000), 7-11.

presenting the idea of the past in a new work, especially in a Soviet context? (3) Which compositional techniques are used by Schnittke in order to put his imprint on the score, and how is the “new” composer apparent in the work? (4) Finally, is it possible to construe a narrative in *Moz-Art*?

The Fragment and the Fragmentary

In the First Symphony, Schnittke borrows short excerpts from works of Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Grieg and others. Those borrowings belong to the first of two general types of fragments: the remnant and the invented.¹⁰ They are remnants of a once-complete work. However, because the objects they are taken from exist as whole works we hear in their entirety, one could say that those fragments are not so much invented, as created through the act of quotation. They are artificial fragments. *Moz-Art* presents a slightly different case. The work is entirely constructed from fragments which, with one notable exception, all come from the same work of Mozart. But this original work, the pantomime KV 446, is itself a “real” fragment since only the first violin part has survived. The object it comes from is no more intact; it is lost. As Wolfgang Gratzner suggests, by using selected moments and reorganizing them, Schnittke submits Mozart’s fragment to a second fragmentation.¹¹ The spelling of Schnittke’s title, with Mozart’s name split into syllables, into word fragments, emphasizes its peculiar nature.

¹⁰ Fragments can be invented as to reproduce the effects of loss and incompleteness typical of remnants. The two types of fragments, the “remnant” and the “invented” are described in a manuscript of David Metzner, from a personal communication.

¹¹ Gratzner, “(K)eine Vorbereitung auf den Sozialismus,” 254.

Before we proceed, the distinction between the concepts of “fragment” and “fragmentary” must be clarified. On the one hand, the fragment necessarily implies completeness, be it of a past work or a future re-assemblage. In the present it remains incomplete. It is the part no longer belonging to the whole. The fragmentary, on the other hand, dispels all hope of any sort of completion. For Maurice Blanchot, the fragmentary is the interruption of the relentless, the constant signalling of a lack which cannot be closed.¹² The particular notion of lack is not the absence of something which should be present but rather the presence of an absence. For that reason, it is closely related to the void that exists between fragments, where that which cannot be written down is to be found. As Blanchot states: “To no longer be able to write except in relation to the fragmentary is not to write in fragments, unless the fragment is itself a sign for the fragmentary.”¹³ Mozart’s pantomime is a fragment, which was once part of a complete work, whereas Schnittke’s *Mozz-Art* is a play on the fragmentary level which uses fragments to signal precisely that level.

The possibilities offered by the fragmentary have been explained and demonstrated by Blanchot.¹⁴ His thoughts on the topic set a point of comparison, against which Schnittke’s usage of fragments can be gauged. Blanchot poses the fragmentary as an ideal

¹² Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, translated by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 42.

¹³ Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, translated by Lycette Nelson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 42.

¹⁴ Paul Davies indicates that Blanchot never develops the words “outside,” “fragment,” “neuter,” “désastre” (and others) as concepts; nevertheless, they engage a certain conceptualization. Paul Davies, “The Work and the Absence of the Work,” in *Maurice Blanchot: The Demand of the Writing*, edited by Carolyn Bailey Gill (New York: Routledge, 1996), 94.

category, which cannot be reached but only approached. As such, Schnittke's practice of musical borrowing satisfies only a portion of that ideal. For example, Blanchot considers the true fragment to be not connected to anything and consequently without a clear origin; it is "a piece of meteor detached from an unknown sky and impossible to connect with anything that can be known."¹⁵ Because they refer to something, Schnittke's quotations are not fragments in this sense.

Blanchot's description of the qualities of the fragment, of its effects and possibilities, nonetheless provides a useful, if not perfect, theoretical apparatus for a piece like *Mozz-Art*. First, the inherent "incompleteness" of the fragments creates the necessary conditions for fragmentary writing. It presents a constant flow of separations, a series of gaps between fragments. The fragmentary is both the "interruption of the incessant" and the unstoppable, because it continues even when interrupted.¹⁶ As I described in the Introduction, the juxtaposition of fragments in a new context forces the establishment of relations where none existed before. Blanchot recognizes that fragments are not irremediably separated. The gap between fragments is "not what ends them, but what prolongs them. [...] And thus are they always ready to let themselves be worked upon by indefatigable reason, instead of remaining as fallen utterances, left aside, the secret void of mystery which no elaboration could ever fill."¹⁷ That disjunction is the "infinite center

¹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, 308.

¹⁶ Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

from out of which, through speech, relation is to be created.”¹⁸ I have argued that the privileged way to do so is by the elaboration of a narrative.

A narrative would prove too much for Blanchot, because it presupposes a degree of coherence and of wholeness that the fragmentary allegedly prevents. The apparent clash between his position and mine is explained by our different points of view. Blanchot essentially looks at the fragmentary from a writer’s perspective; for him it is an ideal state that is impossible to realize fully. I look at it from a reader/listener’s point of view; I witness the product of the author’s work and the scope of my interpretation is free from any author-imposed boundaries. Moreover, in Schnittke’s case, the possibility of a narrative is manifest. The fragments he uses come from a source, they are remnants and consequently point to a past or future whole. Blanchot wants his fragments to be unrelated to anything, to resist the idea of the whole as much as possible. But even he cannot deny the natural impulse toward the whole: “we are beings of a Universe and thus turned toward a still absent unity.”¹⁹ We look to that space and, for Blanchot, we should see beyond the idea of whole and part. Our attention has to focus on the space that separates the fragment: “we know only the separation: the separation, without knowing from what it separates.”²⁰ Fragmentary writing is the privileged way to approach this space, the unspeakable, through its otherness, “marked by the effect of effacement.”²¹ On the

¹⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, 308.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

²⁰ Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, 51.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

contrary, I argue that we project ourselves, our ideas and knowledge, in that space which is all but empty.

Fragmentary writing brings language to its limits. The work ceases to be the masterpiece—which is supposed to present a unified whole—and, through the fragmentary, becomes a “multiplicity of crossing routes.”²² For Blanchot, through the fragmentary, “writing and reading change functions.”²³ That exchange is precisely what brings narrativity into play since it is now up to the reader, or in the case of *Mozz-Art*, the listener, to fill in the blanks. From Blanchot’s point of view, that the reader would feel such an urge is interpreted as one of many risks:

There is always a risk that reading, instead of animating the multiplicity of crossing routes, reconstitutes a new totality from them, or, worse, seeks, in the world of presence and of sense, to what reality or thing to complete correspond the voids of this space given as complementary, but complementary of nothing.²⁴

He made it clear that he would prefer the empty spaces to remain empty. To me, the temptation to “complete” the work is just too strong.

According to Blanchot, the concept of the fragmentary is inseparable from that of time. A distinction must be made here between the theoretical time discussed by Blanchot and chronological concepts evoked by the stylistic connotations of a piece like *Mozz-Art*. On the theoretical level, the time of fragmentary writing is undefined. Time should come when the whole is realized, but “that time is never sure, but is the absence of time, absence in a nonnegative sense, time anterior to all past-present, as well as posterior to every

²² Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, 51.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

possibility of a present yet to come.”²⁵ For Blanchot, the present does not exist. The future and the past come to the same “since both are without present,” but there is no in-between since “the past was written, the future will be read.”²⁶ Again, this is where Blanchot and I disagree. In fragmentary writing à la Blanchot, the whole never existed and will never be realized: “fragmentation is the pulling to pieces (the tearing) of that which never has pre-existed (really or ideally) as a whole, nor can it ever be reassembled in any future presence whatever.”²⁷ Since the whole is nonexistent, fragmentation “can only be understood—fallaciously—as the absence of time.”²⁸ As I have explained above, I do value the whole, and the presence of time that it conveys. For me, it is through reading, listening, and the elaboration of a narrative that the whole can be realized. Through this activity, the written goes from the future to the past by passing through the present.

Moz-Art is a reification of the process of fragmentary writing. Schnittke read Mozart’s fragment, and wrote a piece in which listeners can follow his footsteps and confront a two-level fragmentary work. Schnittke’s reading of Mozart’s fragment is influenced by his artistic philosophy. For him, all possible music exists in some sort of limitless artistic sphere, but only a fraction of it will eventually be written down by composers.²⁹ To develop this idea, he took the example of Mozart, who died at a rather young age. For Schnittke, there is the music Mozart had the time to write, and the rest, the

²⁵ Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, 59-60.

²⁶ Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, 21, 30.

²⁷ Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, 60.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁹ Makeeva and Cypin, “Alfred Šnitke,” 19.

music he could not write, which is possibly infinite.³⁰ When asked if that means that the remainder could be written down by another composer, Schnittke gives *Moz-Art* as an example, saying that although he added nothing new to the work, the piece is not Mozart's since no one else can write Mozart's music.³¹ In short, even if Mozart's unwritten music exists somewhere, it is lost for eternity.

Formal Design

The work (about 12 minutes long) can be divided into a formal pattern consisting of an introduction followed by 11 sections which are delineated by changes in tempo, key signature and thematic material (fig. 2-1). There are no transitions between sections, no preparation of any kind. Some of the sections could be subdivided into separate episodes. Schnittke never provided a program explaining the fragmentary nature of the work. The responsibility of constructing a narrative discourse is clearly handed over to the listener, who will probably identify the moments of rupture, the separations between fragments as the gaps which must be resolved. In *Moz-Art*, the most important moments that create gaps are: (1) the build-up in the Introduction, (2) the diminished chords leading into section 1, (3) the stylistic shifts between any two given sections, (4) the musicians changing seating plans in sections 4 and 5, (5) the quotation from Symphony No. 40 (K. 550), (6) the

³⁰ Ibid., 19.

³¹ Ibid., 20.

climactic stretto in section 10, (7) the exit of the musicians at the end, and (8) the conductor beating time alone in the dark.³²

Figure 2-1. Formal design of *Moz-Art*

<i>Section</i>	<i>Measures</i>	<i>Tempo</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Introduction	[up to RN 3]	Tempo Rubato	“Between the beginning and figure 2 the musicians play in total darkness.” RN 2: “Switch on the lights suddenly.”
Section 1	1-35	Allegretto	
Section 2	36-65	Maestoso	
Section 3	66-85	Allegretto	
Section 4	86-125	Moderato	“The two small orchestras gradually merge (see seating plan, p.2)”
Section 5	126-145	Adagio lamentoso	m. 145: “The musicians return to the original seating plan (2 small orchestras).”
Section 6	146-153	Maestoso	
Section 7	154-178	Allegro	
Section 8	179-184	Molto Allegro	Symphony No. 40 (K. 550)
Section 9	185-219	Vivo	
Section 10	220-261	Allegretto	
Section 11	262-278...	Andante	m. 270: “From here onwards the musicians gradually begin to leave the stage (except the two cellists, the double bass player, and the conductor). The light slowly begins to dim. The conductor continues to conduct for a few seconds after the sound of the departing musicians has died away off stage.”

The Old in the Present

At the time *Moz-Art* was composed, the past was a very malleable concept in the USSR: it existed only so far as it could serve the political objectives of the Party. History was tailored as a succession of chosen events, and anything that did not fit the dominant

³² In a work that depends so much on its fragmentary nature, many other events could be added to the list.

ideology was removed.³³ This malleability can be seen in the connections made with the musical past. For instance, musicological research relied on second hand sources since originals were not only considered as irrelevant, but they were also often inaccessible. Compositions of Glinka, Prokofiev and Shostakovich were travestied and the original versions ignored.³⁴ Mazo argues that since authenticity had disappeared from the social as well as the personal spheres, it became important to Russian musicians of the 1960s to awake the dormant taste for the authentic.³⁵ The new taste for the authentic was a way to rediscover the past and to connect the present with past sources. Suddenly, old works were rediscovered in their original fashion and a new folklore wave struck cities like Saint Petersburg.³⁶ Some composers followed the example of Bartók and found authenticity in folk music, an approach which had the advantage of complying with the doctrines of socialist realism. Others rediscovered the past by its music, and borrowed from it in their own works.³⁷ The “documentary feeling” of the First Symphony, with its quotations of Beethoven and Grieg, its allusions to military marches and popular styles, responded to

³³ Mazo, “The Present and the Unpredictable Past,” 375.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Mazo does not explicitly define what she means by “authenticity.” From the way she uses the term, however, authenticity seems to depend on a direct access to original documents. Ibid., 376.

³⁶ Ibid., 377.

³⁷ Direct and indirect references to Bach, Mozart, or Haydn will be found here and there in the repertoire of composers who did not all adhere to the exigencies of the Soviet doctrine; these references to the past will often be set in opposition to modern techniques. Among those works are Viktor Yekimovsky’s *Brandenburg Concertos* (1979), Dimitrij Smirnov’s *Mozart-Variation for Orchestra* (1987), Edison Denisov’s *Haydn-Variation for Cello and Orchestra* (1982), Rodion Šedrin’s *24 Preludes and Fugues* (1964, 1970) and Kara Karayev’s *1791-Serenade for Small Orchestra* (1983), alluding to the Lacrimosa of Mozart’s *Requiem*. Gratzner, “(K)eine Vorbereitung auf den Sozialismus,” 246-257.

that call. In some ways, *Moz-Art* also responds to the desire for authenticity. As we will see, the past is apparent in *Moz-Art* under three guises: the conventions of the commedia dell'arte, the distant figure of Mozart, and the classical aspect of an important part of the music itself.

Commedia dell'arte

Many parallels can be drawn between *Moz-Art* and the commedia dell'arte tradition. As a theatrical tradition that flourished during the 16th and early 17th centuries in Italy, the genre usually presents standardized plots and stock characters. The actors improvise upon situations which are only briefly described in a given scenario.³⁸ Traditionally, the more stereotypical figures and characters representing different regions of Italy were masked; female and noble characters were unmasked.³⁹

Schnittke composed *Moz-Art* for a New Year's Eve party. But this alone cannot explain why he chose to borrow from an old Pantomime. In fact, Mozart's fragment satisfied many of Schnittke's interests. First, there is the correspondence between the

³⁸ The relation between musical improvisation and the Commedia dell'arte has been noticed by Luigi Nono. The Italian composer described how in Ancient China only the element of pitch was notated and everything else improvised. He observes: "The improvisation in the commedia dell'arte is technically related to that described above. Here the action of the play was indicated only by a few directions about situations, the relationship of characters and the degree of freedom which the actor was allowed in improvising action and dialogue." Nono advocates that improvisation should not be seen as a guarantee of liberty and freedom and that it often serves to mask the composer's inability to make decisions. For him, chance elements can be used as long as they do not become a panacea. In that light, commedia dell'arte, because it opens its doors to a degree of improvisation, without succumbing to pure chance, finds grace to his eyes. Nono published those comments in 1960, three years before his official visit in Moscow during which he met with Schnittke and other young composers; it is not impossible that he shared these ideas with them. Nono, "The Historical Reality of Music," 44-45.

³⁹ Anne MacNeil, "Commedia dell'arte," *Grove Music Online*, ed. by Laura Macy (Accessed 29 March 2006), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

improvisation typical of *commedia dell'arte* and Schnittke's treatment of melodic materials. In the former, the scenario provides a skeleton upon which the actors elaborate. In the latter, Schnittke elaborates upon the melodies of Mozart's piece. He comments on the original, he quotes some parts, presenting the material in new ways. Second, there is the adoption of immediately recognizable personae. In the *commedia dell'arte*, the characters are strongly stereotyped, an effect amplified by the masks worn by some of the comedians. No attempt is made toward realism, quite the contrary indeed. Comic effect relies on the ridiculous stereotypes of the characters. In *Moz-Art*, Schnittke adopts figures from the Classical period, but, unlike *commedia dell'arte*, he never hides behind an alter ego. The music preserves and cultivates the distance between the 18th century Mozart and the 20th century Schnittke. The works of both composers are similar in that they are pretexts for tongue-in-cheek performances. As in the *commedia dell'arte* and Mozart's pantomime, the musicians of the original *Moz-Art* wore masks. Moreover, the unconventional arrangement of Mozart melodies, especially that of K. 550, surprises listeners. In all cases, there is no way to know exactly what comes around the corner.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Schnittke was not the first Russian composer to be inspired by the music of Mozart, as evident in Tchaikovsky's Piano Suite No. 4 "Mozartiana." During the 1930s, Georgij Čičerin, the first Soviet minister of foreign affairs, wrote what could be considered a Marxist study of the composer.⁴⁰ Mozart's music, because of its fame and what was viewed

⁴⁰ Georgij Čičerin, *Mozart: Eine Studie* (Leipzig : Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1930, 1975).

to be its universal appeal, was heard as addressing the collective rather than the individual and therefore supporting the ideals of socialism. Čičerin's study was published more than 40 years after he wrote it, but as an influential member of the Communist Party, there is little doubt his opinion influenced the doctrine of socialist realism.⁴¹

Schnittke's own attitude toward Mozart is hard to define.⁴² Schnittke idealized him to a great extent, saying that "Mozart belongs to the rare cases of full purity."⁴³ In that sense, Schnittke subscribed to the idea that Mozart is close to perfection, perhaps divinely-inspired. He also considered Mozart's music as stylistically diverse. In a concert review he published in 1973, Schnittke noted how it contained remnants of Bach as well as the seeds of Schubert or Brahms.⁴⁴

The first work on the program—the little-known Prelude and Fugue in C Major (K 392, 1782)—served to remind us that it was from Bach that a living thread of music stretched to Mozart. [...] Stylistic sterility ("What, nothing but Mozart?") would in principle have been impossible for Liubimov [...] Mozart carried within himself the "genes" of composers later than Beethoven. Schubert is already immanent in the slow movement of the Sonata in C Major, and Brahms in its first movement. Incidentally, the artist V. Yankilevsky [...] saw in the Prelude and Fugue in C Major a resemblance to Shostakovich's Preludes and Fugues, and he was right. Liubimov thus plays Mozart not as preserved in the eighteenth century but as alive today, as coming through the history of music and making it fertile.⁴⁵

The last sentence of his commentary is especially revealing and could apply to Schnittke's own experience as the composer of *Mozz-Art*. The music he is writing around

⁴¹ Gratzer, "(K)eine Vorbereitung auf den Sozialismus," 255.

⁴² Schnittke got to know the music of Mozart and many other composers during his boyhood stay in Vienna. Pantijelew, "Das Deutsche in der Musik," 187.

⁴³ Gratzer, "(K)eine Vorbereitung auf den Sozialismus," 255.

⁴⁴ Schnittke, "Subjective Notes on an Objective Performance (on Alexei Liubimov) (1973)," originally published in *Sovetskaâ Muzyka*, 2 (1974), 63-65, reproduced in *A Schnittke Reader*, 79-82.

⁴⁵ Schnittke, "Subjective Notes," 79, 81.

Mozart's fragment does not attempt to stay in the eighteenth century. Instead, it uses KV 446 as the ground upon which music evolves, through music history, toward him. Schnittke perceived Mozart as a foundation of modern music, a foundation itself built on Bach's heritage. *Moz-Art* appears as a recent edifice erected on those old foundations.

KV 446 (416d)

It is hard to say exactly why Schnittke specifically chose the obscure fragment KV 446 (416d) upon which to base a new work.⁴⁶ He did mention that the multifaceted stylistic nature of the fragment offered interesting possibilities.⁴⁷ The fact that the last two scenes were missing may have also increased his interest in the fragment. Like its Mozart inspiration, Schnittke's work does not really end. At the first performance, the musicians sang a traditional song, *V lesu rodilas' elocka* [*In the woods a spruce was born*] to announce the arrival of the New Year.

The thirteen surviving scenes of Mozart's pantomime—out of an original fifteen—consist of many episodes of contrasting styles. For Schnittke, they are a fine example of Classical-era polystylism where the nature of the action dictates the style to be used.⁴⁸ Mozart himself was responsible for the specificities of the scenario, which involve the characters Pantalón (the caricatured Venetian merchant, mean to everyone but lecherous with Colombine), Colombine (the young maid, in love with Harlequin), the Dottore (the

⁴⁶ Mozart, "Musik zu einer Faschingspantomime für 2 Violinen, Viola und Baß," *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, Serie II, 6/2 (Kassel: Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg, 1963), 120-123.

⁴⁷ Makeeva, "Alfred Šnitke," 20.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Bolognese scholar, rival to Pantalon), Pierrot (the young lonely lover), and Harlequin (servant to Pantalon, in love with Colombine).⁴⁹

As seen in figure 2-2, each of the thirteen sections is distinct as far as thematic content and style are concerned. To ease the discussion of thematic borrowings, I have partitioned the individual scenes into short thematic sections. For each scene, a number is assigned to a thematic cell. For example, in the seventh scene (Harlequin's entrance), the first theme is heard four times. Themes may repeat in a scene; accordingly, the fragment numbered 7.1 corresponds to the theme of any one of the three subsequent occurrences of theme number 1 in the seventh scene.⁵⁰

Figure 2-2. Partition in thematic fragments of Mozart's 416d

<i>Scene</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Meas.</i>	<i>Meter, Tempo</i>	<i>Tonality</i>	<i>Text</i> ⁵¹	<i>Appears in Moz-ART sections</i>
1	.1	1 – 10	2/4	D maj.	Pantalon und Colombine zanken sich.	1 3 10
	.2	11 – 18				1 10
2	.1	1 – 4	2/4, Maestoso	D min.	Der Dottore kommt.	2
	.2	5 – 8			Pantalon macht Cermonien,	i 2 6
	.3	9 – 12			stellt ihn der Colombine zum Manne vor.	2
	.4	13 – 15		chrom.	Colombine ist traurig.	i 2
	.5	16 – 17		F maj.	Pantalon thut ihr schön. Sie ist böse,	2
	.6	18 – 21			er wieder gut, sie böse,	2
	.7	22 – 26		D min.	er auch böse. Sagt dem Dottore, dass er	2
	.1	27 – 30			mit ihm gehen soll.	2
3	.2	31 – 33			Sie machen Complimente um voraus zu gehen.	i 2 6
	.2	34 – 36				2
	.8	37 – 38			Dottore sieht noch zärtlich.	∅
	.1	1 – 7	3/8, Allegro	A min.	Pierrot kommt gelaufen. Pantalon, Pierrot und Dottore liegen auf der Erde.	9
	.2	8 – 27		G maj.	Pantalon zankt mit Pierrot und fragt ihn, was er will.	9

⁴⁹ Mozart, who played the Harlequin character in the play, seems to have written the most extensive number for his own entrance, where the music is set like a theme and variations, with eight different contrasting themes. Obviously, he gave himself a lot of space to improvise.

⁵⁰ When a theme could be further divided in shorter sections, and those divisions are exploited in some way by Schnittke, a letter has been added to the fragment denomination, for example 7.4a. There are almost no thematic repetitions between scenes, with only one exception: fragments 6.1 and 6.2 correspond to 7.5 and 7.6 respectively.

Figure 2-2. Partition in thematic fragments of Mozart's 416d

<i>Scene</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Meas.</i>	<i>Meter, Tempo</i>	<i>Tonality</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Appears in Moz.-Art sections</i>
(3)	.3	28 – 44		G min.	Pierrot giebt die Nachricht wegen dem Tischel.	3 9z
	.4	45 – 59		G maj.	Pantalon befiehlt ihm, es herzubringen. Pierrot sagt, er sei zu schwach allein.	9
	.5	60 – 88			Pantalon geht mit ihm ab. Colombine steht unbeweglich.	∅
4	.1	1 – 8	2/4, Poco Adagio	C maj.	Dottore langsam auf die Knie, seufzt.	2 6
	.2	9 – 19				∅
	.3	20 – 21			Colombine wirft ihn um und will ab.	∅
5	.1	1 – 4	4/4, Andante molto	F maj.	Pantalon und Pierrot bringen das Tischel.	∅
	.2	5 – 8		[C maj.]		∅
6	.1	1 – 4	2/2, Adagio	F maj.	Colombine ist ganz traurig. Pierrot sagt, sie soll zum Tische sitzen. Endlich geht sie.	i 5 [=7.5]
	.2	5 – 8		[D min.]	Und Pierrot setzt sich auch auf einen Stuhl, um zu schlafen.	5 [=7.6]
7	.1	1 – 7	4/4, Allegro	B \flat maj.	Harlequin guckt aus dem Kasten heraus.	i 5 7 9
	.2	8 – 13	Adagio	D min.		5
	.1	14 – 21	Allegro	B \flat maj.		i 5 7 9
	.3	22 – 24				∅
	.4a	25 – 34				7
	.4b	35 – 44		F maj.		2 7
	.5	45 – 48	Adagio			i 5 [=6.1]
	.6	49 – 52		D min.		5 [=6.2]
	.1	53 – 61	Allegro	B \flat maj.		i 5 7 9
	.3	62 – 65				∅
	.1	66 – 71				i 5 7 9
	.3	72				∅
	.7	73 – 76				∅
	.8	77 – 80				10
	8	.1	1 – 4	4/4, Allegro maestoso	E \flat maj.	
.2a		5 – 6				i 4 6
.2b		7 – 8				i 4 6
9	.1	1 – 20	4/4, Più Allegro	E \flat maj.		i 7 10
10	.1	1 – 8	2/4, Larghetto	G min.	Pierrot geht auf und ab, sieht den Türken.	i 3 4 7 10 11
	.2	9 – 12				∅
	.1	13 – 16				i 3 4 7 10 11
	.1'	17 – 25				i 3 4 7 10 11
11	.1	1 – 8	3/8, Allegro	G maj.		9
	.2a	9 – 12				9
	.2b	13 – 16				i 9
	.2a	17 – 20				9
	.3	21 – 39	2/4, Presto			∅
12	.1	1 – 4	4/4, Maestoso	D maj.		2
	.2	5 – 9				i 2
	.1	10 – 13				2
	.3	14 – 25				∅
	.4	26 – 28		D min.		∅
	.1	29 – 33		D maj.		2
	.3'	34 – 43				∅

Figure 2-2. Partition in thematic fragments of Mozart's 416d

<i>Scene</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Meas.</i>	<i>Meter, Tempo</i>	<i>Tonality</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Appears in Moz-Art sections</i>
13	.1a	1 – 4	4/4, Adagio	A min.	Pierrot fürchtet sich vor dem toten Harlequin.	i 4
	.1b	5 – 8				i 4
	.2	9 – 13				4
	.3	14 – 21	Risoluto	C maj.	Fasst Muth	∅
	.4	22 – 26				∅
	.5	27 – 33				∅
	.6	34 – 36				∅
	.1a	37 – 40		A min.		i 4
	.1b	41 – 44				i 4
	.2	45 – 47				4
	.5'	48 – 55				∅
	.6'	56 – 58				∅
	.7	59 – 62				∅

Note: The symbol ∅ indicates that a thematic fragment is not used in Moz-Art.

Combinatory Techniques

In the course of the work, Schnittke uses various means of developing and combining styles. I have identified four such types: (1) shifts, the abrupt succession of two different styles; (2) stratification, the vertical combination of two or more styles; (3) stretto, the close canonic treatment of a theme, at unison or spread along an intervallic spectrum, with the voices presented in lengthened or shortened rhythmic values (this is certainly the most typical “Schnittkean” development procedure); (4) morphing, the application of a characteristic of one style to another style.⁵¹

⁵¹ One other procedure will be introduced in Chapter 3: dissolving, the rhythmic (and often dynamic) scaling down of a complex texture, usually resulting in a cluster.

(1) *Shift*

A stylistic shift happens when one style is abruptly followed by a contrasting style. At measure 36 [7],⁵² for example, the tempo suddenly changes to *Maestoso*, and the motive 1.2 is replaced by 12.1 and 2.1 (fig. 2-3). The superimposition of four keys used in the presentation of 1.2 gives way to the simpler D major and D minor combination employed for 12.1 and 2.1 respectively. The rhythmic *stretto* heard in 1.2 ends and is replaced by homorhythmic lines. There is no transition, only a blunt juxtaposition. The effect is one of surprise, as the shifts are typically unpredictable.

Figure 2-3. Stylistic shift at measure 36 [7]

	29 [6]	30	31	32	33	34	35	36 [7]	37	38	39
	2/4 (Allegretto)							4/4 Maestoso			
Vln s. 1	D 1.2										
Vln. I-1	D	1.2*R		1.2*R				D 12.1			
Vln. I-2	D \flat	1.2*R		1.2*R				D 12.1			
Vln. I-3	C	1.2*R		1.2*R				D 12.1			
Vla. I	B	1.2*R		1.2*R				D 12.1			
Vc. I	D 1.2*A							D 12.1			
Cb.	D 1.2*A	1.2*A						D 12.1			
Vln s. 2	D 1.2										
Vln. II-1	D	1.2*R		1.2*R				D- 2.1			
Vln. II-2	D \flat		1.2*R		1.2*R			D- 2.1			
Vln. II-3	C		1.2*R		1.2*R			D- 2.1			
Vla. II	B		1.2*R		1.2*R			D- 2.1			
Vc. II	D 1.2*A							D- 2.1			

Note: "A" stands for rhythmic augmentation, "R" stands for rhythmic diminution. All keys refer to major keys, unless they are followed by the minus sign "-", used as an abbreviation for "minor."

(2) *Stratification*

Stylistic stratification is one of the principal procedures used by Schnittke in *Mozz-Art*. Melodies with contrasting stylistic properties can be superimposed all at once, or progressively introduced. The *Vivo* section (m. 185 [37]) presents an example of the

⁵² Measures are numbered in the published score. Rehearsal numbers are given in brackets whenever appropriate.

former. Just after the quotation of the Symphony No. 40, fragments 11.1, 7.1, 3.3 and 3.1 are simultaneously played. The introduction of *Moz-Art* presents an example of the latter approach. Twelve different melodies are introduced separately and are repeated until they are all played simultaneously. In both cases, the fragments combine different styles. In the case of the *Vivo*, they are quite distinct, they seem to come from different sources even if this is obviously not the case. Schnittke often use stratification in climactic moments, as is the case in the last *Allegretto* section (from m. 220 [42], fig. 2-4). Depending on the circumstances, the listeners will continue to perceive each line independently, or, they will confront a complex texture hardly distinguishable from chaos.

Figure 2-4. Stratification from m. 220 to 261

	220	228	236	244 etc.
Vln. s. 1			Allegretto	
Vln. I-1			D 1.2	D 1.1
Vln. I-2				D 1.2
Vln. I-3				D \flat 1.2
Vla. 1		D 1.2		C 1.2
Vc. I	D 1.2	B \flat 7.8	D- 9.1	B \flat 7.8
Cb.	B \flat 7.8	D 1.1	G- 10.1	
Vln. s. 2			B \flat 7.8	D 1.1
Vln. II-1				B 1.2
Vln. II-2				B \flat 1.2
Vln. II-3				A 1.2
Vla. II		D 1.2		B \flat 7.8
Vc. II	D 1.2		D- 9.1	

(3) *Stretto*

Most of Schnittke's works present different types of *stretto*. The procedure involves only one melodic fragment, hence one style, which is repeated in many voices, each starting with a slight delay. Some or all of the voices may or may not be transposed, or rhythmically diminished or augmented. *Moz-Art* presents a *stretto* right after the Introduction: four voices (solo violin I, violins I, solo violin II and violins II) present the theme from 1.1, all an eight-note apart, unaltered in D major. Two other voices (alto I and alto II) present a

rhythmic augmentation of the same theme, still untransposed (m. 1 [3]). The setting is repeated with more voices, some in diminished values, most in independent key signatures (m. 11 [4]). Again, different levels of dissonance are obtained by the process, and perfectly tonal themes suddenly take on an atonal guise when some of the voices are transposed. Most of the time, because the voices are successively added, the borrowed melody is still audible in the dense texture. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 3, Schnittke is partially indebted to Ligeti and Nono for this technique.

Figure 2-5. Stretto from measure 1

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(4) *Morphing*

Sometimes styles are not presented in their original form; but they are transformed in a way that we can recognize the original while perceiving the changes made to it. For example, in the first measure of the Introduction, a short chromatic melodic cell is played in harmonics by the double bass (fig. 2-6). Although the theme is characteristic of the

thematic cells from the thirteen scenes of Mozart's pantomime, seventeen are not used at all.⁵⁴ That leaves 32 thematic fragments that are combined in various ways.

The motives derived from five themes, 1.1, 3.3, 7.1, 9.1 and 10.1, are used in a greater variety of contexts than the other ones (fig. 2-7). As summarized in figure 2-8, they each appear in at least two different sections of *Moz-Art* (besides the Introduction) and they are combined with at least five other fragments. For example, fragment 1.1 is the only theme used in the beginning, but it is used in three other sections, each time combined with other themes; fragment 3.3 is used in only two different sections, but always in complex superimpositions.

These themes have distinct defining features: 1.1 consists of a rising motif in eight-notes, 3.3 includes a minor third presented step-wise with long note values, 7.1 is a violin line in dotted rhythms in B \flat major, while 9.1 is made of arpeggios in E \flat major (fig. 2-7). The most pervasive motive is 10.1, a simple ascending G minor melodic scale. It appears in four different sections besides the introduction, and concludes the piece.

⁵⁴ As mentioned above, the only other borrowings in the piece are a short excerpt from Mozart's Symphony in G minor (K. 550) and the exit of the players at the end, which recalls Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony.

Figure 2-7. Most important thematic fragments used in *Moz-Art*

N° 1. Pantalon und Colombine zanken sich.

[N°3. Allegro] Pierrot giebt die Nachricht wegen dem Tischel.

N° 7. Allegro. Harlequin guckt aus dem Kasten heraus.

N° 9. Piu Allegro.

N° 10. Larghetto. Pierrot geht auf und ab, sieht den Türken.

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Figure 2-8. Principal thematic combinations in *Moz-Art*

Sect.	i	1		2				3		4		5		6		7		8		9				10			11								
Meas.	1	21	36	49	43	48	51	54	57	61	66	86	102	110	126	135	146	150	154	172	175	179	185	189	193	201	205	212	220	228	236	262			
Fragments	2.2	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.1						1.1				6.1		2.2	7.1 ^a					3.1												
	2.4				2.2					2.2	3.3		8.1	8.2	7.1 ^b		4.1	4.1		7.3				3.2						1.2	1.2	1.2			
	6.1										10.1	10.1			7.2	8.1	8.1				7.4a		3.3	3.3	3.3				3.3	7.8	7.8	7.8			
	7.1				2.4							13.1a			7.6																		9.1		
	8.2a							2.5				13.1b							9.1	9.1	9.1												10.1		
	8.2b								2.6			13.2								10.1			KV550	7.1	7.1	7.1									
	9.1										2.7												11.1												
	10.1								4.1															11.1			11.1								
	11.2a																																		
	12.2				12.1																														
	13.1b								7.4b																										
	13.2																																		

The New in the Past

With *Moz-Art*, Schnittke attempts to attack traditional conceptions of musical time. Other composers, like Stockhausen and Zimmermann, whose scores had been carefully studied by Schnittke, also addressed the same issue. Stockhausen believed that the past, present

and future could be simultaneously experienced.⁵⁵ Zimmermann developed the concept of a “Time Sphere” where all times were reconciled.⁵⁶ Regarding Zimmermann’s *Die Soldaten*, Schnittke indicates that “the polystylistic method emphasizes the relevance to all times of the basic theme of the work—it is a protest, not just of the actual German war machine of the eighteenth century [...] but also against militarism anywhere at any time.” For Schnittke, the mixture of the composer’s style with other styles and devices renders the situations depicted in the opera relevant to all times.⁵⁷ Schnittke adheres to the notion that “things return and then go away again,” that “life proceeds endlessly in a circle.”⁵⁸ Schnittke’s idea of polystylism in Machaut’s masses has been mentioned before;⁵⁹ he also noted how serial pointillism reminded him of Renaissance hoquet.⁶⁰ For Schnittke, the past and the present are not that different, or that far apart.

With *Moz-Art*, Schnittke raises the question of what is old and what is really new in music, an idea which he also discussed in interviews and writings.⁶¹ For him, the desire for the new is both creative and reactionary. He also claimed that the new is always both good

⁵⁵ In the notes for *Telemusik* (Deutsche Grammophon 137012), Stockhausen writes that we should hear that as “a higher unity, a universality of past, present and future, of different planes and spaces.”

⁵⁶ For more on the conception of time of Stockhausen, Zimmermann and others, see David Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003), 108-159.

⁵⁷ Schnittke, “Polystylistic Tendencies,” 90.

⁵⁸ Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 26.

⁵⁹ Makeeva, “Alfred Šnitke,” 18.

⁶⁰ Burde, *Zum Leben und Schaffen*, 68.

⁶¹ See in particular Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 25-26.

and bad.⁶² Schnittke was convinced that “the whole life is uninterrupted interaction between what is rational, or divinely preordained, and the uninterrupted flow of what is irrational, of what, so to speak, has not yet ‘germinated,’ of what is completely new.”⁶³ The same observation could be made about *Mozz-Art*. As the formal analysis below will demonstrate, there is a continuous interaction between the “old,” the borrowed material, and the “new,” that is, the treatment of that material. There is also a close dialogue, set in place by Schnittke, between the various styles already contained in Mozart’s fragment. In effect, polystylism in *Mozz-Art* results both from the contrast between the Classical melodies composed by Mozart and the montage constructed by Schnittke and from the contrast between the various fragments created through Schnittke’s reordering of them. The style of each composer constitutes the end point of a spectrum within which the work progresses, from pseudo-classical moments on one side to harsh polytonal dissonances on the other. The superimposition and various combinations of the excerpts create unique chronological perspectives: the material is old, while its shape is very new.

Mozz-Art is to be looked at through two sets of lenses: it is us looking at Schnittke looking at Mozart. However, before we proceed, some interpretative boundaries must be set. *Mozz-Art* does not tell a story in any traditional sense. It does not present Schnittke’s opinion of Mozart nor does it offer a commentary on Mozart’s reception in the Soviet era.

⁶² Schnittke also links the idea of evil with the idea of the new. For him, there is a “dark irrational sphere” opposing the rational, or what is “divinely preordained,” which is always focused on the new. Giving the examples of the French Revolution and of the October Revolution as some of the most terrible events of human history, Schnittke says that the “Devil pounces on what he has not yet tried.” That relation will be developed in more details in Chapter 4. Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 29.

⁶³ Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 25.

What we hear in *Moz-Art* is the fragmentary reading of a fragment by another composer. Schnittke admitted that he never tried to complete Mozart's work. We witness Schnittke's reception of a fragment, nothing more. On a different level, it will be possible to assess what *Moz-Art* might mean for Schnittke's listeners; only then will a narrative be possible. That narrative might include elements from the knowledge we have of Schnittke's own reading; but it will still be ours, not his.

The theatrical elements in *Moz-Art* have been influenced by the original fragment. The pantomime was an improvised form of theatre, played by professional actors who elaborated upon a set of directions. Among those directions were the entrance of characters, the general actions they were taking, and some specific actions relevant to the plot. Much of the same happens in *Moz-Art*. Schnittke directs the musicians on the stage and moves them between two seating plans. He asks some of them to leave the stage before the work is finished and indicates when the lights must turn on and off. In the version for six instruments, Schnittke has the musicians play cards.⁶⁴ Musically speaking, the work could be said to borrow characteristics of the pantomime tradition as well. Mozart's fragments are interpreted by Schnittke much like plot directions in the pantomime: they are included in the work and elaborated upon. In fact, *Moz-Art* could be seen as a kind of compositional improvisation.

⁶⁴ *Moz-Art* is not the only work where Schnittke adds theatrical elements. We have seen similar gestures in the Symphony No. 1. There is also the *visuale cadenza* of the Fourth Concerto for Violin and Orchestra. At one point in the cadenza, the opposition between the soloist and the orchestra reaches a paroxysm and Schnittke asks the violinist to play frenetically, but without touching the strings. This setting is rife with narrative implications.

As I have shown above, not all of the chosen fragments have the same importance for Schnittke. A few are used to a greater extent than others. Fragments like 1.1 and 10.1 recur at various times in changing configurations, while others, 2.3 and 7.2 for example, are never used in combination with other fragments. In some parts, Schnittke brings out correspondences between fragments, while in other spots, he uses differences to create complex textures. Focusing on the most important fragments as established above, the examples below demonstrate how Schnittke turns Mozart's material into his own, how he transforms the "old" into the "new".

At the beginning of *Moz-Art*, the musicians play selected excerpts from the work to come. The first theme heard is 2.4, in D minor, a simple chromatic figure around the tonic played by the double bass in harmonics (see fig. 2-6, above). Eleven other thematic fragments follow with no apparent rules governing their selection other than a strong sense of contrast. The performers repeat the melodic cells in darkness until the sudden appearance of the G# diminished seventh chord over a pedal A at RN 2 with cues for the turning on of the lights. The introduction episode, set in the dark, seems extraneous to the work. Schnittke slowly and progressively exposes the fragments. We witness the composer pulling fragments out of thin air, choosing and ordering them. The introduction prepares us for what will follow, since every fragment heard will later be re-used. The first three fragments being predominantly chromatic, Mozart's presence becomes clear only when violin I starts theme 7.3 (the fourth instrumental entrance of the Introduction). Even there, Schnittke alters the sound of the instrument, having the phrase played *sul ponticello*, and the constant repetition of conflicting cells obscures the stylistic clarity of the figure. The

turning on of the lights, after the sustained chords of RN 2 resolved in D major, marks the proper, more conventional beginning of the work.⁶⁵

Section 1 begins with the same two themes as Mozart's fragment: theme 1.1 flows directly into 1.2. All the parts begin in unison and in the same key as the original, but from m. 11 [4] onward there are two simultaneous versions of theme 1.1—one in the original guise and one variation in shorter rhythm values—which are played in four different keys, the original D major, and three others separated by half steps: in D \flat , C and B major (see figure 2-5, above). That chromatic texture is preserved until the end of the section. The conclusion of the last phrase is interrupted by a change of tempo when section 2 begins, establishing a different mood.

As in section 1, the original material of section 2 is presented at first with little modification. This time though, the two small orchestras play similar, yet conflicting themes: the first orchestra plays unison 12.1 in D major, while the second orchestra plays 2.1 in D minor (from m. 36 [7]). As shown in figure 2-9, even if the themes come from different sections of Mozart's score, they are rhythmically related, notably by the use of dotted rhythms, and both are marked *Maestoso*; obviously, Schnittke noted the similarity and exploited it in this passage. Moreover, instrumental lines no longer play in *stretto* at this point. We hear only the two melodies played in unison by each of the two orchestras, further enlightening the rhythmic correspondence. A similar emphasis can be heard in the following solo violin passage (m. 40 [8]) based upon themes 2.4 and 12.2, which both

⁶⁵ The G \sharp ^{o7}/A of RN 2 can be interpreted as a secondary dominant vii^{o7}/V followed by the dominant A^{7(o9)} in the first solo violin, resolving in D major at measure 1.

feature chromatic motion;⁶⁶ or, in the cadenza-like two-violins episode (m. 154 [29]), where the two melodies (9.1 and 7.4b) follow a similarly rising pattern built around a step-wise progression toward B \flat (E \flat -F-G-A-B \flat and F-G-A-B \flat respectively, see fig. 2-10).

Figure 2-9. Similarity of fragments 2.1 and 12.1, combined from measure 36.

Maestoso

2.1

Maestoso

12.1

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Figure 2-10. Cadenza-like episode of measure 154.

Allegro

Vln. solo I

9.1

p

Vln. solo II

7.4b

p

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⁶⁶ The two fragments 2.4 and 12.2 were already paired in the introduction, as the first two being played. The similarity between them is more clearly presented here.

In section 3, the emphasis is upon thematic contrast. The long notes in 3.3 become a counterpoint to the shorter values in 1.1 (m. 66 [16]). The sustained notes in fragment 3.3 are used in various places and always contrast with the surrounding material. The two themes are later joined momentarily by 10.1 (m. 76 [17], fig. 2-11). In section 9, the sustained notes of 3.3 in the violoncello contrast with the highly animated lines of the violas and violins (m. 185 [37]). Used in different contexts, the 3.3 fragment takes on various roles as a counterpoint or accompaniment figure; it provides contrast at the same time that it supports other melodic material.

Figure 2-11. Contrasts around fragment 3.3, measures 66, 76 and 185.

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system, labeled 'Allegretto m. 66', shows measures 66-70. It features three staves: Violin Solo I (top), Violin Solo II (middle), and a combined staff for Viola I, Violoncello I, and Contrabasso I (bottom). The Violin Solo I and Violin Solo II parts play the 1.1 theme, while the Viola I, Violoncello I, and Contrabasso I parts play the 3.3 fragment. The second system, labeled 'm. 76', shows measures 71-75. It features the same three staves. The Violin Solo I and Violin Solo II parts play the 1.1 theme, while the Viola I, Violoncello I, and Contrabasso I parts play the 3.3 fragment. The third system, labeled 'm. 76', shows measures 76-80. It features three staves: Violin Solo I (top), Violin Solo II (middle), and a combined staff for Viola II, Violoncello II, and Contrabasso II (bottom). The Violin Solo I and Violin Solo II parts play the 1.1 theme, while the Viola II, Violoncello II, and Contrabasso II parts play the 10.1 theme.

Figure 2-11. Contrasts around fragment 3.3, measures 66, 76 and 185.

Vivo
m. 185

Solo I
Vln. I
Vc. I
Solo II
Vln. II
Vc. II

11.1
11.2a
11.2b

7.1 sul ponticello
3.3
3.1
7.1 sul ponticello
3.3

p
f
p
f
p

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The work reaches a climax from m. 220 [42] onward in section 10, where strettos, superimposition of themes, and progressive entrances provide a fugal-like conclusion to the work. Resuming the initial tempo, the Allegretto introduces two themes (1.2 and 7.8) in the low strings. From there on, the two themes are taken by other instruments.⁶⁷ When the two solo violins enter at m. 236 [44], five different thematic fragments (1.1, 1.2, 7.8, 9.1 and 10.1) sound together, creating the most complex structure of the work besides the Introduction (fig. 2-4, above). The result is a texture which, in spite of its heterogeneity, is not totally incoherent. All of the themes are based on binary rhythmic figures and, at least

⁶⁷ The first instruments to play are the double bass (7.8) and the cellos I and II (1.2). The viola I and II are introduced at m. 228 [43]; they both play 1.2 while theme 7.8 goes in the viola parts and a new theme is played by the double bass (1.1). At measure 236 [44], the two solo violins are added, they play 1.2 and 7.8, respectively. Like before, other themes swap places. Finally, the six remaining instruments, the violin I and II sections, are introduced at measure 244 [45]; they take over theme 1.2.

at the beginning of the section, they all have a similar shape, an upward motion which reaches a rest at the end of the line (m. 242-243). More dissonance is introduced when the 1.2 theme is duplicated in six different keys a semitone apart (m. 241). All of the lines are suddenly interrupted by the soloist's cadence at m. 256 [46]. During the conclusion of the section, the two soloists play an augmented version of the 1.2 closing figure. However, this time, Schnittke adds a chromatic counter-melody (adapted from 7.2) in the second solo part which is transposed down by a semitone at the end, resulting in a conclusion on the unresolved interval of a major seventh.

The final Andante is entirely built around a stretto of the 10.1 theme, which is central to the work. Present in the Introduction, this theme is a simple rising G minor melodic scale (fig. 2-1, above). The same theme has been heard in section 3 as a countermelody; it is one of the most-used fragments in section 4; it returns in section 7, this time in a complex thematic stretto; and, it is played by the double bass in the final fugue-like build up. In the conclusion, the 10.1 fragment is set in 8 voices, against a tritone (F#-C) in the low strings, a sustained major seventh in the second soloist part, and a chromatic oscillation around E (from D to G \flat) in the first solo violin, reminiscent of the first two figures of the Introduction which too presented chromatic motion around a central pitch (D). A pedal C is introduced in the double bass and cello I shortly after, a tritone away from the F# of cello II (m. 270 [48]). The combination of all parts creates an eerie atmosphere, in which the constant repetition of the same phrases, in stretto against the dissonant harmony, takes the listener back to the Introduction. By going back to the

beginning, the last section provides a sense of closure to the work. There is little Mozart left at this point.

Meaning and Narrative

At the risk of being repetitive, let me emphasize that the possible narrative offered by *Moz-Art*, like all narratives, resides in the listener's mind. In the present case, the fragmentary nature of the work directs attention toward what is missing, toward the lost portions of Mozart's fragment. The listener witnesses Schnittke's appropriation of the original material and, from there, elaborates a narrative which includes both composers as actors and the music as the subject. But since the fragmentary nature of *Moz-Art*—like the pantomime fragment—seems to support a succession of undetermined and unprecise actions, multiple planes of significations may be developed.

A first narrative hypothesis is that *Moz-Art* might be a simple joke using Mozart's music. The material chosen by Schnittke, however, complicates such a conclusion. If the work was merely an innocent play on classical music, he could have used better-known excerpts and attained his goal much more easily and efficiently. *Moz-Art* is surely a lighter piece than most other contemporary fare, but it is not a mere joke. Moreover, that Schnittke returned to the same material four more times should suffice to prove that he considered the piece as a serious contribution to his oeuvre. In fact, he expressed the belief that music can be serious and frivolous at the same time.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Alfred Schnittke and Vadim Vernik, "Interv'ju s Al'fredom Šnitke," *Vam rasskazyvaet artist: monologi i dialogi*, edited by Eduard Cerkover (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1992), 111.

A second possibility is that *Moz-Art* offers the commentary of one composer on another. Schnittke is building upon Mozart's work by placing stringent constraints on the whole enterprise. Using almost no new material, he nevertheless turns the material into his own; but the traces of the transformations are apparent, the original themes can easily be identified as well as the processes applied upon them. The questions that arise are easier to ask than to answer. Here are some of the queries that come up as the piece unfolds:

(1) At the beginning, fragments are slowly introduced one by one, just as if they were grasped out of the void by the musicians. Where do they come from? Why are they transformed? Why do the musicians play in the dark? Schnittke seems to approach the material with caution. For the listener, the effect is like closing one's eyes to hear distant melodies coming from many directions at once. The gathering melodies may simulate the inspiration of the composer or portray a trip back in time to the Classical period.

(2) Once each musician has something to play, diminished chords resolve to a D major tonic and the work properly begins as the lights are turned on. At first, minimal transformations are applied to Mozart's music, and the beginning of the Mozart original is reproduced in a stretto, where voices, like echoes, create a blurring effect. Shortly afterwards, the voices are transposed and Mozart's music is heard through a distortion filter. How is Mozart's music affected by the harmonic distortion? Is there a hidden message?

(3) With no transition, the *Maestoso* theme brings forward a more serious atmosphere. From here on in, the music alternates between identifiable Classical figures and other fragments which, by their treatment, sound relatively modern even if they are

from the 18th century. Such a transformation can be heard at m. 51 [11], where the soloists' chromatic theme is grafted on to chromatic parallel chords (fig. 2-12). The chords are derived from the 2.4 fragment played by the solo violins. The rhythm is simplified and the C# is omitted. The violins play six transpositions of the adapted theme, while the violas and cellos play the inversion of that same motive. The result is far from the sound world of the Classical period. What is the signification of the themes and combinations chosen by Schnittke? Is it relevant that some themes are used more often than others?

Figure 2-12. Chromatic transition at measure 51.

MOZ-ART À LA HAYDN

By Alfred Schnittke:

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(4) The tempo slows down when the two orchestras gradually merge. The Adagio lamentoso section which follows is unique in the work for its melancholic character. The musicians are hastily separated again when the Maestoso section resumes. The theatrical elements are so tightly tied to the music that they are not to be considered independently.

In sections 4 and 5, the two orchestras behave like two characters setting aside their differences to collaborate toward the same goal. The atmosphere is suddenly more peaceful. This section can be explained musically as the inclusion of a slow section in the middle of the work. However, that does not explain the on-stage movements of the musicians or their temporary reunification. Do the theatrical actions follow the music, or is it the other way around? Maybe the two behave in a kind of dialectic relationship. An eventual narrative could address any one of the two possibilities.

(5) The complexity of the work increases toward the final build-up which constitutes a tour-de-force combination of diverse thematic fragments. The cumulative effect of the music at this point is very strong. Schnittke explores the combinatorial possibilities offered by the fragments and fully exploits them. However, as the music becomes more complex and dissonant, more and more of Mozart is lost. In fact, therein lies a paradox; the more melodies of Mozart that are added, the less they are identifiable as such.

(6) The end of the piece evaporates into an ascending, and anonymous, G minor melodic scale played as the musicians leave the stage. Does the fundamental scale mean that the work does not belong to anyone? Are the musicians taking their music with them? Is the travel in time coming to an end, or are Schnittke's eyes closing? And why does the conductor continue to beat time? To make clear that time never stops, even when the music is gone? The reference to Haydn is rather obvious, but is there any greater significance to it?

The answers belong to individual listeners. There is little definitive extra-musical meaning in *Moz-Art*, but lots of narrative triggers. The dislocated elements are numerous, the foregrounded events are evident and impossible to ignore. The sense of a narrative is unavoidable.

Conclusion

The referential complexity of *Moz-Art* is such that it is impossible to define a single narrative. More important is the peculiar use of fragmentary writing, which in turn allows various narratives to appear, even if the results are unclear and cannot be unanimous. The characters could be Mozart and Schnittke, but also Pantalón, Colombine, the Dottore or Harlequin. The time and location are unspecified and, in fact, the distance between the past and the future is conjugated in the present. Nevertheless, the sense that something is missing and must be completed by the listener is obvious. This is the power of fragmentary writing which is exploited by Schnittke.

Moz-Art does not possess a clear program, but that makes little difference to the listener. He is compelled, on the one hand, to witness the disjunctions, the fragmentation, and the gaps in the musical texture and, on the other hand, to witness the transformations and the new arrangement proposed by Schnittke. The result is a paradigmatic scheme, made of clearly outlined semantic entities, which, because they come from carnival music, fit conventional types. However, that result itself constitutes another fragmentary space, which can be re-ordered and re-arranged. Mozart's fragments seem to be stuck in a perpetual interpretative circle. Schnittke's decision to use no new material is especially relevant in that it prevents the completion of the fragment. As a consequence, any sense of

wholeness, in the form of a narrative or in any other form, has to be inferred by the listener.

Like many of Schnittke's pieces, *Moz-Art* is a work of contrasts and oppositions. *Moz-Art* embraces many relationships: between the past and the present, the old and the new, the light and the serious, the similar and the contrasting, the personal and the universal. With borrowings of Mozart's fragment, the past is turned into the present; the old is brought into the new. With Schnittke's work upon fragments, the present is taken back in time; the new is brought into the old. The work adopts a light tone, full of surprises and combinatorial trickery; yet it begins and ends seriously with dramatically eerie chromatic passages. Correspondences between fragments are sometimes underlined, and differences are often amplified. At times, it seems that Schnittke's voice is predominant, while at others Schnittke seems to hide behind Mozart. That leaves a work which is neither totally old nor new, a work which is neither totally Schnittke nor Mozart, a work which plays upon the distance between the old and the new, between Schnittke and Mozart. *Moz-Art* is a fragmentary work where the attention is focused on what is missing, on the "presence of an absence"; it is a work where the gaps ask to be resolved and to be explained.

CHAPTER 3:
CONCERTO GROSSO NO. 1
OR THE “UTOPIA OF A UNIFIED STYLE’

After the turmoil surrounding Symphony No. 1, and the generally negative consequences for his career, Schnittke relied increasingly on film and cartoon music in order to make a living. Even if the composer was never blacklisted in the strictest sense of the term, he still had to face numerous obstacles to the performance of his works: scores were sent to wrong addresses or were simply refused for performance and publication.¹ What seemed to have hurt him the most was the restriction against traveling abroad, even to attend concerts of his own music.² In spite of such obstacles, Schnittke’s works were performed by a growing number of musicians, notably famous soloists like Gidon Kremer and Yuri Bashmet as well as such conductors as Eri Klas and Gennadij Roždestvenskij. Kremer, who was already well known in the West, would play a large role in Schnittke’s career by commissioning works and by finding ways for the composer to travel outside of the Soviet Union.

In 1976, Kremer suggested to Schnittke the idea of a Concerto Grosso, and the work was finished the following year.³ The Russian première took place in Leningrad on 21 March 1977. The violinist was then the leader of the Lithuanian Chamber Music Orchestra,

¹ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 95.

² *Ibid.*, 127.

³ *Ibid.*, 146.

and hired Schnittke as the harpsichord player in the ensemble. In that capacity, he joined the group in a foreign tour and for the first time the composer could hear his works performed in Europe. They performed the Concerto Grosso No. 1 in Vienna and also visited the St. Florian Monastery, where Bruckner is buried.⁴ Meanwhile in Moscow, rumours started to spread that both Kremer and Schnittke would not return to Russia. Schnittke never had such intentions, but Kremer had planned not to return unless he was granted official permission to travel without restrictions—a privilege he eventually won, the first Soviet musician ever to do so.⁵

Ivan Moody argues that the Concerto Grosso No. 1 “is really a commentary on the idea of the Baroque concerto grosso, almost as though Schnittke did not quite dare write a real one.”⁶ Moody does not say why Schnittke would want to write a “real” one, but the work does bear many characteristics of the genre. It features two solo violins, which oppose an orchestra composed of the standard strings section [66441] and a harpsichord which is replaced by a prepared piano at the beginning of the work. The relatively small string section and the exclusion of winds and percussion contribute to the overall Baroque

⁴ A visit to Bruckner’s burial place provided the inspiration for Schnittke’s *Symphony No. 2*, the early title of which is “Invisible Mass.” One of the three musical principles upon which the Symphony is constructed is the series of natural harmonics which is also important in Concerto Grosso. During the same trip, Schnittke went to Paris as a consultant for a production of Tchaikovsky’s *Queen of Spades*. The production of the Paris Opera was placed under the direction of Ūrij LŪbimov and Gennadij RoŹdestvenskij. They had decided to read Pushkin’s text during intervals between scenes. Schnittke ultimately wrote music to accompany those readings. A devastating article about the project published in *Pravda* led to the cancellation of the whole project. The polemic made Schnittke’s name very popular, and triggered concerts and commissions. Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 141, 146-149.

⁵ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 146-149.

⁶ Moody, “The Music of Alfred Schnittke,” 4-5.

sound of the work. The work is divided into six movements: (1) Preludio, (2) Toccata, (3) Recitativo, (4) Cadenza, (5) Rondo and (6) Postludio.

* * *

Schnittke addressed the issue of combining different styles in the Vienna program notes cited in the introduction and reproduced here.

I dream of the Utopia of a united style, where fragments of 'U' (Unterhaltung) [entertaining] and 'E' (Ernst) [serious] are not used for comic effect but seriously represent multi-faceted musical reality. That's why I've decided to put together some fragments from my cartoon film music: a joyful children's chorus, a nostalgic atonal serenade, a piece of hundred-percent-guaranteed Corelli (Made in the USSR), and finally, my grandmother's favourite tango played by my great-grandmother on a harpsichord. I am sure all these themes go together very well, and I use them absolutely seriously.⁷

On the surface, Schnittke's dream seems to contradict the very idea of polystylism. He says he wants to create a unified style, an ideal which, once attained, would seemingly annihilate the very notion of many concurrent styles in a work. However, like other composers, Schnittke's desire is first and foremost to combine apparently irreconcilable idioms, in his case popular and serious styles. He never says that he wants them to disappear in a synthesis; rather, he "sought a synthesis of styles, juxtaposing different elements, that would yet allow each element to retain its individuality."⁸ Schnittke adds that it is impossible to solve musical problems such as the abyss between musical spheres through rationalism, dogmatism, or dialectical technique: "The synthesis must arise as a natural longing, or through necessity." That explains why his generation has not yet succeeded and why it "may be the challenge for the next generation."⁹ Because he does not think that a

⁷ Schnittke's notes are reprinted in Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 140.

⁸ Schnittke and Polin, "Interviews," 10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

synthesis of popular and classical styles is possible, he calls it a “pure utopia,” yet that never prevented him from attempting it.¹⁰

Schnittke’s Utopian ideal is a goal shared by many composers of the 1960s, including Rochberg, Stockhausen and Pousseur, but he deals with it from a different perspective. The reaction against the rigidity of serialism is apparent in the return of musical quotation, which became a way to restore what had been excluded in the 1950s. Composers of the 1960s tried to connect elements which were apparently unrelated and to create new links where none supposedly existed.¹¹ Zimmermann, for instance, considered time as a sphere where past, present and future were equidistant from the center. In *Music for the Magic Theatre*, Rochberg adopted a collage technique he called “ars combinatoria,” drawing his sources from the past and combining them with old and new materials. In *Hymnen*, Stockhausen blended a very familiar type of music, national anthems, with unfamiliar sounds produced by electronic means. At the end of the work, he uses the blends to create the image of a perfect world, a peaceful country. Pousseur believed that a unified musical realm could be a model for social organization.¹² Schnittke’s Utopian goals are of a different sort. His Utopia is purely musical; he shows no consideration for social concerns or the circularity of time. In fact, his only desire seems to be able to utilize what he called the unwanted layers of his musical consciousness. For him, it is simply necessary “to experience all the musics one has heard since childhood.”¹³

¹⁰ Ross, “A Shy Frail Composer,” C13.

¹¹ For a more complete description of the Utopian ideals of composers in the 1960s, see Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning*, 108-159.

¹² Henri Pousseur, “Composition and Utopia,” *Interface* 12 (1983), 75-83.

¹³ Schnittke and Polin, “Interviews,” 11.

In accordance with Schnittke's ideals, the Concerto Grosso is for the most part quite the opposite of a stylistic synthesis. In the space of six relatively short movements, one can hear a folk-tune, a tango, Vivaldian figurations, the BACH musical monogram¹⁴, and various chorale melodies set either tonally or in clusters (fig. 3-1). In fact, at least twelve different stylistic features can be defined:

Figure 3-1. Main stylistic elements

A Simple, child-like folk tune: the first theme to be heard; tonal; the theme reappears in various places, including the end of the Toccata, just before the Postludio



B Chromatic oscillation: oscillation around a pair of pitches, often approached by successively larger intervals.



C Aggregates: partial cluster formations



¹⁴ Schnittke used the BACH monogram in many works such as the Sonata No. 2 (1968), the *Prelude in Memoriam Dmitri Shostakovich* (1975), and the Piano Quintet (1972-76), among others. In those works, even more than in the Concerto Grosso, it becomes the "center of intensive morphological modification." Ivashkin, "Shostakovich and Schnittke," 262.

D Chorale: the theme is named "Chorale" by Schnittke in the sketches; it builds upon itself in phrases of progressively longer lengths.



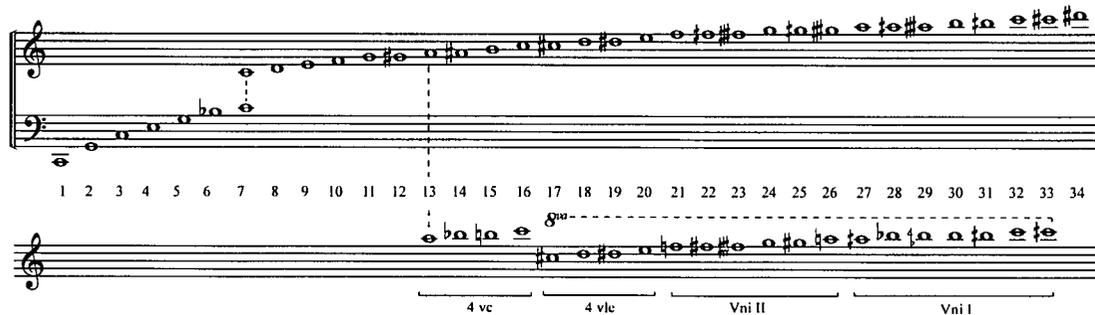
E Toccata theme A: it clearly exhibits Baroque traits, with rising scales and perpetual motion sixteenth notes.



F Toccata theme B: it features modulating sequences.



G Pedal C and overtones: pitches from the 13th to the 33rd partials are emphasized in clusters with quarter-tones



H Waltz: dodecaphonic waltz-like episodes, with reference to BACH monogram



I BACH monogram: harmonized version of the BACH monogram.

Musical score for the BACH monogram, harmonized version. The score is written for two staves (treble and bass clef) in common time. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The first staff contains a series of chords labeled B, A, C, and H, which correspond to the letters of the monogram. The second staff contains a melodic line consisting of a series of eighth notes, also starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

J Rondo: alternating descending Vivaldian sequences

Musical score for the Rondo, alternating descending Vivaldian sequences. The score is written for two staves (treble and bass clef) in common time. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The piece begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The first staff contains a series of descending eighth-note sequences, alternating between the two staves. The second staff contains a series of descending eighth-note sequences, also alternating between the two staves. The piece concludes with a final chord.

K Tango

Musical score for the Tango. The score is written for three staves (two treble clefs and one bass clef) in common time. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The piece begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The first staff is labeled "Vln. I solo" and contains a series of descending eighth-note sequences. The second staff is labeled "Vln. II solo" and contains a series of descending eighth-note sequences. The third staff contains a series of descending eighth-note sequences. The piece concludes with a final chord.

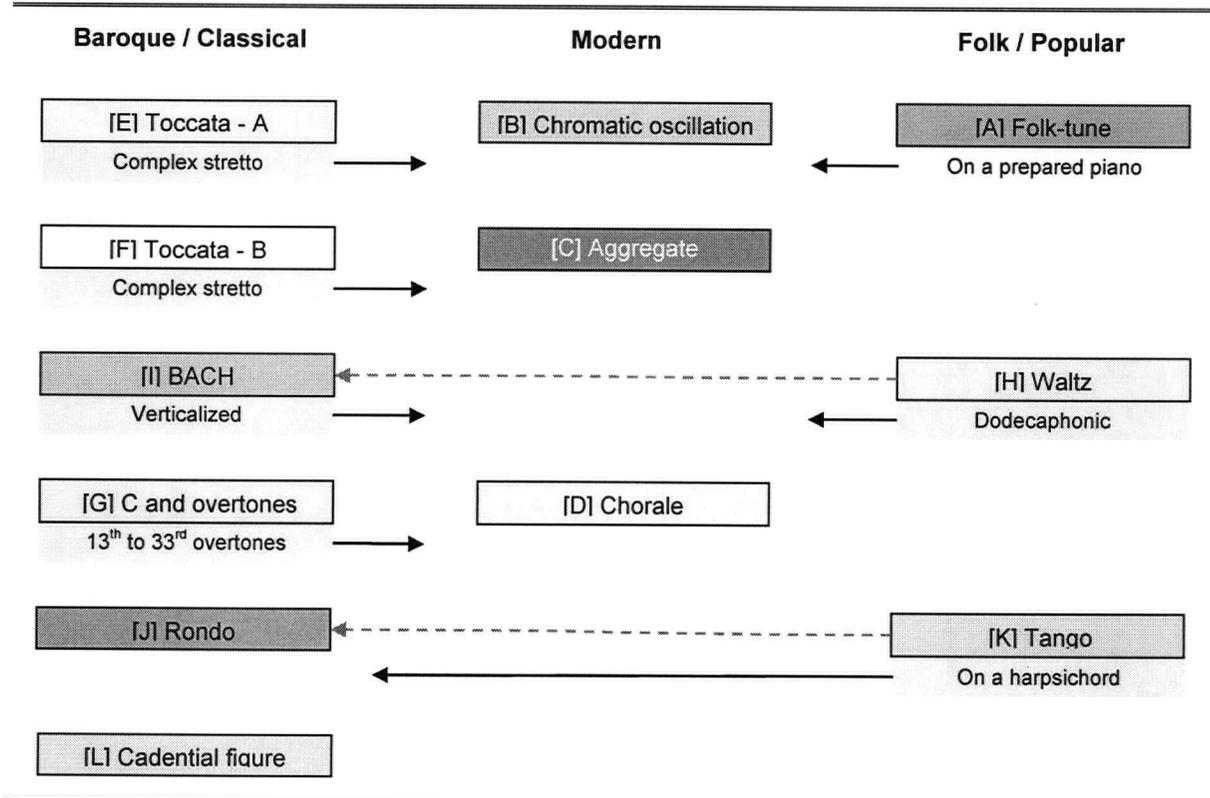
L. Cadential figures: tonal harmonization of a closing figuration

The image shows a musical score for the fifth movement, 'V. Rondo', in a minor key. The score is written for two staves, likely piano and harpsichord. The tempo is marked 'Agitato'. The music features a complex cadential figure with various rhythmic patterns and harmonic changes. A wavy line above the staff indicates a tremolo effect. The word 'attacca' is written below the second staff, indicating a transition to the next movement.

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The twelve basic styles can be grouped under three categories: folk/popular, classical, and modern as shown in figure 3-2. Schnittke muddies the boundaries between the categories; the overlap is represented by the use of arrows. For instance, the first movement begins with the child-like folk tune, but it is played on a prepared piano which could evoke a badly tuned house piano or the modern usage of the instrument as made famous by John Cage. The tango is played on the harpsichord, and the waltz is dodecaphonic. Other styles are developed through modern means and often lose their classical bearings. Dotted arrows on figure 3-2 represent explicit relations between styles in the work: the waltz uses pitches of the BACH monogram, and the Rondo theme retrospectively seems to have been composed with the tango in mind. In general, individual styles are never set in an enclosed, autonomous fashion; rather, they permeate, contaminate and pollute each other, giving a sense of unity to an otherwise fragmented work.

Figure 3-2. Categories of stylistic elements



In Chapter 2, I made a distinction between fragments and the fragmentary. In short, fragments are incomplete parts of what was once a whole, whereas the fragmentary is a space in which those fragments can be related together. A similar observation may be made about Schnittke's use of styles in the Concerto Grosso. Here, each style constitutes a fragment taken from a specific realm: the tango from dance music, Vivaldian figurations from the Baroque era. The styles are used in the same fragmentary space—the work—and as a consequence of the application of transformational processes, new relations are created. Some of the processes are standard musical procedures like canons, imitations, inversion, augmentation and transposition. Additional processes need to be defined or adapted to better correspond with the specificities of polystylism. Four of these processes were previously described in Chapter 2: shifts, stratification, stretto and morphing. One

more will be added here: dissolving. Moreover, many developments result in a kind or another of clusters which will be described below, but for the listener, they are often recognizable as a “clusterization” *meta*-process.¹⁵

Various forms of clusters appear throughout the Concerto Grosso. Generally speaking a cluster is any group of adjacent notes sounding simultaneously. However, as that type of configuration abounds in Schnittke’s works, the following discussion, for the sake of clarity, will distinguish between large clusters including all twelve tones, partial clusters, and a cluster-like texture, almost unique to Schnittke, which I call a “*fabrica*,” the Latin equivalent of the English word “fabric.” *Fabrica* is created by the extreme application of processes like *stretto*, dissolving or stratification.¹⁶ The resulting musical texture attains such a degree of complexity that a state of harmonic stasis is reached. While the overall result, on the surface, is most often heard as cluster, each of its constituents is finely organized following a set of strictly applied rules, like the individual threads of a fabric. Only with the help of a magnifying glass can the organization be perceived. Schnittke describes the process and its outcome:

The stasis arises as a consequence of the levelling influence of an abundance of homogeneous elements that could in themselves be dynamic but are neutralized by a dogmatic, total adherence to the technique. When a canon comprises five imitating voices, they are still audible. But when there are thirty or forty of them, all that can be perceived is the global result, a dense, slowly swaying web of interweaving lines.¹⁷

¹⁵ Kirsten Peterson summarized four types of stylistic changes: “stylistic shifts,” “stylistic collapse,” “stylistic layering,” and “stylistic overlap.” Peterson’s “stylistic shift,” “layering” and “overlap” correspond to my “shift,” “stratification,” and “morphing” respectively. “Stylistic collapse” corresponds more or less to “dissolving” or to one or another means of “clusterization.” Peterson, “Structural Threads in the Patchwork Quilt,” 82-91.

¹⁶ The progressive construction of a *fabrica* will be designated as “clusterization.”

¹⁷ Schnittke, “Static Form: A New Conception of Time (1970s),” in *A Schnittke Reader*, 150.

In his article, Schnittke was thinking about Ligeti's orchestral works (*Apparitions* [1956-59], *Atmosphères* [1961], *Lontano* [1967] and *Ramifications* [1968-69]); however, such an outcome is so frequent in Schnittke's works that they strongly characterize his own style. Differing from Ligeti, Schnittke occasionally uses more than one theme in imitation, resulting in a superimposition of two or more strettos.¹⁸

Concerto Grosso No. 1

What follows is not a thorough analysis of the score; rather, it focuses upon specific events happening on the stylistic plane that are relevant to the elaboration of an eventual narrative. In fact, the elaboration of the narrative depends on a double-axis process: the first axis is the recognition of styles over time. In the present case, styles are confined to sections of at least a few measures. Consequently, the starting point must be what could be called a middle ground somewhere between pitch and form analysis, in other words, a syntactic analysis of styles. Because the meaning of a specific style depends on the context of its usage, the second aspect is the establishment of relations between the many occurrences of a same style. The result could be called a paradigmatic analysis of the styles. References will be attached and ordered along that double-axis. In summary, the analysis of the narrative process is divided in three stages: (1) the elaboration of an analytic synopsis of styles in which the emphasis is placed on syntactic and paradigmatic aspects, (2) the exploration of the referential aspects in order to inform styles with meaning, and (3) the ordering of styles and references in a chronological narrative.

¹⁸ One example of partly heterogeneous fabrica is the stratification of strettos at m. 136 [21] of the second movement.

Synopsis

The six movements of the Concerto Grosso play different formal roles. The prelude (1) establishes an eerie atmosphere which is reprised in the postlude (6). Together, the two movements frame the work. Most stylistic development occurs in the middle three movements. The toccata (2) is longer and can be divided in many episodes of contrasting styles. The recitative (3) is an extended elaboration on a chorale-like theme. The orchestra is silent in Cadenza (4). The rondo (5) is set in more or less standard form and constitutes the most stylistically diverse portion of the work.

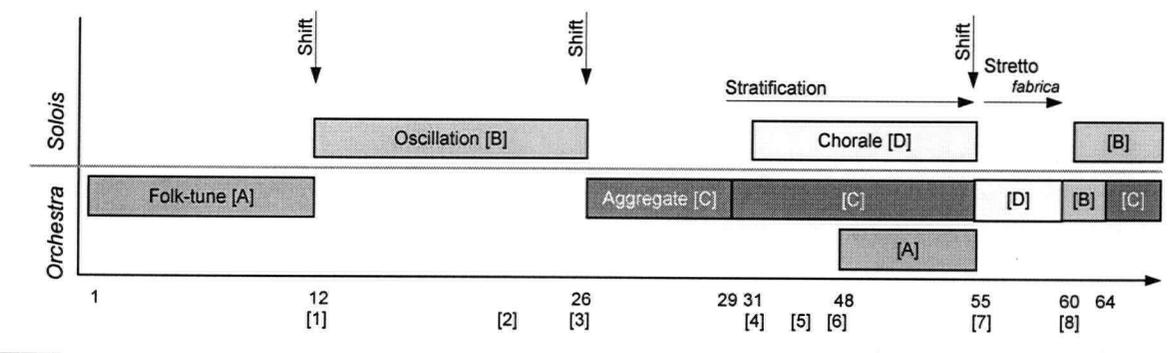
First Movement: Prelude

The movement begins with the child-like folk-tune on the prepared piano (fig. 3-3). The “out-of-this-world” sound produced by the modified instrument creates a dreamy beginning. Tonally centered on C, emphasised by the pedal tone, this tune, like many beginnings in Schnittke’s music, raises false expectations for the rest of the piece; rarely is the innocent feeling to be found again. The soloists are introduced just afterwards, playing chromatic oscillations with inversions, sustained by a faint aggregate in harmonics by the low strings (m. 12 [1]).¹⁹ The soloists abruptly break the oscillation pattern by shifting to disjunct descending lines (m. 25). The chorale is introduced over the string aggregate by one of the soloists (m. 31 [4]) and developed through the build up of a cluster with the addition of the second soloist in imitation, and the introduction of double-stops, and later

¹⁹ The score of Schnittke’s Concerto Grosso No. 1 has been published by Sikorski Edition (SIK 6625). Even if measures are not numbered in this edition, the traditionally metered musical notation makes them easy to count for every movement but the fourth. I am starting to count from number 1 for each movement. Rehearsal numbers are given in brackets, where appropriate.

of three and four-note chords. Meanwhile, the addition of the folk-tune in the harpsichord creates stylistic stratification (m. 48). The choral theme continues in the whole string section in the first *fabrica* of the work (m. 55 [7]). In what could be considered a codetta, the soloists play a variation of the oscillatory motive, now moving by descending ninth or ascending seventh instead of half steps (from m. 60 [8]). The second movement follows *attacca*.

Figure 3-3. Stylistic elements in the first movement

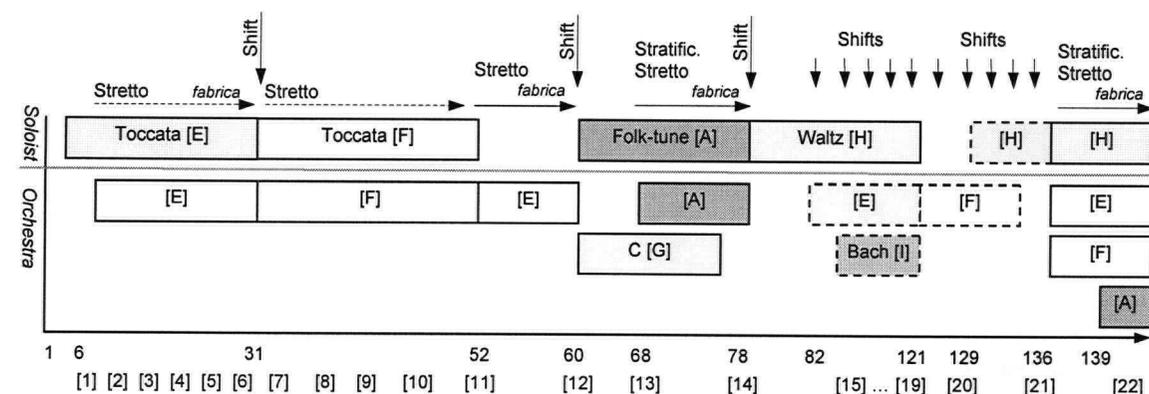


Second Movement: Toccata

The square 4/4 of the allegro toccata, with its Baroque figurations, creates a strong stylistic shift away from the preceding movement (fig. 3-4). The two solo violins play the Toccata A theme in A minor, in imitation at a quarter note delay. The accompaniment soon uses the Schnittkean stretto principle, this time in 8 voices, each statement a quarter note apart (m. 6 [1]). The result is a complex texture, where the Baroque figuration is always audible, however muffled and confused. The Toccata theme B with its repeated-note motive follows, now with the soloists imitating a measure apart. It too is developed in a Schnittkean stretto, this time with each voice starting on a different pitch (m. 31 [6]). The Toccata theme A returns and is developed to create a *fabrica* section (m. 52-59 [11]). The dense sonority resolves to a sustained C-major chord, over which is superimposed the folk-

tune theme played by the harpsichord (m. 60 [12]) with the two violins playing C major figurations that accentuate pitches from the folk-tune theme. Similarly, the sustained strings progressively begin to play fragments from that theme in harmonics, culminating in a full cluster (m. 77). Meanwhile, the soloists become more and more frenetic and, after climactic simultaneous glissandi, they begin a twelve-tone waltz (m. 78 [14]), occasionally interrupted by fragments from previously heard materials, such as the transposition of the toccata theme (m. 82). The pitches included in the three interrupting tremolo-like passages successively spell: BA, BAC, and finally BACH (m. 85 [15], 93 [16] and 101 [17]). After much turmoil, the second toccata theme returns in m. 121 [19], again in a close stretto and this time alternating with the waltz melody. The movement ends with a stratified texture comprised of the waltz played by the soloists, the second toccata theme in the violins, the first toccata theme in the lower strings (each in a chromatic stretto), and the folk-tune in the double basses (m. 139).

Figure 3-4. Stylistic elements in the second movement



Third Movement: Recitativo

The third movement seems to take off where the first one ended (fig. 3-6). Twice, the chorale theme is developed in stretto by the orchestra and dissolves into partial clusters

(E \flat , D and D \flat , m. 13-17; B, C, D \flat , F, F \sharp , G, m. 38-41). This movement is by far the most stylistically coherent of the work, consisting mostly of expanding chromatic figures of increasing density. During the course of the movement, the two soloist parts become more and more aggressive and intense, with frequent outbursts (especially m. 18-25, 41-47 and 83-101). In these cadenza-like sections, the soloists imitate each other, although more in rhythm and expression than in pitch content. Just after the last of these outbursts, at the summit of the last long build up, they quote short excerpts from two famous violin concertos: Tchaikovsky's and Berg's (m. 102 [11], 106, respectively).²⁰ In spite of their brevity, the borrowings stand out because they are surrounded by frenetic lines, which are partly improvised. The Tchaikovsky quotation is immediately repeated by the second soloists, albeit transposed up by a whole step. It is certainly not by chance that the Tchaikovsky fragment chosen by Schnittke alludes to the BACH signature (fig. 3-5). Moreover, that Berg's Concerto quotes Bach is common knowledge.

Figure 3-5. Quotation of Tchaikovsky and Berg's Violin Concertos

CONCERTO GROSSO NO. 1

By Alfred Schnittke:

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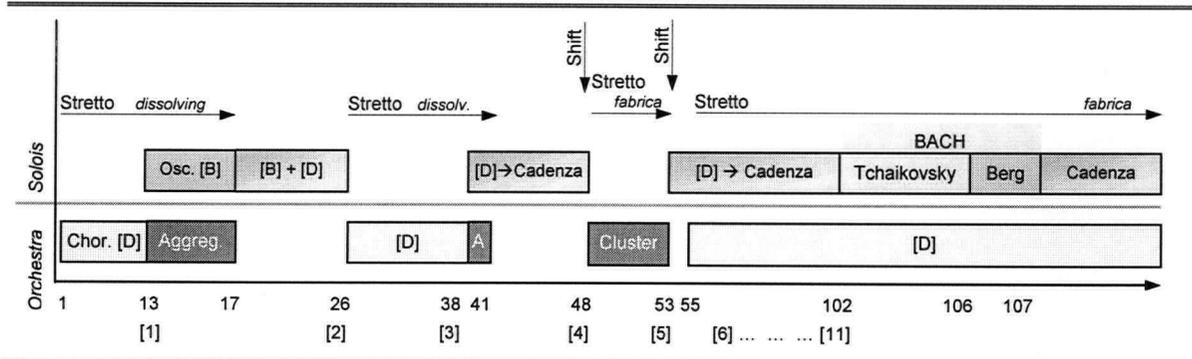
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²⁰ Schnittke's use of pre-existing material here is somewhat reminiscent of what he has done in his cadenza for Beethoven's Violin Concerto, in which a condensed history of the genre is presented. Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre*, 427-432.

At the end of the movement, over the complex quarter-tone fabrica created by the entire string section except for the double bass, the two soloists explode in two lines which have very little in common (m. 107-111). All the parts but the first soloist end with the highest playable note.

Figure 3-6. Stylistic elements in the third movement

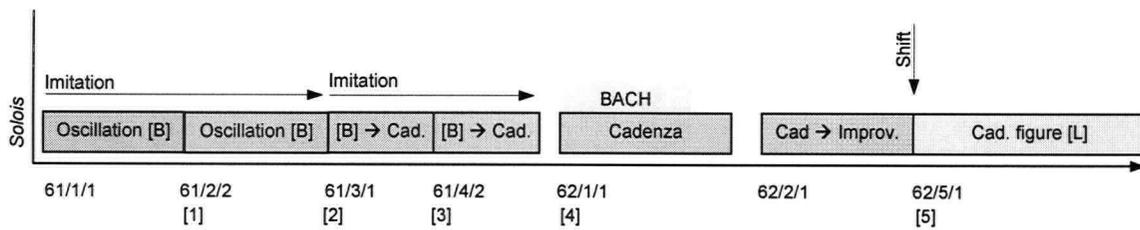


Fourth Movement: Cadenza

In the fourth movement cadenza, the soloists begin with the oscillation material and develop it in four following phrases (fig. 3-7). In each of these phrases, as it was the case through much of the work so far, the second violin seems to answer the first one, roughly imitating its motives, often in an approximate inversion. The second violin then plays a whole note trill on B \flat , followed by the first violin on A, and so on with C and B \natural completing the BACH monogram (62/1/1-4 [4]).²¹ The following section consists of rapid figurations which show no clear organisation principle and dissolve in “improvisato simile.” A cadential figure in C (I/G-i/G-N⁶/G-IV-vii^{o7}) serves as both a conclusion to the cadenza and as an introduction to the next movement (62/5/1 [5]).

²¹ The omission of bar lines at various places in the cadenza makes measure numbering difficult in the movement. Consequently, I use the (Page/System/Measure) system here.

Figure 3-7. Stylistic elements in the fourth movement



Fifth Movement: Rondo

Schnittke calls the fifth movement a rondo probably because of the periodic return of the rondo theme.²² The movement begins like a prolongation of the cadential figure played at the end of the cadenza (fig. 3-8). The harpsichord plays C minor chords in arpeggios (m. 1-15) supported by a C pedal in the strings (m. 15-33). Meanwhile, the violins begin the rondo theme consisting of Vivaldian sequences (m. 3 [1]). The material is developed in a polytonal Schnittkean stretto creating a progressively denser texture as more and more instruments are added. With an abrupt shift, the oscillation motive and the chorale theme return (m. 33-46 [6-7]). Transposed voices are added in a stretto increasing the level of dissonance (m. 47 [9]). The folk-tune emerges in the solo violin lines and other parts, sometimes over a harmonisation of the BACH monogram (m. 53 [10]). The rondo theme returns stated along with the folk-tune now given to the harpsichord (m. 71 [12]).

The stratification ends abruptly when the harpsichord embarks on the tango (m. 91 [14]), certainly one of the least expected genres in a “baroque-ish” concerto grosso. The soloists present the tango melodies and a counter-melody, the latter of which draws

²² The form of the movement could be described as ABACAD*, where A stands for the rondo theme at measures 3 [1], 71 [12] and 133 [19]; B for the first development section (m. 33-70 [6-11]); C for the second one, which includes the tango (m. 91-132 [14-18]); and D* for the final build up section from m. 160 [24], where the rondo theme also reappears.

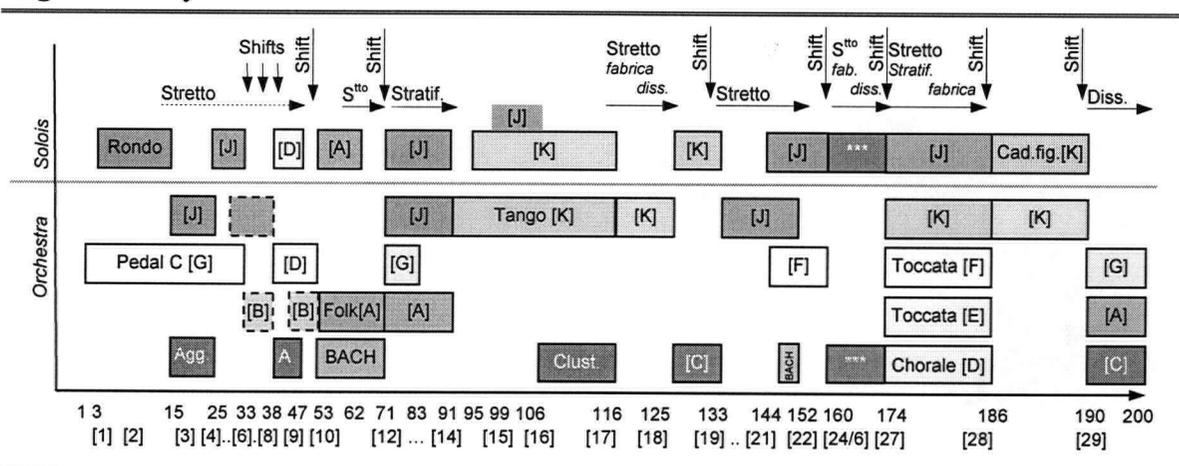
upon the Vivaldian sequence motive in the rondo theme (vln. solo I, m. 99 [15] to 103). Retrospectively, it is as if a part of the tango was implicitly present in the music from the beginning of the movement.²³ The tango also retains the semitone motives and violin imitation characteristic of the preceding music. A full 12-tone cluster supports a bridge-like section (m. 106-115) leading to the return of the main tango theme in stretto made up of all possible transpositions (m. 116 [17] to 123). While the complex texture dissolves in successive clusters, the two soloists reappear with the tango theme (m. 124-132).

Another rondo section emerges, beginning with a return to the initial C minor figuration (m. 133 [19]). The climax of the movement builds the most complex stratification of the entire work with the second toccata theme, the chromatic oscillations, the first toccata theme, the tango theme, and the rondo theme all piled on top of each other (m. 174 [27]). This complex section ends with the same cadential figure presented at the end of the cadenza, transposed up a semitone to C# major, thus framing the fifth movement (m. 186). The folk-tune in the prepared piano comes back (m. 190 [29]), this time over a quarter-tone cluster which dissolves slowly in an ascending motion, ending in a very high register. For Schnittke, those high pitches correspond to the overtones of the fundamental C (see fig. 3-1, element "G," above). Appropriately, a final pedal C is added in the last measure by the double bass (m. 200). The return of the prelude theme strengthens the sense of closure. The work as a whole could plausibly end there closing the same way it

²³ This counter-melody is also present in the tango of *Life with an Idiot*. Its combination with the tango melody in the Concerto Grosso is thus more than a simple superposition of two different themes: even if it is not clear from the beginning of the movement, the rondo theme is in reality derived from one of the tango counter-melody, and not the other way around.

began. As Ivashkin states, the return of the folk-tune truly adds an “extra-structural framework” to the work.²⁴

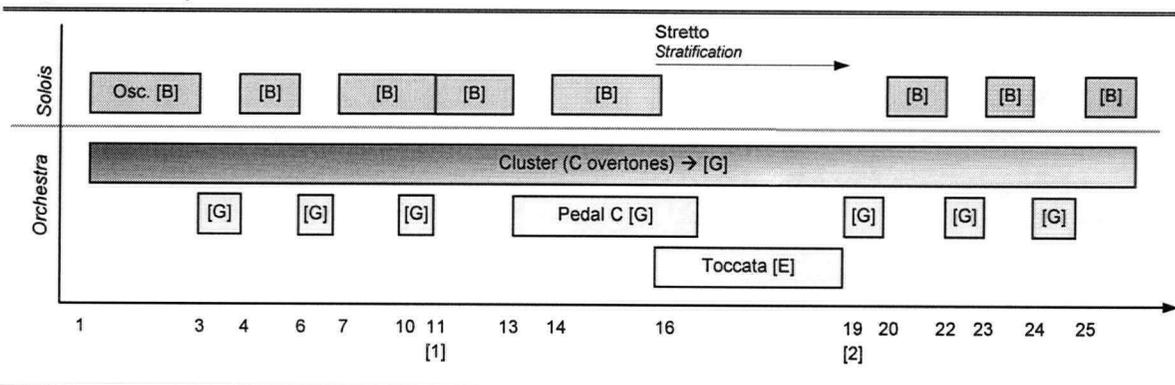
Figure 3-8. Stylistic elements in the fifth movement



Sixth Movement: Postludio

The postludio begins with the cluster from the previous movement simply flowing into it (fig. 3-9). The violins play chromatic oscillations in harmonics, and the piano, a deep low C, sometimes followed by sforzando chords in the upper register. A brief reminiscence of the first toccata theme appears in unison stretto (m. 16-18), and the movement dies in a *pppp* cluster, above a pedal C.

Figure 3-9. Stylistic elements in the sixth movement



²⁴ Ivashkin, “Shostakovich and Schnittke,” 261, 263.

* * *

The thematic material of Schnittke's Concerto Grosso No. 1 presents an unusual diversity of styles. The Baroque outlook suggested by the genre is present, although clearly only from the second movement on. However, the toccata and rondo themes are confronted by popular idioms like the folk-tune and the tango, modern clusters, and a dodecaphonic waltz. Even if these styles often oppose each other, the result is—perhaps paradoxically—clearly identifiable as a whole. The prelude reappears at the end of the rondo and in the postlude. The BACH monogram is present in many movements, including in the Waltz and the Violin Concertos borrowings. Even the tango counter-melody exhibits a Baroque tinge. In that light Schnittke's assertion that "all these themes go together very well" is hard to contradict; after all, polystylism is Schnittke's own peculiar style.

References

The above synopsis describes how styles are shifted, stratified or dissolved over the course of the individual movement and shows where the stylistic gaps occur. Because of its polystylistic nature, Schnittke's work creates a web of meaningful associations; it is an epistemic nexus in the fullest sense of the term, and extra-musical references abound. However, it is when stylistic disjunctions are related together by the listener that gaps can be resolved and explained. Each style bears some connotations which are to be related to those of other styles. Schnittke used and combined all these stylistic devices in a meaningful way for him, and an attempt to reconstitute this referential network can enrich our own interpretation of the work.

The examination of documents, sketches and other elements of what Gérard Genette would call the "paratext" offers insights into Schnittke's own conceptualization of

his work.²⁵ In the present case, two types of documents are especially enlightening: the sketches, which include a programmatic note, and other works by Schnittke from which he borrows. These two types of materials offer specific possibilities and consequently they demand different treatment. Sketches and self-borrowings will thus be dealt with successively.

Sketches

As elements of the paratext, the sketches belong to what Genette calls the private epitext. As Schnittke wrote sketches for his own use, the sketches suppose the presence of a first addressee standing between the author and us: the author himself.²⁶ However, it would be a mistake to think that these sketches were to remain forever private; if that was to be the case their author would have destroyed them. In the present case, the sketches are available and it would have been naïve to think that no one would ever consult them. As Genette writes: “the pre-texts available to us [...] are by definition manuscripts that their authors indeed wished to leave behind.”²⁷ In short, sketches tell us what the composer was willing to let us know.

Schnittke’s sketches for the Concerto Grosso provide fertile seeds for the construction of a narrative. According to Alexander Ivashkin, director of the Center for Russian Music and in charge of the Schnittke Archives, the sketches I have been able to

²⁵ Evidently, that chain of referential elements could spread even further, encompassing the realm of each listener’s knowledge; however, for the purpose of this thesis, it will end relatively close to its epistemic nexus, the work. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, translated by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 371.

²⁶ Genette, *Paratexts*, 371.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 396.

study at the Goldsmith College of the University of London have never been examined before. They can be divided into three sets. The first set of sketches presents general ideas about the work, its instrumentation and the order of movements. The second set includes a tentative narrative and schematic philosophical and psychological ideas, and the third set consists of orchestral score paper and contains mostly musical notation, along with some schematic elements and a few textual explanations.

Sketches: Program

General ideas for a program are written on a single sheet, mostly in German with some words in Russian (LS 10, figure 3-10).²⁸ The first thing that stands out is pairs of opposed concepts, clearly attributed to the original performers. Schnittke proposes three kinds of relations between them: “dialogue,” “antagonism,” and the “representation of the two sides of an entity,” i.e., “anima and animus.” Following his habit of punctuating enthusiasm, the composer set the third kind of relationship apart with an exclamation mark. In summary, an individual is opposed to the collective unconscious and is split in two: the anima and the animus, or the person and the soul. In other words, there are two main characters, implicitly a man and a woman (here Gidon Kremer and Tatiana Grindenko, the original performers) and the orchestra, associated with the collective unconscious. Schnittke adds that it is impossible to tell who is who, since they each bear a part of the other in them, and thus they are alternately both.

²⁸ The letters “LS” stand for “London sketches.” For practical reason, I have numbered the sketch sheets of each set in the order they were presented to me. No attempt has been made to recreate the chronology.

Figure 3-10a. London Sketches, sheet 10.

1) Wagner frei 2 Systeme
 2) ganzes (2 Systeme) [System - nicht-ambiguum sein]
 3) [„unabhängig“ u. „frei“ (Manu - Anima / Frau - Animus)]
 [System - kollektives Unterbewusstsein]

Wagner „frei“ Manu → Anima / Frau → Animus } direkte Verbindung mit Gott

System - kollektives Unterbewusstsein neue Ideen (aber unendlich aufgedeckt)
 [Episode, wo das Orchester Solisten auftauchen]
herausragt, die später bei der Anima? Abwechslung beide.
Wie ist Person und wer
Dynamisierung als wachsende Unstimmigkeit zwischen Person und
Anima. Kulmination - seelische Zerrissenheit. Auflösung - Übertragung aller
Unstimmigkeiten in höhere transzendente Reflexion, wo die
Differenzen als Einheiten auftreten (Dissonanzen werden in
die höchsten Oktaven verlegt, ein Grundton wird untergeschoben
und da wieder wir können die Dissonanzen hören).

Zerrissenheit der Doppelperson - so starrer und stodder
die Haltung des Kollektiv's - bis zu dogmatisch-kirchlichen Haltung
Steifheit in Körper (wo also die Zerrissenheit als
Doppelperson gleichzeitig eine Zerwerfenheit mit der äußeren Welt
ist).

Musikalisches Material.
 1) „Aufbau“ - C mit viele Ordnungen (bis zum 32. 22u. 16u.)
 2) „Dissonanzen“ - Atonalität, flissend, Viertelbrei, Aleatorik,
aperiodische Rhythmik
 3) quasi-Diatonik (Anfang) - st. freie Tongruppen, mit Sekundschritten et.
 4) dogmatische Diatonik

Figure 3-10b. Translation of London Sketches, sheet 10.²⁹

Concerto for 2 violins

Relation 1) dialogue (2 individuals) [orchestra – supporting rhythm (?)]
2) ~~conversation~~ antagonism [orchestra – the third force – or someone's ally]
3) [individual and „soul“ (Anima [man] Man -> Anima
Woman -> Animus) } !
orchestra – collective subconscious]

Individual and „soul“. Man → Anima } direct connection with God
Woman → Animus }

Orchestra – collective subconscious – ~~or Church~~

[Episode, in which the orchestra brings forward (although as yet indistinctly expresses) ideas that later emerge in the soloists' parts]

Who is Person and who is Anime? Both in turn.

Dynamic manifestation as a growing discord between person and anima. Culmination – spiritual rupture. Solution – transfer of all discord to higher transcendental regions, where the dissonances appear as unities (dissonances are shifted into the highest octaves, a fundamental tone with overtones is inserted below so that the dissonances sound consonant).

Change in the orchestra's function – the greater the spiritual rupture of the double-person – the more stubborn and orthodox is the attitude of the collective – leading to a pinnacle of dogmatic-religious ~~attitude~~ rigidity (where thus the internal rupture of the double-person is ~~through~~ at the same time a dispute with the exterior world).

Musical Material.

- 1) „Resolution“ – C with many overtones (up until the 32th, or the 16th).
 - 2) „Dissonances“ – Atonality, glissandi, quarter tones, aleatoric, aperiodic ~~Ry~~ rhythm
 - 3) ~~quasi~~ quasi-diatonic (beginning) – ☆ free groups of tones, with second-steps etc
 - 4) dogmatic diatonic
-

²⁹ This translation is by John Roeder and the author.

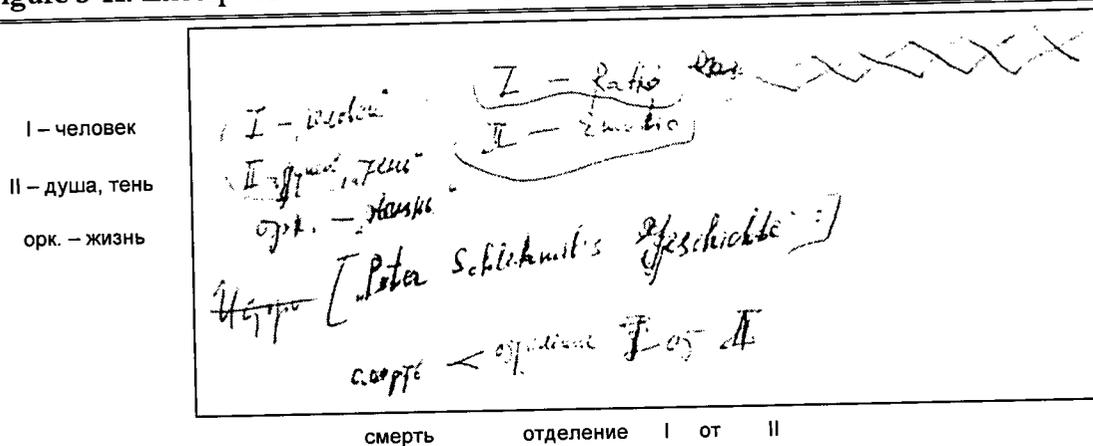
The concepts “Anima/Animus,” “Persona” and “Collective Unconscious” allude directly to Carl Jung’s writings, even if Schnittke does not mention either his name or writings in the concerto sketches or in any published interviews. According to Jung, the collective unconscious, one of the three levels of mind, is hereditary and includes many archetypes: the persona, the anima/animus, and the shadow among others.³⁰ Briefly put, the persona is the façade one exhibits publicly; for instance, it is what enables one to be polite with people one dislikes. It is the outward face of the psyche. In a sense, it opposes what Jung calls the anima for males, and the animus for females, which is the “inward” face of the psyche, the hidden and suppressed complement of the opposite sex that exists in each individual.³¹

On a separate sheet (LS 1, fig. 3-11) Schnittke notes that death is to be seen as the separation of I (man and ratio) and II (spirit, shadow, and emotio). He also references Papageno and Papagena, the famous characters from *Die Zauberflöte*. In addition, the word “spirit” is accompanied by the word “shadow,” and a reference to Adalbert von Chamisso’s *Peter Schlemihl* is placed underneath. The German classic tale tells the story of a man who sells his shadow to the devil in exchange for a magic purse, only to find out that a man without a shadow is not accepted by others. The devil agrees to give his shadow back, but this time asks for his soul in return; Peter refuses the pact. He finally throws the purse away, and begins a journey back to salvation.

³⁰ The two other levels of mind are the conscious and the personal subconscious.

³¹ Together the anima and the animus are referred to as Syzygy.

Figure 3-11. Excerpt of London Sketches, sheet 1.



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In Jungian terms, the shadow is the archetype representing one's own gender in the psyche; as such, it opposes both the anima/animus and the persona. Indeed, whereas the persona can be tamed in order to fit the expectations of others, the shadow presents animal instincts, and by extension creativity and inspiration, all part of the irrational which opposes the rational. How the shadow archetype corresponds to Peter's shadow is open to conjecture, and the psychological and philosophical interpretations of the tale are numerous. Obviously, the richness of the tale inspired Schnittke.

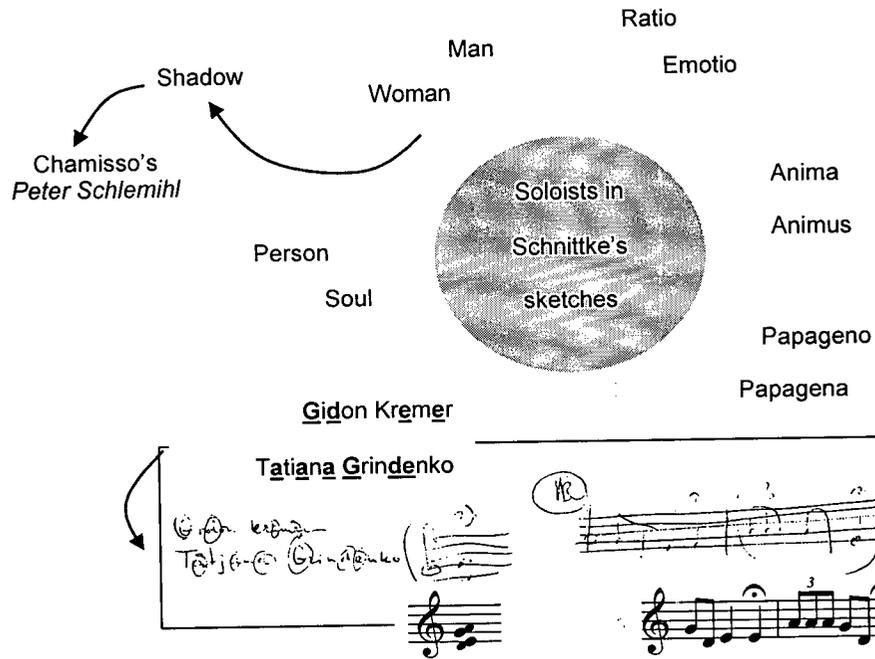
Schnittke's interest in the Peter Schlemihl story mirrors his fascination with the Faust legend.³² In both cases, a young man makes a deal with the devil in exchange for knowledge or wealth. The similarities end there. After the deal, Schlemihl's existence is made difficult by his missing shadow; he is rich but rejected by others. In contrast, Faust lives a fabulous life during the twenty-four years of his devilish pact. Moreover, the

³² Schnittke and Ivashkin, "From Schnittke's Conversations," 29.

outcomes for each character are strikingly different: Faust refuses redemption, renews his deal two times and is ultimately put to death, his soul lost forever. Schlemihl refuses the last gift from the devil, throws away what he previously received from him, and begins to expiate his sins. Schnittke chose to save Faust for a later project, the Faust-Cantata, but he may have drawn inspiration from Schlemihl for the Concerto Grosso, especially in the way the second violin often follows the first one, behaving like its shadow.

The presence of a man and a woman as main characters may have been a consequence of the choice of soloists—Kremer and Grindenko. Lines in the sketches often bear the initials of their first names, G[idon] and T[atiana], in the margin. Moreover, Schnittke considered using their musical signatures. Using the letters in each name, he devised two melodic fragments and combined them in a short theme (LS 8, fig. 3-12). The theme, however, cannot be found in the final work. It is thus assumed that Schnittke refrained from incorporating it in the work at an early stage of the composition.

Figure 3-12. Various kind of dualities in London Sketches



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From the sketches, the following program can be inferred. The person and anima are two sides of a “double-person” that is separated as the music builds in intensity. The divergence of the two sides is influenced by the intervention of an underlying force, represented by the orchestra. All the entities undergo some sort of transformation. The discord between person and the anima reaches “transcendental regions,” and the orchestra, representing the collective unconscious, becomes more “stubborn and orthodox,” until it reaches a state of “dogmatic-religious” rigidity. If the two violins represent the person and the anima, and the orchestra the collective unconscious, the force dividing the “doppelperson” is depicted by various types of “dissonance,” which, as identified by Schnittke at the bottom of the sketches, include quartertones, atonality, glissandi, random pitches, and non-periodic rhythms. As noted in the sketches, by pushing those dissonances

to registral extremes, a point of non-differentiation is reached where the dissonances appear as unities. The sides of the “doppelperson” are to be united again by the introduction of a root in the orchestra: dissonant pitches serving as the overtones of a fundamental.

Schnittke presents his “solution” as the reunification of the person and of the anima/us in “transcendental regions.” Jung uses the exact same words in his theory.³³ The psyche is animated by three principles of operation. The first is the principle of opposites. Every wish suggests an opposite. The tension between the two creates energy, i.e. libido, which has to be released in some way. The principle of equivalence implies that for any amount of positive energy released through an action, a similar amount of negative energy has to be released. If that energy is repressed, it can build into a complex, which can be alleviated over time by the principle of entropy, through which all systems tend to run down, their energy being equally distributed. The dissolution of complexes attenuates the divergences between archetypes, and leads to a state of transcendence, in which the individual can accept him or herself with all of his or her contradictions through the union of conscious and unconscious content. For Schnittke, the soloists should ultimately reach that “transcendental” stage.

³³ See Carl Jung’s essay “The Transcendent Function,” in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, Vol. 8 of *Collected Works*, Bollingen Series 20 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 69-91. Jung wrote his essay in 1916 but it was first published in 1958.

Sketches: Movements

Schnittke's sketches describe much more than a program for the work. Various notes in the sketches pertain to the instrumentation and to the order of movements.³⁴ Among the many versions of the name of movements which are reproduced on various sheets, the only invariable factors are the presence of the recitative as third movement and the postlude as the last. The first movement is sometimes called "canon" or "introductory lyrical prelude"; the second movement, "fugue" or "toccata"; the third one, "choral and recitative," the fourth one, "aria" or "dialog," and the fifth one, "drama" or "toccata."³⁵ Even if Schnittke seems to have hesitated between many different possibilities, the ideas conveyed by some of those titles found their way into the final version. For example, the prelude presents, admittedly like most of the movements, various forms of canons, especially between the two soloists. The tango in the fifth movement could have been an aria even if the idea of "dialog" is much more appropriate. On what seems to be a very early sketch, Schnittke places a large question mark between two framing movements, here named "introduction" and "epilogue" [LS 9]. The introduction is divided in two parts: "dialog (unified style)" and "contrast (varied style)"—both concepts are hard to pin down

³⁴ The first version asks for 12 string instruments in a 43221 formation; the proportions were later changed to 66441, for a total of 21 musicians. Not all the sketches add up to the same result. On one particular sheet, instruments are grouped in three groups of eight or ten, with a note concerning the 30 instruments that would be needed in the last case: "it drops off for lack of two contrabasses." The precise signification of those numbers is far from evident; however, it proves that Schnittke considered the number of voices as significant, and consequently carefully planned the accumulation sections in order to reach a precise goal. As a result, additions and multiplications can be found in the margins of numerous sketches.

³⁵ One version specifies seven movements, adding a "development" to the work.

in the final score—whereas the word “union” which qualifies the “epilogue” is obvious in the program.³⁶

Sketches: Quasi-

The idea of approximation or incompleteness is present in many aspects of the work and this is reflected in the sketches. Musical elements are developed in sections titled with the common prefix “quasi-.” On one of the sketch sheets, four such labels are illustrated: “quasi-periodic,” “quasi-serial,” “quasi-diatonic,” and “quasi-chromatic” (LS 8-9).³⁷ Each category is followed by a short notated example. The quasi-chromatic mode inserts quarter-tones to the chromatic scale. The quasi-serial and quasi-diatonic ideas, given the number of crossed-out versions presented, seem to have been the most problematic for Schnittke. Apparently, the quasi-serial mode has been transmuted in “a tonal effect” that can be obtained in three different ways: “the triad,” “the fourth/fifth,” or by using “more

³⁶ Details about the “material” to be used between the outsets are written out elsewhere (LS 9). Schnittke lists intonation, chorale, “low genres (violin with jazz, Viennese waltz, cabaret etc.,” and more importantly, “tonic (only at the end!).” The idea of chorale is developed in more detail. To a simple note about a “quasi-periodic” rhythm succeeds an ambiguous note about “using the following material: 1) path, 2) at the cemetery, 3) after the torture, 4) execution, 5) before the execution.” The exact meaning of these references is still unclear. They might designate excerpts of a movie for which Schnittke wanted to reuse these materials, or they could be the principal events of a tentative narrative. However, in that last case, the chronological inversion of the “execution” and “before the execution” is hard to explain. The last remarks pertain to the chorale, for which Schnittke enumerates three “intonation versions: 1) diatonic, 2) chromatic, and 3) $\frac{1}{4}$ t.” Also possible are: “1) scale in fourths, 2) in fifths, 3) in sevenths, 4) in ninths.” Finally, two modes of expression are listed: “1) chorale in precise imitations, and 2) chorale in heterophonic imitation.”

³⁷ In fact, the prefix “quasi-” does not always appear, there are a number of instances where only the word “diatonic” is presented. However, in that case, the musical material does not present a strictly diatonic melody, but rather a melody based on an unusual succession of tones and semi-tones.

than three diatonic steps.”³⁸ Two rhythmic figures are given for the “quasi-periodic” mode, the first one showing a sequence of attacks, some of which are slightly extended by the addition of a thirty-second note, the second by placing accents on the quarter-notes that were extended in the above line. The resulting rhythm resembles the one of the chorale, but only to a certain extent (fig. 3-13).

Figure 3-13. Quasi-Periodic as notated in LS 8 and the Chorale theme



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CONCERTO GROSSO NO. 1

By Alfred Schnittke:

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Sketches: Tango

Versions of the tango, the two toccata themes, and the chorale appear on various sheets, with some enlightening annotations. For example, a chromatic scale which is superimposed in different octaves is described in the margin as “the gradual stratification of spirit.” Just below it is a new statement of the chorale pitches, and besides them the words “soloists counterpoint, resistance of the chorale.” The exact meaning of these statements is hard to

³⁸ A final category, called “quasi-statica,” has no musical examples attached to it (LS 6). Schnittke simply noted “c.f. [??] Ligeti.” I have shown above how for Schnittke the *fabrica* sections, made of multiple imitative lines, create a sense of stasis. Obviously, Schnittke is indebted to Ligeti’s works.

assert; nonetheless, they probably refer to the end of the third movement, where both soloists play in question-answer fashion above the complex chromatic movement of the strings sections (from m. 53). This interpretation is supported by the mention of a “pre-climax episode” right afterwards, which corresponds well to the same location in the work.³⁹

Self-Borrowings

As part of the private epitext, sketches provide insights into the compositional process. As such, Schnittke’s notes about the sources of his inspiration can influence our own perception of the work; his program provides departure points and establishes a conceptual framework from which further interpretations can be derived. The situation is notably different in the case of self-borrowing. Here, we are not concerned with the paratext, but rather the intertext. The following discussion depends on a double hypothesis. Firstly, it supposes that Schnittke quotes himself because the excerpts he uses carry a similar meaning in different contexts. Secondly, even if the preceding premise proves false, the same quotation used in different contexts keeps some of its original signification determined in large part by its intrinsic cultural associations.⁴⁰ In all cases, whether or not Schnittke wanted us to trace these quotations back to their origins, the

³⁹ Other thematic material present in the work is worked out in the sketches. The folk-tune, for instance, is sketched for four different purposes: the introduction in the prelude (m. 1), its return in the second movement at the harpsichord and violins (m. 60), in the fashion of the violins in the fifth movement (m. 53), and the conclusive one at the end of the same movement, this time on the prepared piano (m. 190). In the two cases where the piano is used, a note specifies that the instrument must be amplified, but only the last occurrence mentions that it must also be prepared: “prepared piano (with amplification) through dynamic. Timbre – dissociated ‘pitches’, i.e. detuned three strings.”

⁴⁰ Chapter 4 will examine that possibility in more detail by using the tango as case study.

narrative experience will depend on the listener's own familiarity and competence to deal with them.

As with the First Symphony, the Concerto Grosso is directly indebted to some of the composer's music for films and cartoons: the BACH harmonisation comes from *Glass Harmonica* (Andrej Hržanovskij, 1968), the tango from *Agony* (Elem Klimov, 1975 and 1985), the Vivaldian sequences and the cadential figure from *Butterfly* (Andrej Hržanovskij, 1972). In each of the films, the styles are given a precise function and definite meaning. In *Glass Harmonica*, a film about greed and authority, the BACH motto appears as a magic formula bringing good feelings and relief to people. In *Agony*, the tango is heard each time the protagonist, Rasputin, has to choose between good and bad deeds, between virtue and sin. In *Butterfly*, the Vivaldian sequences accompany the love dance of two butterflies and the cadential figure marks a turning point in the plot. These thematic elements which also play fundamental roles in the Concerto Grosso will be approached as examples of intertextuality. For each, I will show how Schnittke relied on the inherent connotations of the borrowings to support extra-musical ideas in the Concerto Grosso, whether they originate from a film scenario or, in the present case, become part of the Jungian inspired narrative of a polystylistic work.

BACH

The BACH monogram appears in many works besides the *Concerto Grosso No. 1*, and trying to understand which images prompted Schnittke to use it in an animated movie can certainly help to understand the meaning he attributed to those four notes. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Schnittke's collaboration with Hržanovskij on *Glass Harmonica* is one of the principal inspirations of polystylism. The film borrows from paintings of Brueghel,

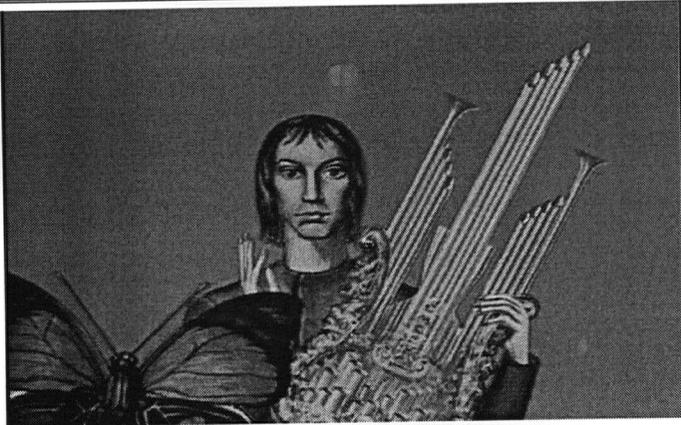
Magritte and others. It uses visual quotations in the manner of a collage with the borrowed images meant to be recognized as such and their respective origins identified. Much like Schnittke's later music, Hržanovskij's movie uses borrowings as referential elements, forcing the viewer/listener to refer to other artworks and to construe meaning from them. A short summary of the plot will show how this goal is achieved.

There is no dialogue in *Glass Harmonica* but the film begins with a written prologue on the screen: "Although the events of this film are of a fantastic character, its authors would like to remind you of boundless greed, police terror, the isolation and brutalisation of humans in modern bourgeois society." The first images of the film show people counting, hiding or asking for money. The glass harmonica is heard playing the BACH monogram right afterwards when the story continues: "Long ago a craftsman created a magical musical instrument, and called it: THE GLASS HARMONICA. The sound of this instrument inspired high thoughts and fine actions. Once, the craftsman came to a town whose citizens were in thrall to a yellow devil."⁴¹

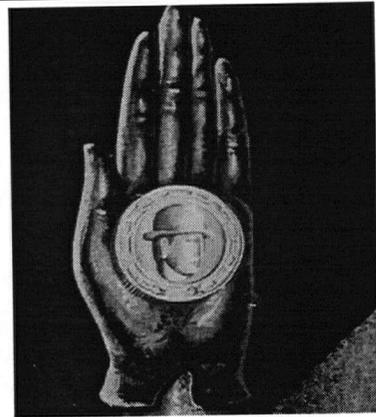
The craftsman loses the glass harmonica when he is arrested by a policeman whose image is taken from Magritte (fig. 3-14). In this film, the man represents the "police terror" and by extension, state oppression. He controls the people with his money. Incidentally, greed and envy are portrayed as transfiguring people, even turning some into animals. The people begin to walk to the sound of an atonal march, marked by the beating of a giant drum conducted by Magritte's man, resulting in a grotesque procession.

⁴¹ Andrej Hržanovskij, *Steklánnaá Garmonika* (1968), from the DVD *Masters of Russian Animation*, vol. 1 (Chatsworth, CA, Films by Jove: 1997).

Figure 3-14. Borrowings in Glass Harmonica



The young man with the glass harmonica



Money, "the yellow devil"



Magritte's Policeman and Brughel's Tower of Babel

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After a shot of the man in front of Brughel's Tower of Babel, dead butterflies displayed on a wall are revived by a ray of light coming from the sun to the music of the BACH monogram. Apparently, the power of the glass harmonica is now diffused by the sun. A young boy returns with the magical instrument and begins to play. People slowly return to their human state and follow the young man and his instrument in a procession. Men declare their love; the rich give to the poor, flowers are thrown in the air. Magritte's

man, though, comes back. He arrests the boy and destroys the glass harmonica; however, this time, people are no longer controlled by his money. They repair the city's giant melodic clock making it play the BACH theme. This time there is nothing Magritte's man can do to silence it.

Schnittke held Bach's music in high esteem, he even conferred upon it a mystical power.

Bach's music produces its own form of physical effect, although not one of loudness or harshness. In fact, one could call it a spiritual effect. But in Bach's music one ceases to be conscious of the boundary between what is spiritual and what is physical, or, to be more precise, the spiritual is a continuation of the physical, not something quite distinct from it.⁴²

That Schnittke chose to portray a cluster of good sentiments by using the musical transliteration of Bach's name is thus not fortuitous. In the movie, this theme is a character in itself; it represents goodness, collaboration and sharing. It is a positive force, able to counter "police terror." It frees people from slavery to money, the "yellow devil." Schnittke thought the BACH monogram would be the best representative of such a positive force. The theme also undergoes a very important transformation. At first, it is the invention of a single man, whose power is not sufficient to counter oppressive atonal forces. At the end, it is shared by all in such a way that the people do not need the craftsman's invention anymore; they can build one on their own together. In a sense, the glass harmonica and its melody have become part of the collective.

As demonstrated below, the two soloists in the Concerto Grosso experience a similar transformation. During the course of the Concerto, the BACH monogram sounds four times. In the second movement, it appears in a sequence of sixteenth-note chords that

⁴² Schnittke and Ivashkin, "From Schnittke's Conversations," 9.

interrupts the waltz, successively spelling BA, BAC, and BACH (m. 85, 93, 101, fig. 3-15). Between these occurrences, the soloists exchange the waltz theme, beginning with a different permutation of BACH as the first four notes of a twelve-tone series.⁴³ The sequence clearly refers to a note in the sketch where Schnittke states that it is impossible to tell which is which of “Person” and “Anima”; they are both in turn.⁴⁴ In this context, BACH might denote the influence of the collective unconscious upon the protagonists. It is slowly emerging from the orchestra and finding a place in the most incongruent position, in a dodecaphonic waltz, as remote from Bach as possible.

⁴³ Although every line completes a 12-tone series, it is impossible to fit the different series into the same dodecaphonic matrix.

⁴⁴ The exchange of roles also points back to two interleaving lines drawn besides the words “Ratio” and “Emotio” on LS 1 (see fig. 3-12, above)

Figure 3-15. Exchange of the waltz theme and BACH aggregate spelling.

The musical score is divided into three systems, each with two staves. The left staff is for Soloists and the right staff is for Strings. The Soloists' part features a waltz theme with notes B, A, C, H in the first system, H, C, A, B in the second, and C, A, B, H in the third. The Strings' part features a BACH aggregate spelling with notes B, A in the first system, B, A, C in the second, and B, A, C, H in the third. The score includes measures 78-85, 86-93, and 94-101. The Soloists' part is marked with 'etc.' and the Strings' part is marked with 'etc.'.

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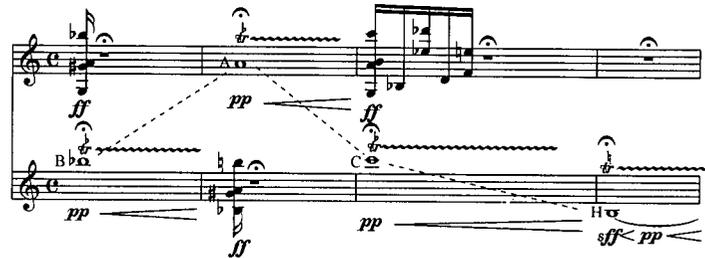
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In the Recitativo, the BACH monogram is a faint reminiscence, a shadow among the quotations of the Berg and Tchaikovsky's concertos (m. 102, fig. 3-5, above). In the fourth movement, the BACH motto returns in a more recognizable form, pitches spread out over different registers, but emphasized by trills and crescendos (62/1/1-4). The theme is also placed in evidence: it is preceded and followed by a few seconds of silence (fig. 3-16). Moreover, that appearance in the soloists is markedly different from the previous ones: instead of being hidden in the works of other composers or in a waltz, it appears here in a deliberate fashion, in whole notes, separated by pauses forming parentheses that seem to have no other function than to emphasize the motto.

Figure 3-16. BACH in the Cadenza, mvt. IV, from 62/1/1



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Before the appearance in the Cadenza, the BACH monogram has been presented as a subtle but nevertheless unmistakable presence. Considering Schnittke's program, the theme may act as an effect, or symptom, of the collective unconscious: it emerges from clusters in the orchestra, it is used as the first four pitches of a dodecaphonic series, and it is subtly referred to by the Berg and Tchaikovsky's Violin Concertos. The role of the motto is different in the Cadenza. It triggers a rare moment of collaboration in a movement where the soloists are clearly divided. When it returns in the fifth movement, the BACH monogram, with the same harmonization used in the *Glass Harmonica* movie, accompanies a polytonal canon built from the folk-tune melody by the soloists and harpsichord. For this last appearance, the BACH monogram appears exclusively in the orchestra. Retrospectively, it seems that the collective unconscious, represented by the monogram, is closely linked to the orchestra. Schnittke's sketches also make that association clear.

Tango

With the tango, another rich relationship develops between the Concerto Grosso and an earlier film.⁴⁵ The exact same theme that Schnittke describes as “his grandmother’s favourite tango played by his great-grandmother”⁴⁶ appears at various times in *Agony*, a film about the life and death of Rasputin, the famous mystic who played a role in the fall of the Romanov dynasty.⁴⁷ The character of Rasputin is ambiguous. His doctrine combines aspects of spirituality and religion with depravity: for him, humility can be attained by the expression of sins. The duality of this character is depicted by having the spiritual Rasputin succumbing to his sexual desires. The melody appears in two guises, either as orchestral background or as the song of a woman. The first time it is heard, Rasputin, coming back from talking to the Tsar’s advisors, sees the Baroness and is instantly attracted to her. He jumps on the stairway, climbs toward her and forces her to kiss him. The tango begins as soon as Rasputin lays his eyes on the woman and becomes very prominent when an officer frees her from his embrace.⁴⁸ In the second guise, the theme is sung by a woman’s voice when Rasputin learns that a motion against him will be submitted at the Duma. He leaves by a side door and picks up the phone, saying that a lady “sings to seduce him.” Just a few seconds later, the lady is there and undresses. Rasputin goes from attraction to repulsion and ultimately rejects her. In the second part of the movie, when Rasputin is asked to place the Tsarévich on the throne, he receives another phone call and hears the same tango

⁴⁵ Schnittke’s use of the genre of the tango will be discussed in more details in Chapter 4.

⁴⁶ Schnittke quoted by Ivashkin in *Alfred Schnittke*, 140.

⁴⁷ The same tango melody also appears in Schnittke’s opera *Life with an Idiot* (1991).

⁴⁸ The situation quickly degenerates with most people taking sides with Rasputin. Finally, the colonel is arrested, and Rasputin leaves as a free man.

melody sung by the same woman, who now agrees to meet him. In the next scene, he is seen with the singing lady but, just as Rasputin is taking the lady to bed, a group of priests enter the room and put him to trial. It turns out that the lady and her song were a lure. Later, the tango is played at the organ in a dissonant fashion, just before Rasputin is invited to eat a poisoned meal. It is heard again when Rasputin recognizes the singer on a portrait at Prince Feliks Úsupov's house. The mysterious woman is the Prince's wife Irina, the tsar's niece, and the whole setting is a trap. Rasputin tries to find Irina and the tango is heard once more. Instead, he finds the men who have plotted against him and who will soon kill him. His last words are that "angels are singing."

It comes as no surprise that Schnittke chose the tango to capture seduction. From its obscure origins, the genre was associated with sexual desire, being used in dances in the brothels of the poor areas of Buenos Aires.⁴⁹ The tango expresses ideas of masculinity, even machismo, but also of sensitivity, eroticism, and desire. In the movie, it is used as a leitmotiv, as the chant of a seductress who pulls the self-proclaimed priest toward his fate. Rasputin, succumbing to a sensual slavery, is seduced by the music of the lady who serves as bait. The tango symbolizes his inner demons, his attraction toward sin, and the desires he cannot resist.⁵⁰

As far as the Concerto Grosso is concerned, it is not immediately evident that the tango symbolizes evil, or that it acts as some sort of bait, or even that it should be seen as a negative force. When the tango is heard in the fifth movement, it resembles more a

⁴⁹ Gerard Béhague, "Tango," *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 18 May 2005), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

⁵⁰ Schnittke often uses the tango to portray evil, metaphorically or literally. This will be discussed in Chapter 4.

solution than a problem. From the beginning of the fifth movement, the soloists seem to be trying to join forces: they are like the butterflies of the Hržanovskij's movie, moving together in a love dance. However, as in the movie, their desire to unite will face numerous obstacles, be it the young boy who catches the butterflies, or in this case, the increasing dissonances of the orchestra... and the tango. As the tango episode progresses, it becomes clear that the music is not heading toward a synthesis, but rather toward fragmentation.⁵¹ When the strings play the tango melody in a complex chromatic stretto that dissolves into a cluster, there is no place left for the innocent feeling of the beginning of the movement. The texture becomes more and more dissonant and forms a complex fabrica in which all other styles melt away. After all, the tango was a dream. Like the woman in the movie, it is the image of an unattainable goal. It is evil in disguise.

Films: Cadential Figure

The cadential figure first heard at the end of the Cadenza and the conclusion of the fifth movement comes from another movie by Hržanovskij, *Butterfly*. It serves to introduce the pastoral music accompanying the flight of butterflies. The movie offers a fable about freedom and about the opposition between civilisation and nature. It begins with a young boy in the middle of his mechanical toys, distracted by the arrival of a butterfly through his

⁵¹ If one section of the Concerto portrays Schnittke's "dream of a Utopia," it is probably the tango episode. Here is the idea of stylistic symbiosis epitomized by the Baroque tango, which is followed by the superposition of many styles: the rondo theme, the two toccata themes, the tango and the chromatic oscillations (m. 174-186). The result of that accumulation of styles is not a "unified style" in the sense that they should be merged in a single synthesized unity. Rather, it is a "unified style" like the one Schnittke dreamed of, an encompassing style in which all musics, high and low, fit together while preserving their identity. This setting is also coherent with the attitude which, according to Schnittke, should be adopted in front of the Evil. He believed that the Evil must be acknowledged and confronted. Schnittke, "From Schnittke's Conversations," 22-23.

window. He decides to follow it through the city, trying and finally succeeding in catching it. Placed in a jar with others, the butterflies become the boy's toys and move to the sound of a music box melody. The young man falls asleep and has a dream in which the roles are reversed: he is chased and captured by a giant butterfly, raised high into the sky and finally released, falling down in the river below. When he wakes up, he decides to release the butterflies, which then cover his face and his body, at which moment the cadential figure is heard again. Thus tamed by the butterflies, the boy is transformed, now understanding the beauty of freedom.

With this borrowing, Schnittke carries forward both the formal effect and the symbolic content of the excerpt. In the movie, the cadential figure marks significant turning points in the story, especially the inversion of the roles played by the boy and the butterflies. In the Concerto, the figure is heard for a first time at the end of the fourth movement, where it acts as both a conclusion and an introduction to the fifth movement. In the narrative, the figure corresponds to the moment when the soloists, separated by the dissonances and frenetically playing their own material, suddenly come together and engage in the cadential figure, which leads to the Rondo. The theme reappears at the end of the fifth movement. At this point, the orchestral chords fit in with the progression in the figure, but it quickly becomes dissonant with the introduction of quarter tones when the folk-tune theme returns. The cadential figure then marks the end of the complex stylistic stretto.

A Tentative Narrative

Placing all the associations created so far between the music, the sketches, the films and the genre references in a linear sequence is the last step in the elaboration of a narrative. What

follows is the framework of one possible narrative. It is obviously one out of many. After all, if gaps are to be related by the listener, different listeners will necessarily achieve different results. My version encompasses what I have learned from the score, the sketches, and self-borrowings.

In the first movement, the soloists are introduced. The sketches present them as the anima and animus of a single being. The orchestra is associated with the collective unconscious. The folk tune played by the prepared piano encompasses two extremes: the folkloric and the modern. In the sketches, Schnittke uses the expression "dissociated pitches" to describe the sound of the prepared piano, perhaps foreseeing the "dissociated" state of the mind when anima and animus are separated. On the whole, the movement presents the background of the work against which further development will be interpreted.

The sketches describe the second movement as a "fugue," a description reinforced by the two soloists often chasing each other. It is in this movement that the exchanges between the orchestra and the soloists are the most sustained. They share the toccata A and B themes as well as the folk-tune melody. In the waltz episode, the soloists exchange two themes which begin with the pitches of the BACH motto, alternating with the orchestra which also spells it out. The behaviour corresponds to the idea expressed in the sketches that it is impossible to tell which is anima and which is animus: "they are both in turn." It also establishes the role of the BACH musical equivalent as a symbol of the collective unconscious, manifesting itself in the most unusual locations, infiltrating the lines of the protagonists.

The third movement grows more and more dissonant. It is here that the “separation of the soul” begins. Anima and animus are progressively torn apart by increasing tensions in the orchestra. At the end, the BACH motive returns but it is hidden in the quotations of Berg and Tchaikovsky; it is only a faint reminiscence. The chorale melody in the orchestra becomes more and more dissonant as a consequence of the use of complex polyrhythm and quarter-tones. As suggested by the program of the sketches, pitches constantly push upwards until “a point of non-differentiation is attained,”—that is, until it is impossible to distinguish individual pitches. This time, no fundamental is introduced, and no solution is provided. The movement ends by the upward outburst of the soloists’ lines, which, in light of the program, symbolizes the explicit “rupture of the soul.”

In the Cadenza, the soloists communicate and their lines imitate each other. But their statements are more and more frenetic, until they together expose the four pitches of the BACH motive in whole notes. Only for this one time is the motto explicitly stated, and therefore impossible to ignore. It is an idea that had been momentarily grasped from the unconscious, an incarnation of the good. However, the momentary coordination between the soloists comes to an end. They begin to play incoherent lines which soon become improvised until the sudden appearance of the cadential figure. Like a magical formula, in a way reminiscent of the movie, the unexpected cadence turns the soloists into two complementary characters.

The fifth movement begins innocently enough; good sentiments are prevalent, dissonance banished. The violins behave like the Hržanovskij’s butterflies, dancing together. As the movement progresses, however, what looks like Schnittke’s Utopia turns

out to be merely a mirage. In the tango, anima and animus dance together but are progressively separated by the negative influence of the dissonant orchestra. The lascivious dance reveals its true nature: a dividing force rather than a unifying one. In a stylistic stretto of increasing dissonance, Schnittke's "unified style" turns into chaos. The mention in the sketches about the gradual "stratification of spirits" and the "resistance of the chorale" seems to apply here. The anima and animus fight for reunification until the very end, when the cadential figure closes an episode which now looks like a nice dream turned bad. Yet all hope has not vanished. The folk-tune returns above the overtones of fundamental C, which does not appear until the very last measure of the movement. In the sketch program, the introduction of the fundamental tone corresponds to the solution, the final reunification of the anima with the animus. The reunification appears almost magically after all energy has been exhausted.

The postlude returns to the eerie atmosphere of the first movement, in which it is difficult to distinguish which soloist is playing what. Low Cs in the piano emphasize the "solution" idea. But all is not like before: the brief return of the toccata melody sounds like a memory, like the unmistakable trace that something had happened and that it could start all over again.

Conclusion

It will always be impossible to explain everything in a score, as it will always be impossible to provide a story showing a perfectly coherent causality, but this should not be an objective. The fact is that stylistic gaps ask for an explanation and that, as far as musicological research is concerned, an explanation can be found in documents, in other words, in the paratext. In order to judge of the appropriateness of a given explanation, the

criteria should be that of plausibility: the correspondence between the extra-musical sources and the musical work. The narrative is thus the result of a hermeneutical process engaging both the listener and his or her representation of the composer's knowledge, of all cultural associations and of the work itself.

From the small number of events it contains, the composer's program may seem simple, but these events concern philosophical concepts which cannot be easily summarized. There are the characters representing a pair of complementary beings, man/woman, anima/animus, soul/person, man/shadow, etc. Whichever one of these pairs is chosen, the components are progressively separated, before being reunited again. The orchestra plays a role in both events. At first, it produces the dissonances intended to represent the negative force tearing the couple apart; later, the introduction of a fundamental beneath those dissonances renders them consonant, reunites the parts into a single whole. But even then, it is more obvious in theory than in practice, as it is far from obvious that the brief introduction of a low C in the double bass will be perceived as creating consonance by all listeners.

Nevertheless there is a striking conceptual resemblance and a definitive psychological affinity between all the literary, cinematic, and philosophical references chosen by Schnittke. The sentiment of duality is present in many sources:

1. *Peter Schlemihl*: The man and his shadow. Good and evil.
2. *Agony*: Good and evil are both embodied in the person of Rasputin.
3. *Butterfly*: The young boy who is chasing butterflies; they eventually exchange roles.
4. *Glass Harmonica*: Altruism and greed. By extension, it also opposes Magritte and Brueghel, the Modern and the Baroque, the selfish individual and the collective.

5. Jungian philosophy: Anima/Animus; Persona vs. Shadow.

The score provides a range of musical oppositions:

1. The serious and the banal: “serious” music opposes waltz and tango.
2. The old and the new: the 12-tone Waltz, the Baroque tango, the Modern folk-tune.
3. The few and the many: The soloists confront the orchestra.
4. Dissonance and consonance: The many forms of dissonances are alleviated by the imposition of a fundamental root.

The conceptual network surrounding the work is dense and multi-faceted. By creating it, Schnittke conveys the idea of duality in many different ways and demonstrates its richness and conceptual fertility. The narrative presented above is clearly not the only possible one. After all, Schnittke’s *Concerto Grosso* relies on many conceptual systems, which function as starting points for archetypal stories, like the many seeds of possible narratives.

CHAPTER 4:

TANGO

In the previous chapters, polystylism was considered mostly on the intra-work level, with styles opposing each other within a single work. Schnittke, however, frequently uses similar styles in different pieces. In each composition, the styles contrast with the surrounding materials and typically trigger extra-musical responses. Although those styles always refer to something, it is less clear whether or not they always refer to the same thing in different works. The context in which they are used can modify their meanings and influence the listener as well.

Using the tango as a case study, this chapter examines how one particular style is placed in different contexts. As discussed in Chapter 3, the tango is one of the central borrowings in the Concerto Grosso No. 1, where the dance melody comes from his score for the movie *Agony*. It is also briefly alluded to in the Symphony No. 1. One more case will be examined here: the tango of *Seid nüchtern und wachet* (1983), or the “Faust Cantata,” which was incorporated into the opera *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (1991/94). Finally, the usage of the tango by Schnittke in other works will be briefly examined.

As Schnittke has stated, the inclusion of a tango in Nikolaj Karetnikov’s opera *Mystery of Paul the Apostle* (*Misteriâ apostola Pavla*, 1972-87) to accompany Nero’s suicide

inspired him to draw upon the style for the first time in the Concerto Grosso No 1.¹ He later reprised the style in the “Faust Cantata,” a borrowing that Karetnikov considered to be direct plagiarism.² However, as Schnittke notes, Kurt Weill used the tango in a similar fashion before both Karetnikov and himself in *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928). Schnittke states other examples emphasizing the fateful role associated with the tango. He mentions “written music of the *Argentina Death Tango*” in Vladimir Maâkovskij’s poem *Vojna i mir* (1915)³ and Bernardo Bertolucci’s film *Last Tango in Paris* (1972).⁴ Moreover, other composers featured the tango in their works before Karetnikov and Schnittke; including Éric Satie, *Sports et divertissements*, “Tango perpétuel” (1914); Igor Stravinsky, *Les cinq doigts*, No. 5, “Pesante” (1917) and *L’Histoire du soldat* (1918); and Darius Milhaud, *Le bœuf sur le toit* (1919).

For Schnittke, the tango is an evocation of popular culture, which he considered to be “the most direct manifestation of evil in art.”⁵ He even adds that he “can see no way of expressing evil in music other than by using elements of pop culture.”⁶ To understand why Schnittke emphasizes evil to such a degree in his music, one must keep in mind that he believes in a dualistic nature of the world, in which everything is good and evil at the same time. As he once said: “the essential thing is not to try to escape into some kind of purified

¹ Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 15-16.

² Ibid, 16.

³ Two staves from Ángel Villoldo’s famous tango *El Choclo* (1898?, premièred in 1903) were inserted in Maâkovskij’s poem. The first use of tango in Russian poetry dates from 1913, in a poem titled “Tango” by Joseph Brodsky. Roman Timenchik, “1867,” in *Joseph Brodsky: The Art of a Poem*, edited by Lev Loseff and Valentina Polukhina (New York: Palgrave, 1998), 63-64.

⁴ Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 16.

⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁶ Ibid., 22.

space but to live with the Devil and engage in a constant struggle against him.”⁷ Such drastic language is typical of Schnittke’s thought. It also explains, at least in part, what triggered the profusion of oppositions in Schnittke’s music, which, as Taruskin has appropriately noted, “tackles life-against-death, love-against-hate, good-against-evil and (especially in concertos) I-against-world.”⁸

“Faust Cantata” and *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*

Faust is a recurrent topic in Schnittke’s life and music. For him, the story reveals the struggle between the rational and the irrational and between the human and the satanic which exists in everyone. He read Thomas Mann’s version of the story for the first time in the late 1940s.⁹ Throughout his life, the character of Faust fascinated him, so much so that he first planned to write an opera on the topic as early as 1959. A cantata, *Seid nüchtern und wachet*, emerged almost 25 years later in 1982-83, as a preparation for a future opera.¹⁰ Schnittke chose to adapt the libretto from the first published edition of the *History of Dr. Johann Fausten, the well-known Magician and Black Magician*, printed and possibly written by Johann Spiess in 1587. The spelling of the *volksbuch* is modernized but the text is faithfully transcribed; passages are omitted, but all of the scenes appear in the original order. The adaptation involves mostly the careful selection of lines.

⁷ Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 31-32

⁸ Taruskin, “A Post-Everythingist Booms,” H20.

⁹ Mann’s novel *Doktor Faustus* had just been published when Schnittke’s father bought a copy in Vienna, where they lived for about two years, from 1946 until 1948. Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 27-28.

¹⁰ A first performance of the opera, led by Christoph von Dohnanyi was abandoned when he departed from his role of music director of the Hamburg Opera. The 1983 cantata was commissioned by the Vienna Festival, which wanted a choral work that could show off their newly installed organ. Weitzman, “Schnittke’s ‘Faust’ in Hamburg,” *Tempo* 194 (October 1995), 27.

Consistent with his idea that everything is good and evil at the same time, Schnittke was fascinated by characters that inhabited this dualistic position. Faust is among them, as are Peer Gynt, Salomé, Peter Schlemihl, and Josephus Flavius (as portrayed by Lion Feuchtwanger).¹¹ The character Faust captivated Schnittke because he had been so much “loaded by the future.”¹² As he explains, since Faust appears in many works written over the course of four centuries, he became a mirror reflecting changes in society. In the *volksbuch*, he is concerned by magic and travel, but not so much by knowledge. According to Schnittke, Goethe’s Faust is different on that last point: he is “an ideal image” driven by the human race’s “insatiable thirst for knowledge.”¹³ In the *volksbuch*, Doctor Faust appears as a selfish character, acting for his own pleasure. Goethe softened that side of the character through additions like the romance with Margarita, her redemption, his visit to the Brocken on Walpurgisnacht, the birth of poetry, and his salvation. For Schnittke, Faust is doomed and there is no happy ending.

After writing the “Faust Cantata” and starting the opera, Schnittke confessed that “Faust is the theme of my whole life, and I am already afraid of it. I don’t think I shall ever

¹¹ Feuchtwanger’s best-known novel is *Jud Süß* (1925), the story of Josephus Flavius (b. circa 37), a Jewish historian and priest who became a Roman citizen. Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 28-30, 35. The correspondence between Faust and Peer Gynt has been underscored by Gerd Albrecht in the Hamburg production of the Faust opera, in which excerpts from Schnittke’s ballet *Peer Gynt* were used as transitory music. Weitzman, “Schnittke’s ‘Faust’ in Hamburg,” 29.

¹² Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 29. Solomon Volkov adds Dante’s *Divine Comedy* as a milestone reading for Schnittke, especially the passage from Hell to Purgatory which symbolized the passage from darkness to light for Schnittke. Volkov, “The ABCs of Alfred Schnittke,” 37.

¹³ Schnittke and Ivashkin, “From Schnittke’s Conversations,” 29.

complete it.”¹⁴ In a sense, he never did. Two acts were to be added to the body of the Cantata in 1991, this time with Jürgen Köchel (who worked under the pseudonym of Jörg Morgener) as librettist.¹⁵ They were revised in 1994. The two acts closely follow the story line of the *volksbuch*, adding 24 scenes before the events depicted in the Cantata.¹⁶ The version premièred in Hamburg was severely truncated and rearranged by Gerd Albrecht. It was never officially approved by Schnittke.¹⁷ For the Hamburg production, 503 lines out of the printed libretto’s 1216 vanished, and the order of scenes was changed so much as to obscure the action.¹⁸ The most significant omission is that no reference to the 24-year span of the Devil’s contract is ever made. Consequently, the sense of urgency felt by Faust as time advances is lost. The nature of the pact that he has made is unclear; that he must renounce his Christian faith and resist all temptation to repent is never mentioned. The depictions of Faust’s epicurean way of life in the second act are obliterated, and almost all of the recitatives are abridged. Whereas the Cantata was generally acclaimed by the critics, the reviews of the Hamburg production were mixed at best.¹⁹

¹⁴ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 208.

¹⁵ Most of the vocal part was written before 1991. Weitzman, “Schnittke’s ‘Faust’ in Hamburg,” 27.

¹⁶ The only modification to the Cantata, which serves as the third act, is the addition of 13 bars at the end of scene 26, when Faust tells his students: “I die both a bad and good Christian: a good Christian for that I am penitent, a bad Christian for that I know the Devil will have my body.” That text appears in the 1587 *volksbuch* but was initially discarded.

¹⁷ Gerd Albrecht insisted in a radio interview that Schnittke gave him the permission to interpolate and to make a montage if necessary. Weitzman, “Schnittke’s ‘Faust’ in Hamburg,” 28. When Schnittke, recovering from a stroke, was presented with a video recording of the performance, he said that this was one possible way of presenting the opera. Obviously, there must be others. Weitzman, “Record Review: Schnittke: Historia von D. Johann Fausten,” *Tempo*, 198 (October 1996), 55.

¹⁸ For more details about the modifications see Weitzman, “Schnittke’s ‘Faust’ in Hamburg,” 29.

¹⁹ Weitzman, “Schnittke’s ‘Faust’ in Hamburg,” 27-29. Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 214.

The “Faust Cantata” is built like a Passion, with a narrator (tenor), Faust (bass), Mephistophiles/Mephistophila (“an hypocritically servile counter-tenor and [a] triumphant deep female voice”²⁰), and chorus. In fact, it is perhaps better described as an anti-passion. Indeed, the stories of Christ and Faust run counter to each other: Christ is illuminated by God, Faust by the Devil; Christ wants to deliver people from sin, Faust is the very incarnation of sin; Christ creates miracles for the love of humankind, Faust uses magic for his own benefit.²¹ As the third act of the opera, the “Faust Cantata” consists of six scenes and picks up the story after the 24 years of the devilish pact.

The fourth scene of the third act (or the 28th in the opera) includes the tango. Here, Mephistophila, the feminine equivalent of Mephistopheles,²² sings a tango recounting how Faust died at the hands of the Devil.²³ Perhaps to enhance the relationship of the tango with popular culture, Schnittke at first planned to cast a pop singer as Mephistophila, but he refrained from doing so when Alla Pugačeva, the pop star that he had invited, began to take her role too seriously and “turned it into her show, improvising and dancing.”²⁴ The

²⁰ Schnittke in the liner notes for Alfred Schnittke, *Ritual — (K)Ein Sommernachtstraum — Passacaglias — Seid nüchtern und wachet*. Malmo Symphony Chorus (BIS CD-437, 1989), Compact Disc.

²¹ Galina Ajvazova and Elena Spirina, “Funkcii zanra v kantate Al’freda Snitke Istorija doktora Ioganna Fausta: K voprosu novoj interpretacii zanra v muzyke XX veka,” in *Problemy istoriko-stilevoj evoljucii: Garmonija, forma, žanr*, edited by L. Aleksandrova (Novosibirsk: Novosibirskaja gos. konservatorija im. M.I. Glinki, 1995), 262.

²² Heinrich Heine also travesties Mephistophiles into its feminine equivalent in his own version of the story; the devilish woman seduces Faust. Heinrich Heine, *Doktor Faust, a Dance Poem; Together with Some Rare Accounts of Witches, Devils, and the Ancient Art of Sorcery*, translated by Basil Ashmore (London: P. Nevill, 1952).

²³ In Heinrich Heine’s *Der Doktor Faust*, the Devil, Mephistopheles, becomes a dancer named Mephistophila in order to lure Faust. It is not known if that version influenced Schnittke.

²⁴ According to Ivashkin, Alla Pugačeva stepped down before the première because she did not want to be associated with the devil. Ivashkin, *A Schnittke Reader*, xxiii.

five-minute episode lasted more than half an hour.²⁵ The instrumentation includes an electric guitar, which, with the percussion and the amplified solo voice, strongly emphasizes the popular music aspect.²⁶

Although the tango is featured in the 28th scene, the tango rhythm appears at the beginning of the third act. It is soon joined by the tango melody in the piano and a melody later presented by the choir and the organ. The resemblance between the tango and the choir melody and the way they fit together seems more than coincidental (fig. 4-1). Both melodies present four-measure phrases built like an arch. They both rise conjunctly with a triplet motive until they reach the cadence, after which they are repeated, almost note for note. The text later sung by the choir announces the end of Faust and sends a warning: "There doth follow now Doctor Faustus' hideous and frightful end, against which to sufficiency every Christian man should see his own reflection and be upon his guard."²⁷ The cautionary aspect of the Faust story is already present in the *volksbuch* text, but it is amplified in the tango by Schnittke through the use of a melody everybody can sing. The tango will become the equivalent of a chorale in a Passion or cantata.

²⁵ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 180.

²⁶ The association between popular elements and the evil sphere has been noted by some commentators. Alex Ross wrote: "In an inspired anachronism, Mr. Schnittke casts the climax in the form of a diabolically melodious tango, with a contralto croaking in Brechtian style into a microphone and an electric guitar thundering underneath." Ross, "The Twins of Modernism, in Light and Dark," *New York Times* (6 July 1995), C13. Claire Polin notes: "The Tango of Death was written for a cabaret-style singer. The main theme clearly represents the exposure of evil. Here, as in the First Symphony, the composer reveals his apocalyptic vision." Polin, "The Composer as Seer, but not Prophet," *Tempo* 190 (September 1994), 14.

²⁷ The English translation of the libretto, by John C. Constable, is from the booklet of the CD, Alfred Schnittke, *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*. Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Hamburg, Chor der Hamburgischen Staatsoper, directed by Gerd Albrecht (RCA Victor, 1996).

Figure 4-1. Beginning of the third act.

The musical score for the beginning of the third act of "The History of Doctor Faustus" by Alfred Schnittke. It features three staves: Toms (T.-toms), Klavier (Klav.), and Organ (Orgel). The Toms part is marked "Sostenuto" and "p". The Klavier part is marked "p ma marcato" and "mp". The Organ part is marked "p".

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The character of Mephistophiles/Mephistophila is two-faced from the start. On the one hand, he/she is the seducer and servant who lures Faust into signing the 24-year contract and fulfills all of his desires; on the other hand, he/she is the torturer who will kill him in due time. The male and female sides of the character are opposed musically, Mephistophiles is sung by a high-voiced countertenor while Mephistophila is sung by a low-voiced alto; paradoxically, this opposition places them in a similar register. The tango is sung by Mephistophila, whose role is played by the same singer who plays the non-singing roles of Gräfin von Bayern, Fair Helen, and the Königin von Griechenland.²⁸ By doing so, Schnittke underscores the correspondence between Helen, whose capture resulted in the destruction of Troy, and the person who is responsible for Faust's fate.

Mephistophila first appears in scene 17, "The mocking Jests of the Devilish Spirits." The scene takes place after Faust has been shown a glimpse of paradise, which triggers his first lamentation. In the next scene, Mephistophiles, for the first time, drops his

²⁸ Of the three characters, only the role Fair Helen was cast in the Hamburg production.

servile role and appears as himself, making fun of Faust with Mephistophila. After another lamentation, Faust refuses to repent and renews his contract with the Devil. Mephistophiles returns to his role of servant and Mephistophila disappears until Act Three. In scene 27, the third one of the third act, the choir of Faust's students unsuccessfully tries to convince him to pray to God for salvation. Mephistophiles appears and, in a disingenuous consolation, announces that the hour has come when Faust must die. The consolation takes the form of an unusually lyrical recitative, which is imitated and commented on by Mephistophila. Again, Schnittke emphasizes the duality of the Devil's discourse and of the male/female split. On the surface, Mephistophiles takes the guise of a friend on Faust's side, a friend who will soon kill him in the most horrible way.

The tango appears in the following scene and, at that point, Mephistophiles vanishes; Mephistophila sings the tango alone. The most striking characteristic of the tango, as opposed to most of the score, is its unequivocal lyricism. It is a simple, natural, almost predictable, melody. Like Ravel's *Boléro*, it is repeated with different instrumentation and a gradual increase in dynamics and textural complexity.²⁹ It infiltrates the mind and, even for a musically unskilled audience, it is easy to grasp. Indeed, according to Weitzman, people leaving the première in Hamburg were humming the tango melody.³⁰ For Schnittke, it was important to give a popular appeal to the Devil, who is in each and every one of us. He wanted to subject the audience "to a kind of stylistic humiliation."³¹

²⁹ Schnittke later on adapted Maurice Ravel's *Boléro* in the score of the movie *The Master and Margarita* (1993-4).

³⁰ Weitzman, "Schnittke's 'Faust'," 27.

³¹ Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 178.

Attractive and accessible, the tango embodies the danger of evil hiding under the surface of pop culture. Schnittke's developed that idea: "It is natural that evil should be attractive. It has to be nice and tempting; it has to take the form of something that can creep into your soul without difficulty, something pleasantly comfortable. Whatever it is, it must be fascinating."³² For him, there is a difference between the symptoms of evil, which can be expressed musically with splintered textures or melodic lines, and its cause, better conveyed by pop elements.³³ In the score, that distinction shows up in the difference between the vocal part of Faust, made up of broken lines frenetically ascending and descending, and the smooth tango melody sung by Mephistophila. The former is the expression of a possessed spirit, whereas the latter is the embodiment of the Devil. For Schnittke, the Devil has to look and sound good.

As far as the musical form is concerned, the deployment of the tango is pretty much straightforward. In the score, the "tempo di Tango" begins over whole-note clusters in the strings and keyboard instruments (piano, celesta, harpsichord), while only a syncopated tam-tam pattern subtly alludes to the style (m. 343/1/1).³⁴ The clusters in the keyboard instruments become stronger and denser. They are cut off by the piano, the bass guitar, and the brass which establish the key of G minor (m. 345/1/1). The tango scene, which then begins, can be divided in three main sections, each built around the AAA'A"BB' form of the melody (fig. 4-2). The A and B sections are each eight bars long. The A, A' and A" phrases feature the same rhythm. The principal difference among them is

³² Schnittke and Ivashkin, "From Schnittke's Conversations," 22.

³³ Ibid., 22-23.

³⁴ On the recording, the performers added a drum part to better mark the tango rhythm.

the melodic progression; the A phrase moves upwards (from G to D), while the A' and A'' phrases first descend (from G to D and from D to G, respectively) before rising up a major seventh (from D to C# and from G to F#, respectively). In both cases, the expected conclusion on the octave is satisfied by the following phrase of the voice or by the orchestra. The B section is set in contrasting style, with duple instead of triple subdivisions of the pulse and the introduction of staccatos giving a more energetic mood to the melody.

Figure 4-2. The tango melody, as of 345/1/5 [65].

Es ge - schah a - ber zwi - schen zwölf und ein Uhr in der Nacht, daß
ge - gen dem Haus her ein gro - ßer un - ge - stü - mer Wind ging. so das
Haus an al - len Or - ten um - gab, als ob es al - les zu - grun - de ge - hen und das
Haus zu Bo - den rei - ßen woll - - - te. Ah...
Choir: (gepiffen)

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The orchestration follows the overall division of the scene into three main sections. The first section emphasizes the keyboards instruments with the notable addition of the baritone saxophone and the electric guitar, both more readily associated with jazz or pop music than opera (from m. 345/1/1). The melody sung by Mephistophila is first doubled by the baritone and alto saxophones. Other instruments are progressively added, creating a

complex texture which is made all the more dense by quarter-tone trills in the strings. The first A phrase concludes with a rising glissando in the strings, underlined by the imprecise oscillation of a flexatone.³⁵ The introduction of the oboes, bassoons, and the English and French horns, marks the beginning of the A' phrase of the melody (348/1/3). The melody continues, now doubled by the oboe and English horn, with progressively louder dynamics until it reaches the summit of the first main section, strongly accentuated by a 12-tone cluster in the strings, which is added to a sustained G minor chord (352/1/3-4) in the rest of the orchestra. The B section follows, and the melody, doubled by a solo violin, is punctuated by a few pizzicato string clusters. A counter-melody, the same that will later be sung by the chorus, is played by the alto and baritone saxophones. The repeat of the B phrase, whistled by the entire choir in suddenly soft dynamics, is accompanied by strange effects produced by glissandos in the bass guitar and by the flexatone.³⁶ The combination of these odd sounds makes the passage sound rather bizarre, almost out of this world (from 355/1/1).

The text of the tango comes directly from Chapter 68, the last one of the *volksbuch* (fig. 4-3). Only a few sentences are omitted, with no significant changes to the course of the depicted action. In the first section, Mephistophila sets the scene by describing the house enduring strong winds. The B theme is presented as a vocalise, which points back to scene 27 in which Mephistophila sang a vocalise to wrap Mephistophiles's consolation to Faust. Since it is not imitating another melody, the vocalise lacks a mocking tone. On the

³⁵ The flexatone is a modern percussion instrument consisting of a small flexible metal sheet suspended on a wire frame.

³⁶ On the recording, the melody is played on sliding flutes instead of being whistled by members of the choir. The effect is still stranger.

contrary, the use of a vocalise at this point strengthens the initial innocent feeling of the scene, paradoxically associating the tragic events described in the text with lightness and pleasantness. The choir whistles the B theme, perhaps to imitate the wind or to accentuate the hypocritical tone of the description.

The second main section repeats the entire melody with a different orchestration (from 357/1/1). Mephistophila starts again on a low G, while the basses of the choir recite the text with open fifths (G-D). The piano and the celesta are silent, only the harpsichord continues, this time playing simple arpeggios. The strings present motives that turn slowly around superimposed quarter-tones. The rest of the orchestration consists of tuba, trombones, glockenspiel, and drum set. For the second A phrase, the woodwinds appear and take over the now silent string parts (m. 359/1/1). As in the first main section, the orchestral texture grows more diverse and unruly, especially with the entrance of the electric and bass guitars and the flexatone. Just before the B section, a second climax is reached, once again reaffirming the overall G minor key. This time, the melody is answered by unison strings (m. 367/1/1) and later by the harpsichord (m. 369/1/1). When Mephistophila sings “aber kaum mit halber Stimme – Bald hernach hörte man ihn nicht mehr” the first allusions to the chime clock motive are made by the celesta. The motive will become important at the very end of the opera. For this passage, the orchestration is suddenly lighter, to allow the celesta part to come through.

In the rest of the second section, Mephistophiles continues her story, with specific words emphasized by the choir. The students gather outside Faust’s study, hear strange noises, and repeat over and over the words “whistling and hissing,” and later on “snakes and adders.” The students witness Faust crying for help but do not intervene. At that

point, the choral exclamations convey the astonishment, fear and disgust felt by the students in facing the developing horror.

The deployment of the third main section is similar to that of the previous two. The melody appears about exactly the same and most of the development occurs in the accompaniment. Overall, the ascending melody is counterbalanced by descending chromatic scales played by a large part of the orchestra (m. 371/1/1). Glissandos prominently return, especially in the choral exclamations (for example, m. 376/1/2). The triplet motive also comes back in the piano. The strings play sustained trills over a pedal G until the third and last climax, just before the final B phrase (380/1/2). Again, the textural complexity and dissonance give way to a G minor chord. The following B phrase is characterized by a series of brass punctuations (m. 381/1/1). In the B' phrase, the counter-melody is played by the brass at the unison (m. 383/1/2). The textural density reaches its apogee with the organ presenting a glissando cluster and the strings playing clusters to the tango rhythm. At the end of the tango scene, the organ and the piano play a G minor chord over a 12-tone cluster in the strings (m. 387/1/4).

The third section takes place on the following morning, when the students enter the house to find the gory scene. From then on, the choir shares the role of narrator with Mephistophila. The choir begins a sentence of the text with the tango melody and she finishes it. At the end, the choir laughs. The exclamations heard before in the second section, which sounded fearful at first, retrospectively sounds like satisfactory acclamations, as if the choir had already taken sides with Mephistophila. As Schnittke explained, Evil is in everyone.

Figure 4-3. Libretto adaptation of the 1587 Volksbuch.

<i>Sect.</i>	<i>Themes Measures</i>	<i>1587 Volksbuch</i>	<i>Mephistophila and Choir</i> ³⁷	
Intro.	345/1/1 [64]			
A	345/1/5 [65]	[224] Es geschahe aber zwischen zwölff vnd ein Vhr in der Nacht /	<u>Mephistophila</u> : Es geschah aber zwischen zwölft und ein Uhr in der Nacht, [It came about between twelve and one o' the clock in the night,]	
A	346/1/3 [66]	daß gegen dem Hauß her ein grosser vngestümmer Wind gieng /	daß gegen dem Haus her ein großer ungestümer Wind ging, [that a great storm of wind came against the house]	
1	A'	348/1/3 [67]	so das Hauß an allen orten vmbgabe / als ob es alles zu grunde gehen /	so das Haus an allen Orten umgab, als ob es alles zugrunde gehen [that it gripped the house in all places, as though it would have all go to ruin]
A"	350/1/3 [68]	vnnnd das Hauß zu Boden reissen wollte /	und das Haus zu Boden reißen wollte. [and raze the house to the ground.]	
B	353/1/1 [69]		Ah... (<i>Vokalise</i>)	
B'	355/1/1 [70]		<u>Mephistophila</u> : Ah... (<i>Vokalise</i>) <u>Choir</u> : (<i>gepfffen</i>) [<i>whistling</i>]	
A	357/1/1 [71]	darob die Studenten vermeynten zuverzagen / sprangen auß dem Bett	<u>Mephistophila</u> : Darob die Studenten vermeinten zu verzagen, sprangen aus dem Bett [Hereupon the students were minded to despair, leaped out from their beds] <u>Choir</u> : Die Studenten meinten zu verzagen, sprangen aus dem Bett und	
A	359/1/1 [72]	vnd huben an einander zu trösten / wolten auß der Kammer nicht /	<u>Mephistophila</u> : und huben an, einander zu trösten, wollten aus der Kammer nicht. [and began to comfort one another, yet would not stir fom their chamber.] <u>Choir</u> : huben an, einander zu trösten, wollten aus der Kammer nicht.	
		{ Der Wiert lieff auß seinem in ein ander Hauß. Die Studenten lagen nahendt bey der Stuben / da D. Faustus jnnen war / }		
2	A'	361/1/1 [73]	sie hörten ein greuwliches Pfeiffen vnnnd Zischen /	<u>Mephistophila</u> : Sie hörten ein gräuliches Pfeifen und Zischen, [They heard a hideous whistling and hissing] <u>Choir</u> : Sie hörten ein greuliches Pfeifen und Zischen, (4X)
A"	363/1/3 [74]	als ob das Hauß voller Schlangen / Natern vnnnd anderer schädlicher Würme were /	<u>Mephistophila</u> : als ob das Haus voller Schlangen, Nattern und anderer schädlicher Würme wäre. [as if the house were filled with snakes, adders, and other pestilent worms.] <u>Choir</u> : als ob das Haus voll Schlangen und Nattern, (Schlangen und Nattern [5X]), und anderer schädlicher Würme wäre. Ah...	
B	367/1/1 [75]	in dem gehet D. Fausti thür vff in der Stuben / der hub an vmb Hülff vnnnd Mordio zu[225]schreyen /	<u>Mephistophila</u> : Indem gehet Fausti Tür auf, der hub an zu schreien um Hülff und Mordio, [With that the door of Faustus came open, who began to cry for help and shouting murder,] <u>Choir</u> : Ah... Ah... Oh...	
B'	369/1/1 [76]	abcr kaum mit halber Stimm / bald hernach hört man jn nicht mehr.	<u>Mephistophila</u> : aber kaum mit halber Stimme. Bald hernach hörte man ihn nicht mehr. [but with hardly half a voice. Soon thereafter, they heard him no longer.]	

³⁷ As mentioned above, the English translation is by John C. Constable.

Figure 4-3. Libretto adaptation of the 1587 Volksbuch.

<i>Sect.</i>	<i>Themes Measures</i>	<i>1587 Volksbuch</i>	<i>Mephistophila and Choir</i> ³⁷
A	371/1/1 [77]	Als es nun Tag ward / {vnd die Studenten die gantze Nacht nicht geschlauffen hatten} / sind sie in die Stuben gegangen / {darinnen D. Faustus gewesen ward} /	<u>Mephistophila:</u> Als es Tag ward, sind die Studenten in die Stuben gegangen. [When it had grown daylight, the students entered into the chamber.] <u>Choir:</u> Oh... Oh...
A	373/1/1 [78]	sie sahen aber keinen Faustum mehr / und nichts / dann sie Stuben voller Bluts gesprützet /	<u>Mephistophila:</u> Sie sahen aber keinen Faustum, nichts, denn die Stuben voll Bluts gespritzt. [They espied though no Faustus, nought save the chamber besprinkled with blood.] <u>Choir:</u> Ah... Ah... Ah...
A'	375/1/1 [79]	Das Hirn klebte an der Wandt / weil jn der Teuffel von einer Wandt zur andern geschlagen hatte.	<u>Mephistophila:</u> Ah... Ah... Ah... Ah... ...weil ihn der Teufel von einer Wand zur andern geschlagen. [for he Devil had beaten him from one wall against another.] <u>Choir:</u> Das Hirn klebte an der Wand... [His brains cleaved to the wall,] Oh... Oh... Oh... Oh...
3 A"	377/1/1 [80]	Es lagen auch seine Augen vnd etliche Zäen allda / ein greulich vnd erschrecklich Spectackel.	<u>Mephistophila:</u> Ah... Ah... Ah... Ah... Ah... ...ein greulich und erschrecklich Spectakel. [a hideous and terrible spectacle.] <u>Choir:</u> Es lagen auch seine Augen und etliche Zähne alda... [His eyes and numerous teeth too lay there,] Ah... Ah... Ah...
{Da huben die Studenten an jn zubeklagen vnd zubeweynen / vnd suchten jn allenthalben / }			
B	381/1/1 [81]	Letzlich aber funden sie seinen Leib herausen bey dem Mist ligen /	<u>Mephistophila:</u> Letzlich aber funden sie seinen Leib heraußen bei dem Mist, [Last though they found his body out of doors aside the dung,] <u>Choir:</u> ...aber letztlich... fund man draußen... seine... ...Leiche... bei dem Mist,...
B'	383/1/1 [84]	welcher greuwlich anzusehen war / dann jhme der Kopff vnnnd alle Glieder schlotterten.	<u>Mephistophila:</u> welcher greulich anzusehen war, denn ihm der Kopf und alle Glieder schlotterten. [the which was a hideous sight to behold for his head and all his limbs hang slack.] <u>Choir:</u> ...hahahahaha ...hahahahaha (2X)...hahahahaha (2X) schlotterten, (5X) oh...

Note: German spelling has been kept as published.

The Feminine, the Exotic and the Devil

As a dance originating from brothels of the poor areas of Buenos Aires, the tango is historically connected with the feminine and the idea of seduction. The popular dance has long been associated with scandal. In its glorious days in the late 1910s, the tango became so much associated with lurid temptation that it was banned by Pope Pius X. In Russia, the tango appeared before the October Revolution of 1917, introduced to the upper classes by foreign visitors. After the Revolution, it remained associated with bourgeois society and

counter-revolutionists. In the 1920s, dancing the tango was clearly antithetical to Bolsheviks' ideals; it became a symbol of dissidence.³⁸ The popularity of the tango eventually declined in the 1930s.

The tango is a public display of passion, symbolized by the tight embrace between the couple and footwork suggesting the tensions of the seduction process. The dancers are playing a game where they must keep their erotic impulses under control. For the European public, the tango was exotic. As Savigliano explains, exoticism is produced by the sentiment of "otherness" generated by the dance:

Tango expresses, performs, and produces Otherness erotically through exoticism, and in doing so, it plays seductively into the game of identification—an attempt at 'selving' by creating anti-selves. Tango is simultaneously a ritual and a spectacle of traumatic encounters, and of course 'it takes two': two parties to generate Otherness, two places to produce the exotic, two people to dance.³⁹

The tango is a display of excess, a threat to the imperial civilized world that must be controlled.⁴⁰ Marta Savigliano describes how the exotic threat is contained: "for the Other to become an Exotic, this threat needs to be tamed, tilted toward the side of the pleasurable, the disturbingly enjoyable: the erotic."⁴¹ In the cantata and in the opera, the shift toward the erotic is embodied by Mephistophila, the only singing female character in

³⁸ Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 11.

³⁹ Savigliano, *Tango*, 73.

⁴⁰ Anne E. Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 121-124.

⁴¹ Savigliano, *Tango*, 81.

the work. She appears as a pop singer, as an object of desire.⁴² Mephistophila is the exotic femme fatale, the erotic turning into fate, and the tango begins precisely when fate strikes after 24 years have passed.

In the “Faust Cantata,” the tango is sung by the female incarnation of the Devil. Other composers have made a similar rapprochement between the dance and the fallen angel. In the “Tango perpétuel” of *Sports et Divertissements* (1914), Satie noted that “the Devil dances the tango when he wants to cool off.”⁴³ In Stravinsky’s *Histoire du soldat*, after the soldier wins his old fiddle back from the Devil in a game of cards, he uses it to heal the Princess with a series of three dances, one of which is a tango.⁴⁴ The Devil is not playing the violin, but the power of the instrument clearly comes from him. As we will see, the ideas of the feminine and evil will recur in many of the works described below.

The Tango in other Works by Schnittke

Mephistophila’s tango scene is not the most musically complex one of the opera. In fact, it is quite simple, both in terms of form and harmonic content. The various orchestral effects and clusters produce a kind of harshness that ultimately remains superficial. Given its simplicity, the tango scene stands out from the rest of the opera. The repetition of the

⁴² The association between an “exotic” feminine character and eroticism is also explicit in the famous habanera of Carmen in Bizet’s opera. In both cases, the appeal of the exotic has fateful consequences. The habanera is an Afro-Cuban dance and song that influenced the Argentinean tango. It was in turn influenced by development of the latter style. Bizet drew on Iradier’s *El arreglito* for Carmen. Frances Barulich, “Habanera,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 12 October 2006), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

⁴³ Satie’s note appears on the score. For more on Satie and the tango, see Steven Moore Whiting, *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 406-407.

⁴⁴ Glenn Watkins, *Proof through the Night: Music and the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 151-153.

melody is almost pedagogical. It easily infiltrates the mind of the auditors. For these reasons and for the connotations carried by the tango as a style, the choice of the tango to recount the fateful end of Faust is strikingly effective.

Schnittke used the tango in various works over a period of more than 25 years. In fact, the dance became one of his trademarks, so much so that Efrem Podgait's homage piece, *Fantasia in Memory of Alfred Schnittke*, makes extensive use of the tango. Obviously, Schnittke was especially fond of the style. Examining how he employed the tango in different contexts will clarify the ways in which he conceived of it, the roles he attributed to it, and its meaning and relevance for musical narrativity.

Symphony No. 1 (1968-72)

In the Symphony No. 1, the tango is one among many styles constituting the sphere of the banal.⁴⁵ It is used to oppose serious styles and appears alongside the fox-trot and march. The tango, however, is rarely exploited extensively enough to be singled out from the other popular styles. The one exception is perhaps in the final march (178/1/1) at the end of the last movement, before the “resurrection” of the work. Short fragments of a tango-like figure alternate with march patterns in a fanfare. Considering the role of popular styles in the Symphony and the fateful character of the tango for Schnittke, the dance accentuates the tragic conclusion of the work, the idea that the symphony as a genre is dead.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 1.

Agony (1974/81)

In the movie *Agony*, the tango melody is the lure which ultimately undoes Rasputin, the inner demon that he cannot resist.⁴⁶ Each time it appears, the tango is clearly associated with the devilish side of Rasputin's personality. In the film as a whole, the tango is almost a character in itself, the instrument of Rasputin's death, the bait that lured him.

Concerto Grosso No. 1 (1977)

The tango from *Agony* is used in the Concerto Grosso No. 1.⁴⁷ The function of the tango in the latter is different from that in the former as it bears no clear associations of death or tragedy. Schnittke himself acknowledged that the difference in context changed the meaning of the excerpt.

[...] the actual treatment of the inferior material dictated by the cinema may prove useful for a composer [...]. I can transfer one or another of the themes into another composition, and by contrast with the other material in that composition, it acquires a new role. For example, my Concerto Grosso No. 1 includes a tango taken from the film *The Agony*, about Rasputin. In the film it is a fashionable dance of the day. I took it from the film and by giving it a contrasting context and a different development tried to give it a different meaning.⁴⁸

The tango takes on a different role. It briefly unites the two soloists, but their union will ultimately collapse in face of numerous obstacles, notably the increasing dissonance in the orchestra. Schnittke does not specify what the new meaning is, but, considering what he thought of popular styles in general, the style may represent a lure, a temptation, at the very least, an impossible solution. The tango is set in the middle of a "utopia" movement in which a languorous violin answers the rigid tango rhythm played on the harpsichord

⁴⁶ See Chapter 3.

⁴⁷ See Chapter 3.

⁴⁸ Schnittke, "On Film and Film Music," 51.

alongside allusions to the BACH motive, Baroque styles, and serialism. Low and high styles are united in the same texture, in a synthesis which “juxtapos[es] different elements, [...]yet allow[s] each element to retain its individuality.”⁴⁹ The Utopia, however, does not last; it is pushed to an extreme and lost in chaos. The tango, like the other styles, becomes nothing more than the memory of a dream.

Polyphonic Tango (1979)

Schnittke composed *Polyphonic Tango* for Gennadij Roždestvenskij and the Orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre. It appeared on a concert held on 15 September 1979 as the last of four pieces composed for the occasion, the others being by Roždestvenskij, Edison Denisov, and Arvo Pärt. Schnittke described what he attempted: “It concerns an attempt to find the middle between tonality and atonality, between banal consonance and banal dissonance, between the pub and the concert hall (but in both cases in a tailcoat!).”⁵⁰ The tango in this work is unrelated to death or tragedy, but, as in the Concerto Grosso No. 1, it is caught in the middle of oppositions. The style is placed in the middle of the “commercial abyss” mentioned by Schnittke.⁵¹ The work presents and develops a tango theme in an attempt to find a middle ground between extremes. The theme is first played pizzicato by the low strings before being stated by other instruments in a very loose fugal fashion, a hallmark of learned styles. The percussion plays a tango pattern accompaniment throughout the piece. A developmental section follows, using motives from the main theme as material. It is in

⁴⁹ Schnittke and Polin, “Interviews,” 10.

⁵⁰ Reproduced by Eckhardt van den Hoogen in the liner note of Bohuslav Martinů and Alfred Schnittke, *Concertos for Two Pianos*, perf. by Piano Duo Genova & Dimitrov and the Radio-Philharmonie Hannover des NDR directed by Eiji Oue, CD (CPO, 2002), 10.

⁵¹ Schnittke and Polin, “Interviews,” 11.

this section that modern procedures like clusters and dissonances become more prevalent, but they never obscure the tango enough to render it unidentifiable. The tango theme returns as a whole in the last section, now in between the poles mentioned by Schnittke.

Life with an Idiot (1991)

The first completed opera by Schnittke is *Life with an Idiot*. The libretto was prepared by Viktor Erofeev, the author of the story upon which the work is based. It is the story of a man, known only by the name "I," who has problems at work. As a punishment, he has to take an idiot into his home. The character of the idiot resembles Vladimir Lenin and his name is Vova, the diminutive of the dictator's first name. Throughout the opera, the only sound that comes out of his mouth is "eh." Underneath its comic surface, *Life with an Idiot* is both a satire of the Soviet regime and "a cruel drama of the absurd concerning unstoppable satanic evil."⁵² It includes quotations of Revolutionary songs in the parts of the four main characters (I, Wife, Vova, and Marcel Proust) and it ends with a Russian folktune, "A Birch Tree Rustled in the Field" [Vo pole berioza stoyala].⁵³

Tango rhythms appear for the first time, in a vaguely recognizable form, in the scene re-enacting the murder of I's second wife who was beheaded by Vova. Wife and Vova dance a few tango steps to the sound of distorted harmonies just before he accomplishes his deadly deed. In a grotesque development, I, who witnessed the whole

⁵² Just before the première Schnittke said that "*Life with an Idiot* is not a self-contained narrative but an open-ended one; although the material has a beginning, it does not have an end." Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 203, 207.

⁵³ The same song is quoted in the Finale of Chaikovsky's Fourth Symphony and in the first Overture on Russian Themes (1858) of Balakirev. Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 7, 124-125.

scene, is sexually aroused by the violence. Right afterwards, while sitting “soaked in tomato juice and sperm,”⁵⁴ he listens to the second tango episode, which constitutes the Intermezzo by which the first scene ends.⁵⁵ Schnittke uses the same tango heard in *Agony* and the Concerto Grosso No. 1, with only slight changes in the orchestration from the latter, a piano replacing the harpsichord.

In the opera, the tango hides a gruesome nature within a beautiful dance. Schnittke chose the style to underline the tragic and absurd aspects of the drama. The tango, as mentioned above, appears when Vova, the Idiot, dances with his victim and then kills her. It is associated with murder. The tango is also linked with the feminine. But in this case, the woman is a victim and not a lure as in *Agony*. The tango is also associated with evil. In such a role, it underscores the main event of the story, the axis around which the exchange of roles occurs. I, as it is explained later in the opera, succumbs to Vova’s sexual advances and progressively loses his mind. In the end, he will be interned in an asylum while Vova will escape as a free man. The two characters exchange places. The structure of the opera emphasises the metamorphosis: in the first act, we witness how Vova became I, and in the second act, how I became Vova. The criminal nature of Vova is transferred to I; evil is “unstoppable.” The tango marks the point of no return.

⁵⁴ Schnittke and Viktor Erofeev, libretto of *Life with an Idiot*, scene one.

⁵⁵ As the plot of the opera unfolds out of order, the second tango corresponds to one of the last dramatic development of the story. The actions of the second act take place before “I” kills his second wife.

The Master and Margarita (1993-4)

Schnittke wrote his last film score for *The Master and Margarita*, directed by Ūrij Kara and based on the novel of the same name by Mihail Bulgakov.⁵⁶ Loosely inspired by Goethe's *Faust*, Bulgakov's novel intermingles three story lines: the Devil comes to Moscow in the 1930s, Matthew the Evangelist conducts an investigation of Pontius Pilate, and Margarita bargains with the Devil to be reunited with the Master, a writer who is interned in an asylum. Accordingly, the action of the film is divided between the 1930s and the time of Christ. Schnittke's score makes use of many borrowings, including a reference to Richard Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* for the introduction of Satan (who appears under the name of Voland) and of a distorted version of Ravel's *Boléro* for the Satanic ball scene featuring Margarita as queen. The scenes in which Voland and his retinue accomplish their sinister deeds in Moscow are accompanied by a foxtrot, a funeral march, and a tango, once again a symbol of evil.⁵⁷

Conclusion: The Tango as a Sign

As Schnittke's use of the tango demonstrates, a specific style can serve as a sign in a variety of contexts. Its meaning is the result of a dialectical process between the style itself and its

⁵⁶ Although the movie was one of the most expensive of the Post Soviet era, Vladimir Skorij, the producer, never released the film, claiming that Yuri Kara's cut was unacceptable. Paul Sonne, "With Eagerness and Skepticism, Russians Await a Cult Novel's Film Debut," *The New York Times* (Monday, December 19, 2005), E3.

⁵⁷ As the film has never been released, this description is freely adapted from Frank Strobel's liner notes for his compact disc of Schnittke's film music. In those circumstances, it is unfortunately difficult to say more about the role played by the tango. Frank Strobel, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, *Alfred Schnittke – Music for the Movies*, compact disc CPO 999796-2 (2001), 13-14.

context. In other words, the tango influences the meaning of its surroundings in the same way that its surroundings influence its inherent meaning.

From its use in Schnittke's works, the various meanings of the tango are of two complementary types: core and peripheral. The core meaning is the one carried forward in all works; it is entrenched in the dance itself and radiates toward the new context. The tango is the banal and the popular; it is a force of seduction. The core meaning is defined by the history of the dance, its origins, and the cultural associations it triggers. On the other hand, the peripheral meaning changes according to the context. It is a more specific meaning, defined in part by its relationship to other meanings present in a work. In the Symphony No. 1, the tango is the easy solution to the problem of writing a symphony for a young Soviet composer; in *Agony*, it is the lure which appeals to Rasputin's inner demons; in the Concerto Grosso No. 1, the tango is part of a stylistic Utopia combining the popular and the serious; in *Faust*, it is the feminine and the song of the Devil; in *Life with an Idiot*, it is the violence and the evil present in everyone (fig. 4-4). The meanings of the tango are not always precise but they are nonetheless well delimited.

Figure 4-4. The tango melody, as of 345/1/5 [65].

<i>Works</i>	<i>Core meaning</i>	<i>Peripheral meaning</i>
Symphony No. 1		The easy which tempts the composer.
<i>Agony</i>		The lure that looses Rasputin. Symbol of his inner demons.
Concerto Grosso No. 1	Banal	Duality of the anima/animus. Stylistic Utopia.
<i>Polyphonic Tango</i>	Popular	The instrument of dualities between tonality/atonality, consonance/dissonance.
"Faust Cantata"/Opera	Seduction	The song of Mephistophila, the Devil. The feminine.
<i>Life with an Idiot</i>		Underscores the absurd violence. The death of Wife.
<i>The Master and Margarita</i>		Accompanies the Devil as he feasts in Moscow

The tango imposes extra-musical meanings upon Schnittke's works. As a musical borrowing, its inherent meanings help the listener to elaborate a narrative, thus bridging gaps in the musical texture. For example, the banal aspect of the tango is evident in the Symphony No. 1 and, as such, it becomes a character playing a role in the work's narrative. In *Agony*, the tango conveys the idea of seduction, underscoring the fateful role of the mysterious lady. Because the tango is inherently associated with the ideas of banality and seduction, its presence may be explained and included in the listener's narrative; it ceases to be only an extraneous style and becomes a meaningful part of a larger construction. The associations of the tango take part in the narrative course of the whole work, which is built across the gaps in the stylistic and semantic textures. This bridging happens even if there is no program, even if there is no narrative suggested by the composer. In *Polyphonic Tango*, no program is needed to realize that the tango melody is developed with the technical devices of serious music. No program is necessary to witness the attempts to balance the tango with learned styles, the temporary dominance of one over the other, the reversal of the situation, and the fragile equilibrium obtained in the end between the popular and the serious. The narrative is possible because the style carries forward its connotations into a new context.

What is true about the tango is also true about the other borrowed materials, like the Dies Irae, which is firmly tied to the idea of death. For Schnittke, those associations are the seeds of an embryonic musical narrative. The series of harmonic overtones symbolizes nature, Gregorian chant represents religion, the BACH motive is part of the collective unconscious, and popular styles are a manifestation of Evil, of which the tango is perhaps

most representative. The force behind Schnittke's polystylism, its narrative potential, lies in those stylistic associations.

CONCLUSION

In each of the previous four chapters, Schnittke's polystylism has been addressed with a different set of tools. The analytical apparatus has been determined in large part by the individual specificities of the works and, as a result, different kinds of narratives have emerged. This conclusion addresses two aspects of Schnittke's polystylism. First, the works studied in the previous chapters will be compared on the narrative level. Second, the works will be placed in the context of Schnittke's oeuvre, allowing us to chart a chronology of the evolution of polystylism.

Schnittke searched for and found his own original path as a young Soviet composer with the Symphony No. 1, his polystylistic manifesto. The result is a blunt and stylistically disjunct work in which Schnittke, frustrated by the question of how to write a symphony, puts the genre to death before resurrecting it. The Symphony presents a double narrative. On the one hand, there is the "immanent" narrative, a general idea that can be expressed in many different ways. In the case of the Symphony, that idea could be the future of the genre. The immanent narrative sets the interpretative limits; it is the semiological background. On the other hand, there is the "temporal" narrative, defined by the series of events. In the Symphony, it begins with a burst of musical chaos upon which order is imposed by the conductor. The temporal narrative also includes the brief victory of Beethoven's Fifth, the fight against banality, the serial experiment, and finally the death and resurrection of the symphony as a genre. Events within the temporal narrative are gauged

against the norms of the immanent narrative according to their plausibility: the Symphony can proclaim the “death of the symphony” because it is about “the symphonic genre.”

Composed only a few years after the Symphony No. 1, *Moz-Art à la Haydn* is radically different. The work asks no fundamental questions. On the contrary, it is a tongue-in-cheek piece, which, despite its humorous twists, triggers a serious reflection on fragmentary writing. Schnittke navigates between Mozart’s music and his own contributions. He establishes a rigid set of implicit rules governing the use of the source material: almost every note is from Mozart’s fragment, but the arrangement and re-ordering of the material is new. Musically, *Moz-Art* is diametrically opposed to the Symphony No. 1: in the former, all the music is borrowed, whereas in the latter, borrowings stand out, but they do not prevail over original material. In fact, the two works contrast in many areas: genre, form, size, orchestration, nature of the borrowed materials, and so on. On the narrative level, though, *Moz-Art* bears a few similarities with the Symphony. In both cases, there is no explicit program, yet both works cannot hide the sense of one. Both pieces exhibit gaps and disjunctions. They include stylistic features from the past and the present. The concept of immanent narrative, developed in the Symphony, may also be applied to *Moz-Art*. In this case, it is a reflection on the possibilities of fragmentation, and an exploration of the concepts of old and new, of past and present.

The fragmentary nature of *Moz-Art* opens the work up to narrative interpretation, although the conceptual play takes place on a different plane than in the Symphony No. 1. In the latter, stylistic gaps emerge between borrowings of pre-existing compositions excerpts that precede the new work. In *Moz-Art*, with only one exception (Mozart’s Symphony No. 40), all the fragments come from a single source, which itself is a fragment.

The Mozart pantomime does precede the new work, but, at the same time, it is the sole source of that piece. Moreover, by its nature as pantomime music, the source is so stylistically diverse that it already resembles a collage. Whereas the borrowings in the Symphony are characterized by the style of their respective composers, the original diversity of the fragments in *Mozz-Art* derives from just Mozart. It is by re-working borrowed material to a much greater extent than in the Symphony that Schnittke puts his imprint on *Mozz-Art*. His role as composer is limited to cutting and pasting, underscoring the correspondences and the divergences between fragments. In doing so, Schnittke transforms the themes. He transposes, combines, elongates, or shortens them. In *Mozz-Art*, Schnittke appears as a shadow behind Mozart's music, he is the foreign aspect of the work, whereas in the Symphony, his music dominates that of the borrowings, which remain foreign to the whole.

Polystylism in *Mozz-Art* takes on a very different guise. In effect, it does not result from the contrast between many quotations, but rather from the distance between two poles: Mozart and Schnittke. In fact, Schnittke shows us that polystylism may reside in the work of a single composer from the Classical period. He proceeds from one fragment to another while emphasizing the fragmentary nature of both the original work and his own. Fragments create space; they open up the interpretative layer. They ask questions and confront listeners, but they rarely provide answers.

In the case of *Mozz-Art*, the narrative is slightly different than in the Symphony. The work does not provide precise events, characters or associations. The cultural background of the source material and its pantomime characteristics are preserved by the addition of theatrical cues, like the turning on of the lights or the change of seating plans. The work is

about large concepts like musical styles, the past and the present, the old and the new. Besides the distant presence of Mozart and the general idea of the past, no passage may be related to specific meanings, which leads the temporal narrative to appear as an empty shell, ready to be filled by individual listeners.

The Concerto Grosso No. 1 is unique in that there is a succinct program attached to it, albeit a secret one. The conceptual network surrounding the work is rich and diverse. It appeals to other artistic works and to psychological concepts. Like the Symphony, the Concerto Grosso provides an immanent narrative. It is a musical exploration of dualities: good and evil, serious and banal, anima and animus. Both in its conception and its interpretation, the Concerto Grosso narrative is determined by extra-musical considerations. These considerations are of two kinds: the relationships explicitly triggered by the program and the implicit connotations provided by self-borrowings. Using the program as a departure point, we can personify the two soloists into two characters who undergo a transformation. They are the anima and animus, who are torn apart by the dissonances of the orchestra. The last pedal C becomes the “resolution,” through which the soloists are re-united. From the self-borrowings, the BACH motto (as orchestrated in the movie *Butterfly*) appears as a force of good, perhaps part of the collective unconscious, whereas the tango (as borrowed from the movie *Agony*) is a temptation or a dream. The sum of these associations creates the temporal narrative of the work, which depends on the immanent one. In effect, the specific event of “the separation of being” is plausible because the Concerto Grosso expresses the general idea of “duality.”

Similar elements in different works can have similar narrative outcomes. For example, there is a special resemblance between the second movements of the Symphony

and of the Concerto Grosso. The second movement of the Symphony is initially set in a Baroque style, with a smaller orchestra and an imitative melody in perpetual-motion rhythms. The second movement of the Concerto is a Baroque toccata, with typical harmonic sequences and steady sixteenth-note rhythms. In both cases, the past is progressively infiltrated by elements of the new, like modern harmonies or passages in popular styles. In the Symphony, the past periodically returns, each time sounding farther away; in the Concerto, the toccata melody returns at the very end, again like a reminiscence. In both works, a window is opened onto the past: the past of orchestral music in the Symphony, and the past of the dualities in the Concerto.

As a recurring style in Schnittke's oeuvre, the tango reveals the diverse roles a style can play in a narrative. It is set against serious music as a recurring stylistic motif in the Symphony No. 1. It appears in a moment of the temporal narrative when the composer confronts the popular sphere and rejects it. The tango possesses a rich cultural background that is carried forward to new contexts. In *Agony*, the tango represents the feminine, the lure, the bait that awakes evil in Rasputin. In the Concerto Grosso, it is part of Schnittke's stylistic utopia, depicting the unreal, the dream, the unattainable. A narrative depends on the amalgamation of meaningful associations, like those provided by the tango. As a style, the tango possesses core meanings determined by its history (eroticism, seduction, roughness) and also more specific meanings, which may vary depending on the immediate context (the feminine, the devil). These two levels of meaning are also found in other borrowings. For example, the Dies Irae generally represents death, but as quoted in the Symphony, it more specifically points to the death of the Symphony. The BACH monogram refers to Johann Sebastian Bach, but in the Concerto, it also refers to the

collective unconscious. It is by bringing both core and specific meanings together that a narrative takes form.

Evolution of Polystylism

Polystylism takes many different guises in Schnittke's oeuvre. Generally speaking, it evolves from the blunt opposition of sharply contrasting elements to more subtle allusions. Figure 5-1 provides a chronology of Schnittke's works. It identifies works that can be considered polystylistic. The following discussion describes the changes in Schnittke's use of polystylism. The first polystylistic work by Schnittke is probably *The Eleventh Commandment* (1962), an early opera that he never orchestrated. The piece presents a rather naïve mix of styles in which consonance emphasizes good sentiments, and dissonance stokes bad ones. Polystylism does not appear again until 1968 with the Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano, "Quasi una Sonata." Between those two works, approximately from 1963 to around 1966, Schnittke composed mostly serial works (Prelude and Fugue for Piano [1963], *Music for Piano and Chamber Orchestra* [1964], *Variations on a Chord* [1965], Violin Concerto No. 2 [1966], and the String Quartet No. 1 [1966], for example), an approach that he would later reject as too strict for his own needs. He was especially dissatisfied by what he considered to be the inability of twelve-tone technique to provide the depth of perspective that tonal music could: "There is no far and near, everything resides in a micro-universe."¹ However, it is that precise feature that Schnittke would exploit in the Sonata No. 2 by opposing tonality and serialism as the two contrasting themes of a sonata form:

¹ Alfred Schnittke, quoted by Detlef Gojowy in the liner notes for Alfred Schnittke, *Kremer Plays Schnittke*, perf. by Gidon Kremer, Tatiana Grindenko and The Chamber Orchestra of Europe, dir. Heinrich Schiff, CD (Deutsche Grammophon 445520-2, 1986), 2.

We know that Webern understood the basic principle of sonata form as a contrast between Strict and Free, and I found that idea convincing. I thought that such a contrast might also be possible between Tonal or Atonal and Serial. In this case Tonality would be “free” and Serialism “strict.” I tried it out, and it seems to me that a certain condition of music history was reinstated on a new level (perhaps the opposition of two styles can be experienced in a similar way to the interaction of two themes in a sonata form).²

Despite these two early pieces, it is not until the Symphony No. 1 that Schnittke fully explored polystylism. Influenced by his work with Hržanovskij on *Glass Harmonica*, he composed his polystylistic manifesto. The Symphony features many kinds of stylistic borrowings, including the quotations of pre-existing works and allusions to different styles (Baroque, march, tango, etc.). It also creates oppositions around abstract features of styles: consonance versus dissonance, serial versus tonal, unison versus clusters. In fact, there seems to be no limitation to the kind of material that Schnittke might use; he simply employs whatever style he needs to. Later works will rarely appeal to such a broad conception of polystylism.

Figure 5-1. Evolution of polystylism in Schnittke's works

<i>Year</i>	<i>Major works</i>	<i>Polystylistic?</i>
1958-9	<i>Nagasaki</i> [Oratorio, conservatory graduation piece]	No.
1962	<i>The Eleventh Commandment</i> [early opera]	Yes: uses unusual, dissonant sonorities to represent negative images and more traditional, tonal language for positive ones.
1963	Prelude and Fugue, for Piano	No, mostly serial.
1964	<i>Music for Piano and Chamber Orchestra</i>	No, serial.
1965	<i>Variations on a Chord</i> , for piano.	No, serial, but attempts to bring quasi-Classical chord structures into twelve-tone music.
1966	Violin Concerto No. 2	No, serial.

² Ibid., 2-3.

Figure 5-1. Evolution of polystylism in Schnittke's works

<i>Year</i>	<i>Major works</i>	<i>Polystylistic?</i>
	String Quartet No. 1	No.
1968	<i>Glass Harmonica</i> [animated movie]	Yes.
	Violin Sonata No. 2, "Quasi una Sonata"	Yes, the most innovative polystylistic piece so far, quotes from <i>Glass Harmonica</i> .
1968-72	Symphony No. 1	Yes.
1971-2	<i>Suite in the Old Style</i>	Yes.
1974/81	<i>Agony</i> [movie]	Includes the tango.
1975	Requiem	Yes.
1976	<i>Moz-Art</i> , for 2 violins	Yes.
1977	Concerto Grosso No. 1	Yes.
1979	Symphony No. 2, "St. Florian"	Yes.
	<i>Polyphonic Tango</i> , for orchestra	Yes.
1981	Symphony No. 3	Yes.
1983	String Quartet No. 3	Yes.
	<i>Seid Nüchtern und wachet</i> , "Faust Cantata"	Generally not, but includes the tango.
1984	Symphony No. 4	Not obviously, uses many "modes of intonation."
1985	Concerto Grosso No. 3	Yes.
1987	Sonata No. 1, for Piano	Not obviously. Opposes various types of chords.
1988	<i>Peer Gynt</i> [ballet]	No.
	Concerto Grosso No. 4/Symphony No. 5	Yes. The second movement is based on an unfinished sketch for a piano quartet by Gustav Mahler.
1989	<i>A Feast in the Time of Plague</i> [movie]	Not really, but it includes two folk songs.
	String Quartet No. 4	Very little, ethereal atmosphere, mostly atonal with a brief return to tonality.
1991/94	<i>Historia von D. Johann Fausten</i>	Mostly uniform, but still includes the tango.
1992-4	Symphonies No. 6, No. 7, No. 8	No.
1994	Minuet, for violin, viola and violoncello. [Composed as an encore for the first performance of the <i>Concerto for Three</i>].	One of Schnittke's last works.

Almost all of Schnittke's works composed between 1968 and 1983 bear at least some polystylistic characteristics, often the result of intensive self-borrowings from film scores. All five movements of the *Suite in Old Style*, for example, are adapted from scores: the Pastorale and the Ballet come from *The Adventures of a Dentist* [*Poboždeniâ zubnogo vrača*] (1965, directed by Elem Klimov), the Pantomime and the Minuet from animated films for children, and the Fugue from a documentary, *Sport, Sport, Sport* (1971, directed by Elem Klimov). Moreover, many of the works discussed in the previous chapters, the Concerto Grosso No. 1, *Agony*, the first version of *Moẓ-Art*, *Polyhonic Tango* and the "Faust Cantata," date from this period.

In the evolution of polystylism, *Moẓ-Art* and the Concerto Grosso No. 1, both composed in the mid-1970s, represent a golden age. Even if these two works contrast in terms of the breadth of stylistic sources—the Concerto includes many different styles which might have been composed by as many different composers, whereas the themes of *Moẓ-Art* were all composed by Mozart—they both present a great variety of styles in unexpected juxtapositions. In the Requiem (1975), Schnittke uses various styles to underscore the religious themes of the work. A contemporary instrumentation, including electric guitars and drums, is employed in the Credo to accompany simple modal melodies, clearly reminiscent of Gregorian chant. The inclusion of instruments used in popular styles in the Credo, where the assembly reaffirms its faith, might be a way for Schnittke to emphasize the contemporary relevance of the Mass. Later, the Dies Irae opens with a unison chorus for the first two verses. The melodic lines emphasize the interval of a tritone, a clear reference to the *diabolus in musica*. At the same time, the organ builds an

eight-note cluster by sustaining pitches as they are sung, creating a dissonant background evocative of wrath.

The Symphony No. 2 (1979), "St. Florian," composed about a decade after he began work on the Symphony No. 1, restricts the number of styles to three main elements.³ The first consists of direct quotations of Gregorian chant melodies. They are sung as incipits to each of the six movements, which bear the titles of the sections of the Ordinary of the Mass: (1) Kyrie, (2) Gloria, (3) Credo, (4) Crucifixus, (5) Sanctus and Benedictus, and (6) Agnus Dei. The second element, which strictly speaking is not a musical style, is the series of natural overtones, as Schnittke once heard it in the wind.⁴ The serial technique is the third element. According to Schnittke, the three elements symbolize the three forces of the world. The Gregorian chants refer to religion, the series of natural overtones to nature, and the serial principles to humanity and culture.⁵ The first movement reveals these forces without giving precedence to any one of them. Each of the following three movements concentrates on one of the forces: natural overtones in the second movement, Gregorian chant in the third, and dodecaphonic series in the fourth. Each time, the material is developed to an extreme, and each time chaos ensues. The equilibrium between the three elements returns in the last two movements. In one passage toward the

³ Other secondary characters in the Symphony No. 2 are major and minor chords and a Classical theme played by the oboe d'amore in the fifth movement.

⁴ One of the working titles of the Symphony No. 2 was *Invisible Mass*. Schnittke recalls the visit of St. Florian Monastery which inspired him the work: "We arrived at St. Florian in the dusk, when Bruckner's tomb could not be visited. [...] Somewhere behind the wall was a small choir singing the mass – 'Missa invisible'. There was no one in the church but us." Reproduced by Alexander Ivashkin in the liner notes for Alfred Schnittke, *Symphony No. 2 "St. Florian,"* perf. Russian State Symphony Orchestra, dir. by Valéry Polyansky (CD Chandos 9519, 1997), 4.

⁵ The associations between musical elements and the forces of the world as defined by Schnittke are reported by his friend, Alexander Ivashkin, in Alfred Schnittke, *Symphony No. 2 "St. Florian,"* 4.

end of the sixth movement, the forces come together: the natural overtone series emerges in a solo violin, joined by dissonant harmonies in the strings, triads in the flutes, the serial theme played by the oboe, Gregorian chant melodies by the organ, and even the first note of a “Classical” theme by the glockenspiel (m. 100/1/1-9). The obvious narrative is that all three forces are essential and that a blind belief in just one of them can only lead to failure, an ideal not far from the conception of Utopia expressed about the Concerto Grosso No. 1

The kind of polystylism developed in the Symphony No. 2 differs from that employed in the Symphony No. 1 and the Concerto Grosso No. 1. The latter two works feature a wide range of styles, whereas the former piece has a more restricted palette, a characteristic that will prevail in a majority of later compositions. At some point in the first half of the 1980s, direct quotations disappear in favour of indirect allusions, or even abstractions of styles. The Symphony No. 4 (1984), a work in one movement, pushes this tendency to an extreme. The polystylism is reduced to four types of “intonation modes,” three representing branches of Christianity—Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran—and the other one Judaism. Important sections of the work are limited to only one tetrachord, from which a scale is developed. For example, the first development section is devoted to Catholicism and uses a scale based on the step–step–half-step pattern; as a result, the whole passage is based upon a modified major mode. The Orthodox scale is defined as step–half-step–step patterns (the minor tetrachord), whereas the Jewish mode is based on an old synagogic chant: three successive half-steps, a whole step and a half, and three successive half-steps. Because of its cyclic nature, the Jewish mode leads to diminished and augmented octaves. In fact, the interval of the perfect octave is avoided until the coda

where the different modes are combined in utopian whole. As in the Symphony No. 2, Schnittke pleads for equilibrium.

After 1985, polystylism almost entirely disappears. This is the case in *Peer Gynt* (1988), a ballet by John Neumeier freely adapted from Henrik Ibsen's play. The score is devoid of anything immediately suggestive of the dance. In fact, the music and the dance evolve in two independent dimensions, and Schnittke's work is an autonomous whole which develops many themes from a single germinating cell, resulting in a stylistically homogeneous score.⁶ The last three symphonies, Nos. 6, 7, and 8 (1992-94), are characterized by a new economy of means that leaves very little place for stylistic allusions. Other works, however, occasionally return to a more blatant polystylism. For example, the Concerto Grosso No. 4/Symphony No. 5 combines the two titular genres; it starts like the former and ends like the latter. While the first movement is a parody of a Baroque concerto, the second movement is based on an unfinished sketch for a piano quartet by Mahler. Schnittke develops fragments of the sketch before presenting it in full at the end of the movement. Polystylism is less apparent in the last two movements, which develop a cataclysmic symphonic language reminiscent of Mahler's own symphonies and include a gloomy funeral march. Another example of late polystylism is the incidental music for *A Feast in Time of Plague* (1989), a televised adaptation of a work by Pushkin. The script includes the lyrics for two songs, which Schnittke composed in the fashion of folk songs. The first one is a lament in memory of the deaths caused by the Plague, while the second one is a satiric glorification of the disease. The score also includes an obsessive dance to

⁶ A detailed musical analysis of *Peer Gynt*, by Ronald Weitzman and Richard Traub is reproduced in the booklet of Alfred Schnittke, *Peer Gynt*, perf. by the Orchestra of the Royal Opera, Stockholm, dir. Eri Klas (BIS CD-677-678, 1994), 11-28.

accompany the speech of Louise, who mocks the dead and pleads for a joyful feast. If stylistic allusions in other works are nevertheless generally much subtle, the Minuet (1994), composed as an encore for the *Concerto for Three* (1994), represents another exception.⁷ This short work, one of Schnittke's last, goes back, perhaps not without nostalgia, to pieces from the 1970s, especially to the Minuet of the *Suite in Old Style*.

Polystylism and Narrative Potential

Polystylism threatens continuity. It opens up gaps in the musical fabric. It interrupts the stylistic flow in an unexpected fashion. A style by itself entails an ensemble of possible developments that usually allows listeners to predict, to a certain extent, what will come next. Polystylism disrupts that scheme. By refusing the satisfaction of expectations, Schnittke's music directs the listener's attention to something beyond strict musical styles and forms. The presence of this inherent symbolism has been felt by many. For Ivashkin, "it is impossible to listen to this music against an abstract rational design. The listener unwittingly senses the latent symbolism of the music. [...] Schnittke and Shostakovich works require interpretation; they are not self-explanatory."⁸ Rothstein adds that, whatever Schnittke may say about his works, his comments "can't hide the sense of a program—political, spiritual or autobiographical—that exists in his works."⁹

Schnittke's polystylism triggers a narrative reflex. The listener constructs relationships to extra-musical concepts in order to explain the numerous stylistic gaps. In

⁷ The Russian slang title of the work, "*na troikh*," invokes sharing a bottle a bottle of vodka among three people.

⁸ Ivashkin, "Shostakovich and Schnittke," 266-267.

⁹ Rothstein, "Masur Introduces Schnittke," 11.

this thesis, the connections that were established had to be supported by either documentary evidence, like Schnittke's sketches, or, at least, by conceptual correspondences made through intertextuality or cultural associations. Such exigencies, however, limit the range of interpretations and restrict the narrative possibilities. In other words, for each borrowing interpreted according to the above approach, there were many for which no obvious meaning could be found either in sketches or in their cultural connotations. For example, in the Symphony No. 1, the presence of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Strauss's *Tales from the Vienna Woods* among quotations of funeral marches is hardly explainable; it threatens the narrative. The sudden appearance of Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in *Moz-Art* was ignored, at least as far as a possible narrative was concerned. Moreover, many events occurring on a smaller scale have been neglected in each work. That they do not influence the narrative as much as the principal events addressed here does not mean that they are insignificant. For other listeners, they might even redefine important portions of the proposed narratives.

Because the score is an epistemic nexus, and because it cannot denote in the same way that words do, a narrative depends on the listener adopting many possible strategies, ranging from the intuitive to the scholarly. The relative imprecision of polystylism is both its main weakness and its main strength. Schnittke never released a program with a work. He never wanted to impose an extra-musical meaning on a piece. Nonetheless, as we have seen, his works cannot hide the sense of a program. They are stylistically disjunct, they are fragmented. They ask questions. Schnittke's works are open; in a sense, they are incomplete. Schnittke's polystylism invites listeners to shape the meaning of a work through their knowledge of the composer, and the cultural references raised by the

different styles. Because of this openness, polystylistic works resist straightforward interpretations. The stylistic richness forces listeners into interpretation cycles, going from the work to extra-musical meanings and back to the work, and so on. Therein lies the narrative potential of polystylism.

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