

**"PERPETUUM MOBILE" BY V. MUZHCHYL AS AN EXAMPLE OF  
CONCEPTUALISM IN MUSIC AT THE BEGINNING OF XXI CENTURY**

**The purpose of the article** is to reveal the principles of conceptual thinking as a phenomenon of artistic consciousness. The **methodology** of the research consists in using the interpretative semantic analysis of choral performance "Perpetuum mobile" by V. Muzhchyl, with the help of which it is possible to reveal subtext in the piece concealed by the composer and to interpret it creatively. The **scientific novelty** of the research lies in the substantiating of non-traditional interpretation of "Perpetuum mobile" as quasi-genre. **Conclusions.** The author formulated the main principals of conceptualism in V. Muzhchyl's creativity, based on the experience of communication the author of the article with his teacher. The trinity of musical semantics was revealed (in ternary form of the piece, three-time occurred thematism of introduction, in the middle section – visualization, vocalization of a symbol and its verbalization).

**Keywords:** idea, intertext, conception, method, performance, symbol, thinking.

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**"Perpetuum mobile" В. Мужчиля як зразок концептуалізму в музиці початку XXI століття**

**Мета дослідження.** Статтю присвячено визначенню принципів концептуального мислення як феномена художньої свідомості. **Методологія** дослідження спирається на інтерпретативно-семантичний аналіз хорового перформансу В. Мужчиля, за допомогою якого можливо виявити символічний підтекст, прихований композитором твору, і творчо його інтерпретувати. **Наукова новизна** отриманих результатів в обґрунтуванні нетрадиційного трактування "perpetuum mobile" як quasi-жанру. **Висновки.** Визначено основні позиції концептуалізму в творчості В.С.Мужчиля, виходячи з досвіду спілкування автора статті з учителем. Виявлено троїчність музичної семантики-обраного твору (3-частинна структура; трикратне проведення тематизму вступу; в середньому розділі – візуалізація, вокалізація символу і його вербалізація).

**Ключові слова:** ідея, інтертекст, концепція, метод, мислення, перформанс, символ.

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**"Perpetuum mobile" В. Мужчиля как образец концептуализма в музыке начала XXI века**

**Цель исследования.** Статья посвящена выявлению принципов концептуального мышления как феномена художественного сознания. **Методология** исследования задействует интерпретативно-семантический анализ хорового перформанса "Perpetuum mobile" В. Мужчиля, с помощью которого, возможно выявит скрытый композитором подтекст произведения и творчески его интерпретировать. **Научная новизна** полученных результатов заключается в обосновании трактовки quasi-жанра "perpetuum mobile". **Выводы.** Сформулированы основные принципы концептуализма в творчестве В. Мужчиля, исходя из опыта общения автора статьи с учителем. Виявлена троїчність музикальної семантики (3-частинна структура; тріхкратність проведення тематизму вступлення; в середньому розділі – візуалізація, вокалізація символу і його вербалізація).

**Ключевые слова:** идея, интертекст, концепция, метод, мышление, перформанс, символ.

Topic Relevance. Viktor Muzhchyl's creativity (1947) is a vivid embodiment of conceptualism in music. According to the composer, initial stage of composing process is construction of concept of a piece and finding the main ways of its materialization in musical dramaturgy. This type of creativity is a phenomenon based not on technique of writing, artistic style or material, but on method of creating a piece of music. Ultimately, piece is a kind of "clot of ideas" expressed by language of music. This type of creativity does not deny any possible ways of compositional thought or ways of musical expression. If the creative credo of many composers in the twentieth century were the principle of "avoidance and denial", then conceptual creativity is aimed at the way of "search a depth" and motivated method for its implementation.

Many researches are devoted to the problem of conceptualism as a platform of musical postmodernism: V. Kutyrev [4], V. Turchin [8], A. Sokolov [7], N. Gulyanitskaya [2]. Among the latest ones, we can note the article by A. Gorbenko, in which, the author revealed features of conceptualism in music by I. Yusupova and V. Tarnopolsky [1]. A considerable number of scientific studies has been devoted to the creativity of a Ukrainian composer Viktor Muzhchyl, among them we can point out several important ones: G. Poltavtseva [5], N. Semenenko [6] and O. Zaverukha [3].

Research goal and objectives of the article is to reveal the main principles of conceptualism in music by researching levels of organization of the performance "Perpetuum mobile" for mixed choir by V. Muzhchyl.

The author, revealing the essence of the piece of music, involved an integrated approach. If the structural method allows to hear a form-composition, then the functional method makes it possible to study the meaning of the process parameter – intonational dramaturgy. The semantical allows to explore "concealed meanings", revealing an essence of different characteristics of musical composition for understanding their

internal and external relationships. Finally, the interpretative makes it possible to substantiate a researcher's point of view, summarizing various ways of studying a piece from "faithfulness to an author" position.

The scientific contribution of the research is in rational the religious and philosophic sense of the *perpetuum mobile* genre. The "perpetual motion" is an unchangeable quality of God, which is conceptually reflected by the composer in the piece in a symbolic form, which requires a listener the interpretive semantic thinking/perception.

Statement of the main material. One of the founders of conceptualism, American artist Joseph Kosuth said: "All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually" [10, 18]. However, sources of conceptualism as an artistic and aesthetic trend in the art of postmodernism, according to A. Sokolov [7], lie in the heritage of Italian futurists at the first third of the XX century (manifestos of F. T. Marinetti's group) and Russian musicians-innovators: the project-utopia "Liberty Music" by N. Kulbin, Manifestos of M. Matyushin, A. Lurie, I. Vyshnegradsky. A. Sokolov notes: "Against these manifestos backdrop, individual works of art began to be viewed as an illustration of initially formulated principle, paradoxically shifting traditional notions about correlation concepts of "text" and "context" in culture" [7, 53]. Regarding the phenomenon of conceptualism in music, A. Gorbenko writes: "At the moment of perception a conceptual work, a listener, being included in a kind of semantic game, seems to solve the intellectual riddle of conceptual art" [1]. On the basis of this position of the art of composition, it is possible to interpret not only text, but also interpret subtext, which, in turn, leads to intertextuality, as one of fundamental concepts in the art of postmodernism.

Conceptualism as art is a composite of postmodernism, based on the definition of "concept"<sup>1</sup>. In a broad sense, a concept is a system of views on phenomena in the world, society, nature. In art, this term represents the guiding idea of a creator. In a narrow sense, a constructive principle is an installation, a driving force for materialization of an idea into a work of art. V. Turchin supposes that "... an idea of a conceptual piece will be "worked" if a viewer asks "why"?" [8, 257].

Conceptualism as a method of composition at the twentieth century is confirmed in the works of Ch. Ives, P. Boulez, S. Gubaidulina, V. Ekimovsky, J. Cage, G. Kancheli, V. Martynov, I. Stravinsky, V. Stankovich, N. Sidelnikov, A. Schnittke, G. Ustvolskaya and V. Schetinsky. The works of the above-mentioned leaders of composer practice of the twentieth century are vivid phenomenon of conceptual thinking.

V. Muzhchyl's creativity is a unique phenomenon not only in the framework of Ukrainian music, but also abroad. Based on ideas of conceptual art, the composer developed the original way of composition based on phonematism as the author's compositional technique. It is based on the method of operating phonemes as semantic units of language. The composer uses the technique exclusively in the pieces, where human voice is the main expression, in particular, in the performances for a capella choir (*Cosmogony* "The Black Square", timbre phonemic piece "TKTs", three sound essay "The Fifth Dimension", choral parable "Shchedrik", performance "Perpetuum mobile"). Every piece of the composer is the individual project.

In order to justify V. Muzhchyl's conceptual way of thinking we will quote two opinions, confirming our determination. For example, O. Zaverukha interprets the concept of "The Fifth Dimension" as "... this is transcendence and logo, aimed to achieving superior level of meaning... First, a human presence in the material world dominates the transition to the transcendental (climbing to the highest level of existence). Second, the transition to the transcendental through postulates of practical reason embodied in address to the highest spiritual values that are in close contact with Divinity" [3, 111].

N. Semenenko reveals some features of the composer's technique: "... in his monumental phonematic choral *Cosmogony* "The Black square", Muzhchil applies the method of endophasia consciously and organically, thereby ultimately expanding the scale of traditional sensory perception and tuning in to a wave the virtual mode of execution and audience's "perception": by the author's will a listener along with performers are immersed in a new, timeless universe of mind images, meanings and codes" [6, 98].

At the heart of the creation of some pieces of the composer there was the search for non-standard solutions of known (sometimes canonical) examples of musical art, such as "Lacrimosa", "Ave Maria", "Shchedrik" and "Perpetuum mobile". For example, in "Ave Maria" – the image of the Virgin Mary is interpreted not only as an image of the Divine, but also as an earthly image as a mother. In the choral parable "Shchedrik" the composer reflects the problems of ecology, the existence of mankind and the Earth. The fact that the problems of planetary-scale, that raised by V. Muzhchyl, relate not only to understanding from a philosophical point of view, but also their objectification in spiritual reality of compositional creativity, give us the right to characterize the type of the composer's worldview as "philosophical", and the way of artistic worldview as a conceptual.

Let us turn to the disclosure of the content of the interpretative semantic analysis of the selected piece by V. Muzhchyl. The performance *Perpetuum mobile* (2008) for mixed choir is a vivid example of conceptual art that includes elements of phonematic technique. According to the author's annotation<sup>2</sup> (which confirms the existence of conceptual thinking), the composer positions himself as a philosopher, that is a consequence of his non-standard thinking, and a type of consciousness. For greater clarity, let us imagine the structure of the piece:

First section			Middle section					Recapitulation			
A	B		A1	C	D	A2	E	B3			
	b1	b2	b3						b4	b5	b6

The piece begins with the brief introduction (A) (to the words: "Perpetuum mobile"), which contains the infinity symbol (circulacio as the musical-rhetorical figure in the Barocco), expressed in inversion and retrograde of the melody and rhythm, and the symbol of the cross as the unity of earthly (horizontal) and divine (vertical) Being. The composer represents the "Perpetuum mobile" genre as the infinity symbol. The function of the introduction is the source, the heart of the concept, as its thematic expresses the important structure and meaning-forming meaning in the dramaturgy of the piece. Let us note the conceptual role of the semantics of the introduction, as an allusion to creations of composers of the past centuries, where firstly the quasi-genre was presented as a virtuoso piece ("Perpetuum mobile" by N. Paganini, K. M. Weber, F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdi, J. Strauss). For V. Muzhchyl, as for contemporary composer, it was important to point out the sacral meaning of this semantic genre.

In the first section of the piece (B), V. Muzhchyl's idea-concept is reflected in retrograde and quasi-retrograde melodic constructions. Against the background of the continuous motion with sixteenth durations ("the water cycle" – syllables "ta-ka" and "tu-ku"), moving from one voice to another, the "infinity" is objectified: roll calls of the words "perpetuum mobile" between S-A-S-A in section b1, in the next section b2 the words are performed as stretto (B-A-T-B-T).

At the end of the second section the composer uses fragmentation of the words: "per-pe-tuum mo-bi-le" (between S and T). It is noteworthy the retrograde at the beginning of the section b3 between S and A. The end of the exposition is finished with the word "mobile" by choir tutti, in which lie the infinity symbol (the inversion movement of the extreme voices). In general, the exposition is perceived integrally, it is saturated with various compositional techniques (imitation, stretto, fragmentation, retrograde) as from position of graphic (the water cycle: sixteenth durations, linearity of the texture), and the symbolic form of musical semantics (the infinity symbol and cross).

The middle section of the piece is marked with the choral thematism of the introduction in As-dur; the section C can be interpreted as the scene of creation of the universe from Genesis. Before "the beginning of creation", we hear a bunch that not only can be interpreted as "the water cycle", but also as "... the Spirit of God moved over the water" [Gen 1.2]. According to the author's annotation, "perpetual motion" is shown here from a metaphysics point of view, the interaction of the elements of water, earth, air, fire<sup>3</sup>: a change of texture occurs against the background of sustained sounds sung to the syllables "per-pe-tuum mo-bi-le", that move from one voice to another. The composer uses chemical formulas that should be performed with recitative in stretto technique by choir tutti. Every chemical formula, embodying the process of birth of a primary element, ends with the words: water, earth, air, fire. We can realize the association of the composition and the moment of creation in the Bible: "And God said: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the water from the water" [Gen 1.6].

In the section D, against the background of the rhetorical figure "circulatio", expressed with sixteenth durations, the composer introduces a visualized "fire scene" as a real fireshow, which allows us to classify the analyzing work to the genre of performance. This is a kind of reminder of the life of primitive society, in which the attitude of man to fire was different than today. At the same time, "fire" is the personification of creativity and a spirit of cognition, in the nature of which lies "infinity" – the symbol of philosophical thought.

The section E marks a new level of development of the quasi-genre – visualization (gestures by choir artists). Following the visualization of symbols, the words "Amor Aeternus" reveal the essence of infinity verbally: objectification of the infinity symbol  $\infty$ , triangle  $\Delta$  and cross  $\dagger$  as "the creative power of Divine love"<sup>4</sup>, embodied in the words "Amor Aeternus"<sup>5</sup> and "Amor Divinus"<sup>6</sup>. Thus, at the beginning the infinity symbol is voiced by glissanding the sound "a" by female (S + A), then – by male (T + B) voices against the background of wave-like gestures by folders of choir artists:

"The triangle" (vocalization of the word "Amor" by choir artists) is interpreted by the composer as the letter code of the word "amor" and, possibly, "Aeternus" (cf: A =  $\Delta$ ). This figure from a Christian point of view is nothing but the symbol of the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And from a philosophical point of view, it is the symbol of knowledge. Namely, Love, Truth and Wisdom are the most accurate conceptual rationale of the symbol of creation. As in the case of the infinity symbol, the triangle is also visualized by choir artists.

"The cross" – the third figure is the symbol of the crucifixion as the unity of earthly and divine Being, human and God. Visualization of the symbol is occurs on the same principle as before, but with addition of the deep semantic detail – a luminous point in the center of the figure (a lantern, as marked by the composer): this is birth and resurrection; it is creativity, faith, hope, love. This section is the sixth in the dramaturgy of the composition can be interpreted as the scene of the creation of man (a lantern in the middle of the cross). The cross is the semantic culmination of the piece.

Recapitulation is built on the musical material of the exposition (the composer uses the compositional techniques: roll-call, imitation, stretto, fragmentation). The dramaturgy of the piece logically ends with the affirmation of the word-symbol "Amor" as the personification of the creative power of Divine love.

**Largo molto (rubato)**

80

1)

Ф.д.

Ritm

2)

S. A.

T. B.

A - mor ac - ter - nus

A - mor as - ter - nus

84

Ф.д.

Ritm

3)

S. A.

T. B.

A - mor

A - mor

A - mor di - vi - nus

1) Изобразить с помощью нотных папок (количество их условно) артистов хора математический знак бесконечности, далее - треугольника, а затем крест, со светящейся точкой в центре (фонарь). Возможны и другие визуальные способы изображения символов (на усмотрение дирижера или режиссера).

2) Сопрано глissандируют от Н→F→Н→F→Н, альты - Н→Е→Н→Е→Н, тенора - G→D→G→D→G, басы - G→C→G→C→G.

3) — Звук продолжает звучать.

Conclusions. 1. Let us summarize the main principals of conceptualism in the piece we analyzed<sup>7</sup>:

- V. Muzhchyl's creativity tends to depth of thought, confirmed in a Word-Logos;
- the conception of the piece contains ideas of global, social, artistic meanings, and not just technical factors (to build a series, to split the seventh overtone etc.);
- every detail (the fire-show, visualization, recitative) is motivated by the composer's conception of the piece;
- compositional technique does not dominate the content, but is its derivative;
- the composer expresses the innovative idea in the piece, caused by unconventional approach to its implementation;
- the genre and the form were dictated by the idea of the piece and were transformed in comparison with its classical and romantic canon.

2. The trinity was revealed at the level of the ternary form of the piece, in the three-fold emergence of the introduction (A, A1, A2); in the first (b1, b2, b3) and middle (C, D, E) sections, recapitulation (b4, b5, b6); and also at three levels of musical content: visualization (the figure-symbols are displayed by choir artists); vocalization (singing outlines of a figure according to the principle marked by the composer) and verbalization (emotional interpretation). Every level means the same thing<sup>8</sup>. The above-mentioned symbols (the infinity symbol, triangle and cross) represent the unified sacred essence of Being. Symbolization is manifested in all forms of musical texture: in the introduction – the infinity symbol and cross as one whole, the movement of the sixteenth durations (circulatio) as the water cycle;  $\Delta$  – the symbol of philosophical knowledge;  $\dagger$  – the symbol of Divine love.

3. The levels of cognition in "Perpetuum mobile" concept by V. Muzhchyl formulate comprehension of the sense of "perpetual motion" not only from the point of view indicated by the composer: physics (the water cycle), metaphysics (interaction of the classical elements: earth, water, air, fire), but also from a position of philosophical and religious worldview. According to the texts of Scripture and Christian teachings, God does not have a beginning or an end; He is the Begin-Unity, the One, Who has immortality. Divine love as the ontological essence of Being is the creative force and the cause of All that is. The "eternal, Divine love" concept is revealed within intonational dramaturgy of the symbols:  $\infty - \Delta - \dagger$ .

The first and second:  $\infty - \Delta$

Eternal = Infinite = Divine – Love of wisdom = Knowledge

The second and third:  $\Delta - \dagger$

Love of wisdom = Knowledge – God = Love

The first and third:  $\infty - \dagger$ .

Eternal = Infinite = Divine – Love = God

Knowledge that keeps the path through Wisdom and Love leads to truth, and Truth is God. In every symbol is covert the Divine aspect and Trinity as consequent. This is the essence of "Perpetuum mobile", realized in religious and philosophic way of composer's thinking.

It is important to note the great meaning of intertext as the condition of conceptual thinking. In this case, conceptualism as the method of composition is manifested on the highest ethical level of musical semantics, revealed the influence of Christ consciousness. We can agree with O. Zaverukha's opinion regarding the spiritual position, that every contemporary composer should follow: "...contemporary composer's creativity is aimed at helping the people to change their thinking, to build a strong spirit, informing the truth abled to change their lives" [3, 110].

Thematically various musical material in V. Muzhchyl's works, semantic symbols used by him make it possible not only to comprehend annotations and notes proposed by the composer, but also to interpret composer's music creatively, revealing concealed symbolic of subtext. The choral works by the composer such as "Vmirala rychka", "Ave Mariae", performance "Overcoming", timbre phonemic piece "TKTs", performance "Ku-ku" (from Cosmogony "The Black Square"), three sound essay "The Fifth Dimension", choral parable "Shchedrik" can be used as the musical stuff for further studies of conceptualism in music, including from the point of view of interpretative semantic analysis presented in the article.

#### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Philosopher V. Kutyrev reveals the meaning of the term: "Conception is the category of epistemology that is in the same line with the theory, but unlike the latter, it does not presuppose completeness of reproduction or construct an object" [4, p. 45]

<sup>2</sup> "This piece presents an attempt at an unconventional view at the "Perpetuum mobile" genre as a quick piece. The author considers the perpetual motion concept from a physics point of view, as the water cycle, metaphysics – the interaction of classical elements: earth, water, air, fire using chemical formulas. The author introduces into the piece a visualization connected with comprehension of sacred meaning of Being by means of the geometric symbols (the infinity symbol, triangle and cross) and letter codes. Thus, we can realize synthesized perception of reality through the creative power of Divine love" [11].

<sup>3</sup> From note to "Perpetuum mobile" by V. Muzhchyl: "In the piece the author used the chemical formulas: SiO<sub>2</sub> – earth (silica – granite, sand, clay); H<sub>2</sub>O – water molecules (the water cycle); N<sub>2</sub>, O<sub>2</sub>, CO<sub>2</sub> – air; CO<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>O, t°, Ferum<sub>2</sub>, O<sub>3</sub> – fire, which are four elements of existence (four classical elements). Also, the infinity symbol  $\infty$ , the symbolic (sacral) figure of triangle  $\Delta$  and cross  $\dagger$ " [11].

<sup>4</sup> From encyclical letter by the Supreme Pontiff BENEDICT XVI: "Love is "Divine", because it comes from God and unites us with God and thereby transforms us into a single "we", overcoming our divisions and making us one whole, so that in the end God became "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15.28)" [9].

<sup>5</sup> From lat. Aeternus – "eternal", "immortal", "continuous", "permanent".

<sup>6</sup> From lat. Divinus – "Divine".

<sup>7</sup> The author of the article, being a graduate of the class of Honored Art Worker of Ukraine, Professor V. Muzhchyl (2007-2012), substantiates the ideas of the conceptual method in composition, based on acquired knowledge, as well as his own experience as a composer.

<sup>8</sup> Cf.: Installation "One and Three Chairs" (1965) by J. Kosuth, as one of examples of conceptual art, is a self-texting work containing the context of his presentation: a chair, a photo of this chair and a copy of the dictionary article "chair".

**Література**

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