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Ilya Mayzus

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ISSUES OF RHYTHM, SYMMETRY, AND STYLE  
IN ALFRED SCHNITTKE'S *CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND STRINGS*

by

ILYA MAYZUS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

The City University of New York

2016

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music  
in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **Abstract**

### ISSUES OF RHYTHM, SYMMETRIES, AND STYLE IN ALFRED SCHNITTKE'S *CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND STRINGS*

by

Ilya Mayzus

Advisor: Professor Jeff Nichols

This dissertation takes as its subject of study Schnittke's Concerto for Piano and Strings and seeks to examine several interconnected issues in Schnittke's music: the problem of unification of disparate and conflicting forces that generally describe his style; the wave-like shape of intensification followed by a pullback that can be seen as acting on different temporal levels; and one of narrative meaning. Particular attention is given to symmetry in various manifestations, which the composer considered a necessary ingredient, comparing rhythmic regularity to periodicity found in nature, while at the same time undermining it through the use of asymmetries in order to avoid "geometrical squareness."

These topics are closely intertwined and interact with each other. Rhythmic asymmetry in the form of syncopation as well as in the form of acceleration of a pulse on the phrase level creates an irregular rhythmic surface and embodies an impulse toward intensification. The appearance of the same pattern of rhythmic intensification followed by a pullback on the phrase level and on the sectional level has a fractal-like effect and contributes to a sense of unification. It is joined and amplified as a unifying force by the symmetry on the formal level and the

inversional symmetry on the pitch level. On the formal level, it is the symmetry of thematic return, and on the pitch level, it is the inversional symmetry of a melodic contour and pitch class sets of atonal triadic progressions.

Both the intensification on different levels and the symmetry of thematic return shape narrative meaning. The constant impulse to intensification creates an impression of a musical world on the verge of losing its balance, punctuated by points of cataclysmic breakdown followed by recovery. The stylistic change toward simplicity in the last appearance of the main theme can be interpreted as attainment of the “true” form of the theme as a protagonist, which is a recurring idea in Schnittke’s music.

While these topics are examined through the prism of the Concerto for Piano and Strings, the same approach could arguably be applied to a number of other Schnittke’s works written in his late period.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Overview of Schnittke's musical language and style

The music of Alfred Schnittke possesses a wide range of musical expression, both in the emotions conveyed by the music and in the diversity of musical elements. After the works of '60s and early '70s, in which the composer employed the technique of quotation from music of different historic periods and styles that combined to create dramatic contrasts, he developed a new, synthetic language that provided a common ground to various stylistic allusions.<sup>1</sup> This is also the time when Schnittke abandoned serialism, with which he experimented in the '60s. The internal logic and musical narrative of compositions written after this stylistic shift of around 1975 are derived from this synthetic language.

The interest in referencing different styles within the same composition, however, persisted throughout Schnittke's creative work. Schnittke introduced the term "polystylism" and wrote a paper, "Polystylistic Tendencies in Modern Music," which he presented in 1971.<sup>2</sup> In that paper, he uses examples of a neo-classical stylistic allusion, quotations, pseudo-quotations and collage from the works of Shostakovich, Berg, Penderecki, Stockhausen, and Pärt. For Schnittke,

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<sup>1</sup> Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 133-135.

<sup>2</sup> Al'fred Shnitke [Alfred Schnittke]. "Polistilisticheskie tendentsii v sovremennoy muzike" [Polystylistic tendencies in contemporary music], in *Al'fred Shnitke: Ocherk zhizni i tvorchestva* [Alfred Schnittke: His Life and Works], by Valentina Kholopova and Evgeniya Chigareva (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1990), 327-331. An English translation appears in *A Schnittke Reader*, by Alfred Schnittke, ed. Alexander Ivashkin, trans. John Goodliffe (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 87-90.

the use of polystylism represented both an artistic interest in the interaction of different styles and a chance to bring together his two primary professional outlets, concert music and music for film, the latter of which often required imitating styles from past epochs. The diversity of musical elements that results from polystylism and the need to integrate them into one unified style are therefore deeply embedded in Schnittke's compositional preferences.

Even in the works written after the stylistic change of the mid-'70s and the deliberate effort to find unification, there is a constant sense of tensions and conflicts that are never completely resolved and perhaps are not meant to be resolved. Part of that comes from Schnittke's preoccupation with the "conflict between good and evil," which Ivashkin remarks is one of the subjects of the "philosophical substance of Schnittke's music."<sup>3</sup> Ivashkin connects it to the Faustian theme, which is one of the lifelong interests of the composer.<sup>4</sup> He views Schnittke's music written in the late '70s and '80s through this lens: "A struggle between polarities, or irregular pulse, a Faustian multiplicity of meaning: that is the quintessence of his music in this period."<sup>5</sup> This "multiplicity of meaning" most often takes the form of a duality of opposites in Schnittke's music. "A troubled yet precise sensation of the duality of the world runs through the whole of his work. As soon as one form appears, even the simplest, it is at once absorbed into the complex context of surrounding events or clashes with its opposite."<sup>6</sup>

Chigaryova proposes that the contrasts in Schnittke's music are not always of the conflict-based type, but coexist with compositions of a more lyrical, static nature, which she calls

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<sup>3</sup> Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 152.

<sup>4</sup> Schnittke first read Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* in the late 1940s. In 1983 Schnittke wrote *Faust Cantata* and in 1994 an opera about Faust, *Historia von D. Johann Faustern*. (Ivashkin, 154).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

meditative.<sup>7</sup> She notes about the period of 1975-1979 that “in these years there appears a stable type of musical conception, which combines in itself conflict and meditative qualities.”<sup>8</sup> She cites several specific examples of this “new, meditative type of musical conception,” including *Requiem* (1975), *Hymns* (1974-9), *Prelude in Memoriam Dmitriy Shostakovich* (1975), and the third movement of the Third Violin Concerto (1978).<sup>9</sup> She writes of the ‘80s as the time of emergence of a “special dramaturgic profile in a composition, which connects in itself on a new level the conflict-based type, which is generally characteristic of Schnittke’s thinking, and the meditative type,” which started to appear in the compositions of the ‘70s.<sup>10</sup> She suggests that the conflict depicted in this “meditative-conflict”-based dramaturgy shifts from being an external opposition of antagonistic forces to one of dissonance and internal split in a person’s internal world.<sup>11</sup> Chigaryova describes “meditative type” composition as possessing a certain set of characteristics: introspective quality, quiet dynamic and slow tempo, absence of polar contrasts, and development from a single “impulse.” She qualifies this by noting that only two

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<sup>7</sup> Kholopova and Chigareva, *Al’fred Shnitke* [Alfred Schnittke]. Bibliography uses an alternative spelling, Chigareva, to be consistent with WorldCat database: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/679052671>. While the monograph on Schnittke is written by two co-authors, Valentina Kholopova and Evgeniya Chigaryova, the preface identifies Chigaryova as the author of chapters four (p. 92-143) and seven (p. 220–252), from which the following quotes are taken.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 95. Here and after, quotations from the monograph are provided in author’s translation from Russian.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

compositions can be regarded as “pure” realizations of this “meditative type,” *Hymns* for cello and instruments (1974-9) and Piano Quintet (1972-6).<sup>12</sup>

The fact that there are only a few pieces that can serve as “pure” examples of the “meditative type” suggests that this set of characteristics (introspective quality, quiet dynamic and slow tempo, absence of polar contrasts) is better considered a part of Schnittke’s “conflict-based” dramaturgy, as an expansion of the existing compositional palette rather than an altogether separate kind of musical conception. Schnittke’s music often contains alternation of sections or movements that are marked by dramatic contrasts with quieter sections that can be thought of as a brooding reaction to the conflicts of the preceding sections. This points to a kind of dualism between an external, outward view that comes from the “conflict-based,” readily perceived contrasts and the internal, introspective view of the musical narrative found in the quiet, slow, “meditative type” sections.

The dualism in Schnittke’s music, the “conflict-based dramaturgy” that describes most of his compositions, as well as his polystylistic technique, give rise to several distinct but related phenomena. The mixture of modernist and traditional elements from different styles leads to a kind of dialogue of contrasting voices, with the composer’s modernist, “authentic” voice opposed to a stylized, distanced, historicized voice. Separately, there is a constant alternation between moments of exhilaration, a rise of musical intensity, and somber moments of deflation. This dramatic flux is mirrored by an irregular rhythmic surface of constant accelerations,

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<sup>12</sup> The Piano Quintet also presents an example of a relatively homogeneous style, somewhat contrary to Schnittke’s usual polystylistic approach. As Ivashkin describes it, Piano Quintet “contains no quotations, no allusions and, with its consonant and traditional harmony, no serial technique. It feels static, like a crystal which turns to show its different sides [...]” (Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, 131-132).

decelerations, complex or frequently changing meter, syncopations, and polyrhythmic texture. On the pitch level, there is a juxtaposition between more or less straightforward, traditional-sounding harmonies and their modernist versions with added dissonances. There is also contrast between chromatically saturated sections and diatonic or tonal-sounding phrases, as well as progressions of clusters based on triads that extend modernist context beyond chromatic dissonances. There is constant change in dynamics, which generally corresponds to rhythmic acceleration or deceleration, increase or decrease in pitch range, and increase or decrease in dissonances, which are all connected to the general category of musical intensification or deflation. Sometimes, however, Schnittke uses dynamics to create a surprise, such as a sudden rise in dynamics at the end of a phrase on a held note or a burst of loud dynamics at the start of a new section after the soft ending of a preceding section. All of this combines into a musical world that is in a constant state of change and uneasy balance between various opposing forces.

This musical world, however, never devolves into complete chaos. Schnittke creates a sense of order and control through many techniques, but perhaps most saliently the use of symmetry, which comes in different forms: the symmetry of thematic return and repetition of recognizable musical events, repetition of the same pattern at different durational levels, the inversional symmetry of a melodic contour, the inversional symmetry of a pitch class set, and the rhythmic symmetry of phrase groupings. In spite of his modernist aesthetic, Schnittke consciously favors having some degree of periodicity and symmetry in his music.

In an interview with Shulgin, dated 1976, Schnittke is asked, “To what are you drawn more – asymmetry or periodicity?” to which the composer replies: “I am naturally inclined toward symmetry and I, realizing that this is not always good, constantly try to destroy that

symmetry with the help of another counter-symmetry. Ideally I imagine this as asymmetry attained through the use of different symmetries.”<sup>13</sup>

In a conversation with Ivashkin (conducted between 1985 and 1994), Schnittke remarks that “in the core of life there lies a kind of periodicity, although that periodicity is changing, tied to asymmetry, with the counteraction of some factors disturbing that periodicity.”<sup>14</sup> Schnittke was critical of “dogmatic avoidance of periodicity,” which he saw in serial technique as applied to rhythm. He was similarly critical of his own composition, *Dialogue* for cello and seven instrumentalists, written in 1965, which, in his words, contains “the idea of non-repetition and rhythmic improvisation,” and whose rhythms “seem to not correspond to some core nature of man and life.”<sup>15</sup>

In an interview with Chigaryova, dated 1983, Schnittke compares music with nature and formulates an idea of “non-rhythmic rhythmicity” or “the infinite variations of repeatable occurrences” in nature, using as an example the waves of the sea, which seem uniform and infinite as a process, and yet the intensity of each wave is different.<sup>16</sup>

Schnittke’s preference for avoiding “crude” symmetry and seeking symmetry on a different, more refined level, can be gleaned from his view of contemporary music and its relationship with traditional forms in another conversation with Ivashkin. “The emphasis on everything that is irregular is expressed by avoiding geometrical squareness. Music has ceased to

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<sup>13</sup> Shulgin, 97, trans. author.

<sup>14</sup> Schnittke and Ivashkin, *Besedy s Al'fredom Shnitke* [Conversations with Alfred Schnittke], 52, trans. author. [“v osnove zhisni vsyo-taki zalozhena nekaya periodichnost, hotya eta periodichnost i menyayuschayasya, svyazannaya asimmetriey, s protivodeystviem kakikh-to narushayushikh etu periodichnost faktorov.”]

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. [“No vsyo-taki eti ritmy mne seychas, na rasstoyanii, kazhutsia nesootveststvuyuschimi kakoy-to korennoy prirode cheloveka i zhizni.”]

<sup>16</sup> Kholopova and Chigareva, 150



be crude verse and has turned into prose or subtle verse. It is the verse not of Lermontov and Pushkin, but of Rilke, Trakl, or Baudelaire. These are poets whose verse is verse ‘once again,’ but at a different level. And something like this has happened to music and all its rational techniques, regularity, and traditional forms – they have come back, but at a different level.”<sup>17</sup>

In Schnittke’s musical world, music characterized by “geometric squareness” often takes on a sinister connotation, particularly when it can be perceived as an allusion to banal or pop music.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, passages with sophisticated interactions between symmetries and asymmetries can be taken as written in Schnittke’s own modernist voice. Symmetry/asymmetry and periodicity/aperiodicity are intimately linked to the stylistic tension and dialogue between modernist and stylized language, which permeates Schnittke’s music.

This dissertation seeks to explore both various manifestations of symmetry, which contribute to unification, and transformations of rhythmic asymmetry that Schnittke uses to evade simple symmetry in favor of a complex irregular surface. It also seeks to find common patterns of musical elements of Schnittke’s style as they translate into musical narrative, the “hidden plot” that typically exists in Schnittke’s compositions.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Schnittke and Ivashkin, *A Schnittke Reader*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> In the chapter from *A Schnittke Reader* titled “From Schnittke’s Conversations with Alexander Ivashkin (1985-1994),” there is the exchange where Ivashkin says: “There is something in your music that shocks some people – the stratum of banal pop music, the musical clichés you use in a number of your works. It is associated with images of what is evil and diabolical, and it appears in concealed, attractive, and, what is most important, accessible form. [...]”, to which Schnittke replies: “Nowadays what is often called ‘pop culture’ is the most direct manifestation of evil in art. Evil in a general sense. [...] You refer to the pop elements in my music. This surprises me, because if I count these elements in chronological order, it turns out that there are not so many. But they ‘stick out’ because they are vivid examples of ‘infection.’” (Schnittke and Ivashkin, *A Schnittke Reader*, 22-23).

<sup>19</sup> Chigaryova writes of a “hidden plot” that appears in Schnittke’s compositions, which is not based on events, but is generalized. This plot “can be characterized as a ‘testing of an idea’: in

This dissertation limits its analysis to Concerto for Piano and Strings, written in 1979. That composition has substantial presence of conflict and moments of relief and contains great diversity of rhythmic asymmetries and tensions of symmetry and asymmetry in the broader sense. Its balance of modernist and stylized, as well as the apparent complexity of interaction between disparate elements on multiple levels, provide an ideal ground to investigate the topics with which this dissertation is concerned.

The analysis of rhythmic asymmetry focuses primarily on two types of asymmetry. One type is syncopation, which creates rhythmic dissonance relative to the established pulse or relative to another rhythmic grouping that is occurring at the same time. This type of asymmetry is particularly common in the context of a 5/4 meter or a five-grouping, as it naturally leads to asymmetric tensions between 3 and 2 groupings.

The second type is linked to acceleration, which is particularly widespread in Schnittke's compositions. It receives the greatest amount of focus in this dissertation because it can be considered as a unifying factor in addition to creating irregular rhythmic surfaces. Its unifying effect comes from the fact that it occurs on different durational levels. On the phrase level, the acceleration of a local pulse occurs when a previously introduced rhythmic figure is transformed to make its asymmetry more acute. The comparison of the transformed figure that is perceived as a diminution of the original creates a feeling of acceleration. On the sectional level, there is often acceleration of a higher level pulse that is created by a repeated event, such as a short motive or an instrumental entrance, which becomes more frequent as the section progresses. Here, the term

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the role of the main 'character,' it undergoes a series of collisions, experiences various incarnations, transformations (or enters into an interaction with polar opposite ideas) and, after passing by false support, through repeated rejection and self-rejection reaches the final moment, where there occurs, finally, attainment of the truth. The idea in this case is understood not as an abstract, extra-musical thought, but as a personal statement" (Kholopova and Chigareva, 97), trans. author.

“acceleration” is broadened to include increase in musical activity through progressive shortening of time between repeated gestures, in addition to its more common connotation of shortening the duration of notes, leading to a faster underlying pulse.<sup>20</sup>

The analysis of symmetry in a broad sense primarily focuses on inversive symmetry in the pitch domain and the symmetry of thematic return. Rhythmic symmetry, in the form of even durations and regular meter, tends to occur as part of stylistic allusions rather than within the composer’s own modernist voice. It is therefore not subject of detailed analysis in itself in this dissertation, but is instead noted as the opposite pole of a continuum of rhythmic symmetry/asymmetry.

The inversive symmetry under consideration includes both motivic inversion and the symmetry of prominent harmonic progressions and pitch class sets. Of particular importance are the B-A-C-H or [0123] pitch class set and the common-third or SLIDE relation of two triads.

Both of these aspects have received considerable prior attention in theoretical writings on Schnittke. The unifying effect of pitch class sets in Schnittke’s compositions is considered in the dissertation “Structural Threads in the Patchwork Quilt: Polystylistics and Motivic Unity in Selected Works by Alfred Schnittke” by Kirsten Peterson.<sup>21</sup> The author notes the analytic challenge posed by polystylistic compositions and argues that “[u]nity in Schnittke’s works derives from various manifestations and treatments” of motivic elements that Schnittke consistently employs in different stylistic contexts. She also writes, “Principal motivic ideas,

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<sup>20</sup> Schnittke often achieves acceleration or deceleration through a written-out change in note durations, rather than relying on terms like *accelerando* and *ritenuto*. This effectively blurs the boundary between acceleration of the pulse of notes and intensification from the increase in frequency of repeated gestures, as both are realized and coordinated through musical notation.

<sup>21</sup> Kirsten Peterson, "Structural Threads In The Patchwork Quilt: Polystylistics And Motivic Unity In Selected Works By Alfred Schnittke" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 2000).

derived from shared intervallic components between themes, can be generalized as unordered pitch-class sets (for instance, [0,1,3] and [0,1,4] in Concerto Grosso No. 1)” as well as in specific ordered sets such as B-A-C-H.<sup>22</sup>

The inversionally symmetric progression or simultaneity of major and minor triads with a shared third, e.g. C minor - C-flat major, was understood by Schnittke as the common third relation (“odnotertsovost”) and also appears in Neo-Riemannian theory as the SLIDE relation. In his dissertation, “Triadic music in Twentieth Century Russia,” Christopher Segall explores triadic practice in Schnittke’s music<sup>23</sup>. He finds that Schnittke favors a particular set of triadic relations, the P or Parallel, S or SLIDE, and M relations, and their use allows the composer to write “atonal triadic music” that steers clear from establishing a tonal center, which distinguishes it from the composer’s “tonally allusive polystylistic practice.”<sup>24</sup>

Schnittke’s “atonal triadic music” may also be linked to the B-A-C-H motive as one of its possible harmonizations. For instance, the sequence C minor – C-flat major – D minor – D-flat major, which is part of the longer harmonic progression that is one of thematic elements in the Concerto for Piano and Strings, can be described in Neo-Riemannian terms as S – M – S.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Peterson, Abstract.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Segall, "Triadic Music In Twentieth-Century Russia" (Ph.D. diss., The City University of New York, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> Segall, 147. The P (Parallel) and S (SLIDE) relations are described in Neo-Riemannian theory. The M relation (“minor third”) is introduced by Segall as another transformation based on parsimonious voice-leading and describes relations such as between B major and D minor. See also Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, 3rd ed., 158-170, for a more detailed discussion of Neo-Riemannian relations. This topic is later covered in Chapter 2: Pitch organization, thematic construction, and form.

<sup>25</sup> An example of B-A-C-H harmonization as part of the 12-tone theme is presented in section 2.3 Analysis of the motives of the introduction, the 12-tone theme, and the opening harmonic progression in Example 2.2.

On a continuum from modernist to stylized or traditional music, the atonal triadic practice fulfills the role of a bridge between the clearly modernist dissonant music that is based on the B-A-C-H set or a subset of the chromatic scale and the stylized allusions to tonal music that appear in Schnittke's music. Rhythmic symmetry/asymmetry has a similar continuum, between a flexible or irregular meter and a regular, constant meter. Schnittke sometimes uses rhythmic asymmetry to highlight either the modernist nature of the pitch material, by pairing it with irregular phrases and a flexible meter, or the stylized, distanced nature, by pairing it with a constant 3/4 or 4/4 meter.

The unification achieved by means of musical language, such as harmony, rhythm and thematic organization, coexists with the issue of narrative meaning and narrative trajectory that invokes similar feelings of closure and engagement in the perception of a musical composition. One element of Schnittke's compositional technique, which is the transformation and thematic return of the main theme, serves a role in both of these issues, the unification through musical language and the narrative meaning. The appearance of the main theme at the end creates a readily perceivable symmetry that unifies a composition. Its transformation after various conflicting juxtapositions and musical intensification can make this last appearance seem like a revelation, as attainment of its "true" form. Such a transformation can take the form of a shift toward greater appearance of tonal elements, a simplification of a previously flexible and changing meter to a constant, regular meter, and a simplification of texture. It can be a shift away from the modernist voice of the narrator to a more distant, stylized voice that puts the "story" of the main protagonist in a different view, as if seen from above. It can be also a stripping of original asymmetric, unbalanced state and replacing it with a more symmetric, more balanced version.

In addition to exploring the narrative implications of thematic transformations, this dissertation will explore the dramatic impact of a wave-like shape of rising and falling intensity in Schnittke's music. The elevation of changes in musical intensity to the level of narrative meaning, such as exhilaration, crash, deflation, and recovery, creates its own narrative trajectory that runs in parallel to the trajectory of the transformation of the main theme. The constant impulse to intensification serves a dual purpose, as it generates an unpredictable, constantly engaging musical surface and also creates a larger rhetorical effect of constructing a world of fragile balance.

In the Concerto, there are critical moments when the rise in intensification reaches a perceived maximum point and instead of a pullback leads to a cataclysmic crash, a dissolution in glissando, a General Pause, and a section of recovery and somber reminiscence marked by a soft dynamic and slower pulse. In this dissertation, the intensification in the described pattern is referred to as "expansion" and the somber section or theme that immediately follows it as "convergence." While in the Concerto, "convergence" is expressed as a somber cadenza in the middle and as a section with rhythmic "dissolution" at the end of the composition, the notion can be easily expanded to similar moments in other Schnittke works, where intensification is followed by pullback.<sup>26</sup> This examination, however, is left to further research beyond this dissertation.

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<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, a motive at mm. 12-15 in *Monologue* for Viola and string orchestra that has contracting melodic lines and conveys the affect of somber convergence. Multiple examples of expansion – convergence on the level of individual themes rather than sections can be found in Trio for Violin, Viola, and Cello. The most prominent instance of these appears in the first movement as the theme at Rehearsal no. 15 in the role of expansion followed by the theme at Rehearsal no. 17 in the role of convergence. That sequence then appears in the recapitulation of the first movement and in the second movement.

The narrative aspects of expansion/convergence and transformation of the main theme, along with investigation of rhythmic asymmetry and inversional symmetry constitute the main focus of this dissertation. In the following chapters, the issues outlined above will be central, although naturally conventional analysis involving harmony, rhythm, and formal structure will also be involved as needed. Because the elements that underlie these issues are closely interrelated, the discussion is organized by concentrating on a particular topic one at a time, which sometimes necessitates re-examining an element already discussed from a different angle. For instance, the same motive may be an important thematic element of the composition, an example of inversional symmetry between its phrases, and also an example of musical discourse that is built on a dialog between opposing parts. Similarly, the same element may be re-examined within the discussion of symmetry/asymmetry and in the context of musical narrative.

This part of the introduction, 1.1, focused on a general overview of Schnittke's musical language and style. The next section, 1.2, will introduce the main issues of the Concerto for Piano and Strings, which is the central focus of this dissertation and will be used to explore the topics just discussed in close detail. The introduction will conclude with section 1.3, which is an overview of other chapters of this dissertation.

## 1.2 Concerto for Piano and Strings

Schnittke's Concerto for Piano and Strings creates the impression of having many moving parts that at times seem to be pulling in disassociated directions but nevertheless cohere. Sometimes it feels like a journey from one place to the next, with short piano solo transitions acting like a "guide." At other times, the propulsive rhythmic sections invite comparison with a complex mechanism, like a clock or a locomotive gathering speed, that could be in danger of going out of sync and becoming unbalanced. The many stylistic allusions and rhetorical devices contained in the material of the Concerto add further complexity and provide many opportunities and challenges in finding the most suitable structural descriptions and narrative interpretations.

This variety of musical elements can be seen through a prism of duality of opposites, which, as discussed in the previous section, takes a central place in Schnittke's musical world. In its immediate form, this duality can be perceived as a kind of pairing of things held in uneasy balance. This sense of balance and duality appears both on the rhythmic level, manifested as an opposition between symmetrical and asymmetrical rhythmic groupings, and on the pitch level in the form of inversional symmetry, such as an alternation of major and minor triadic chords in a harmonic progression or an alternation of ascending and descending inversionally related intervals in a motive. It also manifests in more general kinds of oppositions, such as soloist versus orchestra, diatonic versus chromatic pitch materials, 3/4 meter versus 4/4 or even stylistic quotation versus the composer's own voice.

A more abstract type of duality that also permeates the musical fabric of the Concerto puts on one side the tendency toward intensification, sometimes to the point of losing control, and on the other side the forces that counteract it by maintaining a degree of balance. Here, the same dualities of inversionally symmetric pairs in pitch organization that were just discussed



serve in a unifying role. Balancing elements include: the formal symmetry of the work's arch form; the inversional symmetry of important motives; and internally consistent harmonic languages employed in the Concerto, such as triadic progressions and pitch class sets that are part of the 12-tone theme.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, there is constant forward impetus created by musical intensification, which may come in a number of different forms: a sharpening of a previously introduced asymmetric relation, rhythmic acceleration, an increase in the degree of dissonance, an increase in the density and complexity of texture, an increase in dynamic, both individually and in combination. An increase in the density of texture can be a part of rhythmic intensification, when additional layers of texture form complex polymetric relationships. A point of maximum intensity may be signaled through a polymetric "dissolution" of texture as well as through increase in dynamic and rhythmic acceleration. A change in the dynamic level generally accompanies any other kind of intensification, though sometimes appears on its own.

The appearance of a pattern of rhythmic intensification on different durational levels, the phrase level and the sectional level, creates its own unifying effect. It can be compared to fractals, where the same pattern is repeated on ever larger levels. This effect is secondary to the unification achieved on the pitch level, but it provides an important component to the structure of this composition.

Two patterns of intensification can be specifically highlighted. One is the tri-partite pattern that starts from a steady state, introduces an element of intensification or "complication" in the middle, and then returns to a steady state, though possibly without completely resolving the tension introduced in the middle. This arch pattern provides both asymmetric tension and an

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<sup>27</sup> These are discussed in Chapter 2: Pitch organization, thematic construction, and form.

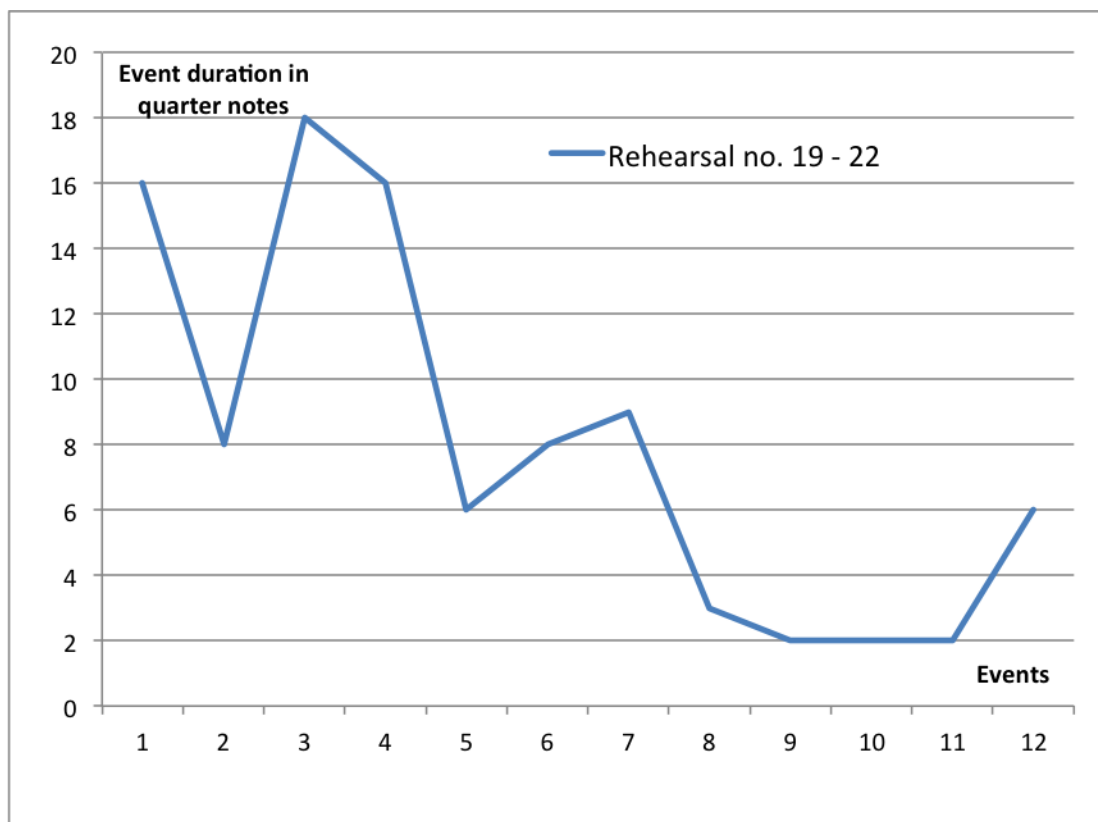
attempt to retain the overall balance, and therefore may be called “balanced” asymmetry. It plays a prominent role in the Concerto, as it appears on different durational levels and in different types of asymmetry.

A second pattern is single-directed, where the acceleration leads to a progressively faster pulse, eventually either reaching another section that sustains the new quick pulse or is abruptly interrupted by a pause or a complete stop. The latter case, where the intensification reaches a maximum point and then runs into a complete stop or a crash, followed by a quiet brooding section of recovery, appears twice in the Concerto.<sup>28</sup>

These two patterns, acceleration with pullback and single-directed acceleration leading to a crash, can be illustrated in the following two graphs (Figure 1, Figure 2). In both graphs, the horizontal axis tracks musical “events,” which on the phrase level are simply notes of a melodic line, and on the sectional level are appearances of a particular motive or gesture, which is generally short in duration by itself, and which draws attention to itself over the course of the section. The vertical axis tracks duration between the events in quarter notes. Since the longer durations appear closer to the top and shorter closer to the bottom of the graph, a downward line in the graph indicates a shortening of durations between musical events and intensification that comes from the increasing rate of musical activity. This intensification can be described as acceleration, where the term is broadly applied to musical gestures as well as individual notes.

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<sup>28</sup> It is discussed in section 4.1 Expansion and convergence.

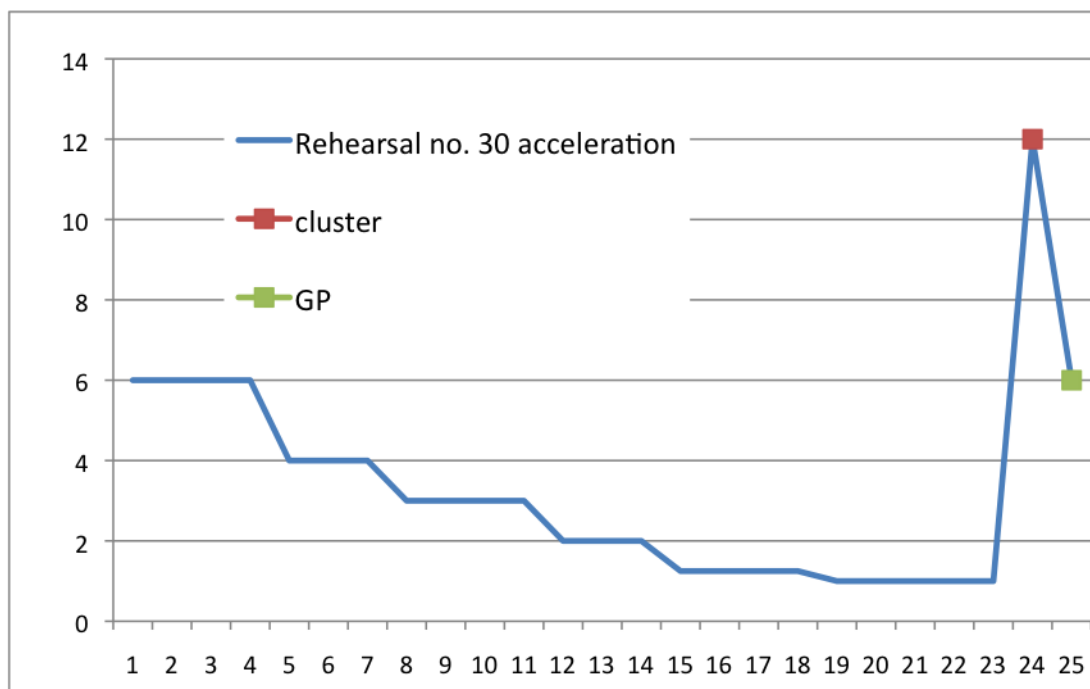


**Figure 1. Acceleration and pullback in Rehearsal no. 19 – 22 (R19 – R22). Higher values on the vertical axis (“Event duration in quarter notes”) correspond to longer durations of individual events or phrase groupings; a descending line indicates acceleration, an ascending line – deceleration.**

In Figure 1, the wave-like shape of acceleration and partial pullback of the section at Rehearsal no. 19 – 22 (R19 – R22) demonstrates the first pattern.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The data for the graph comes from the analysis that is presented in section 3.7 Rhythmic acceleration in R19 – R22 (“jazzy” episode). This analysis is also included in Figure 5 in the same section, which compares this shape with the rhythmic profile of the 12-tone theme at R29 and the 12-tone theme at R45. The rhythmic profile at R45 demonstrates the same pattern as at R29, but on a smaller scale of durations.



**Figure 2. Acceleration in Rehearsal no. 30 (R30) section ending with a cluster chord and a General Pause.**

In Figure 2, the graph illustrates the second pattern of intensification, the single-directed acceleration in the section at Rehearsal no. 30 (R30) that runs into a sudden stop with a long cluster chord marked with a fermata and a General Pause, also with a fermata.<sup>30</sup>

The dualities mentioned to this point (the duality of symmetry/asymmetry of rhythmic groupings, inversionally symmetric motives and simultaneities, 3/4 versus 4/4 meter, intensification to the point of losing control versus maintaining a degree of balance) have dealt primarily with the musical language. There is, however, also a different kind of duality present in the Concerto that is concerned with a more general rhetorical or expressive aspect of listeners' expectations.

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<sup>30</sup> The discussion of R30 is presented in section 4.1 Expansion and convergence. The actual values plotted in the graph are durations in quarter notes of the line of first Violins in R30. The graph, however, is meant as an abstraction of acceleration that also occurs in parallel in other voices in that section.

This is the dualism of a deceptively simple surface under which hides treacherous depth, an impression that can be conveyed by an unpretentious, lyrical melodic line hovering over a complex polyphonic texture, or by a sudden *sforzando* punctuating a soft dynamic with no warning. This idea of “things are not what they seem,” the feeling of unease, the continual expectation of a surprising twist in the narrative complements and amplifies the dynamism of intensification and the tension of symmetry and asymmetry on different levels of musical language in the Concerto.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> This topic is explored in more detail at the end of this dissertation in section 4.2 Issues of musical narrative.

### 1.3 Organization of the following chapters.

The first main chapter of the dissertation is Chapter 2: *Pitch organization, thematic construction, and form*. It includes a table (Table 2.1) of the most important sections in the Concerto that will give a sense of the entire structure. The chapter starts with Section 2.1, *Formal models in the Concerto*. Section 2.2 provides necessary background and terminology for the analysis of triadic usage in the Concerto, including a table (Table 2.2) of Neo-Riemannian transformations that will appear in the analysis. Section 2.3 is an analysis of motives presented in the introduction of the Concerto, the 12-tone theme and the harmonic progression that appears at the beginning and throughout the composition, which together function as theme in the theme and variations model in the Concerto. Section 2.4 focuses on simultaneities that result from the triadic relations contained in the opening harmonic progression. Section 2.5 turns attention to the other themes presented in the Concerto and relates them to the sonata form model.

Chapter 3: *Rhythmic acceleration and symmetry/asymmetry* is devoted to issues related to rhythm. It addresses one of the primary unifying elements in the Concerto as well as the forces that drive its evolution, by generating tension and intensity. After a general overview of rhythmic asymmetry in the Concerto, it introduces a discussion of two types of asymmetry on the phrase level, dynamic and static. Dynamic asymmetry is defined as a transformation of an existing asymmetry, creating a perception of acceleration or deceleration. This transformation can occur as either a single-directed or as a tri-partite shape, which contains intensification in the middle and an attempt to return to the initial state at the end. This is discussed in the section 3.1, *Dynamic asymmetry and “scaling.”* Static asymmetry is defined as a contraposition of different durations, which often has the effect of a syncopation. It is discussed in the section 3.2, *Static asymmetry of 2 versus 3 in 5-grouping and polymeter*.

The next section, 3.3, *Acceleration and asymmetry on the sectional level*, continues the discussion of rhythm, but changes focus from the phrase level to the sectional level. It includes specific examples of analysis of sections at R11 – R12 (section 3.4), R13 – R16 (3.5), R17 – R18 (3.6), R19 – R22, later referred to as the “jazzy” episode (3.7), and the cadenza at R31 – R35 (3.8). The analysis of the cadenza stands apart from the analysis of the other sections in that it focuses less on the linear acceleration and more on the vertical intensification of texture through addition of layers and the use of polymeter.

The final chapter, Chapter 4: *Expression and meaning*, changes focus from musical language to issues of musical meaning. Section 4.1, *Expansion and convergence*, focuses on the two main instances in the Concerto of expansion/climax followed by a crash and somber reminiscence, which occur in the middle and at the end of the composition. It builds on the general discussion of expansion – convergence, which was covered in the section at the beginning of this chapter. The last section, 4.2, *Issues of musical narrative*, takes a broader view of the discussed topics and considers their potential for narrative interpretation, while also making more general observations on Schnittke’s musical style.

## **Chapter 2: Pitch organization, thematic construction, and form**

The Concerto contains a mixture of elements that may be described as modernist and ones that may be described as stylized. Modernist elements include dissonant clusters, atonal triadic progressions, and complex polymetric textures. Stylized are those that contain recognizable references to styles of the past era, such as an Alberti bass reminiscent of a Classical or Baroque style, a Russian Znamenniy chant, or a Romantic Viennese Waltz. These disparate stylistic elements are evident on every musical level, from the formal structure to rhythm and pitch organization. The structure of the Concerto takes its inspiration from and in effect merges three formal models: theme and variations, sonata form of a Classical or Romantic concerto, and a multi-movement symphonic or concerto cycle compressed into a single movement. Each model leaves its own specific mark on the construction of the Concerto. Because of the stylistic heterogeneity of the work's materials and the fragmented, multifarious and at times self-contradictory nature of the work's formal design, this section will necessarily be somewhat discursive; Table 2.1 on the next page attempts to summarize the main landmarks and musical strands mentioned in this discussion, taking sonata form as the template for naming themes and sections in the Concerto.



Section Name	meter characteristics	measure/rehearsal#
<b>Introduction</b>	mixed	mm. 1-23
<b>Exposition</b>		
“Alberti bass arpeggiation” (primary, Andante)	4/4	R3 (24-45)
“heroic” theme (primary)	4/4/mixed	R5 (45-56)
“chant” theme (Maestoso)	3/4-5/4 mixed	R6 (57-62)
“polyphonic episode” (12-tone theme)	3/4	R7 (63-66)
“heroic” theme (primary)	mixed	(67-70)
Transition	3/4	R8 (71-84)
“lyrical” theme (secondary)	6/8	R9 (85-104)
piano solo transition		(105-109)
“appoggiatura attacks” (Concluding theme)	9/8	R11 (110-120)
piano solo transition		(121-123)
<b>Development</b>		
Allegro (“heroic” theme material)	4/4	R13 (124-151)
(“doorbell” motive, six-note-ostinato)		R15 (152-163)
(dense canon, 5-group of eighth notes)		R16 (164-175)
(canon, entrances speed up in the middle)		R17 (176-183)
(canon based on the “chant” theme)		R18 (184-189)
piano solo transition		(190-192)
“jazzy” episode	mixed/free	R19 (193-216)
“Tempo di Valse”	3/4	R23 (217-268)
Climax	3/4/free	R29 (269-283)
(disintegration, 12 repetitions in piano)		R30 (284-297)
Cadenza	free	R31 (298-325)
<b>Recapitulation</b>		
“heroic” theme (primary)	4/4/mixed	R36 (326-335)
“chant” theme	3/4-5/4 mixed	R37 (336-350)
Ending/Dissolution	free	R39 (351-365)
(B-A-C-H motive, 12-tone theme)		R40 (366-277)
Coda	mixed	R41 (378-422)

**Table 2.1 Themes, sections and episodes in the Concerto**

## 2.1 Formal models in the Concerto

The model of theme and variations, loosely construed to include the idea of “developing variation,” yields a great diversity of manifestations of several primary thematic elements. Some of these elements are motivic, appearing with the same melodic and rhythmic contour, while others are more abstract, such as a harmonic progression, a pitch class set, or a rhythmic asymmetry. The introduction of a specific set of musical elements at the beginning of the Concerto and their consequent development and stylistic transformation over the course of the work, which results in their appearance under different guises across different themes and sections, leads to a kind of game of recognizing old elements presented in new ways. These stylistic transformations justify viewing the development of these elements through the model of theme and variations, rather than only as a compositional technique aimed at creating a sense of unity in a composition by using a constrained set of initial material.

There is historical evidence that Schnittke himself envisioned the Concerto as modeled on theme and variations and originally gave the work the subtitle “Variations not on a theme,” although it was dropped in the final version. According to Ivashkin, Schnittke “meant that each variation is based on a certain element of the theme, which is heard in its entirety only at the end of the work.”<sup>32</sup>

The other models that exist alongside the model of theme and variations come from the sonata form and the multi-cycle symphonic or concerto form compressed into a single movement. Like theme and variations, these models open the possibilities of having an array of contrasting

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<sup>32</sup> Alexander Ivashkin, liner notes to *Schnittke: Requiem, Piano Concerto*, Russian State Symphony & Cappella, Valeri Polyansky; Igor Khudolei, piano. Chandos Records Ltd. Chan 9564, CD, 1997. Schnittke’s intention of writing “variations not on a theme” is also mentioned by Chigaryova in Kholopova and Chigareva, *Alfred Schnittke*, 140.

themes and episodes, but at the same time they impose certain order and genre expectations that the listener can use to help navigate the structure. For instance, the presence of contrasting themes that may be characterized as “heroic” and “lyrical,” a long cadenza, and substantial sections that may be compared to an episode and scherzo all have a precedent in the sonata form found in a Romantic concerto. Referencing the existing templates of a larger form allows Schnittke to counteract the diversity of various stylistic references with the unifying effect of a template when it is recognized by the listener.

Alongside the formal templates of the Concerto, there are parallel structures that arise from tonal centers and stable-meter zones. The triadic nature of much of the pitch material in the Concerto leads to the emergence of quasi-tonal centers and a clearer sense of the large-scale structure of the composition. In particular, there is a strong sense of recapitulation when the initial C minor/C major tonal center returns after the cadenza. In a similar structural role, there are two extended sections with homogeneous meter, one in duple and another in triple meter, that lead to an identifiable polarity of the two meters in the Concerto. One of these is the long Allegro section in duple meter that starts the development section at R13 – R16 and can be compared to a Scherzo. The other is the Tempo di Valse episode at R23 in triple meter that starts the process of intensification leading to the climax at R29 – R30 and a crash, which ends the development section and leads to the cadenza. The following recapitulation is clearly recognizable with the return of the thematic material of the beginning at the same tonal centers as it originally appeared, C minor and C major. The identifiable contrasting poles on the pitch and rhythmic domains serve to clarify structural boundaries of the sonata form and the arch form of the composition as a whole.

## **2.2 Triadic usage in the Concerto and Russian and Neo-Riemannian terminology**

Before turning to specific examples of the thematic elements in the Concerto, it is necessary to establish terminology to analyze the composer's idiosyncratic use of triadic progressions, which play a central role in the Concerto. In addition to traditional pitch class set theory, such progressions and simultaneities based on triads are best approached using terminology from Russian harmonic theory, with which Schnittke was familiar, and Neo-Riemannian theory, which provides a terminology more familiar in English-speaking countries and describes relationships that are closely equivalent to those discussed in the relevant Russian theoretical literature.

Most of the material in the Concerto is based on triads and triad-based progressions. However, while this triadic usage can evoke associations with the tonal tradition of past musical periods, it does not fit conventional definitions of either tonality or atonality. One of the core elements of these progressions is the “common third” (Russian terminology) or SLIDE (Neo-Riemannian terminology) relation of major and minor triads that share a chordal third, such as C minor – C-flat major. Schnittke describes this relation as “odnotertsovost” or “common mediants” and credits its discovery to the work of Russian theorist Lev Mazel:

At the end of the 1950s, after Lev Mazel described the harmonic phenomenon of "common mediants" (for example, between B major and C minor), many composers, myself included, made use of it. It was indeed Mazel who first identified it, but for some reason Yuri Kholopov still does not accept the relationship or even the expression used to

describe it.<sup>33</sup> But the examples given by Mazel in his analyses, from Beethoven to Liszt, are very convincing: in one of the *Valses Oubliées*, for example, where we have F-sharp major and G minor.”<sup>34</sup>

In another interview dated around 1976, Schnittke expands on his technique of using triads and in addition to the common third relation also includes a different relation exemplified by A-major triad – C-minor six-four chord:

In regard to using triads, there is a predisposition to what Mazel calls common key common mediant triads and also to the sequence of triads (in the symphony and many other compositions) such as: A-major triad – C-minor six-four chord.<sup>35</sup>

The A major – C minor six-four relation, a major key and a minor key that is higher by a minor third, constitutes another main element of the triadic progressions, appearing alongside the common third relation. This relation does not have a concise term in Russian harmonic theory, in contrast to the common third relation or “odnotertsovost.” It is, however, related to the “major-minor system”<sup>36</sup> (“mazhoro-minor”) in Russian harmonic theory, which includes all triads of parallel major and minor keys, such as C minor and C major. In this system, for instance, a

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<sup>33</sup> There was a disagreement among Russian theorists on the terms “odnovysotnost” (common key) and “odnotertsovost” (common third), with some objecting to the term “common key” when it refers to keys that have the same letter name but that are chromatically different, such as C minor and C-flat major. In particular, one of the major Russian theorists, Yuriy Kholopov, disagreed with Lev Mazel on using the term “odnovysotnost” (“common key”) in this context (see, for instance, Kholopov, *Garmoniya* [Harmony], 438).

<sup>34</sup> Schnittke and Ivashkin, *A Schnittke Reader*, 16

<sup>35</sup> “Chto kasaetsya upotrebleniya trezvuchiy, to zdes est pristrastie k tomu, chto Mazel nazyvaet odnovysotnymi odnotertsovymi tonalnostyami ili k sopostavleniyu trezvuchiy (v simfonii i mnogikh drugikh sochineniyakh) tipa: la-mazhorne trezvuchie - do-minorniy kvartsekkord.” (Shulgin and Schnittke, *Gody Neizvestnosti* [Years of Obscurity], 97)

<sup>36</sup> See, for instance, Stepanov, *Garmoniya* [Harmony], 230-234.

progression like C minor – A minor or C major – E-flat major would be considered to stay within the same “major-minor” key of C minor/C major. If this system is expanded to include triads of relative keys, such as C major and A minor, the expanded major-minor system of both parallel and relative keys would include the described relation of A major and C minor.

The term “common third” relation in Russian harmonic literature has an equivalent in Neo-Riemannian theory as SLIDE relation or S relation. In his dissertation, “Triadic music in Twentieth Century Russia,” Segall compares Russian harmonic theory with Neo-Riemannian theory, with particular focus on the common third relation. He also devotes a chapter to Schnittke’s harmonic language and relates Schnittke’s treatment of triads in harmonic progressions with Neo-Riemannian theory. In addition to the established Neo-Riemannian terms, such as L, P, and R relations,<sup>37</sup> Segall adds a new, M relation, which he describes as “M, or the ‘minor third’ relation, which relates a major triad to the minor triad with a root three semitones (or a minor third) higher, as with C major and E-flat minor.”<sup>38</sup> The M relation therefore describes the A major – C minor relation that Schnittke mentions in the above quote.

Segall identifies three relations that are particularly important in Schnittke’s music and that he highlights in his musical examples: P, for parallel major and minor, S or SLIDE, and M. He argues that “the P, S, and M relations are the least tonal-sounding relations that preserve two, one and zero common tones respectively. By using these relations, Schnittke permits himself

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<sup>37</sup> L, P, and R are leading-tone exchange, parallel, and relative transformations that change a triad from major to minor or from minor to major by keeping two notes constant while moving the third by a step. In leading-tone exchange (L), the root of a major triad moves down a semitone, e.g. (C – E – G) to (B – E – G), and in a minor triad the fifth moves up a semitone, e.g. (C – E-flat – G) to (C – E-flat – A-flat). Parallel (P) will change a major triad into a minor triad by moving the third down a semitone and vice versa, e.g. C major into C minor. Relative (R) transforms a triad into its relative, e.g. C major into A minor.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 11.

maximum voice-leading flexibility at the same time that he minimizes echoes of traditional tonality.”<sup>39</sup> In the case of triads with zero common tones, there are actually two possible triads that are maximally distant on the circle of fifths, one major and one minor. For example, when considered in relation to C major, two such maximally distant triads are F# major and E-flat minor (which are themselves related by R). Segall argues that in Schnittke’s harmonic language the minor triad (i.e. E-flat minor), which can be reached through the M relation, is chosen because it gives certain voice leading advantages without doubling voices and, crucially, because it allows alternation of a major triad with a minor triad, in the same way as the P and SLIDE relations alternate major and minor.<sup>40</sup> The following table (Table 2.2) summarizes transformations that will be encountered in the following analysis. In the table, diamond-shaped notes indicate triadic roots, dotted ties indicate common tones.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 126-128.

Transformation	Description	Example
SLIDE or S	relates two triads, a major and a minor, that share a chordal third	
P or Parallel	relates a major and a minor triad with the same root	
M or 'minor third'	relates a major triad to a minor triad with a root three semitones (or a minor third) higher	
MP <sup>41</sup>	compound transformation of M followed by P, which relates two major triads where the root of the second triad is a minor third higher	

**Table 2.2 Neo-Riemannian transformations used in the analysis**

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<sup>41</sup> MP applies to two major triads but not to two minor triads, because M transformation, as defined by Segall, relates a major triad and a minor triad with the root a minor third higher. This inflexibility is supported by Schnittke's actual usage of this transformation, which always starts with a major triad but never with a minor triad.



## 2.3 Analysis of the motives of the introduction, the 12-tone theme, and the opening

### harmonic progression

Having established some essential terminology for Schnittke's harmonic language, it is now possible to consider in detail thematic elements of the Concerto and relate them to the model of theme and variations as well as the model of the sonata form. As is often the case in Schnittke's works, most of the thematic elements are introduced at the very beginning of the composition, including the just discussed harmonic relations. The four-measure opening motive in mm. 1-4, which can be called the "doorbell" motive, presents melodic symmetry that begins with a descending major third that is immediately echoed back with an ascending minor third in its first measure (Example 2.1).<sup>42</sup>

**Example 2.1.** The “doorbell” motive at the beginning, mm. 1-4, immediately repeated based on three different triads in mm. 5-8. The six triads form the “opening harmonic sequence.”

Together, the descending and ascending thirds make up a C minor triad. In a diatonic pitch space, this figure is inversionally symmetric. It is immediately repeated in m. 3, but instead

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<sup>42</sup> Ivashkin remarks, “Surprisingly, the initial motive of the Concerto (a minor third) is quite similar to the doorbell at Schnittke’s Vavilova Street apartment in Moscow where he lived in the 1970s and 1980s.” (Alexander Ivashkin, liner notes to *Schnittke: Requiem, Piano Concerto*, Russian State Symphony & Cappella, Valeri Polyansky; Igor Khudolei, piano. Chandos Records Ltd. Chan 9564, CD, 1997.)

of the C minor triad, the pitches come from the C-flat major triad. The succession of C minor – C-flat major introduces the SLIDE or common third relation and the beginning of a harmonic progression that will reappear at later points of the composition. The D minor six-four chord that appears in m. 4 and concludes the opening phrase extends the harmonic progression with the M relation between C-flat major and D minor. The phrase in the next four measures retains the same rhythm, register, and a descending line in the top voice as in the first phrase, but the pitches come from three new triads: D-flat major – E major – G minor. Because of this similarity, the second phrase feels like a sequential repetition of the first, only a tone lower. The second phrase retains the M relation between the last two triads, E major and G minor, but the relation between the first two, D-flat major and E major requires its own term, MP, which is the M transformation followed by the P or Parallel transformation. The triads at the end of the first phrase and beginning of the second, D minor and D-flat major, are also connected by the SLIDE relation (Example 2.1).

The Concerto contains some thematic elements that are clearly introduced in the beginning, like the “doorbell” motive, and others that are revealed gradually in different contexts. This in particular applies to the 12-tone theme and the B-A-C-H motive. The B-A-C-H motive primarily appears as part of the 12-tone theme, and its mark in the Concerto is less visible than in some of Schnittke’s other compositions, partly because of the dominance of the triadic harmonies in the Concerto that supersede the chromatic [0123] pc set. However, the B-A-C-H motive plays an important role as a unifying element, as it appears in different sections of the Concerto, as well as an identifying element of the 12-tone theme, which contains it. The 12-tone theme, on the other hand, plays a prominent role in the Concerto both as a melodic line and as embedded pitches in the harmonic progression that first partially appears in the “doorbell”

motive in Example 2.1. The appearance of the 12-tone theme as an embedded part of musical material in the Concerto becomes one of the important threads of development in the composition.

The harmonic progression of the six triads that appear in the “doorbell” motive in mm. 1-8 (here and after referred to as the opening harmonic sequence or progression) contains within its pitches both the first half of the 12-tone theme and the B-A-C-H motive embedded in it (Example 2.2). Example 2.2 displays these triads without regard to the original registers, but it preserves the inversions in which they originally appeared in mm. 1-8 in Example 2.1 and in which they appear in the piano part at R3 in Example 2.5 (which will be discussed later). The B-A-C-H motive and the first six pitches of the 12-tone theme embedded in the triads are indicated in diamond-shaped noteheads.

diamond-shaped notes trace the line of B-A-C-H motive and the first half of the 12-tone row

B-A-C-H motive in roots of triads  
(C-Cb-D-Db)

B-A-C-H (Eb-D-F-E)

first 6 pitches of the 12-tone row

**Example 2.2. B-A-C-H motive and the first half of the 12-tone row “hidden” between the tones of the triads in the “doorbell” motive, mm. 1-8.**

The B-A-C-H motive comes from the roots of the first four triads, and it is also embedded as the second through fifth pitches in each of the two halves of the 12-tone theme.

The 12-tone theme appears in its clearest, pure form at the end of the Concerto at R45 in piano solo (Example 2.3).

45

first half of the row      second half of the row

**Example 2.3. The 12-tone theme at the end, piano part, R45.**

The 12-tone row in this theme consists of two inversionally related halves (Example 2.4).

First and second halves are inversionally related under I1.  
Each half belongs to Sc6-8, which is invariant under I7.

[0,2,3,4,5,7] or Sc6-8      [6,8,9,10,11,1] or [0,2,3,4,5,7] in normal form

**Example 2.4. The 12-tone row consists of two inversionally related halves.**

The first six pitch classes of the row are [C - E-flat - D - F - E - G], a member of sc6-8 (023457), one of the first-order all-combinatorial hexachords.<sup>43</sup> The pc set is inversionally symmetrical and maps onto itself under I7. This set is paired with its inversive complement at I1 to form the last 6 pitch classes of the row, [D-flat - B-flat - B - G# - A - F#] (Example 2.4).

The “doorbell” motive later seamlessly blends into a texture that is generally associated with a background accompaniment to a melody. It becomes Alberti bass arpeggiation of the Andante section that starts at R3, which also retains the same triadic progression as in mm. 1-8 (Example 2.5). While at first glance, this section seems like a slow introduction, it fulfills the role of the first theme of the primary theme group of the sonata form in the Concerto.

<sup>43</sup> It is the second set of the six all-combinatorial hexachords. See, for instance, Figure 6-11 in Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, 3rd ed., 224.

**3 Andante**

SLIDE

24  $\text{C}$   $\text{Cb}$  M

Pno. *pp*

Vln. II.1 *ppp*

Vln. II.2 *ppp*

SLIDE

28  $\text{D}$   $\text{Db}$

Pno. *pp* *poco sf*

$\#8$  8

Ped.

Vln. II.1

Vln. II.2 *ppp*

Vln. II.3 *ppp*

Vln. II.4 *ppp*

**Example 2.5. Alberti bass arpeggiation figure at R3, first four triads, mm. 24-31.**

Although there is no melodic line in this passage that could be construed as a theme, both the opening harmonic progression and the arpeggiation of R3 appear later in the Concerto (for instance in Allegro at R13 and in the cadenza at R33), which justifies regarding it as a theme (“Alberti bass arpeggiation” theme). It is also necessary to differentiate this section from the “heroic” theme that is the second theme of the primary theme group that will come later at R5 and that will have all the trappings of a theme, with an unambiguous melodic line (Example 3.9). That theme will be considered in more detail later in this section.

The opening harmonic sequence in the measures 1-8 and in the Andante section at R3 can be regarded as the generative theme of the theme and variation model, which was discussed earlier as one of the formal templates in the Concerto. It shares this role with the 12-tone theme, with which it is closely linked. The appearance of the opening harmonic sequence and the 12-tone theme under different guises produces sections and episodes that can be compared to variations in the traditional theme and variations model: Andante at R3 (harmonic sequence), the “polyphonic episode” at R7 (12-tone theme), canon at R17 (harmonic sequence), Tempo di Valse at R23 – R25 (12-tone theme), climax at R29 (harmonic sequence and 12-tone theme as one), Coda at R40 (12-tone theme), followed by several more restatements of the 12-tone theme until the end. In parallel, the appearance in different sections of variations of the motives from the introduction, particularly the “doorbell” motive and the “six-note-ostinato” motive, generates a sense of variation as a general principle, even though it does not directly add to the main strand of the variations of the 12-tone theme and the related opening harmonic sequence.

The Andante section extends the sequence of the six triads in mm. 1-8 with other instances of SLIDE and P or Parallel relation, but only the first seven triads appear at later points, such as at R17, R29, and R30. Within the theme and variations model, this section can be

regarded as its first variation, which develops the opening harmonic sequence presented in the introduction (Example 2.6).

R3 (Andante after introduction) mm. 24-37. SLIDE (S) or 'common third', M, P or Parallel, and compound relations indicated by arrows. Common mediant tones shown as diamond-shaped notes. Common tones also connected by ties.

common part with progressions at R17, R29, R30

first 6 triads, common part with mm. 1-8

**Example 2.6. The harmonic sequence of the “Alberti bass arpeggiation” theme (R3, Andante, mm. 24-37).<sup>44</sup>**

The opening harmonic progression from mm. 1-8 and R3 re-appears at R17 as a canon, which makes the relations between triads appear both sequentially and as a simultaneity. The canon consists of a two-measure phrase that is repeated four times from different transposition points. The top voice, which carries the roots of the triads in first inversion, reveals the B-A-C-H motive as C – C-flat – D – D-flat (Example 2.7).

<sup>44</sup> PSP (Parallel – SLIDE – Parallel), PSR (Parallel – SLIDE – Relative), and PS (Parallel – SLIDE) are compound transformations that can be used to connect some of the triads in this example. However, they do not appear in later development, unlike the sequence of the first six triads, and therefore are not included with the analysis of the four main transformations (Parallel, SLIDE, M, and MP) that were discussed earlier.

**17**  
div. in 3  
sul pont.

**SLIDE**

**Cb**

Vln. I

**ff** 3 3 3 3

Vln. II

div. in 3  
sul pont. **Cb** 3 3 3 3

**ff** 3 3 3 3

Vle

tutti div. in 3  
sul pont. **ff** 3 3 3 3

**SLIDE**

Vc.

tutti div. in 3  
sul pont. **ff** 3 3 3 3

**MP** 3 3 3 3

**Cb**

div.  
pizz. **fff**

**SLIDE**

**Cb**

**fff**

**M**

**SLIDE**

Vln. I

**Cb** 3 3 3 3

**d** 3 3 3 3

Vln. II

**d** 3 3 3 3

**SLIDE**

**Db** 3 3 3 3

**MP** 3 3 3 3

Vle

**Db** 3 3 3 3

**E** 3 3 3 3

**M** 3 3 3 3

Vc.

**E** 3 3 3 3

**SLIDE**

**G** 3 3 3 3

**fff**



**Example 2.7. The opening harmonic progression at R17 with SLIDE and M relations presented sequentially and as a simultaneity in a canon.**

The “verticalization” of the opening harmonic progression in Example 2.7, where consecutive triads are sustained canonically, resulting in new simultaneities, is not unique to this section, but appears throughout the Concerto as one of the development methods of harmonic texture. This technique expands the influence of the opening harmonic progression beyond the major and minor triads into pitch class sets that result from their vertical combinations. This topic will be explored in more detail after the overview of appearances of the opening harmonic progression and the 12-tone theme in the Concerto.

The opening harmonic progression of the six triads in mm. 1-8 and at R3 is extended to twelve at R29. The additional six triads are essentially a retrograde sequence of the second through sixth triads, with the seventh G-flat major triad introduced through SLIDE relation and serving as a pivot. The tones of the 12-tone theme that were embedded within the pitches of the triads, as shown in Example 2.2, are placed in the top voice, so that the progression at R29 is simultaneously a statement of the 12-tone theme and an extended restatement of the chord progression from the opening measures, mm. 1-8 (Example 2.8).

R29 mm. 269-283 (the 12-tone theme). SLIDE or common third relations and M relations indicated by arrows. Common third tones shown as diamond-shaped notes. Common tones also connected by ties.

The musical notation displays the 12-tone theme at R29, mm. 269-283. It is divided into two parts: 'First half of the row' and 'Second half of the row'. The notes are: c, Cb, d, Db, E, g, Gb, g, E, Db, d, B/Cb. Harmonic relations are indicated by arrows: 'S' (Slide) for c to Cb, d to Db, and g to Gb; 'M' (Major third) for Cb to d, Db to E, and g to B/Cb; 'MP' (Minor third) for E to g. Common third tones (Cb, d, E, g, B/Cb) are marked with diamond shapes. Common tones (c, Db, d, g) are connected by ties. A double-headed arrow at the bottom indicates a 'retrograde relation' between the first and second halves of the row.

**Example 2.8. Harmonic sequence (expanded opening harmonic progression) of the 12-tone theme (R29, mm. 269-283).**

The harmonized 12-tone theme at R29 is presented in chordal texture by the full orchestra, with the piano solo creating a rhythmically contrasting background with repetitions of an angular one-measure phrase. The chordal progression has a distinct rhythmic profile that makes it sound like a fully formed theme, rather than a homogeneous progression (Example 2.9, rhythmic analysis in Example 3.24). This section serves as a local climax that leads to a fuller catastrophic climax at triple forte at the midpoint of the Concerto at R30, followed by a General Pause and the cadenza. Unlike the local climax at R29, the climax at R30 does not carry the 12-tone theme, with its particular rhythm, but only the harmonic progression in gradual acceleration. The climax at R30 will be discussed in Example 4.1 in the section *Expansion and convergence*.

The musical score for Example 2.9 shows the first three triads of the harmonized 12-tone theme at R29. The score is written for a full orchestra, including Piano (Pf. s.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vle 1.2.3.4), Violoncello I (Vc. 1), Violoncello II (Vc. 2.3.4), and Contrabass (Cb.). The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and slides. The string parts are marked with 'div. in 3' and 'arco'. The score is divided into three measures, each containing a triad of notes. The first measure is marked 'div. in 3' and 'SLIDE'. The second measure is marked 'M' and 'C♭'. The third measure is marked 'D'.

**Example 2.9. First three triads of the harmonized 12-tone theme at R29, full score.**

The 12-tone theme also appears in polyphonic contexts, rather than as a chordal progression. A first such appearance occurs early in the exposition at R7 (Example 2.10). Somewhat similarly to the R3 and mm. 1-8, where the theme could be said to be present in a hidden state among the tones of the triads in the progression, the theme at R7 appears like an anonymous line in a counterpoint. It is disguised in a dance-like triple meter and polyphonic texture that seems like an imitation of a style from the baroque era, which makes it difficult to recognize its connection to the other appearances of the 12-tone theme, particularly at R29 and at R45.

7 **Tempo I**

Pf. s.

Vln. I

Vln. II 1.2

Vln. II 3.4

Vln. II 5.6

Vle 1.2

Vle 3.4

Vc.

Cb.

[0123] set (BACH set), D#-F#

[0123] set (BACH set), A-C

[012345] set, A-D

[012345] set, E-A

1st half of the row

2nd half of the row

sustained notes

mf

ff

2nd half of the row

1st half of the row

**Example 2.10. Polyphonic episode based on the 12-tone theme, R7, mm. 63-66.**

In this episode, the row is presented linearly in the Violin I part and also in the Cello part, in which the second half of the row is followed by the first half. Together, the two halves of the row in the Violin I and Cello combine to create an aggregate of the entire row that appears twice, first as the first half in the Violin I plus the second half in the Cello, then as the second half in the Violin I plus the first half in the Cello (Example 2.10).

Schnittke uses a 12-tone row as well as techniques designed to achieve chromatic completion in texture as a way of invoking a modernist, highly dissonant musical world. This

style complements a modernist yet consonant musical world that results from his triadic usage that is based on the SLIDE, M, and Parallel triadic relations. The 12-tone row in the Concerto can be viewed as a bridge between the consonant atonal triadic and the dissonant polyphonic worlds, as it appears in both contexts. While atonal triadic material is prevalent in the Concerto, the presence of the polyphonic episode at R7 adds an important element of stylistic contrast that extends the range of stylistic expression in the composition.

Among the techniques Schnittke uses to create this contrasting, highly dissonant musical world through a maximally chromatic texture, two can be highlighted, as both appear in the polyphonic episode at R7: sustaining notes to create a vertical aggregate and chromatic saturation that segments the entire instrumental range of pitches into non-overlapping intervallic ranges that are then chromatically filled by linear movement.

The sustaining notes technique can be seen in the first measures of Example 2.10, where vertical dotted lines indicate pitches in the melodic line of Violin I sustained in Violin II. This example foretells the one that comes at the very end of the Concerto at R45, where each note of the 12-tone theme is sustained, resulting in an aggregate of all 12 pitches (Example 2.11). In that case, however, with the dynamic of triple piano in the orchestra, the sustained aggregate serves the role of a static background.

45 sustaining notes of the piano part in the orchestra

Pno. s. *p* *sempre* (Cello)

Vln. II 1

Vln. II 2 *ppp*

Vln. II 3 *ppp*

Vln. II 4 *ppp*

Vln. II 5 *ppp*

Vln. II 6 *ppp*

Cb. s. *ppp*

**Example 2.11. Sustaining notes of the piano part in the orchestra in the 12-tone theme at R45.**

The chromatic saturation technique can be seen in Example 2.10 in the fourth measure after R7, where the Violin II 1.2 engage all chromatic pitches in the range from A to D while the Viola 1.2 fill the range from E to A, in both cases a [012345] pitch class set. Together with the D# in the Cello, this completes the entire set of the chromatic scale. Separately, the [0123] pitch class set that appears in both halves of the 12-tone theme is also an example of chromatic saturation in the range of a minor third, which makes the technique part of the 12-tone theme.

After the R7 episode, the 12-tone theme appears as a melodic line in the section marked Tempo di Valse at R23. The theme is stylistically transformed into a rough-sounding waltz,

marked *poco pesante*. It is carried by the piano solo in the low register in the left hand, while the right hand provides an accompaniment based on the “doorbell” motive, thus combining two of the main thematic elements of the Concerto (Example 2.12).

**23** **Tempo di Valse**

the "doorbell" motive

*f poco pesante*  
12-tone theme, first half of the row

8vb

12-tone theme, second half of the row

**Example 2.12.** The twelve-tone theme at R23 in the bass line in the left hand, with the accompaniment in the right hand based on the "doorbell" motive.

The theme is then transformed yet again into a Romantic Viennese-sounding waltz at R25 (Example 2.13).

**25** cumulative pc set in piano part: [0134679t] (octatonic set)  
pitch class sets with [07] and [037] setting the boundaries of possible triads

Pno.

[01367] [0369](dim.7) [0167]

[07] [07] [07]

[01367] [01367]

12-tone row, 2nd half ([2,4,5,6,7,9], [023457]), emphasis on [A-F#-F-D] or [0347]

Vln. I

Vln. II

unis. *p cresc.* doubling in thirds and sixths between VlnI and VlnII

*p cresc.* "passing tone"

Vc.

unis. *p cresc.*

Cb.

tutti "passing tone"

*p cresc.* 12-tone row, 1st half ([8,10,11,0,1,3],[023457])



Example 2.13. The 12-tone theme at R25 (part of Tempo di Valse at R23) with two halves of the row presented simultaneously.

The section at R25 picks up from the appearance at R7 the same principle of presenting the two halves of the 12-tone theme simultaneously. However, unlike the more dissonant texture of R7, which emphasized the [0123] pitch class set, the texture of R25 emphasizes thirds and sixths through doubling at these intervals between Violin I and Violin II (indicated by a dotted line in the first three measures in Example 2.13). Similar to the R7 episode, the R25 section divides the pitch class space into segments that complement each other. Since almost all the

pitch class sets in the example contain a perfect fifth or [07], they can be thought of as collections that fill in that interval.

Each half of the 12-tone theme includes as a subset the pitch class set [0347], which results from a combination of major and minor triads of the same key. This pitch class set can be viewed as the center of the larger [023457] set of each half of the row because of the way it is presented at R25. In the first three measures in Example 2.13, the first and second violins carry a line of long notes of a descending trichord (indicated by rectangles around the notes), with the second violins doubling the first violins by a minor third. This line carries a strong implication of a D major/minor triad, unfolded through the descending stepwise progression [F# - A] – [E - G] – [D - F], with the middle [E - G] playing the role of a passing sonority. This accentuates the beginning and ending pitches [D – F - F# - A] or [0347] pc set within the overall [023457] pc set. It is worth noting, in comparison, that this emphasis on a triad-based pc set is not present in the polyphonic context at R7 discussed earlier, which reflects a more dissonant texture at R7 versus a more consonant triadic texture at R25.

Both the orchestra and the piano part at R25 independently partition the pitch class set space in a way that leads to chromatic saturation. In the first three measures, the orchestra has the violins carrying the first half of the 12-tone theme, which fills the [D-A] range, while the cellos and double basses the second half, which fills the [G#-D#] range. The two groups then switch in the next three measures, with violins taking on the second half and the cellos and double basses the first half. The piano part separately alternates segments of [01367] and [0167] pc sets based on different triads between the left and right hand that combine into a [0134679t] pc set of 8 pitch classes (which is an octatonic scale).

There is a kind of trajectory in the way the opening harmonic progression and the 12-tone theme evolve and interrelate. The harmonic progression is first introduced separately from the 12-tone theme, in a mix of arpeggiation and chords in mm. 1-8 and in the arpeggiation at R3, with little indication that this arpeggiation may “hide” the 12-tone theme. The 12-tone theme similarly appears in its entirety for the first time with no hint of its relation to the harmonic progression in the polyphonic context at R7. The harmonic progression at R17 is presented as chords rather than arpeggiation, but its top voice accentuates the B-A-C-H motive rather than the 12-tone theme, which remains “hidden” in the middle voices. The 12-tone theme again appears as a melodic line at R25, as it did in R7, but this time in a much more triadic and harmonic context. The progression and the theme are finally joined at R29, in the middle of the composition, with the 12-tone theme in the top voice of the chord progression, thus explicitly showing it as part of the chordal tones. The progression therefore becomes a kind of harmonization of the 12-tone theme.

The evolution of the 12-tone theme continues at the end of the Concerto, where it appears as a melodic line in a polyphonic context at the beginning of the coda at R40 (Example 2.14). This appearance brings into focus the B-A-C-H motive embedded in the 12-tone theme, because it effectively starts the melodic line in the coda, as the first note of the row is a held note from the previous section. The B-A-C-H motive therefore acts here as a marker of the 12-tone theme.

**40** **Tempo I**

12-tone row theme from 'A' (pitches 1 to 5)

1 pulto (1 Executore)

B-A-C-H motive

tutti div.

p

pp

pp

pp

12-tone row theme continuation from Vle. (pitches 6 to 12)

tutti unis.

(second half of the row)

mp

mf

mp

p

unis.

mp

mf

unis.

mp

mf

unis.

mp

mf

tutti unis.

mp

mf

mp

p

**Example 2.14.** After the “dissolution,” the 12-tone theme at the beginning of Coda (R40).

The 12-tone theme is then repeated two more times in different textural arrangements, as one would expect to see in theme and variations. These variations culminate with the final appearance of the 12-tone theme as a simple tune at R45, free from chordal or polyphonic texture (Example 2.3, Example 2.11). Stripped to its most basic form, the theme has the narrative effect of reaching a final, “true” statement.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> This fits into Chigaryova’s description of a “hidden plot” in some of Schnittke’s compositions, which was discussed in the Introduction chapter.

In several other of Schnittke's compositions, a theme introduced at the beginning is stylistically transformed at the end from dissonant and modernist to one that is more tonal, rhythmically regular, and referencing a style of the past. While this transformation is not exactly the same as the one observed in the Concerto, where it is presented as a simplification, it is similar in the creation of a narrative arc that endows musical development with extra-musical meaning. For example, in Schnittke's later composition, Trio for Violin, Viola, and Cello, written in 1985, the main theme of the first movement appears at the very end of the two-movement composition in its most tonal, rhythmically regular form, as if cleansing it from the modernist transformations that it undergoes in the beginning and throughout the composition. An even more dramatic example is the second movement, Allegretto, of the Concerto Grosso No. 4 / Symphony No. 5, which is built on a distorted, modernist development of an unfinished sketch of the second movement of Mahler's Piano Quartet, which Mahler wrote at 16. At the end of the movement, Mahler's original music appears as a kind of revelation mixed with nostalgia and produces the same effect of an unfinished ending as Mahler's sketch itself.<sup>46</sup> In the Concerto, both the 12-tone theme and the opening harmonic progression serve in the role of a protagonist that appears in harmonic and polyphonic contexts. Their stylistic transformation allows Schnittke to create a sense of progression within a composition and a particular kind of ambiguity of the ending that does not resolve the preceding drama, but at the same time achieves something of a stylistic closure.

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<sup>46</sup> Schnittke and Ivashkin, *Besedy s Alfredom Shnitke* [Conversations with Alfred Schnittke], 191.

## 2.4 Simultaneities resulting from the triadic relations of the opening harmonic progression.

The opening harmonic progression that appears throughout the Concerto can be viewed as a source of harmonic texture when its triadic relations appear as simultaneities. In particular, the common third or SLIDE relation, the P (Parallel), and M relations, when presented as simultaneities, result in symmetrical collections that are used throughout the Concerto: [0347] as a major and minor triad of the same key or in a Parallel relation (e.g. C minor and C major), [01478] as a major and minor triad in a common third or SLIDE relation (e.g. C major and C# minor), and [013479] as a major and minor triad in an M relation (e.g. A major and C minor) (Example 2.15).

<p>P (Parallel) (0347) set class, I7 symmetry for [0347] pc set (inversion: C → G, G → C, E → E-flat, E-flat → E)</p>	<p>S (SLIDE) (01478) sc, I8 symmetry for [01478] pc set (inversion: E → E, C → G#, G# → C, G → C#, C# → G)</p>
---	--

<p>M (013479) sc, I4 symmetry for [013479] pc set (inversion: A → G, G → A C → E-flat, E-flat → C, C# → E, E → C#)</p>	<p>(023457) sc, I7 symmetry for [023457] pc set (inversion: C → G, G → C, E → E-flat, E-flat → E, D → F, F → D)</p>
--	---

**Example 2.15. Pitch class sets resulting from simultaneities of triads related by P, SLIDE, and M, and [023457] pc set.**

All these pc sets are inversionally symmetrical. For instance, the (01478) set class, or sc5-22, maps onto itself under inversion (the [01478] pc set is symmetric under I8), where the C#-minor triad would map onto the C major triad and vice versa, and with the shared third tone,

E, mapping onto itself. The [013479] pc set, which results from a simultaneity of A major and C minor triads, related by M, is symmetric under I4. The pitch class set of each half of the 12-tone row, [023457], actually contains the [0347] set as its subset, which is formed as a combination of two triads in a Parallel relation. The [023457] pc set is symmetric under I7, as is the [0347] set. The [0347] set is emphasized in a melodic context in the appearance of the 12-tone theme at R25, as described in the earlier analysis of Example 2.13. As a simultaneity, it appears in the theme at R5 and will be discussed later in this section as Example 2.19.

Such simultaneities can be found throughout the Concerto as part of the harmonic texture. They are formed in a variety of ways, such as by combining individual triads and as part of a counterpoint of voices carrying whole segments of the harmonic progression, as was encountered in the canon at R17, Example 2.7.

The example at R17 can be compared to an earlier example at R8, which also turns a linear progression of triads at R3 into a succession of simultaneities (Example 2.16). In this example, similar to the R17, the progression is presented in a canon, resulting in simultaneities of each triad with the next triad in the progression. However, unlike the example at R17, the slow arpeggiation over each triad and the transparency of only two voices engaged in a canon allows for a greater focus on each simultaneity. The texture is characterized by a saturation of SLIDE and M relations, where the same relation appears both linearly and vertically, producing the effect that feels both tonal and atonal.

**Example 2.16. Arpeggiation on C minor and C-flat major triads (SLIDE) and C-flat major and d minor triads (M) simultaneously at R8.**

To take one such simultaneity, at the start of R8 there is a combination of two triads in SLIDE relation, with the right hand carrying an arpeggiation on the C minor triad in eighth note triplets while the right hand has arpeggiation on the C-flat major triad in eighth notes. The same SLIDE relation then appears between the C minor and C-flat major triads in the right hand, resulting in a [01478] pc set. It is followed by a simultaneity of C-flat major and D minor triads in M relation, resulting in a [013479] pc set (Example 2.16).

The introduction presents several additional motives that play a thematic role in the composition. These motives similarly contain instances of simultaneities of triads in SLIDE and M relations.

At R1 appears the “six-note-ostinato” motive, which contains M and SLIDE relations as a simultaneity (Example 2.17).



9 1

g minor                      b minor                      [0257]

*mp*                      *mp*                      *mp*

M                      SLIDE                      M

E major                      B-flat major                      c# minor

8<sup>vb</sup>

**Example 2.17. The “six-note-ostinato” motive, R1, mm. 9-11.**

In m. 9, the simultaneity consists of E major and G minor triads, connected by the M relation, and in m. 10 it is formed from B-flat major and B minor triads, connected by the SLIDE relation. The M relation also appears linearly as a connection between the B-flat major and C# minor triads in mm. 10-11 in the left hand.

The “six-note-ostinato” motive has a recognizable rhythmic figure of five equally spaced notes followed by a much longer sixth note that has the same duration as the preceding five notes combined. The rhetorical effect of this figure can be described as hesitation, encountering an obstacle that prevents one from moving forward. It provides an element of tension between the forward momentum and the hesitation (Example 2.17; rhythmic analysis in Example 3.4).

The asymmetry of this figure later becomes embedded as part of the “heroic” theme (Example 3.9). The six-note ostinato also becomes one of the recurring elements of the Allegro section at R16 (Example 3.15).

The “six-note-ostinato” motive leads to a motive that may be called “rhetorical question,” which contains the rhythmic figure of slowing down and which projects a similar sense of hesitation and unwillingness to move forward. The ascending minor second at the end of the

motive also creates harmonic suspense that can be interpreted as a rhetorical question (Example 2.18; rhythmic analysis in Example 3.5).

20 [0369] [01236789] [0257] [01369]  
 mp 3 3 3 3 suspension [0369]  
 [0257] [0258]

**Example 2.18.** The “rhetorical question” motive, seven measures after R2, mm. 20-22.

The “rhetorical question” motive contains a number of inversionally symmetrical pitch class sets: [0369], [0257], and a combination of two [0257] sets, [01236789]. These sets extend the collection of other inversionally symmetrical sets already encountered, which are formed by SLIDE-related and M-related triads as simultaneities. The [0257] set also appeared earlier as part of the “six-note-ostinato” motive (Example 2.17).

## 2.5 Themes of the Concerto in relation to the sonata form template

While the introduction contains the seeds of most thematic elements, such as the discussed “doorbell” motive and the “six-note-ostinato” motive, other themes are introduced and developed as part of the sonata form template. There is, however, a certain degree of contradiction between the character of these themes and the roles they play within the implied sonata form. The primary theme group in the exposition is represented by two themes, the Andante section at R3, which was discussed earlier (Example 2.5), and the “heroic” theme that appears later at R5 (Example 2.19). The theme at R3, which is referred here as the “Alberti bass

arpeggiation” theme, carries important generative elements in the form of the opening harmonic progression and the Alberti bass figure. However, it does not draw attention to itself as is expected from a primary theme of the sonata form, as it does not contain a melodic line. As mentioned earlier, it could alternatively be considered as a slow introduction, which would make the “proper” exposition start with R5. In contrast, the theme at R5, which can be called the “heroic” theme, has all the elements of a theme: a homophonic texture with a melody and an accompaniment, an active or “heroic” character, and an identifiable harmonic center of C minor, although it is distorted by the inclusion of E-natural from the C major triad (Example 2.19).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Chigaryova mentions, without specifying the source, that Schnittke referred to the theme at R5 as the “fake” or “deceptive” theme [“lozhnaya tema”]. (Kholopova and Chigareva, *Al’fred Shnitke*, 141).

5

Pno. *ff* 8<sup>va</sup> [0347] 8<sup>va</sup> [0124578] (piano and orch.)

Vln. I *f* six-note-ostinato motive [01478] (SLIDE)

Vln. II *f*

Vle *f*

Vc. *f*

Cb. *f*

**Example 2.19.** The “heroic” theme at R5, based on the [0347] pc set and the six-note-ostinato motive.

However, its role in the Concerto is limited, as it makes a relatively brief appearance in the recapitulation at R36 to mark the return of the C minor center (Example 2.20). In fact, it undergoes a notable transformation in the recapitulation, as the flashy melody prominently carried by the piano solo in the exposition is buried in the low register of the orchestra, while the six-note-ostinato motive that served the role of background accompaniment in the exposition now becomes the foreground melody. The piano solo part now serves as a background and resembles the figuration of the “Alberti bass arpeggiation” theme, except that instead of single notes at pianissimo dynamic, as at R3, there are now heavy cluster chords fortissimo (Example 2.20).

(Moderato)

36  variation of Alberti bass from R3



Pno. *ff*

\* Ped.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vle

Vc.

Cb.

tutti arco div.

pizz. *ff* arco

tutti arco div.

pizz. *ff*

melody from piano solo at R5

(div. in 3) "six-note-ostinato" motive

*f*

(div. in 3)

*f*

(div. in 3)

*f*

3

3

3

**Example 2.20. “Alberti bass arpeggiation” theme at R36 with the melody from the piano part in its earlier appearance R5 now in the low register and a variation of the Alberti bass from R3 in the piano solo part.**

The secondary theme group of the sonata form in the Concerto is similarly split between two themes that fulfill different aspects of the sonata form template. The “lyrical” theme that appears at R9 provides a perfect contrast to the “heroic” theme of the primary group. This theme has a lyrical melody, 6/8 meter, and starts with G that was supposed to be the point of arrival of the previous measure but is immediately re-characterized as suspension to F#. It then proceeds in

a series of suspensions to triadic harmonies that form an atonal progression, which includes already encountered SLIDE and M relations among others (Example 2.21).

lyrical melody at Rehearsal no. 9, piano part,  
hovering on top of a complex background texture in orchestra (not shown).

The musical score for piano part, rehearsal no. 9, is presented in two systems. The first system (mm. 84-88) shows a melodic line in the treble staff and a complex texture in the bass staff. The melodic line is annotated with 'SLIDE' from Bb to Bb, 'M' from Bb to C#, '(V-I)' from C# to F#, and 'M' from F# to A. The bass staff is annotated with 'Pno.' and 'mp'. The second system (mm. 89-92) shows a melodic line in the treble staff and a complex texture in the bass staff. The melodic line is annotated with 'SLIDE' from A to Ab, 'MP' from Ab to Cb, and 'M' from Cb to Cb. The bass staff is annotated with 'Pno.' and 'mp'.

**Example 2.21. The “lyrical” theme at R9 with atonal triadic harmonization, piano part, mm. 84-92.**

However, the “lyrical theme” at R9 does not return in the recapitulation, although the theme’s elements that can be associated with lyrical or song-like character resurface in the development section in Tempo di Valse at R25, which was examined earlier in relation to the 12-tone theme (Example 2.13). These elements include the stepwise descent of the melodic line, the 3/4 meter, and the consonance-based, seemingly triadic yet atonal texture. In this way, the “lyrical theme” disappears, but becomes reincarnated in an episode that fulfills a similar function

At the same time, there is another theme, at R6, that functions in the role of opposition to the “heroic” theme both in the exposition and in the recapitulation (Example 2.22). It can be called a “choral” or “chant” theme, with melodic roots that can be traced to Russian Znamenny chant. Its contrast is therefore on a qualitatively different plane, an opposition of stylistic roots rather than contrast of musical elements, such as key, meter, tempo, or dynamic, although that contrast is also present. The theme is based in C major, while the “heroic” theme is primarily in C minor (with E-natural added to the sonority), and its meter is a mixture of 3/4, 5/4, and 4/4, although there is distinct triple quality that sometimes grows to 5/4 and that is also mirrored by the theme’s main motive, a trichord C – D – E.

6 **Maestoso**

[9,0,1,3,4]  
[01347]

57

Pno.

[0134]

*ff*

6 **Maestoso**

VI V VI V I (diatonic C major)

[C-D-E] trichord

Orch.

*f*

61

The “chant” theme contains two contrasting elements: the orchestra part, which is in diatonic C major; and the piano part, which contains a dissonant cluster [C – D-flat – E-flat – E] ([0134]) that fills the interval between C and E or the major third of the C major triad. Together with the A minor chord in the orchestra part, this cluster forms the [01347] pitch class set. This set contains as a subset the [0347] set, which results from a simultaneity of C minor and C major triads and which appeared prominently as part of the “heroic” theme at R5 (Example 2.20). The [0347] set also connects both the “chant” and the “heroic” themes to the 12-tone theme, in which both halves of the row contain the [023457] pc set and the [0347] set as its subset (Example 2.17).

The “chant” theme and the “heroic” theme mirror each other in the degree to which a major or minor triad dominates the [0347] pc set that is present in each theme. The “heroic” theme at R5 has a prevalent C minor mode based on the ostinato on the C minor triad in the orchestra part, with the E-natural that appears in the piano solo part as part of the [0347] cluster, creating a dissonance as well as a shadow of the C major triad (Example 2.19). In the “chant” theme at R6, that relationship of C minor and C major is reversed, as the C major is the prevalent mode in the orchestra and the E-flat appears only in the piano part, as part of the chord cluster along with additional dissonant notes, providing a kind of stand-off between the implied C minor key in the piano and the C major in the orchestra (Example 2.22). In the recapitulation, this idea is further developed into a confrontation between a dissonant, modernist piano part and a consonant, diatonic orchestra part (Example 2.23).



38 dissonant piano part (all chromatic pitches except 'G' and 'G#')

Pno. *fff*

38 diatonic orchestra part (C major)

Vln. I 1.2

Vln. I 3.4

Vln. I 5.6

Vln. II 1.2

Vln. II 3.4

Vln. II 5.6

Vla 1

Vla 2

Vla 3.4

Vc. 1

Vc. 2

Vc. 3

Vc. 4

Cb. 1

Cb. 2

The image displays a musical score for a piano and orchestra. The piano part (Pno.) is marked with a forte (fff) dynamic and features a dissonant, chromatic texture. The orchestra part (diatonic orchestra part in C major) includes staves for Violins I and II, Violas, Cellos, and Double Basses. The score is divided into two main sections by a rehearsal mark (38). The first section shows the piano part playing a dense, chromatic texture while the orchestra is silent. The second section shows the piano part continuing its dissonant texture while the orchestra plays a diatonic, harmonic texture in C major. The piano part is marked with a forte (fff) dynamic, and the orchestra part is marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The score is written in 3/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

**Example 2.23. Dissonant piano solo part and diatonic orchestra part confrontation in recapitulation at R38.**

The “heroic” theme at R5 and the “chant” theme at R6 are therefore both contrasting, based on the diatonic harmony of the orchestra part of the “chant” theme and the flexible meter in the “chant” theme, and similar, in that they both feature prominently the simultaneity of C minor and C major triads, which sounds both tonal and atonal.

Both the “chant” theme at R6 and the “lyrical” theme at R9 therefore fulfill the function of thematic opposition assigned to the secondary theme group in different ways. The “lyrical” theme at R9 provides genre contrast and the difference in tonal center, as G/F# versus C, and meter, as triple versus duple. The “chant” theme at R6 functions as an opposing pole based on pitch organization, in the form of diatonic versus chromatic and atonal triadic progressions, and meter characteristics, as changeable meter versus constant meter. There is an element of complementarity between the relative simplicity of diatonic C major and the relative complexity of flexible meter in the “chant” theme, which mirrors a similar situation of the relative simplicity of regular meter of the “Alberti bass arpeggiation” theme that brings into focus the relative complexity of the opening harmonic progression in that theme.

### **Chapter 3: Rhythmic acceleration and symmetry/asymmetry**

Rhythmic asymmetry and acceleration provide two of the main sources of imbalance and dynamism in the Concerto. While inversional symmetry in pitch organization and symmetry of thematic return and formal design can be viewed as sources of stability, the presence of rhythmic asymmetries and acceleration provides both a degree of instability and a unifying principle by creating nested structures on different durational levels. The resulting asymmetries built from symmetries, which may be called “balanced asymmetry” or “disturbed symmetry,” reflect the composer’s predisposition to avoid “geometric squareness” while maintaining a degree of periodicity.

There appears to be no hierarchical correspondence between rhythmic asymmetry and the tonal centers discussed in the previous section, as they perform different functions in the composition. The tonal centers work to reinforce the structure of the sonata form and create a sense of order, while rhythmic asymmetry works to create forward momentum that challenges that stability.

In this discussion, the notion of asymmetry is broadened to include acceleration on a sectional level. While these notions are distinct, they are closely linked, because both have the effect of creating a sense of intensification.

A connection between asymmetry and acceleration on the sectional level particularly applies to the case when a section that contains acceleration takes a tri-partite shape of a starting point, acceleration in the middle, and then a partial return to the initial tempo. The middle

acceleration represents an asymmetry relative to the initial state, and the ending represents a symmetric balancing of that asymmetry.

Acceleration can also be linked to asymmetry by focusing on the idea of imbalance and a “slope” or unevenness, which is present in an asymmetry. It is easy to imagine that this “slope” creates a forward momentum that results in acceleration. These concepts share the same rhetorical impact, which can be seen in terms of musical intensity. The opposition of symmetry/asymmetry as well as evenness/acceleration also connects with the opposition of “steady state” or a state of balance versus “falling out of balance.” The process of acceleration is comparable to a process that may start from a state of balance and later lead to a state of growth and imbalance, sometimes to the point of losing control and becoming chaotic.

From the point of view of asymmetry as a unifying force, which comes from projecting the same asymmetric pattern on different durational levels, the most significant are instances where the “local” asymmetry on the level of individual durations and phrases contains acceleration of the main pulse. The reason for their importance is that this acceleration on the local level can be connected with acceleration on the sectional level, which is found in numerous examples in the Concerto. Before discussing this further, it is necessary to first consider different ways in which asymmetry arises on the local level.

One type of local rhythmic asymmetry can be called static asymmetry and defined as a pairing of a short and a long duration, which often goes against the beat and has the effect of syncopation. This asymmetry does not imply a change in tempo (i.e. acceleration or deceleration), but rather creates unevenness, a ripple on the rhythmic surface.

A second type is dynamic asymmetry, which can be defined as a transformation of a previously introduced asymmetry that results in acceleration or deceleration. While static

asymmetry arises from a relation between notes with different durations, dynamic asymmetry is experienced as a comparison of one static asymmetry to its subsequent appearance in a modified form, such as in augmentation or diminution. For example, a melodic contour with static asymmetry 1-1-4 in eighth notes may be repeated as  $(2/3 - 2/3 - (4+2/3))$ , which involves a diminution of the shorter notes and a lengthening of the last note, resulting in a more acute asymmetry.<sup>48</sup> In this case, a comparison of the two static asymmetries creates a sense of intensification, and the diminution of rhythmic values in the second asymmetry results in acceleration of the rhythmic pulse.

In this dissertation, augmentation and diminution that is used in dynamic asymmetry is referred to as “scaling.” It extends augmentation and diminution traditionally used in thematic transformation to apply to a rhythmic contour that can result not only from pitches of a melody, but from any musical events that can be recognized as forming a particular pattern over the course of a section. Also unlike traditional augmentation and diminution of a theme, “scaling” is considered independently from a specific theme, which allows one to compare asymmetric shapes that are related by augmentation or diminution but that arise in different melodic contexts.

The discussion in the next two sections will concentrate on the asymmetry on the phrase level. It will start with examples of dynamic asymmetry as well as “scaling.” It will then turn to examples of static asymmetry, in particular the five-grouping of  $(2+3)+(3+2)$ .

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<sup>48</sup> The rhythmic values in this example are taken from the 12-tone theme that appears at R45 and is discussed in Example 3.25.

### 3.1 Phrase-level asymmetry: dynamic asymmetry and “scaling”

The introduction of the Concerto presents two examples of dynamic tri-partite phrase-level asymmetry, in mm. 1-4 and mm. 9-13. The two examples are themselves closely related, as the phrase in mm. 9-13 can be considered a diminution of mm. 1-4. The opening phrase in mm. 1-4 already appeared in the earlier discussion as the “doorbell” motive and was noted for its thematic importance to the whole composition, as an example of inversional pitch symmetry, and as the beginning of the opening harmonic progression.

The phrase in mm. 1-2 contains a static rhythmic asymmetry of 2 versus 6 in quarter notes. While the second note is notated as a half note, it actually lasts three times longer than the first, because it is followed by a four-quarter rest. This initial “dormant” asymmetry serves as the beginning part of the tri-partite shape of mm. 1-4 (Example 3.1).

**Moderato**

*p*

*Red.*

shortened from 6 in m. 1 to 3 \*

"complication" of 2 versus 3 instead of 2 versus 6

last part of asymmetry, 6, partially balances (2-3)

asymmetry of 2 versus 3 is congruent to 5 versus 6

**Example 3.1. The “doorbell” motive with annotated asymmetries, mm. 1-4.**

In the second phrase, mm. 3-4, the same motive is repeated, but the second note is actually shortened, from 6 quarter notes to 3 quarter notes, and the rhythmic imbalance between

the two notes is felt more acutely, because now they are closer in duration, a half note followed by a dotted half note. This creates the middle “complication” or a local climax of the tri-partite shape (Example 3.1).

The phrase ends with a D minor chord in m. 4 with the duration of 6 quarter notes, which matches the duration of the second unit of the beginning asymmetry (2-6) in mm. 1-2. However, this does not completely balance the tension created by the asymmetry in m. 3, which has a combined duration of five quarter notes (2-3) and nearly equals the six quarter notes of m. 4. Instead, the sense of closure is achieved on the harmonic level, as a sudden introduction of a chord balances the solo melodic line of mm. 1-3 (Example 3.2).

**Moderato**

Annotations in the diagram:

- "stable" balancing of 2 and 6
- same duration of 6 quarter notes, but different levels of tension
- "uneasy" balancing of 5, or (2+3) grouping, with 6

**Example 3.2. Balancing of asymmetries in mm. 1-4.**

The appearance of the duration of six quarter notes as part of the initial asymmetry, (2-6), and as the last unit in the (2+3)-6 asymmetry, provides an additional element of both balancing and tension, as the latter six quarter note duration carries greater forward impulse because of the unresolved tension of the middle (2-3) asymmetry (Example 3.2).

The analysis of asymmetries in mm. 1-4 is complicated by the fact that some of the asymmetries are nested, creating a layered structure. While the initial asymmetry of mm. 1-2, (2-6), stands by itself, the asymmetry of m. 3, (2-3) is nested within a larger asymmetry of mm. 3-4,  $((2+3) - 6)$  or (5-6). Moreover, the two asymmetries, (2-3) and (5-6), are congruent in shape, which creates the effect of the same asymmetry appearing on different durational levels (Example 3.1, Example 3.3).

Moderato

*p*

*p*

syncopation and asymmetry 2-6

syncopation and asymmetry 2-3

syncopation and asymmetry (2+3)-6

2 6

2 3

5 6

**Example 3.3. Nested asymmetries in mm. 1-4.**

In the preceding analysis, the phrase of mm. 1-4 is viewed as a tri-partite shape, with m. 3 acting as the middle part and m. 4 as the partial return. However, there are reasons to also view it as a binary shape, with mm. 1-2 as the clear beginning part and mm. 3-4 as the ending part. This view of a binary shape contradicts the earlier interpretation of the phrase as having the beginning part, the middle “complication,” and the end that partially balances the middle “complication.” The view as a tri-partite shape is suggested by the pitch domain, as the motive in mm. 1-2 is repeated in m. 3, creating a clear second part, and the appearance of the chord in m. 4 makes it a



separate third part that opposes the previous melodic line. The view of the phrase as a binary shape is guided by the rhythmic domain, where the (2-3) grouping of m. 3 is joined with the long chord in m. 4 to create a larger asymmetric grouping ((2+3) – 6) or (5-6). The rhythmic domain, however, also allows one to view the phrase as a tri-partite shape if the (2-3) asymmetry is counted twice, as the middle part and also as the beginning of the last, third part, which is realized only with the arrival of the last chord.

There is a broader tension between the pitch and rhythmic domains in relation to symmetry/asymmetry in mm. 1-4, which goes beyond the question of tri-partite or binary shape. The inversional contour symmetry of the motive in mm. 1-2 is counteracted by the asymmetry of rhythmic durations. The repetition of the same motive in m. 3 as in mm. 1-2 creates the basis for comparison of rhythmic asymmetry in both instances and to derive from it the sense of intensification, as the second asymmetry is felt more acutely. The change in the pitch domain from a single melodic line to a chord in m. 4 gives more weight to the last unit without altering its rhythmic duration and therefore balances it against the asymmetries of the beginning part (Example 3.2). This suggests that the sense of symmetry and asymmetry in this example is constantly in flux, constructed through a complex interaction between rhythm and pitch domains and through balancing between different structures on the rhythmic domain.

The “six-note-ostinato” motive in mm. 9-13 has a similar asymmetric shape as the one in mm. 1-4, but it appears as a diminution of mm. 1-4, with the main rhythmic unit now an eighth note instead of a quarter note. The “complication” that was expressed in quarter notes in m. 3 as the asymmetry of (2-3) appears in m. 11 as the asymmetry of (3-4) in eighth notes. The asymmetry of larger durations, (2-6) in quarter notes in mm. 1-2, becomes comparable to the asymmetry of (3-7) in eighth notes in mm. 9-10 (Example 3.4).

9

mp

8<sup>th</sup>

11

mp

mf

f

\* 8<sup>th</sup>

"complication" in the middle

pulse of a dotted quarter note

pulse of a quarter note

pulse of a quarter note, syncopation 1-1-2 and intensification relative to m. 11

pulse of a half note, attempt to restore balance

3 7 3 7

3 4 1 1 2 3 1 6

3 4 2 2 4 6

**Example 3.4.** The “six-note-ostinato” motive from the introduction with asymmetries annotated (mm. 9-13). In m. 12, the fact that the first ‘2’ is not equivalent to the second ‘2’ is noted in the graph as ‘2’ placed in a square. Here and in other places, a number placed in a square is meant to illustrate that the duration is a rhythmic grouping, rather than a single note.

The “complication” of m. 11 becomes more intense in m. 12, where the pulse quickens to a quarter note (two eighth notes), compared to the dotted quarter note (three eighth notes) of mm. 9-10, and in addition there appears a syncopation (1-1-2) in eighth notes. The change in pulse occurs within m. 11, where the first three eighth notes continue the previous pulse of a dotted quarter note while the latter four eighth notes start to articulate the pulse of a quarter note. At the

same time, the lengthening of the ostinato motive from three eighth notes to four eighth notes creates a sense of anticipation, delaying the resolution that comes in the next measure.

In m. 12, the new quarter note pulse receives “confirmation” in the 2/4 measure. However, the seeming symmetry of the 2-2 grouping in m. 12 is undermined by the fact that the first beat is articulated as two eighth notes, while the second comes as one quarter note, which gives it more weight and creates an asymmetry.

In the next measure, m. 13, the rhythmic pattern of (3-1-6) or (4-6) can be considered an augmentation of the (1-1-2) or (2-2) pattern of m. 12. This creates the effect of slowing down of the main pulse and a feeling of release, as the quarter note pulse articulated by the (0.5-0.5-1) asymmetry in quarter notes is replaced with the half note pulse of the (1-1.5) asymmetry in half notes. The change is also reflected in the meter signature, from 2/4 to 5/4. The asymmetry of (4-6) in m. 13 echoes the asymmetry of (3-7) in mm. 9-10, which gives a symmetric closure to the tri-partite asymmetry, with mm. 11-12 as the middle “complication.” Unlike the asymmetries of mm. 1-4, where the middle and last parts are tightly connected, the phrase of mm. 9-13 has a clearer division between the middle part of mm. 11-12 and the decelerating, “balancing” part of m. 13.

The deceleration that takes place at the end of the mm. 9-13 phrase can be described as a unidirectional asymmetry. The same shape of decelerating asymmetry is then repeated three times in mm. 14-23, each time slightly varying proportions of the asymmetry. Each phrase has the length of three measures and decelerates from a quarter-note pulse to a half-note pulse (Example 3.5).

3 waves of deceleration from a quarter note pulse to a half note

lengthening from 3 to 4 quarter note ostinato

lengthening of the last note from 4 to 10 quarter notes, implying additional deceleration

**Example 3.5. The “rhetorical question” motive from the introduction with different asymmetric relations in each restatement (mm. 14-23).**

In m. 14, a quarter-note pulse is articulated by eighth note triplets with 4/4 meter, then m. 15 carries the same pulse but with quarter notes, which in m. 16 start to form half-note groupings and the implied pulse of a half note with 3/2 meter. The three-measure phrase in mm. 17-19 follows the same trajectory, but now the ostinato of three quarter notes in m. 14 is expanded into four notes and 4/4 meter in m. 17, creating a sense of deceleration and anticipation. In mm. 20-23, the same ostinato measure of quarter notes shrinks back to three quarter notes in the right hand and 3/4 meter in m. 21, but it is now presented in counterpoint with a second ostinato in the left hand in dotted quarter notes. The counterpoint of two pulses, one in quarter notes and another in dotted quarter notes, bridges the transition to the half-note pulse of mm. 22-23. The final note is also lengthened from 4 quarter notes to 10, which caps the series of decelerations

and takes the pulse into unmeasured territory, beyond the half note pulse of the 3/2 measures at the end of the previous phrases (Example 3.5).

An example of unidirectional asymmetry that is accelerating, rather than decelerating, as in mm. 14-23, can be found as part of the 12-tone theme at R45. In this case, a short motive at six measures after R45 is sequentially repeated a tone lower in the next measure in diminution that changes the (1-1-4) asymmetry into  $(2/3 - 2/3 - (4 + 2/3))$ . This repetition of the same motive in diminution is an example of “scaling,” where the same asymmetric shape appears in different rhythmic values. (Example 3.6).

Motives inside the boxes demonstrate the concept of "scaling" and intensification of asymmetries: the second motive is a diminished and "sharper" version of the first. The numbers are durations in eighth notes.

**45**

"six-note-ostinato" motive with the extension of the last note

(8)

[3] [5] [9]

**Example 3.6. “Scaling” of a motive in the 12-tone theme in its appearance at R45.**

The 12-tone theme at R45 ends with deceleration based on a progressively longer last note of the “six-note-ostinato” motive, which echoes the deceleration at the end of the introduction (Example 3.6, Example 3.5). This similarity of the endings gives the statement at R45 a greater sense of closure, like the composition coming full circle.

The appearance of “scaling” of the same or a similar asymmetric shape on different durational levels is not limited to the above example of the 12-tone theme. In the already

discussed measures of the introduction, the motive in m. 12 with the asymmetry 1-1-2 in eighth notes appears in transposition and augmentation in m. 16 (and since that phrase is repeated, at the end of each of the three phrases of Example 3.5), with the 1-1-4 asymmetry now in quarter notes (Example 3.7).

1-1-2 pattern in eighth notes

same pitch contour as in m. 12,  
1-1-4 pattern in quarter notes,  
"scaling" of the pattern in m. 12

**Example 3.7. "Scaling" of the motive in m. 12 in m. 16 (as well as in m. 19 and m. 22).**

An even more direct juxtaposition of the same motive scaled at different durations appears in the "chant" theme at R6 in the orchestra part, first in dotted quarter notes and then in quarter notes (Example 3.8).

**6** **Maestoso**

Orch.

*f*

"scaling" of the trichord motive  
from dotted quarter notes to  
quarter notes

**Example 3.8. “Scaling” of the trichord motive in the orchestra part of the “chant” theme, R6.**

Unlike the “scaling” in Example 3.6, which leads to intensification as part of dynamic asymmetry, the “scaling” in Example 3.8 participates in symmetric/asymmetric structures by creating a fractal-like unifying effect of the same element appearing at different durational levels.

The tri-partite shape of the initial state, acceleration, and a partial return to the starting point, which was observed in mm. 1-4 and in mm. 9-13, also applies to the whole introduction of mm. 1-23. The main pulse starts with a quarter note in mm. 1-8, accelerates to a dotted eighth note and an eighth note in mm. 9-13 and then returns to a quarter note in mm. 14-23. The same shape of asymmetry on the phrase level therefore translates into the shape of asymmetry on the level of the entire introduction. Compared to other sections in the Concerto, however, the acceleration within the introduction is mild and almost completely resolved by the progressively

longer decelerations at the end of the section. This fits with the expository role of the introduction, leaving the drama to the next sections.



### **3.2 Phrase-level asymmetry: static asymmetry of 2 versus 3 in 5-grouping and polymeter**

Unlike dynamic asymmetry, which arises from a change in previously introduced asymmetry, static asymmetry creates an uneven rhythmic surface by itself as a contraposition of different durations that participate in an asymmetric grouping. In the Concerto, both the “heroic” theme at R5 and the “chant” theme at R6 contain asymmetries of 2 and 3 groups.

The 5-grouping asymmetry in the “heroic” theme at R5 (introduced earlier in Example 2.19) provides an example of “balanced asymmetry” or a symmetry made up from asymmetric parts. In this asymmetry, the (2+3) group is mirrored by the (3+2) group to create a larger (2+3)+(3+2) group (Example 3.9).

46 **5** syncopation on C 8<sup>th</sup>

Pno.

[ (3+2), emphasis on the '3' of the group and the 6th pulse ]

(eighth-note placement within a 4/4 measure)

1 3 6 8 1

P.

2 3 3 2 4 2 3 3 6

accented note in orchestra subdivides 6 quarter notes into (2+4)

**5**

Orch.

O.

5 5 6 6 5 3

The image displays a musical score for measures 46-49. The piano part (Pno.) features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth notes and a syncopation on C. The percussion part (P.) includes a series of rhythmic triangles with numbers 2, 3, 3, 2, 4, 2, 3, 3, 6, indicating pulse groupings. The orchestra part (Orch.) shows a melodic line with a box labeled '5' and a note that subdivides 6 quarter notes into (2+4). The strings part (O.) includes a series of rhythmic triangles with numbers 5, 5, 6, 6, 5, 3, indicating pulse groupings. The score is written in 4/4 time and includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests.

**Example 3.9. The “heroic” theme at R5, mm. 46-49. Symmetry/asymmetry of groups of five eighth notes or 5-grouping.**

The orchestra repeats an ostinato figure of six notes (five eighth notes followed by a long note whose duration is equal to the five notes combined), while the piano introduces the “heroic” theme, whose motive (mm. 46-47) has a rhythmic structure that can be described as (2+3) +

((2+1)+2) or, simplified, (2+3) + (3+2) grouping, where one unit is an eighth note. It is notable that in this symmetry all four components are not equal to each other. The 2 and 3 of the first group are made of single duration notes, the 3 of the second group is made of a compound rhythm (2+1) and therefore is not exactly equal to the 3 of the first group, and the 2 of the second group is actually formed by the intrusion of the accented note from the orchestra (m. 47), which implicitly subdivides the long dotted half note into 2+4. When the phrase is repeated in mm. 48-49, there is a single accent at the beginning of the m. 49 in the orchestra part and therefore that subdivision does not happen. The grouping in mm. 48-49 becomes (2+3) + (3+6), with the long note of 6 eighth notes in m. 49 creating a more final symmetric closure than the one in m. 47, which was subdivided into (2+4) (Example 3.9).

The boundary between (2+3) and (3+2) groupings in m. 46 is marked by a syncopation on C in the top voice on the weak sixth eighth-note pulse of the 8 eighth-note pulses of the 4/4 measure, which starts the (3+2) group. This interaction between asymmetric groupings of 3 and 2 and the 4/4 meter enhances the effect of rhythmic asymmetry, which arguably would have been less prominent in a 5/8 meter that could hide the syncopation (Example 3.9).

The same rhythmic grouping, (2+3) + (3+2), appears in the context of a 5/4 meter in m. 52 (Example 3.10), which provides a chance to compare it to m. 46 (Example 3.9). In this case, the quarter note that used to mark the sixth eighth-note pulse is subdivided into two eighth notes, which removes the syncopation effect to some extent. In the absence of strong syncopation in the piano part, the emphasis on the 3 of the second group is created by syncopation in the orchestra part by a tied note on the sixth eighth-note pulse (Example 3.10).



motive is shaped closer to a triple meter when that emphasis on the second 3 is removed, resulting in the division of  $(2+3+3) + (2+2+2)$  in mm. 50-51 (Example 3.11).

The musical score for Example 3.11, measures 50-51, is presented in four systems: Piano (Pno.), Piano (P.), Orchestra (Orch.), and Oboe (O.).

- Piano (Pno.):** Measures 50 and 51. Measure 50 is in 4/4 time, and measure 51 is in 3/4 time. The piano part features a melodic line with a descending motion in measure 50 and an ascending motion in measure 51. A dashed line labeled  $8^{vb}$  indicates a dynamic change.
- Piano (P.):** Measures 50 and 51. Measure 50 is in 4/4 time, and measure 51 is in 3/4 time. The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of 2, 3, 3 in measure 50 and 2, 2, 2 in measure 51. A box labeled 2 is present in measure 51.
- Orchestra (Orch.):** Measures 50 and 51. Measure 50 is in 4/4 time, and measure 51 is in 3/4 time. The orchestra part features a rhythmic pattern of 2, 3, 3 in measure 50 and 2, 2, 2 in measure 51.
- Oboe (O.):** Measures 50 and 51. Measure 50 is in 4/4 time, and measure 51 is in 3/4 time. The oboe part features a rhythmic pattern of 2, 3, 3 in measure 50 and 2, 2, 2 in measure 51.

**Example 3.11. Emphasis on the second 3 removed, producing the sense of a triple meter (mm. 50-51).**

The groupings in this example are heavily influenced by the melodic line in the piano part, so that a descending motion creates one group of  $(2+3+3)$  and an ascending motion the second group  $(2+2+2)$ . Similarly, a descent by a major 6 in m. 52 (Example 3.10) is mirrored by an ascent by a major 6, which creates inversional symmetry in pitch and predisposes the symmetric rhythmic grouping of  $(2+3) + (3+2)$ .

In contrast to the linear juxtaposition of 2 and 3 groups in the 5-grouping in the “heroic” theme, the “chant” theme at R6 (introduced earlier in Example 2.22 and further discussed in Example 3.8) provides an example of their vertical combination, creating a kind of polymeter of

dotted quarter notes versus quarter notes. In this theme, two lines are carried by multiple voices, where each line implies its own tempo, a slower one with the pulse of a dotted quarter note and a faster one with the pulse of a quarter note. Here is a simplified representation of the two main lines of the orchestral polyphonic texture (Example 3.12):

The musical notation for Example 3.12 consists of two staves. The upper staff begins with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. It contains a box labeled '6' with the text 'pulse of a dotted quarter note' next to it. The first measure has two dotted quarter notes, with a bracket below them labeled '2-grouping'. The second measure has a dotted half note. The third measure has two dotted quarter notes. The fourth measure has a dotted half note. The fifth measure has two dotted quarter notes. The sixth measure has a dotted half note. The lower staff begins with a bass clef and a 3/4 time signature. The first measure is a whole rest. The second measure has two quarter notes, with a bracket below them labeled '3-grouping'. The third measure is a whole rest. The fourth measure has two quarter notes. The fifth measure has two quarter notes. The sixth measure has two quarter notes. The time signature changes to 4/4 in the seventh measure, which has two quarter notes. The eighth measure has two quarter notes. The ninth measure has two quarter notes. The tenth measure has two quarter notes. The eleventh measure has two quarter notes. The twelfth measure has two quarter notes. The thirteenth measure has two quarter notes. The fourteenth measure has two quarter notes. The fifteenth measure has two quarter notes. The sixteenth measure has two quarter notes. The seventeenth measure has two quarter notes. The eighteenth measure has two quarter notes. The nineteenth measure has two quarter notes. The twentieth measure has two quarter notes. The twenty-first measure has two quarter notes. The twenty-second measure has two quarter notes. The twenty-third measure has two quarter notes. The twenty-fourth measure has two quarter notes. The twenty-fifth measure has two quarter notes. The twenty-sixth measure has two quarter notes. The twenty-seventh measure has two quarter notes. The twenty-eighth measure has two quarter notes. The twenty-ninth measure has two quarter notes. The thirtieth measure has two quarter notes. The thirty-first measure has two quarter notes. The thirty-second measure has two quarter notes. The thirty-third measure has two quarter notes. The thirty-fourth measure has two quarter notes. The thirty-fifth measure has two quarter notes. The thirty-sixth measure has two quarter notes. The thirty-seventh measure has two quarter notes. The thirty-eighth measure has two quarter notes. The thirty-ninth measure has two quarter notes. The fortieth measure has two quarter notes. The forty-first measure has two quarter notes. The forty-second measure has two quarter notes. The forty-third measure has two quarter notes. The forty-fourth measure has two quarter notes. The forty-fifth measure has two quarter notes. The forty-sixth measure has two quarter notes. The forty-seventh measure has two quarter notes. The forty-eighth measure has two quarter notes. The forty-ninth measure has two quarter notes. The fiftieth measure has two quarter notes. The fifty-first measure has two quarter notes. The fifty-second measure has two quarter notes. The fifty-third measure has two quarter notes. The fifty-fourth measure has two quarter notes. The fifty-fifth measure has two quarter notes. The fifty-sixth measure has two quarter notes. The fifty-seventh measure has two quarter notes. The fifty-eighth measure has two quarter notes. The fifty-ninth measure has two quarter notes. The sixtieth measure has two quarter notes. The sixty-first measure has two quarter notes. The sixty-second measure has two quarter notes. The sixty-third measure has two quarter notes. The sixty-fourth measure has two quarter notes. The sixty-fifth measure has two quarter notes. The sixty-sixth measure has two quarter notes. The sixty-seventh measure has two quarter notes. The sixty-eighth measure has two quarter notes. The sixty-ninth measure has two quarter notes. The seventieth measure has two quarter notes. The seventy-first measure has two quarter notes. The seventy-second measure has two quarter notes. The seventy-third measure has two quarter notes. The seventy-fourth measure has two quarter notes. The seventy-fifth measure has two quarter notes. The seventy-sixth measure has two quarter notes. The seventy-seventh measure has two quarter notes. The seventy-eighth measure has two quarter notes. The seventy-ninth measure has two quarter notes. The eightieth measure has two quarter notes. The eighty-first measure has two quarter notes. The eighty-second measure has two quarter notes. The eighty-third measure has two quarter notes. The eighty-fourth measure has two quarter notes. The eighty-fifth measure has two quarter notes. The eighty-sixth measure has two quarter notes. The eighty-seventh measure has two quarter notes. The eighty-eighth measure has two quarter notes. The eighty-ninth measure has two quarter notes. The ninetieth measure has two quarter notes. The ninety-first measure has two quarter notes. The ninety-second measure has two quarter notes. The ninety-third measure has two quarter notes. The ninety-fourth measure has two quarter notes. The ninety-fifth measure has two quarter notes. The ninety-sixth measure has two quarter notes. The ninety-seventh measure has two quarter notes. The ninety-eighth measure has two quarter notes. The ninety-ninth measure has two quarter notes. The hundredth measure has two quarter notes.

**Example 3.12. The “chant” theme with simplified texture, contraposition of 3 versus 2 (R6, mm. 57-62).**

The same fluidity of musical time that is expressed as lines of faster and slower tempo also finds an expression in a dialogue of different meters, triple and duple. The phrase at R6 starts with a duple meter presented by dotted quarter note values (here in the upper staff first measure), then counterbalanced by a triple meter presented by quarter note values (lower staff second measure), which implies a faster tempo. Then the two are cross-pollinated into a motive of two dotted quarter notes and a quarter note that suggests a triple meter (here in the upper staff in the fourth measure) and a motive of quarter notes that suggests a duple meter (here in the lower staff in the fourth measure), until finally expanding into a 5/4 measure that naturally combines both in a 3+3+2+2 group (Example 3.12).

The mixture of triple and duple groupings breaks the constraints of a regular set meter and creates a sense of metric fluidity. In this example, this fluidity also manifests in an instance of expansion, where a measure “grows” from 3/4 to 4/4 to 5/4 (mm. 57-62) (Example 2.22). The

polyphonic episode at R7 that follows the “chant” theme, however, contracts the expansion to the initial  $\frac{3}{4}$  meter (Example 2.10).

### **3.3 Rhythmic acceleration and asymmetry on the sectional level**

The instances of acceleration on the sectional level can be divided into unidirectional, where the acceleration leads into another section that sustains the new quick pulse, and acceleration with a pullback, which is similar to the tri-partite shape found on the phrase level, as it contains the starting state, the middle acceleration, and the pullback that partially brings it back to the starting state. The examples of unidirectional acceleration include the section of R11 – R12 and the cadenza at R31 – R35, both of which fill the role of a transition, pushing the development forward to the next, more intense development signpost. The sections with an arch shape include the R13 – R16 section, the R17 section, and the larger R11 – R18, which includes them as well as other sub-sections. Unlike the transition-type sections, these arch-shape sections allow the musical development to slow down and linger in its own space.



### 3.4 Unidirectional acceleration in R11 – R12

The R11 – R12 section starts with the mark of *a tempo* and plays the role of a short run-up to the fast duple meter zone that starts at R13. The pulse within the section is initially carried by appearances of appoggiatura notes in the Violin I part, played at triple fortissimo (Example 3.13). Within each 9/8 measure, the distances between the attacks create a (3-6) asymmetry in eighth notes in the triple meter. At the same time, they create a higher level triple periodicity of a three-measure phrase in mm. 111-113 and in mm. 114-116, and this periodicity mirrors in augmentation the (3-6) asymmetry and triple periodicity within each individual measure. At R12, the pulse accelerates from 3 eighth notes to 1.5 eighth notes and there appears an ostinato motive that carries a polymeter of an eighth notes duple within the 12/8 meter. The ostinato motive consists of three groups of two notes that imply triple periodicity. The rhythmic grouping of 6 notes with the last note the longest that appears twice at R12 in mm. 117-118 is a version of the “six-note-ostinato” motive. In m. 119, the pulse accelerates further to an eighth note, and the duple meter of 12/8 changes back to 9/8 and triple periodicity, as it was in the beginning at R11.

110 **11** *a tempo* *fff* *8va* 3 6 [9] 3 6 3 6

(3-6) asymmetry in triple meter

triple periodicity (3-measure grouping)

115 *8va* 3 6 [9] **12** rhythmic asymmetry of "six-note-ostinato" motive  
 1.5 1.5 1.5 1.5 1.5 4.5 1.5 1.5 1.5 1.5 1.5 4.5

triple periodicity (3 groups)

duple meter

119 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 *accelerando* **13** *Allegro*

triple periodicity

**Example 3.13. “Appoggiatura attacks” episode, triple forte grace note attacks in the violins (R11).**

This gradual acceleration of the pulse of the ostinato leads to a three-measure transition in the piano solo, which contains further rhythmic accelerando that prepares for the start of the Allegro section at a faster tempo.

### 3.5 Acceleration and partial pullback in R13 – R16

The Allegro section, from R13 to R16, contains several layers of rhythmic intensification that propel the development forward, but at the same time this is masked by deceptive constancy of tempo and 4/4 meter that are set at the beginning and remain unchanged. The overall intensification is achieved by several periodically occurring musical elements that are gradually introduced throughout the section and then remain through to the end, which creates a sense of increased density of musical events. In addition to the sense of progression, these elements also create their own higher level rhythmic surface that counteracts the 4/4 meter, most notably the triple meter periodicity that emerges from one of the elements that has the length of 6 quarter notes.

The first periodically occurring element is a motive consisting of three half notes (the “three-half-notes” motive), which first appears in the first violins in mm. 134-136 (11 measures after R13) and later gets passed between first and second violins from m. 170 (7 measures after R16) to the end of the section (Example 3.14, Example 3.15).

152 15

*ff* *mf* *ff*

*ff* *ff*

["three-half-notes" motive]

["attack" or short motive in D-b.]

**Example 3.14. "Attack" in double-bass and the “three-half-notes” motive (R15, mm. 152-157).**

The second element is a short “attack” figure in double-bass that first appears in m. 152 at R15 (Example 3.14, Example 3.15). It appears with the periodicity of six quarter notes, at first intermittently, disappearing when the three-half-notes motive comes in within R15, and then continuously, from R16 till the end of the section.

The third element is a six-note-ostinato figure, which first appears in m. 167 (four measures after R16) and which also ends the section when it appears for the third time (Example 3.15).

124 **13**

128 *f*

134 *f* *ff*

["three-half-notes" motive in violins]

138 **14**

144 *f* *ff*

152 **15**

*ff* *mf* *ff* *ff*

[three-half-notes" motive]

["attack" or short motive in D-b.]

159 **16**

*mf* *ff* *f* *ff*

166

*mf* *f* *mf*

[six-note-ostinato]

170

*mp* *mf* *mp* *mp*



**Example 3.15. Extended analysis of the R13 – R16 section.**

The six-quarter-note periodicity of the six-note-ostinato figure, which has an affinity with triple meter, contrasts with the duple meter of the Alberti bass arpeggio that dominates the texture in this section.

Schnittke also adds five-eighth-note periodicity in the arpeggio entrances in the strings in the canon at R16, which diffuses the accents of the duple meter and increases the rhythmic complexity of the texture (Example 3.16). This additional periodicity does not duplicate other layers, but adds to the unevenness of the rhythmic surface as a kind of vertical polymeter. Even if this irregularity is difficult to perceive in the overall texture, it is illustrative of Schnittke's attention to detail in avoiding "geometric squareness," which was his preference, as discussed in the introduction. The added rhythmic complexity can be seen as amplifying the contrasts in the succession of triads in the canonic subject, which follows the harmonic transformations of the opening harmonic progression, which was discussed in Chapter 2.

16

The musical score for Example 3.16 is a dense canon with 5-eighth-note periodicity in texture. The score is written for the following instruments:

- Pf. s.** (Piano, solo): The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with 5-eighth-note periodicity, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Vln. I** (Violin I): The first violin part includes a section marked "div. in 3" (divided in 3) and a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Vln. II** (Violin II): The second violin part includes a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Vle 1** (Viola I): The first viola part includes a section marked "sul ponticello" (sul ponticello) and a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Vle 2** (Viola II): The second viola part includes a section marked "sul ponticello" (sul ponticello) and a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Vle 3** (Viola III): The third viola part includes a section marked "sul ponticello" (sul ponticello) and a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Vle 4** (Viola IV): The fourth viola part includes a section marked "sul ponticello" (sul ponticello) and a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Vc. 1** (Viola I): The first viola part includes a section marked "sul ponticello" (sul ponticello) and a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Vc. 2** (Viola II): The second viola part includes a section marked "sul ponticello" (sul ponticello) and a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Vc. 3** (Viola III): The third viola part includes a section marked "sul ponticello" (sul ponticello) and a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Vc. 4** (Viola IV): The fourth viola part includes a section marked "sul ponticello" (sul ponticello) and a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Cb.** (Contrabass): The contrabass part includes a section marked "unis. sul pont." (unison, sul ponticello) and a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic.

Example 3.16. Dense canon with 5-eighth-note periodicity in texture (R16, m. 164).



### **3.5.1 Acceleration of the higher-level rhythm of phrase structure in R13 – R16**

Each of the described elements has its own local periodicity that impacts the rhythmical surface of the section, which particularly applies to the six-quarter-note grouping within the 4/4 meter and the five-grouping at R16. However, more important is the interaction of these elements and their gradual introduction within the section, which creates a higher-level rhythmic layer and contributes to a sense of progression (Example 3.17).

The term “higher-level rhythm” here refers to rhythm that results from an interaction of grouping structures that result from repeating musical events. It seeks to describe a similar phenomenon to “phrase rhythm,” but avoids implications of metrical hierarchy (e.g. every four or eight measures) or any considerations commonly used in the analysis of tonal music to identify phrase boundaries, such as cadences and voice leading.

**Example 3.17. Higher-level rhythm abstraction (R13 – R16). The top voice indicates rhythm of entrances of the three-half-notes motive, the bottom voice of the six-note ostinato. The middle voice reflects structure based on appearance/disappearance of a high trill in Violin I in R13 – R14 and on entrances of a short motive in double-bass in R15 – R16. One unit equals a whole note.**

The first segment of this higher-level progression, at R13, has the structure of 4+6+4, with a unit corresponding to one measure of 4/4 or four quarter notes. The segment contains tripart symmetry, with the middle six measures unified by a held trill on E, which acts as a background for the harmonic progression in other voices (Example 3.15, Example 3.17).

The second segment, at R14, repeats the same structure, 4+6+4, with the trill now moved to F# (Example 3.15, Example 3.17).

The third segment, at R15, establishes both shorter phrases and makes the higher level rhythm regular, with the structure of 3+3+3+3. This structure is formed by the interchange between a three-measure phrase, which is based on two appearances of the short “attack” motive

in double-bass, and a three-measure phrase that is based on two appearances of the “three-half-notes” motive (Example 3.15, Example 3.17).

The final segment, at R16, contains elements of both consolidation and fragmentation of the structure of R15. Its first 6 measures are based on the double-bass motive, similar to the beginning of R15, but in a departure, the three-half-notes motive, which previously had a fragmenting role, is absent. The last 6 measures of R16 combine both the double-bass motive and the three-half-notes motive simultaneously. At the same time, the appearance of the six-notes ostinato motive in the 4th, 7th, and 12th measure of this 12-measure segment fragments the whole structure into 1.5 measure segments and injects asymmetry and irregularity in previously symmetric and regular structure. The rhythm of R16 can be described as  $3+(1.5+1.5) + (1.5+1.5+1.5) + 1.5$ , with the brackets reflecting the appearances of the six-note ostinato (Example 3.15, Example 3.17).

The gradual increase in frequency of musical events in R13 – R16 creates a sense of progression similar to intensification or acceleration without an actual change in tempo or rhythmic pulse (Example 3.17).

The Allegro section defies the trend of increased dynamics that usually accompanies rhythmic acceleration and instead has a prolonged diminuendo in R16, which creates a partial pullback in intensity. The main purpose of this diminuendo is to prepare a surprise entrance at fortissimo of the next section. The appearance of the ostinato motive in R16 both creates fragmentation in the higher level rhythm and marks the progression of the diminuendo, with the first entrance at mezzo-forte, lowering dynamics from the previous forte, then mezzo-piano, and finally at the very end at pianissimo.

### 3.6 Acceleration and pullback in R17 – R18 and in R13 – R18

The next section, at R17, can be characterized as a “complication” or an increase in intensity, compared to the previous relative stability of the Allegro section in R13 – R16. This section was already presented as an appearance of the thematic harmonic progression in Example 2.7. In the context of acceleration and pullback after the R13 – R16 section, it presents both a jump in dynamics, starting at fortissimo after the preceding pianissimo, and also a faster pulse, emphasizing each quarter note with a new canonical entrance and further subdividing each quarter note as an eighth note triplet (Example 3.18). At the same time, the higher-level rhythm, marked by attacks in double-bass, becomes slower and more regular, appearing every eight quarter notes (or every two measures), which prepares for the eventual slowing down in the “chant” theme that appears next at R18. It is notable, as an example of a larger-scale pattern appearing on a smaller scale, that this short section of R17 functions in the role of intensification within a larger section and has itself a tri-partite shape of relative balance – intensification – pullback. The intensification part inside the R17 section comes in the fifth measure after R17, where the distance of canonic entrances of the second and third voice in a canon (Violin II and Viola) changes from a quarter note to two eighth note triplets or  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a quarter note. After this, it returns to a quarter note in the last two measures (Example 3.18).

17 div. in 3 sul pont.

Vln. I *ff* 3 3 3 3

Vln. II *ff* div. in 3 sul pont. 3 3 3 3

Vle tutti div. in 3 sul pont. *ff* 3 3 3 3

Vc. tutti div. in 3 sul pont. *ff* 3 3 3 3

Cb. div. pizz. *fff*

1 quarter note distance in entrances

1 quarter note entrances

1 quarter note entrances

*fff*

sudden acceleration in distance of entrances

Vln. I 3 3 3 3

Vln. II 3 3 3 3

Vle 2/3 quarter note 3 3 3 3

Vc. 2/3 quarter note 3 3 3 3

Cb. 1 quarter note *fff*

The musical score for Example 3.18 is a canon for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The Violin I part begins with a triplet of eighth notes. The Violin II part has a 'return to 1 quarter note entrances' annotation. The Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass parts also feature triplet markings. The Contrabass part has a 'fff' dynamic marking.

**Example 3.18. Acceleration in the distance of entrances in a canon at R17. A change from 1 quarter note to 2/3 quarter note at 5 measures after R17.**

The next section, at R18, brings back the “chant” theme that first appeared at R6. Like the section at R17, the “chant” theme is presented in a canonic texture, but instead of the descending entrances, they are now ascending. More significantly, instead of entrances of every quarter note, they are now every half note, therefore signaling further deceleration, which partially brings back an earlier sense of relative stability and balance (Example 3.19). The stability here comes both from the slower rate of unfolding and from the constancy of the diatonic C major, which contrasts the harmonic changes of the opening harmonic progression in R17.

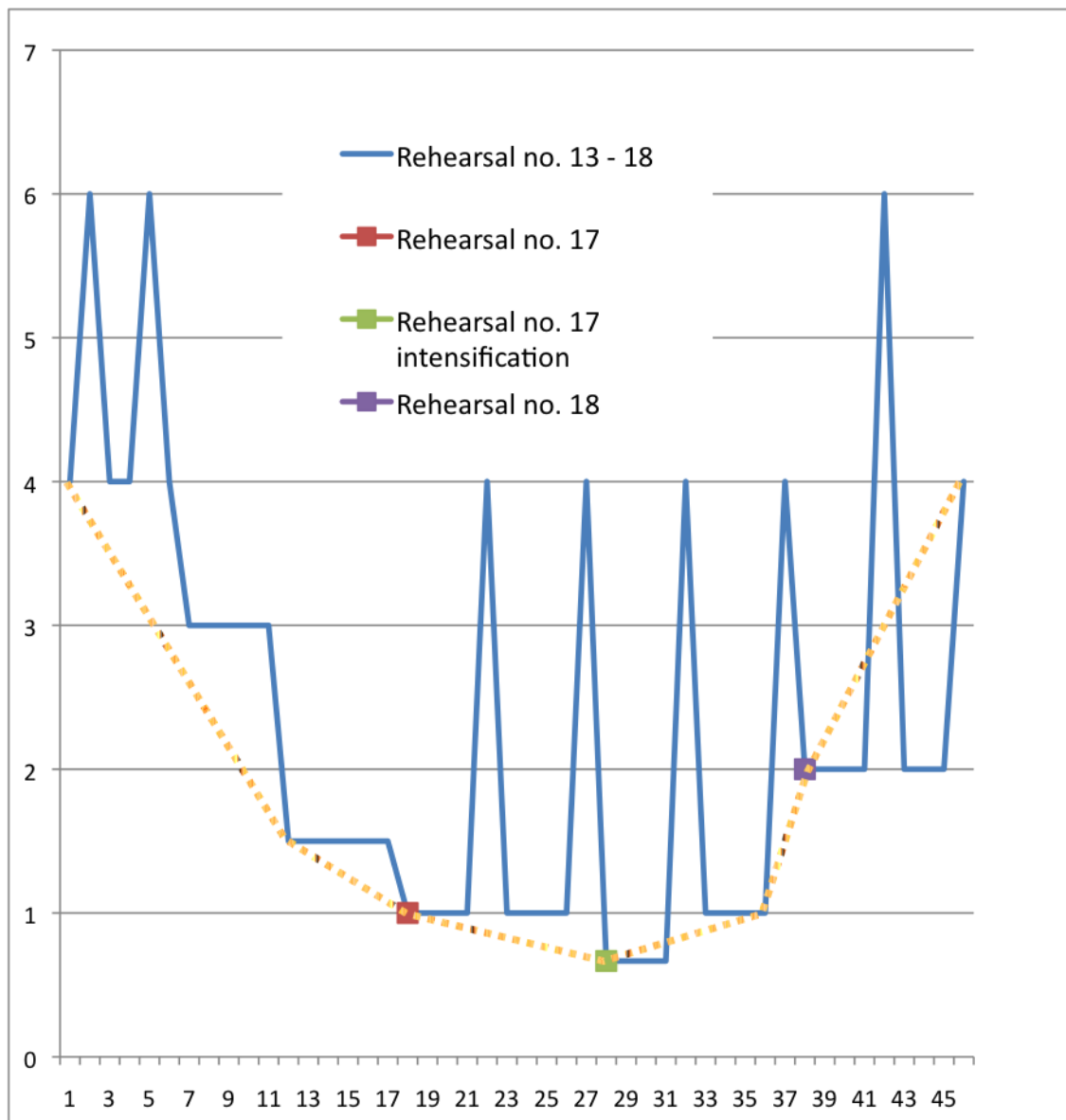
**18**

**Example 3.19. Canon based on the “chant” theme with entrances in a half note at R18.**

Taken as a whole, there is a long arc of acceleration from R11 that reaches its first peak in R12, then another arc that starts in R13 - R15 but that then leads to a surprising diminuendo in R16, then a sudden burst in intensity in R17, with a further increase in intensity at 5 measures after R17, and then gradually restoring a slower pulse in R18.

It is possible to visualize the acceleration and pullback of R13 – R18 by assigning to the vertical axis the time between repeating events and assigning the unit of time to a whole note for R13 – R16 and to a quarter note for R17 – R18. The events for R13 – R16 come from three lines of development: “attacks” in Double-bass, the “three-half-notes” motive, and the six-note ostinato. The values for R13 – R16 are taken from the analysis in Example 3.17. The events for R17 and R18 are canonic entrances, which start at a quarter note at the beginning of R17, change to 2/3 of a quarter note in the middle of R17, return to a quarter note by the end of R17 and then

a further increase to a half note in R18. The visualization is presented in Figure 3. It is similar in design to the two figures that appeared in the Introduction chapter: a descending line corresponds to a shortening of durations and therefore acceleration in the broader sense, while an ascending line indicates deceleration.<sup>49</sup>



**Figure 3. Wave-like shape of acceleration and pullback in R13 – R18.**

<sup>49</sup> Intuitively, a downward line may be imagined as going downhill, possibly toward a crash.



This wave-like shape of change in acceleration and intensity on sectional level in the R17 section and in the larger arc of R13 – R18 echoes the tri-part shape of asymmetry on the phrase level in the examples discussed earlier in the section 3.1 *Dynamic asymmetry and “scaling.”*

### **3.7 Rhythmic acceleration in R19 – R22 (“jazzy” episode)**

The section at R19 - R22, which can be called a “jazzy” episode and which precedes the Tempo di Valse episode at R23, presents an example of acceleration with partial pullback. As in R11 – R12 and in R13 – R16, this acceleration is carried out by changes in texture rather than an overt change in tempo. In the Concerto, the episode provides relief from a firmly established pulse of the previous section, as well as the section that follows it. There is no firm sense of meter, and the sense of time is established by local musical events on several levels: the free, improvisational melodic line in the piano; jazz-like stepwise movement in the double-bass; and the bursts of activity followed by long harmonic trilled suspensions in the violins (Example 3.20). Of these three levels, the one created by the harmonic “bursts” of the violins is particularly important, as it is the only one that continues through the entire episode and creates the sense of rhythmic acceleration that ties it together.



Using a quarter note as the pulse value, the “bursts” come in these intervals: 16 (R19, mm. 193-196), 8 (197-199), 18 (R20, 199-203), 16 (203-207), 6 (R21, 207-208), 8 (209-210), 9 (R22, 211-213), 3 (213), 2, 2 (214), 2, 6 (215-217) (Example 3.21). It is clearly observable that the rhythm significantly speeds up towards the end, with “bursts” at first far apart (distances of 16, 8, 18 quarter notes), then becoming more and more frequent until reaching periodicity of two quarter notes, with the last value of six being the interval of transition to the next section.

"jazzy episode", "bursts" in orchestra, bottom line indicates rhythmic values in quarter notes between onsets

193 **19** 207 **21** 214 **23**

16 8 18 16 6 8 9 3 2 2 2 6

**Example 3.21. “Bursts” in orchestra in the “jazzy episode” (R19 - R22).**

In addition to counting the rhythmic intervals between “bursts,” it is also possible to group them based on two salient textural divisions that occur in this episode. One comes at m. 207 (R21), when the first violins begin arpeggiating on a triad in steady eighth notes and pizzicato, which is a significant moment because these eighth notes create a steadiness of pulse that up to now has been avoided. This is amplified by a change in the piano part from a single melodic line to a flourishing two-voice dialogue, which mimics the “bursts” of the violins (Example 3.22).

The image displays a musical score for measures 207-208, starting at rehearsal mark R21. The score includes parts for Piano solo (Pno. s.), Violin I (Vln. I 1.2.3, Vln. I 4, Vln. I 5, Vln. I 6), Violin II (Vln. II 4, Vln. II 5, Vln. II 6), and Cello/Double Bass (Cb. s.).

- Piano solo (Pno. s.):** Features a triadic arpeggiation in eighth notes pizzicato, marked *mp*. A box highlights the first measure of this texture. The piano part also includes a single melodic line in the right hand.
- Violin I (Vln. I 1.2.3, Vln. I 4, Vln. I 5, Vln. I 6):** Violin I 1.2.3 plays a single melodic line in eighth notes pizzicato, marked *mp*. Violins I 4, 5, and 6 play sustained notes with trills.
- Violin II (Vln. II 4, Vln. II 5, Vln. II 6):** Violins II 4, 5, and 6 play a two-voice texture in eighth notes, marked *sff* and *pp sub.*. The texture is characterized by a sixteenth-note figure.
- Cello/Double Bass (Cb. s.):** Plays a single melodic line in eighth notes, marked *sff* and *pp sub.*.

**Example 3.22. Start of a triadic arpeggiation in eighth notes pizzicato in the Violin I and the beginning of a two-voice texture in piano solo, at R21, mm. 207-208.**

The second significant textural moment comes in m. 213 (3 measures after R22), when the two-voice dialogue texture in the piano switches back to a single melodic line that gradually descends from the middle register all the way to the lowest range of the piano. This moment also marks the acceleration of frequency of “bursts” (Example 3.23).



Taken together, the intervals between “bursts” can be grouped as follows:  $(16+8+18) + 16 + (6+8+9) + (3+2+2+2) + 6$  (Example 3.21). Each group can also be re-written with a gradually shortening rhythmic pulse:  $(16+8+18)$  becomes  $(4+2+4.5)$  in whole notes,  $(6+8+9)$  becomes  $(3+4+4.5)$  in half notes, and  $(3+2+2+2)$  stays same in quarter notes, which shows a change in pulse while maintaining similar numeric values.

The accelerating rhythmic pulse in this episode ties it to similar instances of a changing rhythmic pulse on the phrase and sectional level in this composition. What makes it stand out, however, is the nonlinear pattern of acceleration created by the “bursts.” Rather than a simple straight line of acceleration, it bears intriguing similarity to the rhythmic pattern of the emphatic statement of the 12-tone theme that appears at the climax at R29, mm. 269-283 (Example 3.24, Figure 4).

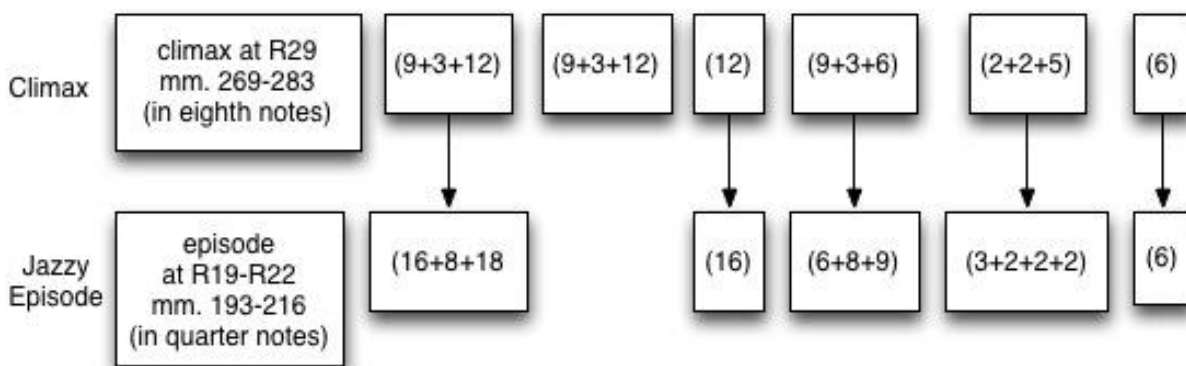
**29** 12-tone theme at climax, bottom line indicates rhythmic values in eighth notes

9 3 12 9 3 12

12 3 3 6 2 2 7 6

intensification from 3-3-6 to 2-2-7

**Example 3.24. The 12-tone theme at climax (R29, mm. 269-283).**



**Figure 4. Rhythmic pattern of the 12-tone theme at the climax versus rhythmic pattern of “bursts” in the jazzy episode.**

In particular, the sequences share the same pattern of gradually accelerating rhythmic pulse towards the end, so that in mm. 269-283 there is progression from (9+3+12) to (3+3+6) to (2+2+5). This comparison also holds in relation to the statement of the 12-tone theme at R45, where the rhythmic values are in diminution compared to the statement at the climax (Example 3.25).

final appearance of the 12-tone theme,  
bottom line indicates rhythmic values  
in eighth notes

45

intensification from 1-1-4 to 2/3-2/3-(4+2/3)

(8)

1 1 1 1 1 3 1 1 1 1 1 5 1 1 1 1 1 9

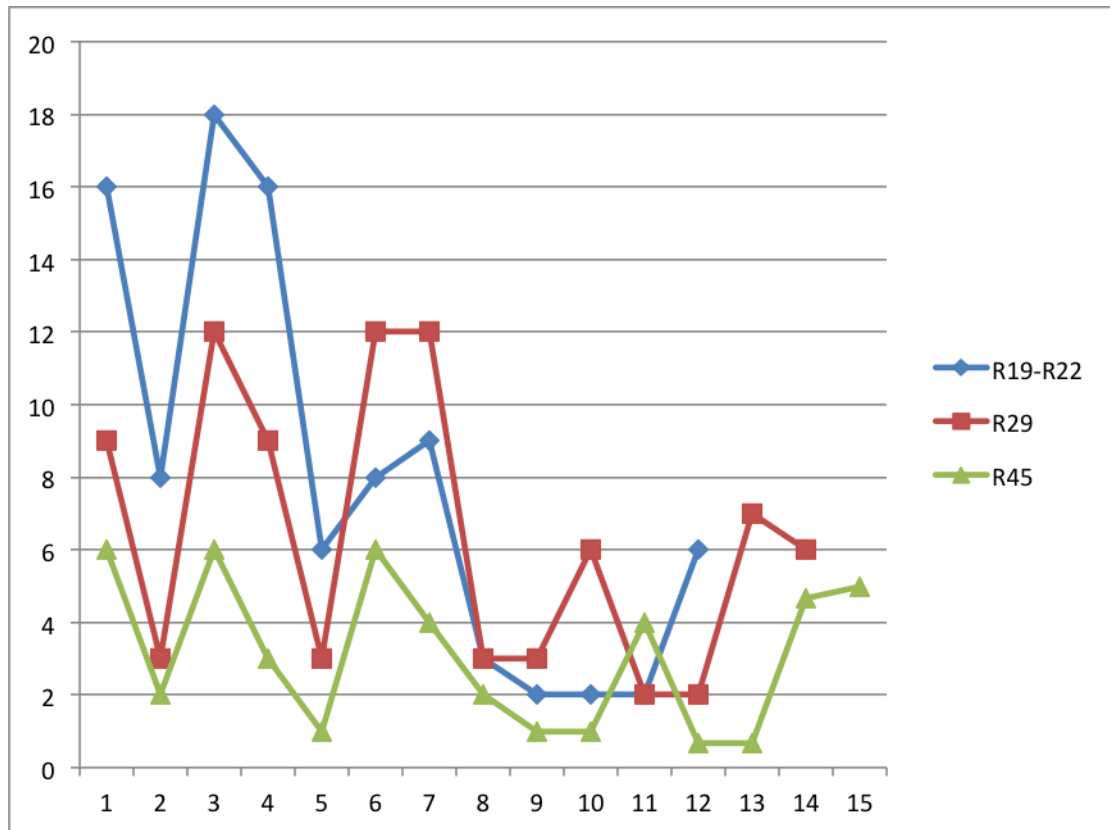
**Example 3.25. The 12-tone theme at the end, piano part (R45), with rhythmic values and acceleration annotated.**

The rhythmic values in eighth notes, shown in Example 3.25, can be further grouped as follows: (6+2+6) + (3+1+6) + (4+2+((1+1)+4)) + ((2/3+2/3) + 4 2/3) + (5+3) + (5+5) + (5+9).



The acceleration and pullback in R45, expressed as  $(4 + 2) + (1 + 1 + 4) + (2/3 + 2/3 + 4 \frac{2}{3}) + 5$ , aligns with the  $(6+8+9) + (3+2+2+2) + 6$  in the “jazzy” episode.

The next graph (Figure 5) illustrates the similarity of rhythmic profiles of “bursts” in the “jazzy episode” (R19 - R22), the 12-tone theme at the climax (R29), and the 12-tone theme at the very end (R45).



**Figure 5. Superposition of rhythmic values of “bursts” in the “jazzy episode,” the 12-tone theme at R29, and the 12-tone theme at R45.**

The slowing down in the “jazzy” episode at the end, which is a transition to the next section, is sustained with the arrival of the next section at R23, Tempo di Valse (Example 2.12).<sup>50</sup> The Tempo di Valse episode is characterized by a sustained 3/4 meter and phrases built

<sup>50</sup> Part of this section also appeared in the analysis of R25 in Example 2.13.

on statements of the 12-tone theme, which results in a relatively slow phrase-level pulse. Taken together with the R19 – R22 section, the R23 section completes the wave-like shape of acceleration and pullback, which links it to other extended sections with the same shape, such as R13 – R18 and, on the phrase level, with the 12-tone theme at R45.

### **3.8 Rhythmic acceleration and examples of polymeter – Cadenza (R31 – R35)**

The cadenza at R31 – R35 connects with several points related to asymmetry that were already discussed. The ending of the cadenza presents a complex rhythmic surface made up of voices with different pulses. This connects it with the “chant” theme, which has a polymeter of 3 versus 2 or a dotted quarter note versus a quarter note. It also recalls the polymetric texture of the climax at R30 that preceded the cadenza. The entire progression of the cadenza from sparseness and relative simplicity of texture at the beginning to the dense, polymetric texture at the end mirrors the much larger arc from the introduction of the Concerto to the climax at R30 and prepares for the second arc from recapitulation to the second climax at R38-R39, a rhythmic dissolution, and a return to sparseness in the coda.

Unlike the wave-like shape of acceleration with pullback, as was the case with the R13 – R18 section, the cadenza presents almost linear acceleration and intensification. It therefore departs from the tri-partite shape of asymmetry found on the phrase and sectional level, which was the subject of earlier analysis of asymmetry. However, it still serves as an example of intensification and growth in complexity, which is found in almost every section of this composition. What is particularly remarkable about this section is the way texture gradually gains in rhythmic complexity and at the same time destabilizes the initial state of balance by adding layers in polymetric relation. This process of destabilization in the cadenza happens in a more controlled and nuanced way than in the two similar sections, the climax preceding the cadenza at R30 and the rhythmic dissolution at the end of the Concerto at R39. The process starts with R33 and eventually leads to an extended unmetered measure at R35.

The cadenza begins with a reminiscence of the material of the “Alberti bass arpeggiation” theme, a simple duple meter consisting of an Alberti bass in the left hand on the F minor triad

(Example 3.26). Then the right hand part adds a polymeter of two eighth notes in the space of three in the middle voice and an ostinato on B in the top voice. The middle voice therefore creates a different, slower pulse relative to the eighth notes in the left hand, which can also be described as the pulse of a dotted quarter note versus the pulse of a quarter note. That ostinato in the top voice adds metric complexity not by adding a new relationship of rhythmic values, but simply by virtue of a different grouping, which creates a counterpoint of groups of three notes in the top voice versus groups of four notes in the lower voice. This allows the composer to preserve the relative sparseness of texture at soft dynamic while adding to the rhythmic complexity of texture (Example 3.26).

33 eighth notes in groups of 3

dotted eighth notes  
(written as  
eighth note duples)

*pp* 2

eighth notes in groups of 4

*pp* 4

**Example 3.26. Polymeter, top voice in eighth notes in 3-groupings, middle voice in dotted eighth notes, bottom voice (left hand) in eighth notes in 4-groupings (R33).**

In the next section at R34, the left hand continues with the same pattern, though with different harmonies, while the right hand seemingly simplifies to one voice but at the same time carries a rhythmic pattern designed to provide a maximum effect of syncopation against the duple meter of the left hand (Example 3.27). In effect, the right hand continues the triple pattern that was started by the ostinato in the top voice in the previous section, although now instead of having an eighth note on each eighth note pulse, the rhythm is carried by longer durations, a dotted quarter note and a dotted half note.

[numbers indicate durations between attack onsets in eighth notes]

34

dotted quarter notes  
(groups of 3 eighth notes) 3 9

*sf* *sf*

groups of 4  
eighth notes 8<sup>th</sup>

34

3 3 3 6 3 6

*sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf*

8<sup>th</sup>

**Example 3.27. Polymeter, right hand dotted quarter notes create syncopation against left hand 4-grouping of eighth notes (R34).**

The repeated occurrence of a 3-6 rhythmic asymmetry in eighth notes, which is a 1:2 syncopation, leads to the emergence of triple meter in the right-hand part at R34 (Example 3.28).

right-hand part rewritten in 9/8 from the original 4/4; lower staff shows rhythm in abstraction  
[numbers indicate durations between attack onsets in eighth notes]

34

3 9 3 6 3 3 3 6 3 6

*sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf*

1:2 syncopation (if triple meter assumed) 1:2 syncopation

1:3 syncopation (if duple meter assumed)

3 3 6 3 6

*sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf*

1:2 syncopation 1:2 syncopation

**Example 3.28. Right-hand part of R34 re-written in 9/8 to clarify the emerging triple meter.**

While on the whole, the cadenza presents a mostly linear process of intensification, it contains within itself local waves of intensification followed by relaxation, which give it a more nuanced shape. One particular instance occurs at R34, which has a tri-partite shape similar to the one found on the phrase level in the introduction: the initial state – “complication” – partial return to the starting point. This shape of intensification occurs in the pattern of rhythmic durations between attack onsets of the voice in the right hand, 3, 9, 3, 6, 3, 3, 3, 6, 3, 6 (taking an eighth note as a unit), which contains both the symmetry (the ending 3,6, 3,6 mirroring the beginning 3,9,3,6) and the asymmetry of a “complication” in the middle (the appearance of consecutive 3,3,3) that has the effect of acceleration that is not completely resolved by the ending symmetry (Example 3.27).

This section leads to the ending of the cadenza at R35, a long unmetered single measure (m. 325). Schnittke specifies a tempo change at the beginning of that measure, where an eighth-note pulse of the previous section, which is the pulse carried by the left hand Alberti bass, becomes a dotted-eighth-note pulse in the new section (Example 3.29). This allows the composer to gradually accelerate the main pulse from a dotted eighth note, carried by the right hand in the beginning, to a stream of regular eighth notes toward the end and then returning to repeated dotted-eighth-note chords, which re-establish the previous pulse. The next section at R36 starts with a tempo marking of a dotted eighth note equals an eighth note, making the pulse of the repeated chords the pulse of the eighth notes in the next section (Example 2.20).

While in the previous section (R33 - R34) the left hand carried the prevalent pulse with Alberti bass arpeggiation, in this section it is transformed into an unmetered, aleatoric stream of arpeggiation, creating a rhythmic background for the other layers of voices carried by the right hand (Example 3.29). The material in the right hand undertakes a process of trying to establish its own pulse of a dotted quarter note with an ostinato on D, then complicating it with another pulse (four quarter notes in the space of 18 eighth notes of the main pulse), then freely mixing accented notes and various groupings and durations of eighth notes and dotted eighth notes until finally disintegrating into an emphatic repetition of a single chord 25 times with durations of a dotted eighth note, a pulse of the next section. The appearance of a longer duration (a dotted eighth note) in the stream of shorter durations (eighth notes) forms its own dramatic effect by creating emphatic points similar to declamation or perhaps stuttering. It also creates an impression of an uneven surface, asymmetry rather than an even stream of the same durations, as was the case with the triadic arpeggio in the left hand earlier in R33 - R34.

35  $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ .

dotted eighth notes as the middle voice

*pp* aleatoric arpeggiation as base *mp*

8:9 eighth notes grouped in quarter notes as the top voice

*ff* simile (accenti variabili) *fff*

*8va*  
*Ed. sempre*

*(Ed.)*

*(Ed.)*

**Example 3.29. Polymeter, 8:9 eighth notes grouped in quarter notes in the top voice in the right hand, dotted eighth notes in the middle voice in the right hand, aleatoric arpeggiation in the bottom voice in the left hand (R35).**

The final sequence of ostinato on a single chord represents both an emphatic climax of the buildup and a simplification and homogeneity after the previous rhythmic variety and uneven surface (Example 3.30).



irregular rhythmic surface due to embedded dotted eighth notes in the stream of eighth notes

*fff*

(Ped.)

6-note-ostinato

(Ped.)

(Ped.)

**Example 3.30. Simplification while maintaining uneven surface and the return of the 6-note ostinato, end of the cadenza, R35.**

The ostinato at the end recalls the ostinato on D at the start of this section (Example 3.29), creating a kind of overt structural symmetry of departure and return with the middle filled with significant asymmetric variety and complexity that is not fully resolved by the return to evenness in the end.

## **Chapter 4: Expression and meaning**

### **4.1 Expansion and convergence**

As discussed in the Introduction, there are two points of expansion – convergence in the Concerto that come at critical points in the composition. One happens with the expansion in the Tempo di Valse episode that leads into the climax, where the emphatic statement of the 12-tone theme at R29 and the harmonic progression at R30 bring a kind of catharsis. The harmonic progression is presented with the same relations between triads as introduced in mm. 1-8 and at the beginning of R3 (Example 2.6). It is combined with gradual rhythmic acceleration to the point of polymetric dissolution until it reaches the final chord cluster. The point of maximum intensity reached at the climax ends with a General Pause, followed by a solitary recovery and contemplation in the cadenza, which starts with the “six-note-ostinato” motive from the introduction (Example 4.1).

**30** 1-12 2 3

Pf. s. *fff* *8va* *sempre* [SLIDE] [M] [SLIDE]

Vln. I *fff*

Vln. II *fff* *div. in 3* *sim.*

Vla. *fff*

Vc.1,2,3 *fff*

Vc.4 *fff*

Cb.1,2 *fff*

---

4 5 6

Pf. s. *8va* [MP] *acceleration from dotted half notes to half notes* *sim.* [M] *end of the first 6 triads* *8va* [SLIDE] [M] *acceleration to dotted quarter notes*

Vln. I [MP] *acceleration to dotted quarter notes* *sim.* [SLIDE] [M] *acceleration to quarter notes*

Vln. II *sim.* *acceleration to quarter notes*

Vla. *sim.*

Vc.1,2,3 *sim.*

Vc.4 *sim.*

Cb.1,2 *sim.*

7 8 9

Pf. s.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.1,2,3

Vc.4

Cb.1,2

[SLIDE] [MP] [M]

acceleration to quarter notes and polymetric disintegration

8<sup>vb</sup>

4:6

10 11 12

Pf. s.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.1,2,3

Vc.4

Cb.1,2

8<sup>vb</sup>

4:6

5:6

final cluster and a General Pause \*

$p < fff$

$p < fff$

$p < fff$

$p < fff$

$p < fff$

$p < fff$

**Cadenza**

**31 Moderato**

"six-note-ostinato" motive

Pf. s.

**Example 4.1.** The climax at R30, followed by a General Pause and the cadenza in piano solo. The numbers above the measures are made by the composer in the score and indicate the repetition, 1 to 12, of the same one-measure figure in the piano part.

The second expansion-convergence instance occurs at the end of the Concerto at the second climax of the composition, where after reaching triple forte dynamics, the expansion is essentially halted by a cluster in all voices (R39), after which begins a long section of rhythmic dissolution, where a polymetrically complex texture creates the effect of waving away the drama that preceded it. The polymetric complexity then collapses into glissando, diminuendo to triple piano and a General Pause (Example 4.2).

**39** Moderato Cluster chord and beginning of polymetric dissolution in orchestra

The musical score is for a symphony orchestra, starting at measure 39. The tempo is marked 'Moderato'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score begins with a 'Cluster chord' marked 'fff' (triple forte) and 'sempre'. This is followed by a 'beginning of polymetric dissolution'. The score includes parts for Piano (Pr. s.), Violins I (Vln. I.1-6), Violins II (Vln. II.1-6), Violas (Vle. 1-4), Cellos (Vc. 1-4), and Contrabasses (Cb. 1-2). The dynamics range from 'fff' to 'mp' (mezzo piano) and 'mf' (mezzo forte). The score shows a complex texture with many notes and rests, indicating a dense and intricate musical passage.

**Example 4.2. Cluster at triple forte and the beginning of “dissolution” (R39).**

The following coda is emotionally similar to the cadenza, as it also fulfills the role of convergence, as a section of recovery and searching for the narrative voice after a catastrophic breakdown. It is characterized by sparseness of texture, soft dynamic, and slow rhythmic pulse. It brings back the 12-tone theme in the strings and ends with its final appearance in the piano at R45, creating a sense of closure (Example 2.14).

These two instances of expansion taken to the breaking point followed by contraction and recovery also connect with a larger idea that is present in many of Schnittke's works: the fragility of the world that is described by his music and the notion of hidden dangers lurking beneath the surface. This sequence of a period of expansion followed by contraction and reflection also distinguishes these instances as moments of seriousness and authenticity, as if the playful and whimsical surface is suddenly punctured to reveal an actual drama, rather than a game.

## 4.2 Issues of musical narrative

In addition to the two instances of expansion followed by contraction and recovery described in the previous section, there are many other examples suggesting the idea that there are dangers beneath the seemingly quiet surface, that things are often not what they seem, that there are hidden depths a step away. The work constantly engages the listener, by first setting up and then undermining expectations, keeping the musical narrative in a state of imbalance.

The first indication of this comes early, when at seven measures after R3 there appears a sudden *sforzando* in the piano part, disturbing without apparent cause the overall pianissimo that has been established (Example 2.5).

A fuller and more dramatic transformation occurs when the initially simple and unsophisticated waltz (R23, Tempo di Valse, Example 2.12) first gains lyrical melodic lines, reminiscent of the Viennese waltz (R25, Example 2.13) and then gains almost violent force at the climax (R30, Example 4.1). In the section just preceding this climax, at R29, the 12-tone theme that was hidden in the bass line of the initial waltz, appears in full glory (Example 2.9, Example 3.24).

There are several other places in the composition that hold an element of discordant surprise and, consequently, an element of suspense and unpredictability. For instance, the four measures that appear at R7, right after the “chant” theme at R6, at first glance seem like a rather curious episode, a kind of baroque counterpoint in triple meter (Example 2.10). It is positioned between sections with texture based on contrasting homophonic layers (Example 2.22). At first encounter it is easy to dismiss it as simply an oddity, but within this polyphony is hidden the 12-tone theme, which is introduced here for the first time as a melodic line. The surprise in this case



comes from the realization that some things are not what they seem to be and important elements may be hidden in plain sight.

A more extended and deliberately prepared surprising moment based on unexpected dynamics and rhythmic changes comes at R16 and the subsequent R17, which has already been mentioned in the section on the acceleration in R13 – R16. The whole R16 contains a gradual diminuendo from forte to pianissimo over the course of 12 measures. After this, suddenly comes a four-voice canon at fortissimo, which playfully sweeps aside the preceding gesture of diminuendo (Example 2.7, Example 3.18). The canon itself also contains a surprise in the middle, where the time of entrances between the canon voices is shortened from a quarter note to two eighth note triplets before restoring it to the beginning quarter note. This shortening sounds like a stumble or a wrench thrown in the orderly forward motion established at the beginning of the canon. This creates a moment of levity that refreshes the attention of the listener. It also provides a contrast of the uneven rhythmic surface in the R17 section with the even surface and slower pulse of the canon that starts the next section at R18 (Example 3.19).

Two notable examples of a simple surface foreground that masks hidden complex background texture, taken as a metaphor of hidden depths behind apparent simplicity, are the lyrical melody at R9 and the canon at R16. The canon at R16 was discussed earlier as an example of 5-eighth-note periodicity subtly embedded in duple texture (Example 3.16). The lyrical melody example is much more dramatic and provides a stylistic contrast of a piano part that evokes the Romantic style and the orchestra part written in a modernist language, with microtonal trills and heterophonic polyphony. The sliding scale motives in the orchestra part, imitating the descending motive in the piano part, feel like a sinister or sarcastic commentary on

the Romantic piano part (Example 4.3; see also Example 2.21 for a longer excerpt of the piano part).



The idea of “things are not what they seem” also feels organic in this composition because it has a natural affinity with the theme and variations method, which is one of the formal strands in the Concerto. The variation method presupposes presentation of a theme in various guises and contrasting transformations, which add to the sense of surprise and unpredictability. Schnittke uses the variation method to create the surprise of encountering the same “doorbell” motive in various transformations and adds to it the surprise of encountering the 12-tone theme sometimes hidden and sometimes exposed. As a result, there is “multiplicity of meaning” that broadens the duality of opposites mentioned in the introduction.

The “lurking danger,” unpredictability embedded in the musical texture and musical narrative itself, provides a continual source for dramatic development in the Concerto. The continual expectation of a surprising twist in the narrative becomes embedded in the musical texture in the form of a kind of balancing of symmetric and asymmetric relations.

This sense of uneasy balance seeps into practically every level of musical language in the Concerto. It is built into the choice of the main material, from the “heroic” theme with its  $(2+3) + (3+2)$  syncopation, to the “chant” theme with its flexible triple and duple meter that combine into  $5/4$  and contraposition of 3 versus 2, to the “six-note-ostinato” motive that brings with it the asymmetry of five short notes and the final long note every time it appears in the texture. The sense of balance also comes in the inversional symmetry, which underscores the weighing of two inversionally related alternatives: a major triad followed by a minor triad in the harmonic sequence of the “Alberti bass arpeggiation” theme or a descent by a major third followed by an ascent by a minor third in the “doorbell” motive.

The rapid change from major to minor in the harmonic sequence of the “Alberti bass arpeggiation” theme and the 12-tone theme at the climax projects a sense of equivalence and

equivocation, an act of choosing between two things. On the rhythmic level, there is a similarly close alternation between groupings of 2 versus 3, which occurs both linearly and vertically as polymeter. The flexibility of 5-groupings, where 5 can be organized as (2+3) or (3+2), becomes a source of rhythmic fluidity and embodies a kind of balanced asymmetry.

The balancing and asymmetry on the local level naturally extends to larger durations, in the form of acceleration over the course of a section, and it also extends to complex textures based on polymeter. The principle of intensification therefore may be seen as acting horizontally over a stretch of time as acceleration or vertically, in the form of additional layers of texture, and both these instances sometimes intersect when intensification over the course of a section reaches a maximum point that is followed by a section of dissolution based on complex polyphonic texture. On the opposite end of this intensification, the dissolution is followed by a return to ascetic, radically simplified texture in the cadenza and in the coda.

The continuing process of intensification and pullback, however, poses a challenge of how it could be properly resolved or what sort of ending it could imply. The balancing forces described earlier, particularly the symmetry of thematic return at the end, bring a conventional kind of structural closure but are inadequate to properly balance the emotional intensity of the preceding development.

In one of his conversations with Ivashkin, Schnittke remarked, “In my compositions everything often goes away into an ellipsis or simply stops, ending without a finale.”<sup>51</sup> He then traces this tradition to Mahler and to Tchaikovsky’s Sixth symphony.

In fact, however, in the Concerto, as well as in several other compositions, Schnittke does offer something that can serve as a kind of closure that, while not completely resolving the

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<sup>51</sup> Schnittke and Ivashkin, *Besedy s Al'fredom Shnitke* [Conversations with Alfred Schnittke], 68 (trans.author).

emotional tension, creates a kind of detachment from it. As noted in the discussion of the transformation of the 12-tone theme in Chapter 2, *Pitch organization*, the theme's last appearance is marked by a stylistic shift toward simplification. After "dressing" the theme in various stylistic disguises, its turn to a simpler, "purified" form signals a kind of resolution or revelation.

This stylistic change, from a modernist form, when the theme is introduced in the beginning, to an altered, "stylized" form at the end, puts in perspective the emotionally intense development that preceded this point. It is as if the theme and the narrative trajectory of the composition is now viewed from a distance, as something that happened in the past. The somber aftermath of the conflict of opposing forces that forms the basis of the compositional narrative evokes feelings of longing or nostalgia for the idealized form of the theme that is revealed in the end. The ending juxtaposes the turbulent, emotionally intense world of the composition against the idealized world of the coda, in which all the conflict has been ostensibly resolved, but which effectively exists outside the main narrative of the composition.

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