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The Vitality of Music: From the Origins to the Realities of Non-Classics



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Витальность музыки: от истоков к реалиям нон-классики

Abstract. The subject of the article is the phenomenon of vitality in music. It is considered as a generic feature of music, dating back to its origins and early forms. The author briefly describes the historical evolution of musical vitality illustrated by individual examples, ranging from the late Baroque, the works by J. Haydn, L. Beethoven, R. Wagner, and A. Scriabin to D. Shostakovich and the composers of the second half of the 20th century – the first third of the 21st century, to whom the main attention is paid. The purpose of the article is to identify specific, relatively stable forms of manifestation of vitality, which are materialized both in individual elements of the musical language (such, for example, is the new monody that emerged with the birth of opera at the beginning of the 17th century) and in integral phenomena of a systematic order.

Among the stylistic instances of the second type, the article specifically examines *the concept of creation, the gesture of birth*. Gradually, it is consolidated in music as a thematic constant (based on the biblical mythology, as in J. Haydn's oratorio *The Creation*) but eventually disengages from the plot, acquiring universal significance. The result of this research is the identification of the mythological roots of the concept of creation; in some cases, they come to the forefront (e.g. the Introduction to the opera *The Rhinegold* by R. Wagner; *Stimmung* for six vocalists and electronics by K. Stockhausen). Another variation of the concept of creation is formed in line with the romantic tradition. In this case, the birth of the world is associated with the lonely voice of a character – the initial monologue of the solo instrument, which is dramatically opposed to the orchestra (e.g. concert works by A. Schnittke, S. Gubaidulina, W. Lutosławski, B. Tishchenko, and E. Denisov). In all such cases, the heightened sense of vitality is enhanced by special performing techniques. The concept of creation is further developed and logically completed in the new music. The gesture of creation is no longer responded to by the final statement of existence but by *the gesture of destruction*, annihilation of the sound matter – attenuation, acoustic extinction. The feeling of vitality in such compositions is specific, since the musical matter in them lives by its own laws, as if it does not need a mirror of the subject (e.g. large orchestral compositions by Ch. Ives, Ia. Xenakis, and V. Tarnopolsky). The new music also introduces other non-classical aspects of vitality associated with threshold states on the edge of life and death. Starting with I. Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring*, the *vitality of transgression* becomes a noticeable phenomenon of contemporary music.

Аннотация. Предмет статьи – феномен витальности в музыке. Он рассматривается как родовое свойство музыки, восходящее к ее происхождению и ранним формам. Кратко описана историческая эволюция музыкальной витальности, представленная на отдельных примерах, начиная от позднего барокко, творчества Й. Гайдна, Л. Бетховена, Р. Вагнера, А. Скрябина вплоть до Д. Шостаковича и композиторов второй половины XX – первой трети XXI века, которым уделено главное внимание. Цель статьи – выделить специфические, относительно устойчивые формы проявления витальности, которые материализуются как в отдельных элементах музыкального языка (такова, например, новая монодия, возникшая с рождением оперы в начале XVII века), так и в целостных явлениях системного порядка.

Среди стилистических событий второго рода в статье специально рассматривается *концепт творения, жест рождения*. Постепенно он кристаллизуется в музыке как тематическая константа (с опорой на библейскую мифологию, как в оратории «Сотворение мира» Гайдна), но со временем эмансипируется от сюжетной основы, приобретая универсальное значение. Результатом исследования становится выявление мифологических корней концепта творения; в некоторых случаях они выступают на первый план (Вступление к опере «Золото Рейна» Вагнера; *Stimmung* для шести вокалистов и электроники К. Штокхаузена). Другой вариант концепта творения формируется в русле романтической традиции. Тогда рождение мира ассоциируется с одиноким голосом героя – начальным монологом сольного инструмента, драматически противопоставленного оркестровой массе (сочинения концертного жанра А. Шнитке, С. Губайдулиной, В. Лютославского, Б. Тищенко, Э. Денисова). Во всех подобных случаях обостренное ощущение витальности усиливается специальными исполнительскими приемами.

В новой музыке концепт творения получает дальнейшее развитие и логическое завершение. Жесту творения отвечает отныне не финальное утверждение сущего, а *жест уничтожения*, аннигиляции звуковой материи – затухание, акустическое угасание. Ощущение витальности в подобных композициях специфично, поскольку музыкальная материя живет в них как бы по своим собственным законам, словно не нуждаясь в зеркале субъекта (большие оркестровые композиции Ч. Айвза, Я. Ксенакиса, В. Тарнопольского). Новая музыка «вводит в игру» и другие неклассические аспекты витальности, связанные с пороговыми состояниями на грани жизни и смерти. *Витальность трансгрессии*, начиная с балета «Весна священная» И. Стравинского, становится заметным явлением актуальной музыки.

Some music approached the barrack and began to play special, lively sounds, in which there was no thought, but a triumphant premonition that made <...> body quaver with joy. The troubling sounds of the sudden music aroused a feeling of conscience; they urged one to care for the time of life, to travel the whole distance toward hope and reach it, and find there the source of this exciting song, so that one wouldn't have to cry at dying time over the misery of a wasted existence.

Andrei Platonov. *The Foundation Pit* [6]

Introduction

The art of music has an enormous potential in terms of manifestations of vitality in the truest sense of this term, as a synonym for the very being. Music has originated from sound and movement, which form the basis for human existence. The physical sound as such, unfolding in time, presents a manifestation of energy and arouses a feeling of “power and vigor”, i.e. a sense of vitality.

The subject of this article is musical vitality as an aesthetic phenomenon. The relevance of the topic under study is recognized by a number of recent works, both fundamental and specialized, on topics ranging from musicology to biomusicology and ethnomusicology, which are based on the interdisciplinary and integrated approach and involve data and methods from various fields of science. Of particular importance are the publications by Richard Taruskin (*The Oxford History of Western Music*, 2005 [17], *On Russian Music*, 2008 [18], etc.) and the joint research *The Origins of Music* (1999) [15] conducted by musicologists, biologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, psychologists, neuroscientists, ethologists and linguists that marks the birth of evolutionary biomusicology. In addition, an area of considerable interest is a comprehensive research into the origins and nature of music carried out by Iain Morley (2003; 2013) [13; 14]. An example of the latest foreign discussion works that combines the methods of musicology and natural sciences is the monograph by Holly Watkins, *Musical Vitalities: Ventures in a Biotic Aesthetics of Music* (2018) [19]. Of fundamental importance in the context of the present work is the latest study of the classical focus, though by no means traditional in terms of the concept and methodology – the work *From Music to Sound: The Emergence of Sound in the 20th- and 21st-Century Music*, 2019 [16] by Makis Solomos, professor of musicology, one of the most acknowledged experts on Iannis Xenakis. Another researcher, musicologist Mark Evan Bonds, based on the material with an extensive chronological coverage

studies the evolution of one of the most important aesthetic concepts of music – the idea of absolute music (2014; 2019) [2]. In our study, central focus is given to the article by Eli Kramer (2019) [12] which discusses the ideas of metaphysics of R. Wagner’s music from the cultural and philosophical perspective and conceptualizes the vitality of the “musical object”.

The question concerning the origins of music and the process of its formation is a debatable one and is unlikely to be given a single answer, at least as long as music remains a real phenomenon of human existence. Importantly, in attempts to explain the emergence of music, a significant role it assigned to direct physiological manifestations. Thus, according to the well-known assumption of Charles Darwin, music appeared as a form of wildlife, in situations of sound and intonational rivalry between males – this has preserved in animals and birds (*The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, 1872). Ch. Darwin described one of the variations of the sound activity of primitive man that is associated with natural selection (the “best singer” wins the competition).

A more universal inference about the origins of music is to be found in later studies by anthropologists and ethnomusicologists. According to it, the primary sound signals, essential for life, represented unshaped articulation dominated by rises and falls, unstable sliding, screams and whines characteristic of the animal world⁽¹⁾. Gradually, in this non-articulated stream, the tones of the same height were fixed, which had the practical significance of semantic differentiation. Such “primal music” presumably existed as far back as at the pre-verbal level; over time a sense of intervals between sounds was formed, and those most harmonious and convenient for intonation were intuitively distinguished. Simultaneously, the evolution of sound existence in time took place, that is, the formation of a rhythmic structure. The purpose of this article is to outline significant milestones in the evolution of musical vitality, its key concepts and specific forms.

(1) In ethnomusicology, such phenomena are described by the term *ecmelica* (ancient Greek ἐκμελής – dissonant, discordant) – a genus of intonation that includes sounds of unfixed pitch.

Historical forms of vitality in music

A special role of temporal structures, which is characteristic of some surviving forms of the primary indigenous folklore, has become the ground for the “rhythmic” theory of the origins of music, according to which it is rhythm that was fundamental in its formation. Music emerged in close connection with body plasticity (dance), and in collective labor – in either of these cases, rhythm served as the main means of organization. According to Karl Bücher, music, poetry and dance originated in the labor process that constitutes the universal basis for any artistic activity⁽²⁾. In essence, this idea is typologically not that far from a Darwinian competition of males, since K. Bücher also offers a universal reason for the emergence of music, only of a different order.

Finally, we should mention the theory of music originating from the word, according to which emotionally charged speech determines the character of the melody. This theory was formulated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Dictionary of Music*, where he treated melody (the highest element of music, in Rousseau’s opinion, in comparison with “barbaric” harmony) as an imitation of the “accent” of speech, but not so much grammatical or logical as “the pathetic, or the accent of oratory”⁽³⁾.

Nevertheless, it is not scientific concepts that have proven most influential, but mythological ideas about the essence of music. From this perspective, music has a legacy incomparable with that of other arts: Pythagoreanism and its father, the legendary Pythagoras of Samos.

It is a well-known fact that Pythagoras understood music as a cosmological phenomenon. The very phenomenon of Sounding goes beyond the limits of the human dimension, expanding to the scale of the Universe. The birth of the heaven and earth, the formation of the cosmos from chaos originated from the *primordial sound*, which formed the concordant sound

- (2) Rhythm “stems from the internal body structure and the technical conditions for the performance of work, that is, naturally follows from the application of the economic principle to human activity” (K. Bücher. *Labor and Rhythm. Work Songs, Their Origin and Economic Significance*. Moscow, 1923) [cit. ex: 4].
- (3) Accent, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s understanding, includes all the expressive elements of speech: intonation patterns, pitch, timbre, tempo, and dynamics. The properties of speech are expressed by the melody, which is directly related to the accent of the language and imitates it [see: 5, p. 23].

of the moving planets, the Sun and stars. People do not hear it because for them it exists from the very birth and is indistinguishable from silence⁽⁴⁾. The harmony of the spheres based on this primordial sound (world music, *musica mundana*) is determined by mathematical proportions, which are also followed by earthly music (*musica humana*).

Thus, in the system of Pythagorean ideas, music is actually synonymous with the element of vitality – the root cause and condition for the existence of the world. The birth of the world is musical in itself. In human everyday life, the role of music is strengthened by its educational and medical effect; this is what other ancient thinkers agreed with Pythagoras on. Music heals human morals, calms passions and restores the harmony of soul [1, pp. 127–128]. In essence, music is universal: the world is organized according to its laws.

Like other arts, the music of the professional European tradition evolved towards generic differentiation and specialization, in the course of which the ancient attitude to sound was lost. The idea of the harmony of spheres eventually acquired a form of a scientific discipline, since in the system of medieval theoretical knowledge “music was understood primarily as a science of numbers” [9, p. 73]. Admittedly, this could not reduce such a universal quality of music as vitality; however, music itself did not seem to notice it, just as a healthy person does not notice their breath. Direct manifestations of vitality were invariably and unconditionally associated with the original folklore genres, where they continued to exist in the music and singing of the oral tradition, inseparable from the life of steady social groups and fundamentally different from other, “high” forms⁽⁵⁾.

Nevertheless, manifestations of vitality can also be found in the evolution of professional musical art. Some points in the history of musical vitality will be discussed below.

The outbreak of vitality occurred in the music of the beginning of the 17th century, when opera emerged and the homophonic texture was formed. It is observed in opera monody that focuses on the “natural”

- (4) A similar mythology of sound was also formed in the Hindu tradition. The sound Om (or Aum) possesses a sacred power – the vibration caused by it marked the beginning of the perceived Universe.
- (5) One example of many: in traditional Russian village there was a clear distinction between the manners of singing – “church singing” and “street singing” were two different things.

unity of word and music resurrecting an imaginary antiquity, and in the “agitated” and “representative” styles of performance⁽⁶⁾, which create a special technique of vocal expression aimed at the direct quasi-improvisational production of sound and, consequently, a new cantatory physiology. An entirely different aspect of vitality is seen in the narrative: in consolidation of the *gesture of creation*, which gradually becomes a noticeable thematic constant. It is based on the biblical mythology, as, for instance, in the oratorio *The Creation* by J. Haydn, and other compositions on similar topics⁽⁷⁾. In works by L. Beethoven, the motive of creation is disengaged from the narrative. This is illustrated in the introduction to the *Symphony No. 7*, where instead of the traditional exposition of thematic material, the composer presents the process of its development. The theme of the first part emerges like a living organism. The further development of the symphony, “the triumph of dance”, intensifies the impression of a victorious vital force⁽⁸⁾. In the *Symphony No. 9*, the same type of introduction assumes a dramatic character of emerging from the abyss, from the darkness of underground chaos, where begins the path of ascension to the harmony of the cosmos, which is to be resolved in the final hymn.

The composer to have made great advances in the musical embodiment of vitality was Richard Wagner. And again, his most impressive example of vitality is found in the introduction; in this, R. Wagner historically takes over L. Beethoven, even though as a musician he operates in a completely new territory. In the Introduction to *The Rhinegold* (the first music drama of *The Ring of the Nibelung*), it is no longer short motifs, the beginnings of a future integral thematic invention that are heard, but what constitutes their acoustic soil – an overtone series in the form of a major chord as a symbol of the prime matter of water. In its universal vibration, similar

(6) Stilo concitato and stilo rappresentativo (Italian).

(7) In this respect, apparently, the music falls behind such breakthrough phenomena of vitality in visual arts (which, unlike music, is “mute and static”) as *The Creation of Adam* from the series of frescoes in the Sistine Chapel painted by Michelangelo.

(8) The way Romain Rolland describes the symphony is an example of the “vital” vocabulary: “It is a mad outburst of superhuman energy, with no other object than for the pleasure of unloosing it like a river overflowing its banks and flooding the surrounding country.” R. Rolland. *Life of Beethoven*. Available at: <https://litlife.club/books/183215/read?page=5> (In Russian. Accessed 21.08.2021).

to the Pythagorean primordial sound, which grows from the quietest bass to vibrant broad sounding, the myth of *The Ring* is born. No theme in its traditional understanding is present there. The audacity of R. Wagner’s discovery was unprecedented for its time: the effect of the Introduction could be compared with the same effect as if his contemporary poet started reciting a heroic song with pronouncing soniferous phonemes not overburdened with semantic content.

The interpretation of the beginning of a musical piece as an act of creation and a vital awakening of the musical matter continued its steady development in European music, and, in fact, has remained to our time. In one way or another, it has preserved the mythological typology of moving from the primary ambiguity of the sounding matter to its clarification, statement and triumph. Similar examples dating back to R. Wagner’s time are Alexander Scriabin’s *Piano Sonata No. 5* (nominally athematic) and *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*, or, in the decade to follow, the *Symphony No. 2* (subtitled *To October*) by D. Shostakovich, in which the same idea of the birth of the matter from chaos and its formation on the way to victory is presented as a mythologeme of revolution. An impressive example following the same tradition is *Stimmung* for six vocalists and electronics by Karlheinz Stockhausen. Like in R. Wagner’s compositions, the cosmos of the 70-minute *Stimmung* is based on an overtone series (an extended overtone series), to the sounds of which the names of different gods and goddesses are sung – a superpantheon of the neo-mythological universe⁽⁹⁾.

Musical form as the “concept of creation”

The gesture of creation should not necessarily be associated with the cosmic scale. It can be expressed with an outwardly unpretentious motif – a single sound of a solo instrument, which gradually develops into a large, usually dramatic composition. It is also a universe, but it is associated with the human realm and the fate of an individual in the hostile world. The romantic roots of such a concept are evident. A new quality of vitality as a sound verisimilitude is revealed in personifying the soloist,

(9) However, unlike R. Wagner, K. Stockhausen does not prescribe the sound in finished form: it is formed with vocal phonemes and acoustic microtones. The whole musical piece *Stimmung* can be seen as a *series of variations on the idea of sound formation*.

who becomes the hero of the drama, with an instrument being his “voice”. This idea is naturally implemented in the genre of an instrumental expressionist concerto: the gesture of creation is expressed in a solo cadenza, which has moved to the beginning from its traditional place in the middle development section. There are numerous examples of this kind, including almost all instrumental concertos by Alfred Schnittke, large compositions by Boris Tishchenko (not only of the concert genre), concertos by Witold Lutosławski or Edison Denisov.

Nevertheless, the soloist’s opening monologue as is does not guarantee a specific quality of vitality. The violin or cello, for example, have historically consolidated in the European tradition as symbolic imitators of the human voice, so to resurrect the primary vocal nature of their sound, certain non-classical techniques are required. For instance, in the opening cadenza of A. Schnittke’s *Concerto Grosso No. 3*, the melody, imitating ritual wailing, presents constant trembling that arouses an unmistakable feeling of the momentary creation of a real “erratic” intonation⁽¹⁰⁾.

The recognized master of this kind of vitality is Sofia Gubaidulina, who focuses on the soul and the essence of an instrument revealed in the commitment of a responsive musician. S. Gubaidulina creates works with a particular performer in mind and her creative concept is developed in close contact with the performer. Thus, before composing the violin concerto intended for Gidon Kremer, she regularly attended his concerts, listened to and observed him playing, and connected with his artistic manner. This is how she created one of her best opuses entitled as part of a Mass, *Offertorium* (1980).

While working with musicians, S. Gubaidulina discovered new capacities of instruments and new performing techniques. Some of them assume clear “tones of vitality”. Thus, it is distinctly unusual that in the *Concerto for Bassoon and Low Strings* there goes a wind instrument rarely used solo. In the sound of it, S. Gubaidulina recognized a voice of a character, a tragic-grotesque hero of a musical action. Additionally, she discovered a new sounding of bayan, which in Russian music is traditionally confined to the context of the Russian folk orchestra. It is in her compositions where the bayan started “breathing” like a living being.

(10) In a private conversation, the author called this cadenza the “Wailing Wall”.

New performance techniques that we have briefly mentioned above will be discussed further; now we should consider another aspect of the same topic. The opposite of the gesture of creation in the composition matter is the *gesture of destruction*, annihilation, that is, attenuation, disappearance. In classical composition, the end of the opus is always defined – it is the loud and affirmative tutti (the whole orchestra) confirming that the word has been said, the new sound object has been created and now exists⁽¹¹⁾. In contrast to this, acoustic attenuation has a different meaning. It corresponds to such natural processes as the sunset, the arrival of autumn, the fading of feeling and human existence itself; it all intensifies the feeling of the vital, which dies in sound just as it does in real life. Gradually, special techniques that produce an impression of leaving and disappearing have developed. Thus, in D. Shostakovich’s narrative codes that are closer to the classics (e.g. in the brilliant finale of *Symphony No. 4*), the effects resembling cinematic techniques can be observed: the characters gradually leave, dissolving in space, but their existence continues somewhere “behind the scenes”.

A different finale is introduced in later compositions, where attenuation and leaving are no longer a metaphor. The gradually fading musical sound falls silent, but the composition does not finish there. It modulates into the area of noise and side tones, such as breathing into the headpiece of wind instruments, soundless touches of the keys, tapping on the body of the strings, etc. Eventually, all sounds fade away in a long pause, after-sound; this is the real annihilation of sound, its real end. Such, for instance, is the finale of Edison Denisov’s chamber cantata *Italian Songs* after Alexander Blok. The last bars of its final movement *Assumption*, as envisioned by the composer, symbolize the dormition of the Mother of God. Paradoxically, this is the only truly vital sound instance in the entire cantata.

The gestures of creation and destruction combined in one composition, establish a “frame” in compositions of a particular kind. The basis for their dramatic profile is the principle of a wave as a natural phenomenon, where the sound matter follows its own laws, as if it does not need a human.

(11) This ground rule has exceptions owing to specific artistic conception. The most famous of them is Joseph Haydn’s *Symphony No. 45*, known as the *Farewell Symphony*. It does not finish but gradually melts away, as the musicians one after another go off-stage. Initially, this prototype of modern performances was just a message for Prince Esterházy, who withheld salary, but later the *Farewell Symphony* became a metaphor for the death of music, presented not only to the ruling nobleman but also to the European community.

It seems that music has created itself and that the natural element has obtained its voice in a powerful vital impulse. Such are large orchestral compositions by Charles Ives, Iannis Xenakis, Pierre Boulez and others, which can be defined as a certain natural philosophy in sound. In works by Ia. Xenakis, its creation acquired the status of a deliberate creative task in the spirit of the new Pythagoreanism, where the feeling of elemental primordial sound received a mathematical justification⁽¹²⁾. The vital power of the compositions of the kind is unquestionable; equally evident is their semantics, new to the European tradition, which is based on the natural, “objective” properties of the musical matter, such as timbre, dynamics, register and volume of sound. Meanwhile, the temporarily retreated “anthropological” vitality that is associated with melodic and harmonic organization continues to exist, albeit having lost the hierarchical supremacy of former times.

An illustrative example of this kind is the music piece for symphony orchestra with electronics by Vladimir Tarnopolsky, *The Breath of the Exhausted Time*. The title clearly conveys the artistic conception: one does hear the breath of the sound matter that is alive but existing as if outside of a human, personifying a certain cosmic substance – a musical metaphor for the Universe. The composer compares it with *Solaris* – the image from the novel by Stanisław Lem and the film by Andrei Tarkovsky. According to Vladimir Tarnopolsky, the whole music piece is based on an endless undulating rhythm of rises and falls that includes different states of the sound matter – its emergence, pulsation, consolidation, dispersion and new birth. This process takes place asynchronously in various layers of the orchestra. It seems to have no articulated purpose, but an immense ascent and a catastrophic fall are heard there as a metaphor for the last inhale and exhale – the image that consolidates the meaning of the entire composition [7, p. 32].

(12) The so-called stochastic music the composing technique of which is based on the probability theory.

Expanding the aesthetic range of contemporary music

Despite all the novelty of this stylistics of the vital, on a large scale it adds to the earlier examples mentioned above, from L. Beethoven to R. Wagner and A. Scriabin. A fundamentally new feature is the expansion of the range of aesthetically acceptable sounds. This process started with a shift away from classical tonality (similar to the abandonment of the idea of figurativeness in the visual arts) and a gradual introduction of a spectrum of noise and artificially generated acoustic objects⁽¹³⁾. It could be assumed that the introduction of noises, the “sounds of life” that did not use to be considered musical, would automatically provide new capacities of vitality in music; however, in reality, it was found that there is no direct correlation. Thus, purely electronic compositions that require technical means of reproduction instead of live performance in a concert hall did not take hold, whereas live electronics that expands the capabilities of the musician and his instrument has been widely introduced.

Whatever is related to this sphere activates an important parameter of the vitality of modern academic music, i.e. spatiality. Like other innovations, the technique of sound separation in space has long existed as a side product of performing live; however, in some cases it was used intentionally and was purposefully developed, as, for example, in the temple music-making at St. Mark’s Basilica (the Venetian school of the 16th–17th centuries). In the music of the 20th–21st centuries, spatiality can be illustrated in different examples; we would like to focus on two of them, most interesting in the context of the new vitality. The first is an instrumental composition by Iannis Xenakis, *Terretektorh* (1966), which implies a particular seating of the orchestra and the audience: alternating wedges inscribed within a circle, with the conductor placed in the center⁽¹⁴⁾. The music is grounded on the constant movement of sound from one wedge of instruments to another, over the audience

(13) It is about the so-called electro-acoustic (electronic) music. It is also referred to as *acousmatic* music (from Greek *akusma*, “a thing heard”), that is, music, the source of which is hidden from the listener and which is reproduced without the direct participation of the performer. The word goes back to Pythagoras, who, according to a legend, taught students from behind a screen, so as not to distract them from the content of his lectures.

(14) It is easiest to imagine this disposition as a round cake cut from the center to the edges.

who perceive it not just with their ears but also with the whole body as the sound passes by. One can enter the sound stream like a river, which is not a metaphor here but a *physiological reality*⁽¹⁵⁾.

Another example is one of K. Stockhausen's creative projects implemented at the Osaka 1970 World Expo. The pavilion of the Federal Republic of Germany had a shape of a ball, and the audience could move inside in various directions and planes, accompanied by the music of K. Stockhausen's electronic compositions coming from all sides: right and left, front and back, from above and below. The total stereophony caused by the spherical shape of the building, like in the above given example of the instrumental composition by Iannis Xenakis, created a new physiology of auditory perception.

The feeling of spatial vitality can also arise under more ordinary conditions, for example, with the help of a special technique of dynamic comparisons and extreme contrasts in sound volumes, while maintaining traditional instruments and the generally accepted seating on stage. This technique was skillfully used by Giya Kancheli, who elevated it to the level of a unique element of style. The unquestionable vital tension of his music is largely due to this particular technique⁽¹⁶⁾.

The physiology of perception, which the ultimate effect of vitality is built on, is closely connected with what determines it, that is, with a particular performing process. It is also marked by a tendency towards expanding the boundaries of the physiological element, already inherent in the performing arts. Non-conceptual and non-pictorial in nature, the musical art is moving towards physicality, since the human body itself is not external in relation to an organized sound phenomenon. On the contrary, the human body and the sound construct can directly interact with each other. In the case of contemporary art, this is connected, for instance, with the phenomenon of extended instrumentalism, which offers new performing opportunities, new forms of interaction between the performer

(15) The musical spatiality of Ia. Xenakis also reflected his experience as an architect (in particular, he is known for his close collaboration with Le Corbusier in 1948–1959).

(16) Its efficiency is indirectly confirmed by the fact that microphone recording of Kancheli's compositions for large orchestral ensembles proves to be technically challenging and is fraught with significant acoustic losses.

and the instrument, and new forms of the extreme vocal, which pushes the boundaries of the available methods of voice production⁽¹⁷⁾.

However, from the perspective of our research problem, the degree of radicality of innovations, both spatial and performing, is not a determinant. The most daring innovations just create the ground for a genuine sense of vitality. A composer, for instance, can simply prescribe instrumentalists to sing at some point, with the voices they have, and in this way produce an impression of the *efficiency* of the sound of music, which has gone beyond a concert ritual. Such was the favorite technique of Alexander Vustin (1943–2020), the composer who strove for the true vitality of a musical work. "...Music is able to engage in its magic circle, and such is its vital relevance, since performing music is an act, a reminder of the golden age, when a word, gesture and sound were inseparable..."⁽¹⁸⁾

All the examples of "materialization" of the vital element in music that have been given above (and many others that have remained outside the scope of this article) by default imply that the phenomenon of vitality itself is not evaluated in moral categories: like a natural phenomenon, the vital lives to its own laws. Human life can be seen as a flow of vital energy, which enters into different relations with the environment. These relationships can be confrontational; nevertheless, vitality itself seems to be indifferent to society and its ethical attitudes. This idea is challenged by Mikhail Epstein, who suggests introducing an antipode of the "positive" vitality, that is, aggression. "Vitality is vigor that seeks manifestation. A vital person always fills their life and that of their close people with new content; they create something, prove something, and discover the truth. They can take up the struggle with others, but only if their energy wins over the inertia of the environment and want to fulfil their potential, overcoming external obstacles. However, their main struggle is with themselves, their internal boundaries, inertness, dismay, and fatigue.

(17) Thus, the *Aria for Soprano and Accordion* by Alexey Siumak (2014) implies an "inversive" breathing technique: in regular singing and speech, the sound is produced on the exhale, whereas here the composer prescribes to do so on the inhale. Such innovations undoubtedly intensify the vital sensations of both the performer and the audience, all of whom are free to find their own semantic subtext in the musical piece.

(18) From an unpublished interview (2013). The same idea is expressed by Rainer Maria Rilke, who noticed that poetry is alive as an acoustic phenomenon, and in the famous exclamation of Osip Mandelstam, "And word, return to music!"

Aggression, by contrast, is a manifestation of inner emptiness. A person lacks internal motives and incentives for action. They are dead but willing to be alive. So they catch hold of those alive and try to get their energy" [11]. Answering the legitimate question of what to do then with indisputably negative manifestations of vitality, for example, those having taken place in Nazi Germany, Mikhail Epstein clarifies that in such cases we can observe a special type of vitality – aggressive vitality (apparently, it is up to the reader how to understand it – as an oxymoron or dialectics).

Of all the arts, it is music that by virtue of its specific nature is the furthest away from unambiguous value judgements. However, mixed genres are more vulnerable. An example illustrating this is Igor Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring*, an unsurpassed piece of the vital art of the modernist era. The anniversary events in 2013, which celebrated the centenary of the masterpiece, initiated its interpretation in the spirit of the "new ethics" and the relevant idea of tolerance. It refers to the finale of the ballet that was criticized by new critics for being a demonstration of inhumanity and violence. In other words, the undisputed vital energy of the ballet music was presented as a negative property of this great creation of the 20th century. In a way, it appeared to be a replication of the scandalous premiere of *The Rite of Spring*, which had marked the real, "non-calendar" beginning of a new era and a new art. The reason was the literally unheard-of music of the ingenious opus.

The concept of the ballet unfolds between its opening and closing scenes: the Introduction and the finale – the *Sacrificial Dance*, the only choreographic solo in the entirely corps-de-ballet composition. These two episodes in a concentrated form convey the essence of the poetics of the vital, which is observed in the ballet as a whole, but finds its culmination in the introduction and the finale. Its material, sound basis is well known and has been described more than once: archaic Slavic folklore (authentic and "composed"), presented in a "natural" form, rather than traditionally processed, and an innovative rhythm discovered by the composer in the same folklore, but not limited to it.

"...I wanted the Introduction to convey the awakening of spring, scratching, cracking, birds and animals fussing" [8, p. 149]. People also can be seen in this landscape, but they are almost indistinguishable from nature and its inhabitants. The famous opening melody of the high bassoon, obviously a "human" one, is replaced by a kaleidoscope of "voices" of other

participants; gradually, "a gigantic orchestra of supposedly 'primitive' instruments is formed, where everyone plays what they are capable of" [10, p. 240]. The archetypal theme of modernism ("the awakening of spring") develops from a simple plot motif into something else: the musical canvas imitates the processes of nature, growth, accumulation, and in the climax – an unthinkable dissonance of thirteen real instrumental lines (intensified by duplication). There is no hierarchy in this element of singing, whistling, rumbling, quacking and croaking, rustling and knocking of the "conception of the world" (I. Stravinsky's words). The introduction creates an illusion of a sound materialization of the archaic world – "here and now". However, with all the unprecedented novelty of the concept and its implementation in the non-classical form of accumulation and growth (increasing, crescendo), the roots of the vitality of the Introduction are still to be found in the past of the European tradition (see above for introductions to other compositions). This is a gesture of creation in all its glory and victorious power.

Another side of the poetics of vitality is presented in the final scene, the *Sacrificial Dance*, which is entirely new for the European musical tradition. In this respect, it is worth giving the second part of the dictionary definition of vitality: along with "power and vigor", vitality implies "the ability to survive on the edge of life and death" [3]. It is this subtext exactly that comes to the forefront in the finale of the ballet. Not the creative power of the act of creation, not the joy of awakening discussed above: in the *Sacrificial Dance*, we observe the vitality of transgression, the threshold state of life in the face of death – *The Sacrifice*⁽¹⁹⁾. Music is the main means of implementing this collision. Irregular convulsive rhythm distorts the sense of time – the ontological basis for music as a form of art; thus, the expression "pulse of the era" acquires an unexpected literalness.

As it is known, *The Rite of Spring* proved to be a prophecy, both in socio-historical and aesthetic terms. Transgressive vitality has also been continued in life and art, which comes as no surprise. One of the examples is *Requiem* by György Ligeti (1965), a fundamental opus of European music after World War II. We refer to its central part – *Dies irae* (the Day of Wrath), which is traditionally interpreted as an impressive scene

(19) The title of the second part of the ballet; originally, a working title for the entire composition.

of the Last Judgment, full of dramatic contrasts and hopes for the mercy of God. It is not without reason that G. Ligeti considered his *Dies irae* to be the best piece he had composed.

Expression is to the utmost degree there: contrasts are exaggerated, the cosmic boundlessness of space is emphasized by the full and resonant echo, stereo separation of the groups of performers and, last but not least, the great number of performers⁽²⁰⁾.

The whole part is built around abrupt changes of frames and states. The “torn form” follows the logic of “moving hallucination”, the logic of irrational fear, inexplicable and unknowable. The convulsive, unnatural, baffling discontinuity of voices and the orchestra suddenly gives place to numb stillness, as if a person, rushing through the crowd looking for survival, is paralyzed with fear when caught by a searchlight beam. According to the composer, *Requiem* reflects his personal experience⁽²¹⁾; it can be assumed that composition became his “poems after Auschwitz”, an exceptionally reliable expression of insanity between life and death – in the transgression of vitality.

Conclusion

In this article, we have presented a brief outline of the evolution of vitality in music, which is considered an essential quality of this art form. The phenomenon of vitality is illustrated by examples of various historical epochs and styles; however, the focus of this research is pieces of contemporary musical art. The article suggests specific terms of the poetics of vitality, such as *the concept of creation*, *the gesture of birth*, *the gesture of destruction*, and *the transgression of the vital*. Special attention is given to the analysis of the vital at the level of the musical language and form.

As an epilogue, let us turn to Vladimir Tarnopolsky’s small and low piece for viola solo, *One Hundred Days of Solitude*, which culminated

the concert of the same name that took place on June 29, 2020 in the empty Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory (was broadcast online). The title contains the idea of the pandemic quarantine and a paraphrase of both Borges and Napoleon; the sounds the melody is centered around are the initials of friends-composers who have left. The finale is as follows: the soloist continues to play the main motif as he is leaving the stage (which is currently a common technique). The musician goes off-stage, but the sound of his steps strangely remains and gradually intensifies. The steps separated from a person and filling the entire sound space represent a deafening shadow of the disappeared world, the reality of Atlantis, and eyes wide shut on the threshold of life and death.

P.S.

There is a story about the composer John Cage, which he himself would often tell. One day he found himself in a soundproof room, intending to hear complete silence. However, even there he heard two constant sounds, the high and the low. As it was explained, that was the sound of his own body, the blood-vascular system and nerve impulses working. Therefore, J. Cage concluded that music would never disappear; it would exist as long as people are alive.

(20) There should be no fewer than 180 members of a choir. A greater number is possible, up to 220–250.

(21) In 1944, György Ligeti narrowly escaped deportation by accidentally being placed on a sort of “Schindler’s list”. His parents and brother were sent to a concentration camp, only his mother survived.

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