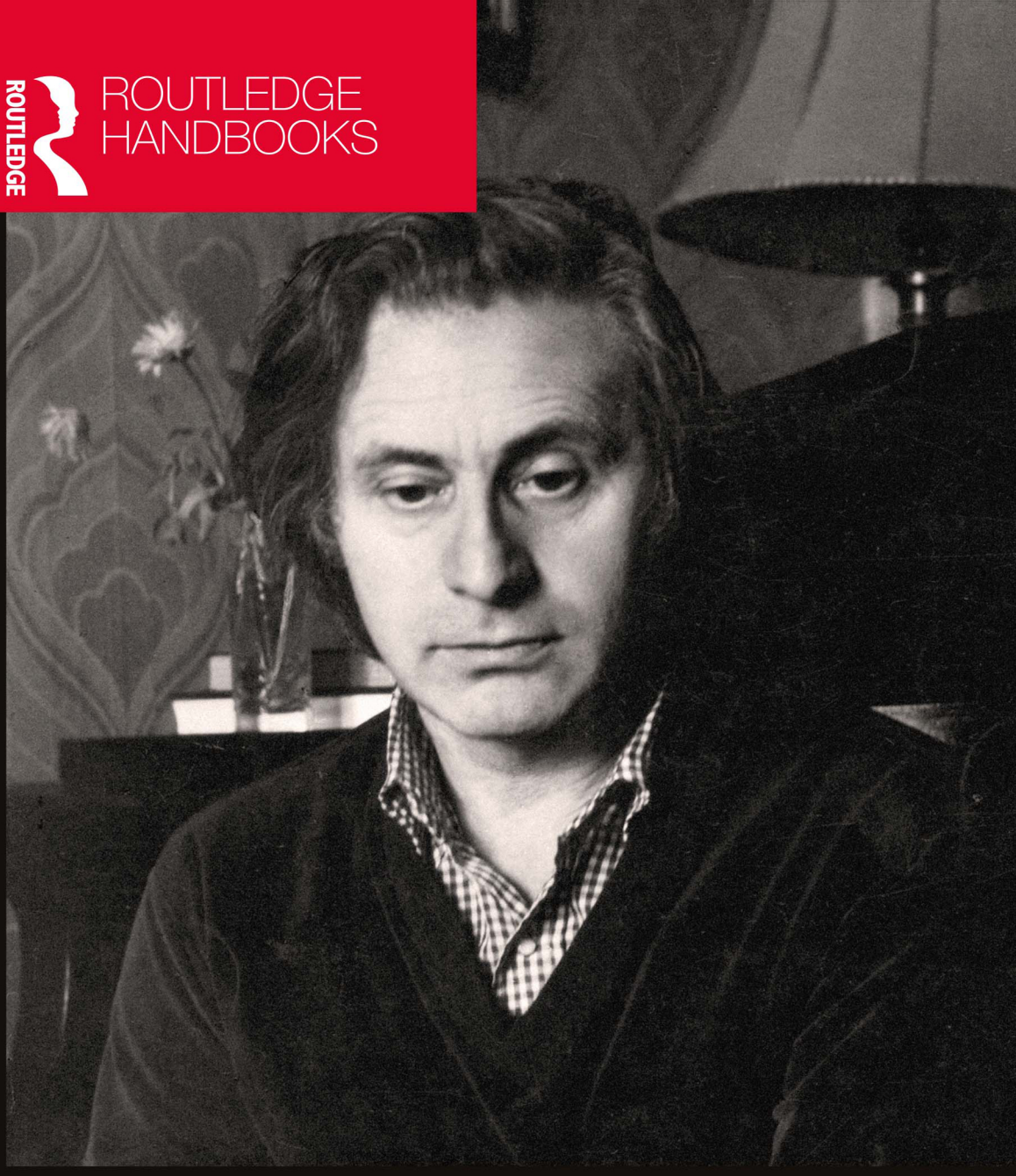
ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOKS



The Routledge Handbook to the Music of Alfred Schnittke

Gavin Dixon

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK TO THE MUSIC OF ALFRED SCHNITTKE

The Routledge Handbook to the Music of Alfred Schnittke is a comprehensive study of the work of one of the most important Russian composers of the late 20th century. Each piece is discussed in detail, with particular attention to the composer's groundbreaking polystylism, as well as his unique approach to musical symbolism and his deep engagement with Christian themes.

This is the first publication to look at Schnittke's output in its entirety, and for most works it represents either the first ever published analysis or the first in a language other than Russian.

The volume presents new research from the Ivashkin-Schnittke Archive at Goldsmiths, University of London and the collection of Schnittke's compositional sketches at the Juilliard Library in New York. It also draws on the substantial research on Schnittke's music published in the Russian language. Including a work list and bibliography of primary and secondary sources, this is an essential reference for all those interested in Russian music, 20th century music and performance studies.

Gavin Dixon is a writer and editor specialising in classical music. He is Editor of *Schnittke Studies* (Routledge 2017) and Music Editor of *Fanfare*, America's leading classical review magazine.

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THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK TO THE MUSIC OF ALFRED SCHNITTKE

Gavin Dixon

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CONVENTIONS

Transliteration of Cyrillic script

Russian text is presented in this book using a simplified version of the Library of Congress romanisation system, as outlined below. Personal names are rendered less systematically, in most cases employing the Latin version that is either conventional or the expressed preference of the bearer (i.e. Alfred Schnittke). The soft sign, 'ь', is rendered as an apostrophe, but this is omitted from personal names. Work titles and all titles in bibliography entries, however, conform to the system below.

А а	A a
Б б	B b
В в	V v
Г г	G g
Д д	D d
Е е	E e
Ё ё	E e
Ж ж	Zh zh
З з	Z z
И и	I i
Й й	I i
К к	K k
Л л	L l
М м	M m
Н н	N n
О о	O o
П п	P p
Р р	R r
С с	S s
Т т	T t
У у	U u
Ф ф	F f
Х х	Kh kh
Ц ц	TS ts
Ч ч	Ch ch
Ш ш	Sh sh

Щ щ	Shch shch
Ъ	"
Ы ы	Y y
ь	'
Э э	E e
Ю ю	IU iu
Я я	IA ia

Musical register

Note names refer to pitch classes (i.e. in any octave) or to pitches in specific registers as implied by the context. Where register designation is required, Scientific Pitch Notation is employed, with the octave number given in subscript. Octaves are counted upwards C–B, with middle C as C_4. All musical examples are written at concert pitch.

PREFACE

The composer Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998) was a man of many musical identities. He came to prominence in the West in the late 1970s as a polystylist, a radical eclectic seemingly intent on levelling all musical hierarchies. This contrasted the parallel reputations that he had already established in Soviet Russia, as one of the leading Modernists of the 1960s generation, and as a popular and prolific film composer. In the 1980s, Schnittke's career continued along similarly diverse paths. His polystylistic works brought ever-greater acclaim in the West, while in Russia his religious works aligned with a resurgence of the Orthodox faith, giving voice to a newly liberated spiritual awareness. And even to describe Schnittke as a Russian composer is simplistic. His family roots were Catholic and Jewish, and he was born and raised in the Volga-German region of southern Russia, with German as his mother tongue. Schnittke spent much of his adult life seeking reconciliation between these disparate identities, and much of his music is as Austro-German as it is Russian. Yet, in spite of these competing influences, Schnittke's attitude to the art of music remained little changed throughout his career. He was instinctively drawn to musical genres, especially the symphony and concerto, and his works in these forms are often closely related.

The structure of this book acknowledges the diversity of Schnittke's music while also focusing on deeper connections within individual genres. Chapters 2–8 discuss Schnittke's music in each of the forms in which he worked. Works are grouped by genre, and each section has a short introduction discussing Schnittke's relationship with the form. A more general context is provided in Chapter 1, 'Eras and Techniques', which offers a broadly chronological survey of Schnittke's career. The chapter is divided into stylistic periods, and each is discussed with reference to the technical and expressive features of Schnittke's music at the time. Readers with a general interest in Schnittke's music are encouraged to read Chapter 1, as well as the introductions to the later chapters. Readers looking for information on individual works can begin with the dedicated section and then explore the chapter introduction for links to other works in the genre, and Chapter 1 (cross-references are provided) for discussion of contemporaneous works, and of Schnittke's artistic motivations at the time.

This book is not a biography of Alfred Schnittke. The composer himself appears regularly in these pages, but only with reference to his music and how it was shaped by his motivations and compositional strategies. However, separating the musical from the extramusical in Schnittke's work proves difficult. Schnittke treated music as a language, in which he sought to

express definite ideas in abstract terms. These concepts were often highly personal – his search for identity, his grief at the death of his mother, his increasingly devout Christian faith – but were coded into his music as a deep layer of meaning. If there is a single idea that links every period of Schnittke's career it is this search for subtext, a long struggle but increasingly successful in his later years. Schnittke's earliest professional works, at the start of the 1960s, were to official commissions. Schnittke would later reject most of these, finding little personal subtext in music that conformed to Socialist Realist conventions. Schnittke's exploration of serialism in the 1960s also proved frustrating, the technique's focus on surface detail continually at odds with his search for depth. That helps explain Schnittke's move to polystylism in the 1970s. Here, the semantic potential of multiple styles, and especially the relationships between them, allowed Schnittke to create many layers of expression and meaning. Monograms derived from musicians' names provided a more direct, even literal, means of conveying subtext. Similarly, Schnittke's late style, from the mid-1980s, can be understood as a sonic distillation of the composer's underlying message. Generic forms are subverted, and the music resists rational analysis, its surface no longer reliant on historical conventions, shaped instead almost purely by intuition and subtext.

The sheer stylistic diversity of Schnittke's music has proved challenging for musical analysis. Within individual periods of his career, specific analytical techniques have been fruitfully applied. Schnittke's search for subtext often involves treating musical styles as a play of codes, and analytical techniques have been applied, particularly to his tonal music and his serialism, to demonstrate both the depth of his stylistic engagement and the subversion he employs to create irony and historical distance. Almost every analytical approach in common use today has been fruitfully applied to Schnittke's work (the exception is Schenker, still a rarity in Russian music studies). The discussion of Schnittke's music in the present volume assumes a grounding in common-practice tonality, serial technique and in pitch-class set theory analysis. Schnittke himself was not familiar with the set-theory approach, but it proves particularly useful in discussing his post-serial music, where rigorous serial transformations are often applied to shorter sets, and in situations where pitch distribution can be concisely described as the manipulation of unordered sets. The discussion of Schnittke's later music also brings in terminology from Neo-Riemannian analysis, although these concepts are explained in the text and require no prior knowledge of the approach.

Many sections of this book have been expanded from earlier published texts. These include programme notes for the BBC Philharmonic and the Salzburg Festival, CD liner notes for the BIS and Somm labels, prefaces for the *Alfred Schnittke Collected Works Edition* (Schnittke 2010–) and papers published in the proceedings of conferences at the Gnessin Academy of Music in Moscow. I am grateful to the editors of those publications for permission to reuse the material here.

Thanks also go to the late Professor Alexander Ivashkin (1948–2014), who supervised my PhD on Schnittke's music (Dixon 2007). This book is indebted to him in many ways. The *Collected Works Edition*, a project ongoing at the time of writing, was his initiative, and its scholarly approach to Schnittke's music, and to the available resources, is a model to which the present publication aspires. The supervising editor for the *Collected Works*, Aleksey Vulfson, has also greatly assisted my research, helping to trace scores and articles, and patiently assisting in my never-ending struggle with Russian cursive script.

The *Collected Works Edition* was made possible by Ivashkin's collection of photocopies of Schnittke's manuscript scores. This collection, which is almost complete, now forms the basis of the Ivashkin-Schnittke Archive at Goldsmiths. The Archive has been invaluable to the present publication, for the manuscript copies, but also for the compositional sketches and the vast array of secondary literature that Ivashkin also collected. I am grateful to Ivashkin's widow, Natalia

Pavlutskaya, for her help in sourcing many scores and articles and for her permission to reproduce several of the sketches in the Archive. At Goldsmiths, the collection is under the curatorship of Lesley Ruthven, Special Collections & Archives Manager. I am deeply indebted to Lesley and her colleagues for all their assistance during my many visits to the library. Thanks also to Lesley and to Jade Leonard for sourcing information in the Archive after Covid-19 brought library visits to a halt. Another important archive of Schnittke's compositional sketches is held at the Juilliard School in New York. I am grateful to Jane Gottlieb, Vice President for Library and Information Resources, for permission to reproduce two of the sketches.

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1
ERAS AND TECHNIQUES

Student works 1953–1962

Schnittke's earliest surviving works date from his years at the Moscow Conservatory where he studied as an undergraduate student from 1953 to 1958 and as a postgraduate student from 1958 to 1961. Throughout these years, Schnittke studied under the composer Evgeny Golubev (1910–1988), and his student works document a rigorous training programme, covering all major instrumental and vocal genres.

By 1953, Schnittke was already a proficient pianist, and his early exposure to the Russian late-Romantic piano school, particularly Rachmaninov, is evident from his earliest works. He had also studied harmony and counterpoint privately with Iosif Ryzhkin since 1950 (Ivashkin 1996, 44–45). Golubev agreed to teach Schnittke on the strength of his *Poème for Piano and Orchestra*, a single-movement work, written under Ryzhkin's supervision, but only completed in piano score. The music is clearly reminiscent of Rachmaninov, with the piano textures of the main theme and contrasting middle section modelled on those of Rachmaninov's *Prelude in C♯ minor*, op. 3, no. 2.

Schnittke remembered Golubev as a musical conservative: 'In terms of harmony, he, unfortunately, could not help me at all, because his own interests ended in Romantic-era major and minor, with supplementary major and minor chords, and some extended dominants' (Shulgin 2004, 14). But a constructive tension arose between teacher and pupil, with Golubev stressing the value of smooth transitions and a natural, 'narrative' flow, while Schnittke's tendency was towards stark contrasts and rhythmical regularity (Ivashkin 1996, 58–60).

Golubev asked Schnittke to write in a broad range of genres, and his student works gradually expanded in scale from piano works to solo songs and chamber works 1953–1955, to choral then orchestral works 1955–1958, culminating in his graduation piece, *Nagasaki*, a full-scale cantata (1958). Schnittke entered the Conservatory in the year of Stalin's death, and his earliest works demonstrate a conformity to the stylistic conventions of the time. Myaskovsky and Kabalevsky are clear models, especially in Schnittke's piano writing, in the *Six Preludes* (1953–1954) and the piano part to the *Violin Sonata No. 0* (1954–1955). From Kabalevsky, the E minor Prelude takes the triadic harmonies alternating with downbeat diatonic dissonances. In the D minor Prelude, Schnittke alternates major harmonies with their tonic minor, another idea found in Kabalevsky, for example in the Prelude in C major, op. 38, no. 1.

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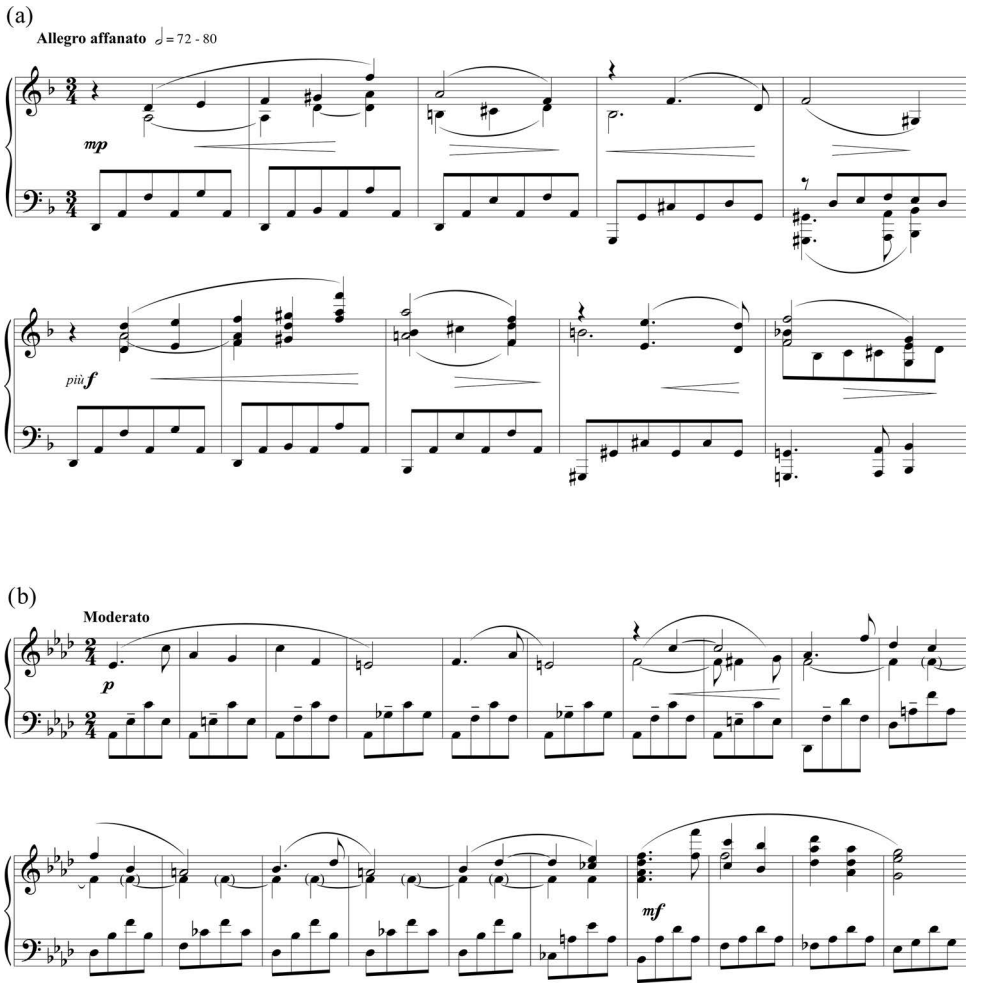
Myaskovsky was a more direct influence, as Golubev himself had studied with him. During classes with Golubev, Schnittke played in four-hand arrangements of Myaskovsky's symphonies (Kholopova & Chigareva 1990, 22). Myaskovsky's piano writing was particularly influential on Schnittke's early work, a lyrical and Romantic style, but more direct and less florid than Rachmaninov. The piano part for Schnittke's *Violin Sonata No. 0* employs textures derived from Myaskovsky's 'Barcarolle-Sonatina' from his *Piano Sonata No. 8* (Vashchenko 2016, 97). The Myaskovsky sonatas also influence the *Six Piano Preludes*. The D minor and B minor Preludes both employ simultaneous chromatic mirroring between treble and bass, a textural device that Schnittke would return to in his orchestral music of the 1980s, but which here looks back to Myaskovsky, for example his *Piano Sonata No. 4*, movement III. Schnittke's A♭ major Prelude is modelled even more closely on Myaskovsky's *Piano Sonata No. 1*, movement II (see Example 1.1). In both cases, the quiet lyrical opening theme is presented over widely arpeggiated left-hand harmonies, accompanied by a more static alto voice, and then reprised in octaves.



Example 1.1 (a) Myaskovsky *Piano Sonata No. 1*, op. 6, movement II, bars 1–10; (b) Schnittke *Six Preludes* (1953–1954): Prelude in A♭, bars 1–20

Music from outside the officially endorsed curriculum was difficult to access in the early 1950s, but opportunities gradually increased later in the decade. Schnittke also attended the composition class of Vissarion Shebalin (1902–1963), who made great efforts to introduce students to forbidden Western music – Stravinsky, Hindemith, Bartók, Schoenberg. In addition, the Students' Association (Scientific Student Society – Nauchnoe Studencheskoe Obshchestvo), under the energetic leadership of Edison Denisov, regularly met to hear recordings of new music. Stravinsky's Russian-period ballets figured prominently, as did wartime works by Shostakovich, still censured following the Zhdanov denunciations. The *Symphonies Nos. 8 and 9*, which had been singled out for criticism in the first draft of the 10 February 1948 Resolution on Music of the Central Committee (Bolshevik) and officially proscribed four days later (Fay 2000, 157, 162), were performed at the Students' Association in four-hand piano arrangements (Ivashkin 1996, 56). As Schnittke recalled: 'for a long time I was tormented by the covert logic of Shostakovich's voice leading. It seemed that a lot of time passed until I was able to understand it. Also interesting, but just as unclear, was Stravinsky's linearity, but it is obvious that just my independent contact with the music of these luminaries … was a necessary stage in the development of my compositional skills' (Shulgin 2004, 14).

As Schnittke's studies moved to orchestral forms, he was increasingly influenced by the contemporaneous works of Shostakovich. The premieres of Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 10* and *Violin Concerto No. 1*, in 1953 and 1955, respectively, made a significant impact on the way that Schnittke understood the orchestra. In his *Symphony No. 0* (1956–1957), the passacaglia third movement is modelled on the third movement of the Shostakovich concerto. The symphonic scope of Schnittke's early concertos also reflects the influence of Shostakovich, and the first violin concertos of both composers are effectively symphonies for violin and orchestra (Ivashkin, preface to *Collected Works Edition*, Series III, Volume 5a). Distinctive features of Shostakovich's orchestration also appear in Schnittke's early scores, such as the xylophone doubling the melody in the coda of the first movement of the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (1960).

In 1993, Schnittke drew up a list of his 'early' compositions, which formed the basis of the 'Early and Unfinished Works' appendix to the works list compiled by Alexander Ivashkin (Ivashkin 1996, 223–24). The only two student works not consigned to the juvenilia list were the concertos, for violin (1957, rev. 1962) and piano (1960). The two concertos are also the most stylistically advanced of his early works, with 20th-century innovations in harmony and orchestration applied to the otherwise traditional structuring and expression. The harmonic language of the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* provoked heated debate at a meeting of the Composers' Union in 1961 (Kholopova & Chigareva 1990, 11), but such harmonic explorations were becoming an increasingly prominent feature of Schnittke's music in his first years of postgraduate study. A collection of four works for violin and piano, also written in 1960, show a similarly experimental approach. One movement (the second in the manuscript copy) is notated without key signature, but hovers around a modal E minor. The final movement is in a similarly ambiguous D minor, with repeated diatonic dissonances in the piano part, and prominent movement in parallel fifths – another borrowing from recent Shostakovich (see Example 1.10).

Most of Schnittke's postgraduate works were large-scale projects to official commissions. Schnittke described these years as a 'time of unsuccessful attempts to enter into friendly relations with the Union of Composers' (Shulgin 2004, 17). The relationship lasted just over two years and resulted in the cantata *Songs of War and Peace* (1959), the orchestral *Poem About Space* (1961) and the unfinished operas *African Ballad* (1961–1962) and *The Eleventh Commandment* (1962). The large-scale, civic style of these works drew on Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, which had impressed

Schnittke when he heard it performed in 1957, as well as on the patriotic cantatas of Gigory Sviridov (1915–1998), although neither influence lasted long into the 1960s.

Schnittke's 'short affair' with the Composers' Union came to an abrupt end around the time that he completed his postgraduate studies. *Poem About Space* did not meet the Union's requirements, and in the fallout from that project, the two operas that had been commissioned also fell through. Work on *The Eleventh Commandment* also demonstrated to Schnittke that his path lay in a different direction: 'While working on the opera, I realised that I needed to put the larger issues to one side for a while and thoroughly examine my musical language. I realised that I didn't care enough about the exact embodiment of ideas, often being satisfied with a "generalised" approach based on my technique. And since limitation of means encourages invention, I turned to chamber music, and wrote a number of works in this genre' (Kholopova & Chigareva 1990, 14).

The issue of an 'exact embodiment of ideas' relates to the texts that Schnittke was setting, none of which he had chosen himself (Shulgin 2004, 33, 35, 37; Ivashkin 1996, 63). But the move away from vocal writing was emphatic, and for several decades Schnittke's music was dominated by instrumental forms, with voices only returning in a significant capacity with his choral works from the late 1970s. Chamber music took precedence over orchestral works, in part because these were easier to perform, and could be organised at short notice to avoid censorship (Schmelz 2009c, 205). But that limitation paralleled Golubev's syllabus a decade before, with Schnittke now exploring his growing interest in serialism and post-war avant-garde techniques first through piano works and pieces for small ensemble, but then gradually building in scale up to orchestral scores at the end of the 1960s.

Serial period 1963–1971

Serialism

Like many Russian composers of his generation, Schnittke spent the early years of the 1960s experimenting with serial techniques. The wave of interest in serialism across Western Europe between the wars was impeded in Russia by Soviet censorship, and information about the techniques and practices of the Second Viennese School only became widely available during the Khrushchev years of the mid-1950s. The result was a rapid and chaotic assimilation, with information about Schoenberg's pitch-based serialism arriving simultaneously with scores from the Darmstadt School, where serialism was by then being applied to all musical parameters. Schnittke learned of serial techniques while still a student, but only began to explore their potential seriously after completing his studies in 1961. The relationship soon proved to be problematic, and after a short period of strictly applied technique, 1963–1964, Schnittke began to move away, still employing tone rows and serial practice, but increasingly combining them with other ideas. Schnittke's polystylism of the 1970s grew out of the composer's dissatisfaction with serialism, with its resolutely technical approach and its enforced abstraction.

Schnittke learned of Schoenberg's musical philosophy earlier than most of his contemporaries, through Thomas Mann's novel *Doktor Faustus*, which he read in the original German soon after its first publication in 1947. Mann's Faust is a thinly veiled portrait of Schoenberg, and while the text does describe Schoenberg's serial technique, it is more concerned with the symbolism and philosophy of the idea than the mechanics of serial composition. So, from the start, Schnittke's attitude to serialism was informed by the numerological symbolism of the number 12 – which Mann perceived in Schoenberg's approach – and by a philosophical dichotomy between technical restraint and personal expression. That idea had come from Mann himself, and

was presented in the novel with a profound ethical significance, as the restraint and depersonalisation were linked in the narrative with evil and the demonic.

Exposure to serial music came later, during Schnittke's undergraduate years at the Moscow Conservatory. From 1954, scores by Schoenberg, Berg and Webern became available in the USSR. While Schnittke was an undergraduate, he lived with his family in Valentinovka, three hours by train from Moscow. The journey was often spent studying these scores and writing musical exercises that imitated the techniques (Ivashkin 1996, 62). At the Conservatory, many of the students were taking a similar interest in serialism, with scores and recordings distributed as they became available. Edison Denisov, as head of the Students' Association, was particularly active in this respect, well connected with musicians in the West and able to provide fellow students with otherwise unavailable scores and recordings. Under his leadership, the Students' Association became a 'window on Europe', introducing students to recordings of still forbidden works.

Another important figure for composers of Schnittke's generation was Philipp Hershkowitz (or Gershkovich, 1906–1989). Hershkowitz was a Romanian-born composer who had studied briefly with Alban Berg and more extensively with Anton Webern. In 1946, he settled in Moscow and from the 1950s became a mentor for young composers, a 'living witness' to the Second Viennese School (Smirnov 2003, 69). Hershkowitz was wholly outside the musical establishment – he earned a living editing film scores, while continuing to write and propagate serial music privately – and acted as an independent mentor to many composers of Schnittke's generation. Denisov described him as 'the anti-secretary of the anti-union of (anti-Soviet) composers' (Kholopova 2003, 69). Although Hershkowitz was versed in serial technique, his influence on Schnittke was more aesthetic and philosophical. The Viennese musical culture he brought to Moscow stretched back to Beethoven, whom he revered for the perfection of his thematic development. The implicit link that Hershkowitz presented between First and Second Viennese Schools communicated Schoenberg's own view on the historical foundations of his theories. Schnittke also recalled that Hershkowitz taught his followers to be wary of relying too heavily on serial techniques. 'What was important was that Hershkowitz was influential, not so much as a source for techniques, but as a person with a powerful aesthetic instinct, who helped us find specific and concise characteristics for the artistic side of our work' (Shulgin 2004, 20).

In 1980, Schnittke recalled that his first '12-tone' movement was composed in 1961 (Hansberger 1982, 205). This probably refers to the fugal second movement of the *Concerto for Electric Instruments* (1960), itself an arrangement of a string quartet composed in 1958–1959 (Ivashkin 2003, 259). The movement is both strictly fugal and strictly serial, but the fugal development is more accomplished than the serial manipulation. The fugue subject is based on the prime form of the row, presented three times without transposition. The countersubject is based on the row in inversion. Transpositions only occur according to the fugal logic, i.e. in ascending fifths in the exposition, and no retrogrades are employed. Subject and countersubject are fragmented in the coda, and this is the only section that is not strictly serial. Schnittke said of his earliest serial experiments that the main difficulty the method posed was in the creation of dynamic forms (Shulgin 2004, 16). In this movement, the problem was solved by mapping serial practice onto fugal form, with all the structural decisions dictated by the latter.

In 1963, Schnittke began a two-year period of intensive exploration of serialism. He was now in a better position to understand the technical minutiae of serial practice as well as its history, as textbooks from the West were becoming available. Schnittke had a particular advantage in his native German competency, reading textbooks by Krenek and Eimert, and later texts by Stockhausen and Ligeti (Kholopova 2003, 70–71). Theoretical debates about modern compositional theory were also at the front of Schnittke's mind throughout this period through his

teaching at the Moscow Conservatory, where he discussed composers including Berg, Boulez and Ligeti (Kholopova & Chigareva 1990, 22).

But Schnittke was not yet ready to embrace the full rigour or the system: His first two serial works of that year, the *Violin Sonata No. 1* and *Prelude and Fugue for Solo Piano*, both employ multiple series. The *Violin Sonata No. 1* is particularly cautious in its application of serialism and, in the first movement, the series only appears in the melody untransposed (Schmelz 2009c, 137) (although it is used in retrograde to form the piano's harmonies – the first use of retrograde forms or chordal voicings of rows in Schnittke's music).

The following year, Schnittke composed two works that pushed the rigour of the system to its limits. By this stage, post-war total serialism was coming into play for Soviet composers (in a 1980 interview, Schnittke used the terms '12-tone' and 'serial' to distinguish tone-row serialism from total serialism in music of the early 1960s (Hansberger 1980, 250)), and it had been discussed – negatively – in a *Sovetskaia Muzyka* article as far back as 1959. *Music for Piano and Chamber Orchestra* and *Music for Chamber Orchestra* (both 1964) employ integral serial techniques. In the first work, Schnittke applies serial techniques to pitch, rhythm and texture, although in non-rigorous ways. The second work employs a more rigorous system for applying serial order to durations, although it employs a 13-note set.

These two works, and especially *Music for Chamber Orchestra*, which Schnittke chose not to include in his works list, caused a brief crisis for the composer, who was unsure where to take his serial project next. His next major work, *Three Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva* (1965), was based on a more intuitive approach to pitch organisation. As Schnittke explained, the two *Music* pieces 'led me to the fact that I wanted to write a work completely free from both the technical dogmas of serial technology and the mechanical dogma of tonal music' (Shulgin 2004, 42).

Two works from 1966 suggest a new role for serial technique in Schnittke's music. The *String Quartet No. 1* and *Violin Concerto No. 2* were written at the same time (Schnittke interrupted work on the quartet to meet a commission deadline for the concerto), and both employ symmetrical tone rows (see Figure 1.1). The symmetry in the two cases is different, reflective symmetry in the concerto and rotational symmetry in the quartet, but the symbolism is the same. In the quartet, Schnittke seeks symmetry on many levels, and the structure of the row is complemented by similar symmetries in the structure and counterpoint of the music. In the *Violin Concerto*, symmetry and order are linked to the music's covert narrative. The work is based on the life of Christ, with the row symbolising his message, the musical order imposed by serialism now symbolic of virtue, and a musical virtue in its own right. That attitude may have resulted from a deeper engagement with the work of Anton Webern, who championed symmetrical rows. The *Violin Concerto No. 2* also contains brief applications of serial rhythm, which have little structural significance, but allude to the Webernian post-war tradition.

Schnittke's attitude to serialism in the late 1960s gradually became less utilitarian and more symbolic. That process began with *Improvisation and Fugue* (1965), which follows the letter of serial technique more than the spirit. As Schnittke pointed out, the work is based on an all-interval series (Shulgin 2004, 43), a property he had also explored in the two *Music* scores the previous year (see Figure 1.1). But the serial manipulation is deliberately primitive, with the row mainly appearing in prime form in the Improvisation. In the Fugue, the row vies for primacy against a rumba rhythm. The chordal passage from the work's opening reappears, but with the accumulating series replaced by clusters. The row becomes a symbol of order rather than a functional structuring device.

By the time of *Serenade* (1968) and *Symphony No. 1* (completed 1971), that symbolism has become more generalised. Neither uses an all-interval row or a symmetric row – the fact that the

WORK/MOVEMENT	ROW AS INTERVAL CLASSES	COMMENTS R- retrograde RI – retrograde inversion T – transpositional
String Quartet (1959) *Concerto for Electric Instruments*, movt. 2 *Prelude and Fugue*	-1, -5, +2, +5, 6, -5, 6, -5, -3, +5, 6	Every other interval perfect 4th/5th
Eleventh Commandment Prelude and Fugue	+2, +1, -2, +5, -1, -1, +3, -1, +2, +1, 1	
Violin Sonata No. 1, movt. 1	+3, +3, +4, +4, -3, -3, -3, +4, +4, +3, +3	R symmetry. Diminished and augmented triads
Violin Sonata No. 1, movt. 2	+3, +4, +3, +4, -3, -5, +3, +4, +3, +4, -3	T symmetry
Violin Sonata No. 1, movt. 3	+4, +3, +4, +3, +4, +1, +3, +4, +3, -5	
Violin Sonata No. 1, movt. 4	+4, +3, -4, +3, +4, -1, -4, -4, +1, 6, +3	Major – minor – diminished – augmented triads
Music for Piano and Chamber Orchestra	+1, +4, -3, +2, -5, -2, 6, -5, -1, +3, -4	All-interval row
Music for Chamber Orchestra	+1, +3, -2, -4, +5, 6, -1, -3, +2, +4, -5, 6	T symmetry All-interval row 13 pitches
Improvisation and Fugue	-4, +3, +4, 6, +5, +3, +2, -1, +4, +3, +3	All-interval row Major – minor – diminished triads
Violin Concerto No. 2	-1, +2, +1, -4, +5, +1, +5, -4, +1, +2, -1	R symmetry
String Quartet No. 1	+2, -1, -3, +5, -4, 6, +4, -5, +3, +1, -2	RI symmetry
pianissimo…	-4, +1, +5, -3, +2, +4, -2, -5, 6, +3, -1	All-interval row
Serenade	+1, 6, -4, -5, -1, -1, -2, -1, 6, +5, -2	
Symphony No. 1	+3, -1, -3, -3, -1, -2, +1, +4, -1, 6, +3	
Symphony No. 2, IV 'Crucifixus'	-1, +2, +1, +1, +1, 6, -1, -1, -1, -2, +1	RI symmetry
Viola Concerto	-1, 6, -3, -1, +5, -3, +5, -1, -3, 6, -1	R symmetry. Based on Bashmet monogram

Figure 1.1 Tone rows from Schnittke's works as interval classes

row contains all 12 pitch classes is sufficient to denote its status. In *Serenade*, the serial ordering competes with aleatoric devices in a clash between order and chaos. In the *Symphony No. 1*, thematic connections, tonal relations and the prime number sequence are as significant as the row in structuring the music – the row and its serial transformations have become a cultural, even historical, artifact within the signification system.

A parallel aspect of that symbolism, which also grew in importance for Schnittke in the late 1960s, was the numerological significance of the number 12. In the *Violin Concerto No. 2*, the link with the life of Christ is illustrated through the 12 instruments of the string orchestra, representing the apostles. *pianissimo…* (1968) is based on a story by Kafka, 'In the Penal Colony', about a torture machine that operates over 12 hours. The number 12 again becomes structurally significant well beyond functional serialism, with the instrumental groups each made up of 12 players, and the score structured as a series of 12 variations. Rhythm series are employed in both works, extending the 12-part symbolism to the rhythmic structure as much as the pitches. The ethical significance of the number 12 in the Kafka story effectively reverses that in the New Testament narrative, suggesting a more abstract symbolism.

In Schnittke's later music, serial practice is largely abandoned – he said that his last serial work was *pianissimo…* , composed in 1968 (Hansberger 1982, 252) – but he continued to employ melodic presentations of all 12 pitch classes. This idea connects with an important trend in Soviet serialism. Svetlana Kurbatskaya, following classifications devised by her teacher Yuri Kholopov, makes a distinction between a 'technique of 12-tone rows' and 'serial technique' (Kurbatskaya

1996, 34–36, see also Cairns 2012). While both are series-based compositional strategies, the 'technique of 12-tone rows' is not based on a single ordering of the pitch classes: all 12 appear with equal regularity, but not in an order derived from the serial system. Kholopov identifies this as a feature of Shostakovich's late adoption of serialism, and, as Peter J. Schmelz points out, 'Only in Russia was there a pervasive tendency to construct pieces with multiple twelve-tone rows that in fact obeyed none of the traditional Schoenbergian "laws" of twelve-tone music (or if they did, did so only selectively)' (Schmelz 2004, 326).

Schnittke continued to privilege 12-note aggregates in his later music, although only as symbols of completion. In the 1970s, these aggregates were completed through an intuitive filling in of the pitch space. In the *Requiem* (1975), Schnittke described how 'a principle of complementarity applies, within free atonal thinking, where I still ensure that the number of notes reaches 12 and that they are not repeated before that' (Shulgin 2004, 80). The fourth movement of the *Symphony No. 2* (1979) returns to the symbolism of the *Violin Concerto No. 2*. In both cases, the religious symbolism is reflected in the symmetry of the respective rows, and the four-note cross representation that begins and ends each (see *Representations of the Cross*, below). But the two works differ in the functional status of serial technique, which is fundamental to the *Violin Concerto No. 2*, but only applied in the *Symphony No. 2* movement through a repeating 12-note passacaglia theme.

Twelve-tone aggregates also appear in Schnittke's late works, although the thinking here is influenced as much by Josef Hauer as by the Second Viennese School (see Late Style below). Aggregates in these works are usually constructed through repeating pitch patterns, for example in the *Piano Sonata No. 1*, movement II, bars 72–76, where a full aggregate is constructed from alternating tritones and semitones. Such an approach often leads to symmetric rows, often with transpostionally related hexachords (Honarmand 2019).

Serial practice also retained a symbolic status in Schnittke's music of the 1980s, especially in works that address the Austro-German tradition. In the *Symphony No. 3* (1981), monograms representing the names of Austro-German composers are each expanded into separate 12-note rows. This device allows Schnittke to acknowledge both the extensive use of monograms by many German-speaking composers, and the role of serialism in the history of Austro-German music. The finale emphasises the referential status of the tone rows by harmonising them with tonal triads, the anachronism emphasising historical perspective. Similar historical juxtapositions are employed in the *Concerto Grosso No. 3* (1984–1985), a work commemorating the anniversaries of Bach, Handel, Domenico Scarlatti and Alban Berg. In the second movement (as in the *Symphony No. 3*), 12-note rows are constructed to begin with monograms based on the names of the four composers and harmonised with tonal triads. Schnittke emulates Berg's quasi-tonal serial structuring. One of the second movement rows employs the hexachordal partitioning of the row for Berg's *Der Wein*, the first half of which, in the Berg, is an ascending D minor scale (Honarmand 2019, 2). Schnittke also regularly employs the chord sequence D minor–G major, referencing the first five notes of the row for Berg's *Violin Concerto* (Sullivan 2010, 22–25). The referential status of the rows is emphasised by the absence of serial manipulation (the rows only appear in prime form): serialism has now become a wholly historical concept, a symbolic reference to an earlier era.

Sonorism: Ligeti and the Polish school

Serial techniques proved paradoxical for Schnittke, new approaches that offered liberation from the confines of tonality, but that imposed even greater restrictions in the process. As his interest in strict serial practice waned, around 1965, he began to explore peripheral aspects of Western

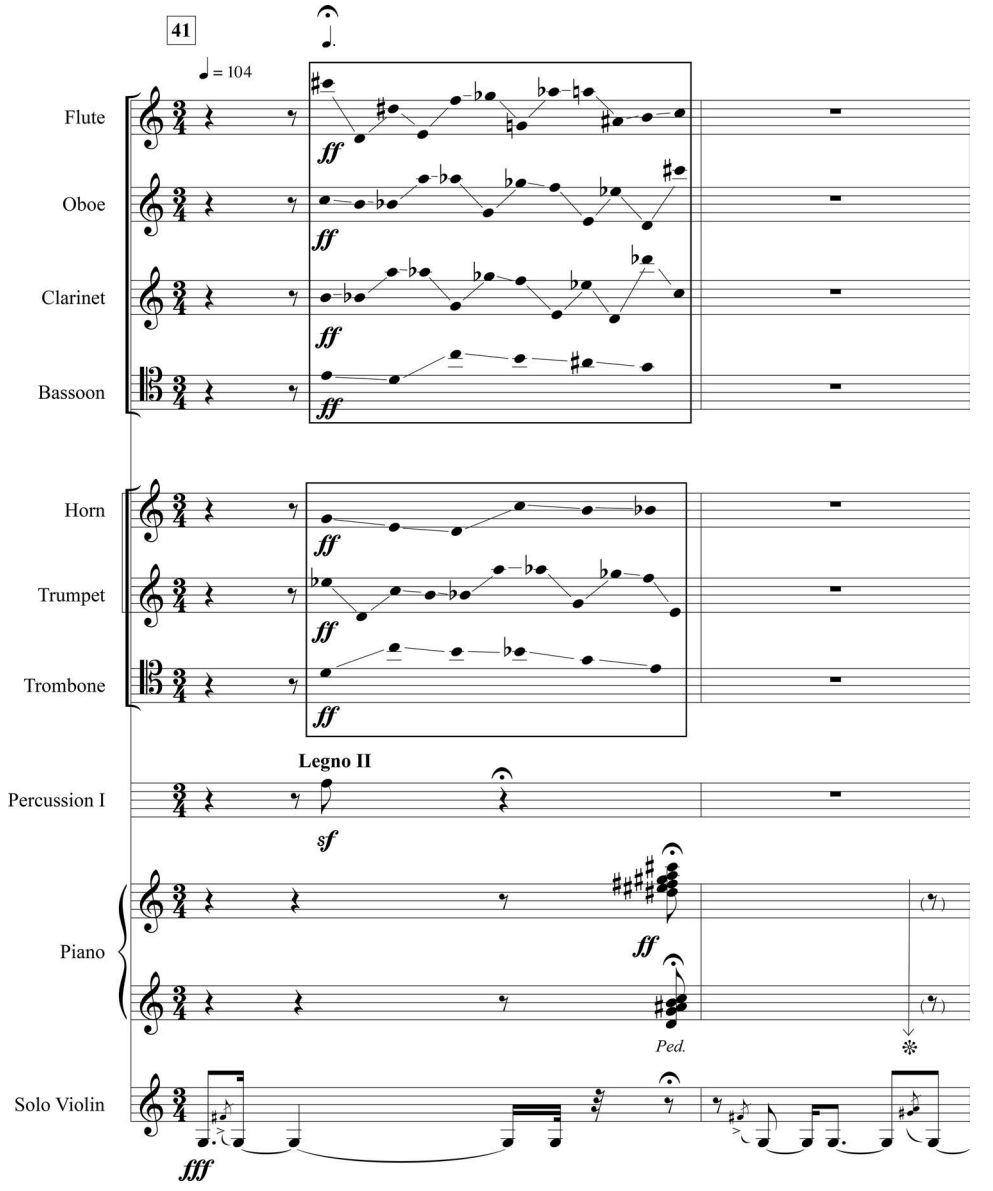
post-war Modernism, particularly extended performing techniques. Another movement in the late-1950s also accorded with his maturing musical voice: the exploration of timbre and texture, the basic acoustical materials of music. These ideas came from several sources. American composers of the early 20th century, notably Charles Ives and Henry Cowell, had made significant advances in texture-based music, and their ideas had reached the Darmstadt School via Pierre Henry and John Cage. Another school of texture-based composition developed in Poland during the late 1950s, and Polish music proved particularly influential in Russia. By the late 1960s, Schnittke was also aware of the music of György Ligeti, which synthesised aspects of the Darmstadt and Warsaw approaches to texture and sonority. Serialism, and mathematical systems for pitch and rhythm, continued to play an important role in Schnittke's music, but his focus gradually shifted towards a greater interest in texture and sonority.

Schnittke's *Violin Sonata No. 1* (1963) introduces new piano techniques, a chromatic cluster and playing inside the body of the instrument. Both are very limited – only one cluster occurs, movement I, Fig. 6, and, in the passage where the pianist reaches inside the piano, movement II, Fig. 34, it is only to damp the strings rather than to play them directly. These ideas can be linked to the early years of Darmstadt serialism – Boulez had used piano clusters as early as *Notations* (1945), and Stockhausen had employed under-the-lid piano playing in *Formel* (1951). But as Schnittke became increasingly disillusioned with the limitations of serialism, both techniques became more prominent. His *Three Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva* (1965) includes two pages of instructions on how to interpret the under-the-lid techniques in the piano part, and similarly detailed instructions are given for the second movement of *Serenade* (1968).

By the mid-1960s, Schnittke was exploring alternatives to serialism. From around 1965, his aim was to find some kind of 'unregulated technique', or to rely instead on 'pure intonation'. 'Since that time,' he recalled, 'I have begun to pay more attention in my work to the "immediate moment" than to a constructive scheme; I began to feel a kind of "amoralism" in the fact that a constructive plan was calculated in advance, … reducing [the composer's] task to filling in cells of different sizes in accordance with the general plan …' (Shulgin 2004, 21). Schnittke looked increasingly to the Polish Sonorist school, a movement that had developed from the late 1950s, led by composers Krzysztof Penderecki (1933–2020), Witold Lutosławski (1913–1994) and Henryk Górecki (1933–2010). In contrast to Western serialism, the Sonorist approach prioritised texture and sound at each specific moment over mathematical ordering principles. Russian composers of Schnittke's generation had early exposure to Sonorism, particularly through the Warsaw Autumn Festival. From 1964, the Polish authorities were actively disseminating scores and recordings from the Festival to the Soviet Union (Schmelz 2009c, 47), and in 1967 Schnittke himself attended, for a performance of his *Dialogue for Cello and Seven Instrumentalists* (1965).

Schnittke recalled that his first experiments with 'Polish' techniques were earlier, when he first started writing film music in 1963. There, under pressure to create something new, he resorted to clusters, aleatorics, polyrhythms and ostinato (Ivashkin 2003, 50). Many of these techniques would recur in Schnittke's film scores of the 1960s and 1970s, with clusters playing a significant role in the soundtracks to *Day Stars* (Igor Talankin 1968), *You and Me* (Larisa Shepitko 1971), *Ascent* (Shepitko 1977) and *Agony* (Elem Klimov 1974, released 1981), a significant bridge between his film and concert work.

Although Schnittke only made limited use of aleatoric techniques, they proved totemic, for the opposition they embodied to the mathematical order of serialism. *Dialogue for Cello and Seven Instrumentalists* and the *Violin Concerto No. 2* employ Lutosławski's 'limited aleatoricism', with musical cells enclosed in boxes and repeated in an unsynchronised fashion (see Example 1.2). For both composers, this was a means to a specific end, creating predetermined textures, but



Example 1.2 *Violin Concerto No. 2*, Fig. 41

without precisely notating the details. That distinction came into focus in *Serenade* (1968), where the serial ordering of the pitches is in stark contrast to every other aspect of the work's organisation. Aleatory boxes are again used, and the published score also leaves blank spaces, rather than empty staves, for silences, a style pioneered by the Polish publisher PWM for Sonoristic scores. Serialism and aleatory techniques are here presented in opposition, with the latter clearly dominant.

Schnittke's larger scores of the late 1960s – *Violin Concerto No. 2* (1966), *pianissimo…* (1968), Sonata for Violin and Chamber Orchestra (1968, the orchestral version of *Violin Sonata No. 2*),

and *Symphony No. 1* (begun in 1969) – show an increasing alignment with the aesthetics of Ligeti. However, Schnittke downplayed any direct influence, pointing out that he had not heard either *Atmosphères* (1961) or *Lontano* (1967) when he composed *pianissimo…* (Shulgin 2004, 26), and the two composers were both combining ideas from Warsaw and Darmstadt independently through the mid-60s. Nevertheless, Ligeti was an important influence on a more fundamental level. Never a serialist himself, Ligeti had been critical of the strict adherence to serial technique, especially by Boulez. Ligeti's article 'Pierre Boulez: Decision and Automatism in Structure Ia' (Ligeti 1958) was one of the texts on serialism to reach Moscow in the early 1960s. In it, Ligeti pays ironic tribute to the ordering potential of Boulez' integral serialism, but also highlights how, even here, intuitive elements play an important role – a tension that Schnittke would later amplify in his *Serenade*.

Although Ligeti employed evocative titles for many of his orchestral works, these only suggest a mood for the music, rather than any specific narrative or reference. Schnittke's music in the late 60s, by contrast, was becoming increasingly focused on cultural concepts and associative themes. But Schnittke's encounter with Ligeti's abstraction sparked a brief period of exploration of acoustical phenomena. One result was Schnittke's only electroacoustic work, *Stream* (1969), created on the ANS synthesiser (see Schmelz 2009b). The ANS can divide the octave into 72 equal steps, and Schnittke uses these increments to emulate the higher partials of the harmonic series. We hear a single, gradually evolving sound mass, although it is actually constructed through dense, imperceptible canon. The music's progression is both timbral and harmonic, growing in intensity while clarifying in texture and culminating in a pure overtone series of C, before the process is reversed in a substantial coda. The idea of exploring higher partials of the harmonic spectrum would return at the opening of the *Symphony No. 3* (1981). But, by then, Schnittke had left behind the abstraction of *Stream*, with the harmonic series now signifying nature in a dialogue between nature and culture.

The canonic construction of *Stream* reflected a similar practice in Ligeti's orchestral scores of the 1960s, his micropolyphony. This approach to cluster writing became increasingly prominent in Schnittke's orchestral scores of the late 1960s as well. His earlier cluster technique had followed Polish models, the clusters either static or with the voices moving *en masse* in parallel glissando, as in the *Violin Concerto No. 2*. But the idea of an internally evolving sound mass, constructed through dense polyphony, was an innovation of Ligeti, soon adopted by Schnittke, albeit through a wide range of harmonic approaches. In *pianissimo…* , the pitch and rhythm organisation are serially determined, with the series applied to progressively expanding intervals. The *Concerto for Oboe, Harp and Strings* (1971) employs similarly expanding lines in its micropolyphonic construction, but with the pitch organisation governed by the prime number sequence. Most radically of all, *Passacaglia* (1981) applies the micropolyphonic idea to tonal voice leading, a canon of voice groups, each group internally organised in traditional four-part harmony, and all within a stable C major tonality.

Ligeti's micropolyphonic canon technique became a valuable element of Schnittke's polystylistic vocabulary in the 1980s, but with Ligeti's wholly abstract voice leading replaced by associative melodic lines. In the *Symphony No. 2* (1979) for example, micropolyphonic textures are constructed from lines derived from Gregorian chant, and in *Minnesang* (1980–1981), an unaccompanied choral work for 52 independent voices, similarly complex micropolyphonic textures are constructed from medieval troubadour songs. In *Concerti Grossi Nos. 1–4*, lines of pastiche Baroque counterpoint are combined in dense Schnittke stretto (see below), compromising the tonal implications of the individual lines, while still alluding to the contrapuntal interplay of Baroque toccatas. In the 1970s, Schnittke wrote an article entitled 'Ligeti's Orchestral Micropolyphony' (Schnittke 2002, 225–28). The article demonstrates how Ligeti's voice

leading creates the dense and apparently non-contrapuntal textures in *Lontano*. But Schnittke is as interested in what Ligeti avoids – he argues that Ligeti's approach inherits an 'aesthetics of avoidance' from 1950s serialism. Schnittke's description inadvertently reveals the key difference between Ligeti's micropolyphony and his own. He writes that Ligeti 'avoids direct topical associations', and that individual lines are 'deprived of conventional expressive effect'. In *Lontano*, each voice begins with a semitone descent, but then returns to the opening pitch. To simply descend would suggest a sigh, but returning to the initial note neutralises it, 'a "sigh" is expressive; "inhaling" and "exhaling" are not' (Schnittke 2002, 225). In Schnittke's music of the 1970s and 1980s, individual lines are always expressive, and semantically charged, that significance intensified through the multiplicity of voices.

Funereal and religious works 1972–1980

In 1972, Schnittke's mother died unexpectedly, a personal loss that dominated his work for the next decade. His immediate response was to begin work on a Requiem Mass setting, but the project proved complex and occupied him for several years. Around the time of the work's completion, in 1975, his father also passed away. These events contributed to the composer's adoption of the Christian faith, although this too was a gradual process, also influenced by the rising profile of the Russian Orthodox Church through the 1970s. Two related trends appear in his music of the time, both linked to the *Requiem* project. The *Requiem* began a period of engagement with the music of the Christian church, with further choral works, as well as instrumental pieces based on liturgical chant. It also gave rise to Schnittke's *Piano Quintet* (1972–1976), based on music originally composed for the *Requiem* setting. The *Piano Quintet* became the first of a series of mournful instrumental works, subjective and inward-looking, which brought a new depth of expression to his work.

Funereal works: Schnittke's quiet period

Even before his mother's death, Schnittke was turning his attention to commemorative works. The *Concerto for Oboe, Harp and Strings* (1970) remembered 'a number of my friends and relatives [who] died within a few years' (Shulgin 2004, 60). In 1971 and 1975 Schnittke wrote *Canon in Memoriam Igor Stravinsky* and *Prelude in Memoriam Dmitri Shostakovich*, both paying homage on a civic level to well-known composers. The works that immediately followed the *Piano Quintet*, *Violin Concerto No. 3* (1977) and *Cello Sonata No. 1* (1978), continued the *Piano Quintet*'s deeply expressive and personal style. The three pieces are closely related, even sharing some thematic material. The connections demonstrate an important element of Schnittke's new approach, a desire for unity, both within and between works, and a move away from arbitrary musical contrasts.

In place of explicit contrast, conflict and resolution were now achieved through shadings of instrumental colour. In the *Violin Concerto No. 3*, Schnittke likened the timbral contrasts to day and night (the solo violin is predominantly accompanied by winds), but said that he was most interested in the transitions, dawn and dusk, and the shadow play and colour modulation that could be achieved (Köchel 1994, 95). The movements of each of the three works are joined together *attacca*, and each work has the feeling of a single, uninterrupted utterance, with one movement in each piece simply acting as an introduction (*Cello Sonata No. 1*) or coda (*Piano Quintet*, *Violin Concerto No. 3*).

Although Schnittke continued to recognise the structural necessity of contrast, he was now keen to minimise its role. When asked, in 1976, whether he looked more for contrast or similarity

when formulating a musical structure, Schnittke replied: 'Similarity. Contrasts interest me more as connections, or as shocks, in the sense of collage. But now I am more interested in finding a new technique for integration, not serial or tonal, but still ensuring a form of unity. It must be original but developed organically. I have not yet achieved this, to be honest.' His goal was to demonstrate deeper connections within his musical material. He continued, 'it seems to me that the main task of the composer is to permeate everything with a kind of structural unity. Webern described this as a feeling for something both impossible but essential, allowing everything to converge' (Shulgin 2004, 94–95).

This idea appears in a simple form in the *Prelude in Memoriam Dmitri Shostakovich*. The work is based on monograms derived from the names of Shostakovich and Bach, which gradually merge into a single utterance. The *Piano Quintet* employs a broader musical vocabulary, including triadic progressions, chromatic passages and quartertones. But Schnittke explained that he 'did not want these different layers of music to contrast in a consciously polystylistic way. The idea was to combine these layers, to find their connections, not their contrasts' (Kholopova & Chigareva 1990, 116).

One consequence of this approach was a sense of calmness in Schnittke's new aesthetic. He described the *Requiem* as resulting from 'a need for quiet, measured, steady music …' (Kholopova & Chigareva 1990, 95). Kholopova described the phase as Schnittke's 'quiet period'. The goal, in each work, was to explore the musical material in greater depth, a meditative approach, based on subtle and abstract associations. For example, the *Cello Sonata No. 1* and *Violin Concerto No. 3* share a horn-like figure: it ends the sonata's first movement and opens the concerto's third. The music in both cases evokes the 'horn fifths' of Classical symphonies, that idea itself invoking distance, and made even more remote through the abstract presentation. The harmony contributes to the sense of ambiguity, vacillating between C major and C minor. Ivashkin writes that Schnittke's musical material in these works avoids direct connotation in order to communicate on a more universal level, the abstract stylistic references connecting with a '"genetic well" of memories'. Ivashkin writes of a 'Velvet Depth of Meaning', where a smooth but finely textured musical surface allows a deeper significance to permeate. That meditative quality reflects Schnittke's feeling of grief in these years, but is also indicative of the times: at the height of the Khrushchev stagnation, censorship was low key, but pervasive: 'nothing was possible but everything was important' (Ivashkin 1996, 126, 134). The growth of the Orthodox Church was also in spite of increasingly harsh government restrictions, and the idea of an 'underground' faith is reflected here in music that is deeply spiritual but not religious.

Towards the end of the 1970s, Schnittke began to write explicitly religious works, and the liturgical elements that he introduced sat comfortably with the 'quiet style'. The *Hymns for Cello and Ensemble* (1974–1979) take a meditative approach to the musical language of Orthodox chant, as does the *String Quartet No. 2* (1981). The style also continues in two short chamber works of the late 70s, *Stille Nacht* (1978) and *Stille Musik* (1979), the latter modelled on Webern and his deep structural unities. The approach also influenced several of Schnittke's more reflective film scores of the era, particularly *Ascent* (Larisa Shepitko 1977) and *Leave-Taking* (Shepitko, completed Elem Klimov 1983).

Religious works

Schnittke was interested in religion from an early age, but he had little exposure to any Christian tradition during his childhood. His parents were atheists, but his maternal grandmother, a Volga-German Catholic, read the Bible (in German) and was considered a religious authority within the family. Schnittke's first exposure to religion was through talking to her, and seeing

her pray every night (Ivashkin 1996, 21). That distanced engagement with religion resumed in the mid-1960s, when Schnittke began to read religious texts, as they gradually became available in the Soviet Union. His interest in religious literature began with Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, which he read in samizdat in 1965 (Ivashkin 2003, 24) (the novel was banned in the Soviet Union until the 1980s). Schnittke was particularly interested in the appendix 'The Poems of Doctor Zhivago', a cycle of poems attributed to the title character, many on religious themes. For around a decade, this remained primarily an intellectual interest, but from the early 1970s, with the death of his mother, he began a gradual adoption of the Christian faith. This was also part of a larger trend in the Soviet Union in the 1970s, with large numbers of people re-engaging with the religion of their forebears (see Smolkin 2018, Chapter 7). The movement was reflected in the music of the time, with at least 100 religious works composed in the Soviet Union in the 1970s (Medić 2017a, 3), including by composers of Schnittke's generation Sofia Gubaidulina, Rodion Shchedrin, Nikolai Karetnikov, Nikolai Sidelnikov and, most significantly for Schnittke, Arvo Pärt. Schnittke was baptised into the Catholic faith in Vienna in 1982, but retained an equal affiliation to the Orthodox Church, confessing to an Orthodox priest when in Moscow. His music traces the course of this increasing engagement with the Christian faith, from works demonstrating an intellectual interest in the late 1960s and early 1970s, through a period of spiritually inspired chant-based works in the late 1970s, to a broader acceptance of the Christian faith from the mid-1980s, its ethos and traditions now integral to his musical persona.

The *Violin Concerto No. 2* (1966) reflects Schnittke's intellectual curiosity towards biblical themes in the 1960s. *Cantus perpetuus* (1975) also derives its abstract musical form from religious symbolism, this time drawing on iconography from Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Yoga, as well as Christianity. That comparative approach reflects Schnittke's intensive interest in world religions in the mid-1970s. Schnittke recalled how he had received a book on cabbala, the Jewish mystical tradition of interpreting sacred texts through number codes, from Luigi Nono (Schnittke 2002, 32), and also read widely on the *I Ching*, Yoga and Anthroposophy. Grigory Frid remembered visiting the library of the Composers' Union to read something on Yoga, but was told, 'There is nothing on the shelf, Schnittke has everything' (Kholopova 2003, 115). *Der gelbe Klang* (1974), Schnittke's choreographic setting of a libretto by Wassily Kandinsky, was connected with the ethos of Anthroposophy, and the first Russian performance was given in 1984 by a Steiner-oriented group.

Schnittke's adoption of the Christian faith changed his perspective on each of these religious traditions. Comparing so many symbolic systems proved overwhelming, and he came to see much of the iconography, especially of the more esoteric traditions, as overly intellectual and rational. He grew suspicious of the influence of Rudolf Steiner, and his final verdict on the cabbala book from Nono was, 'The world of the cabbala reminds me of a psychic illness, which is in essence a continual and critical accumulation of negative experiences' (Schnittke 2002, 32). But the Bible was different, and Schnittke continued his intensive study through the 1970s. 'It affects me emotionally', he said (Kholopova 2003, 114), in marked contrast to his more intellectual engagement with the texts of other religions.

The *Requiem* marked the start of Schnittke's explicitly religious phase – its initial presentation as incidental music for a play was due to state censorship rather than personal reticence. The work instigated an exploration of historical choral genres, linked with the composer's new-found faith, but not exclusive to it: *Minnesang* (1981) for example, is a choral work based on medieval troubadour songs. But the majority of Schnittke's choral works, from the *Requiem* up to *Lux aeterna* in 1995, set sacred texts and engage with Christian choral traditions and genres. This engagement

with vocal genres was direct, without commentary or irony, in marked contrast to his use of instrumental genres.

Religious symbolism also began to appear in Schnittke's instrumental music, and the most significant works of the late 1970s – *Hymns for Cello and Ensemble* (1974–1977), *Symphony No. 2* (1979), *Concerto for Piano and Strings* (1979) and *String Quartet No. 2* (1980) – explore themes and ideas from liturgical music, but with the purely instrumental forces allowing the composer a degree of abstraction and greater semantic freedom than in sung performance.

Liturgical allusions in instrumental works

The *Hymns for Cello and Ensemble* were a laboratory for liturgically inspired instrumental works. Where the *Requiem* draws on Catholic plainchant traditions, the *Hymns* are based on the Znamenny chant of the Orthodox Church. Schnittke had learned a little about the theory of Znamenny chant from his studies with Evgeny Golubev at the Moscow Conservatory. His knowledge was later expanded by the publications of Nikolai Uspensky, particularly *The Ancient Russian Art of Singing* (1971), which provided the source material for the *Hymns for Cello and Ensemble*. The fourth hymn attempts to reconcile the static nature of chant with the dynamic structure of sonata form. That approach is repeated, on a larger scale, in the *Concerto for Piano and Strings*, with Orthodox bell-ringing traditions also invoked (see below), all within a strict sonata form structure. In the early 1980s, Schnittke extended these ideas in several directions, with each work taking a different approach to the constructive tension created between Orthodox chant and the conventions of instrumental music. In the *String Quartet No. 2*, genuine hymns, again from the Uspensky collection, are subjected to radical contrapuntal techniques and instrumental textures. The *Symphony No. 4* (1984) abstracts the modal structure from Orthodox chant and exchanges the modal characteristics of different liturgical musics. But the work ends with sung counterpoint, re-establishing a link to liturgical practice. Meanwhile, Schnittke had also begun to take a greater interest in the Gregorian chant of the Catholic church, which became the basis of the *Symphony No. 2*, again with a choir singing the chant sources, which the orchestra elaborates independently.

As Schnittke became more comfortable with his new-found faith, these religious allusions became more symbolic allowing theoretical aspects of liturgical music to convey religious and ethical significance, without the need to invoke the sound of church singing. In the late 1980s, Schnittke explained how using church music imposed an ethical rigour on his work:

> When I included episodes of church music in various of my works, I was quite serious about what I was doing. I believe that in this respect using genuine or pseudo-quotations that limit one stylistically is something obligatory. This is not because it involves a hypocritical demonstration of one's own humility, but because in essence it means that one understands the necessity of moral limitations that one is obliged to impose on oneself.
>
> (*Schnittke 2002, 31*)

But these 'moral limitations' were not applied to the manipulation of liturgical themes in instrumental works, where Schnittke continued to exercise considerable freedom. This reflected another dimension of the composer's understanding of religious symbolism, his belief that religion is an integral part of everyday life, allowing a close interaction of sacred and secular. When