

# **METHODOLOGICAL BASIS FOR INTERPRETATION IN THE FIELD OF MUSIC EDUCATION (AS EXEMPLIFIED BY IN CROCE COMPOSED BY S.A. GUBAIDULINA)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The relevance of the problem under study is caused by the search for a methodological basis for studying the musical composition interpretation by pupils. The purpose of the article is to identify the historical, cultural and religious contexts and their role in the sense making of the organ and violoncello duet IN CROCE by S.A. Gubaidulina. The leading approach to the study of this problem consists in the historiographical approach, cultural and semiotic analysis of the musical text. The main results of the study are to identify the fundamental role of the historical, cultural and religious contexts as the musical composition's semantic factors and reception by pupils. The basic artistic techniques of the sense making typical for the contemporary music composing style of S.A. Gubaidulina have been revealed. The relationship is established between the "word" as a verbal semantic sign and specific signs of a musical text, their role in making of the artwork's sense. The article materials may be useful for the music pedagogy and art semiotics professionals.

**Keywords:** *semantic field of culture; text of musical composition; reception; sense making; historical and cultural interpretation*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The music history teaching is impossible without considering the historical and cultural context. A musical composition is closely linked with the culture that it creates. The whole fabric of the world culture represents a meaningful interweaving of different levels, from personal to social. "The whole history of culture is nothing more than an attempt of communication - more or less extensive attempt of "culture for oneself" to become a "culture for others", an attempt to identify and objectify subjective senses for other; and at the same time - an attempt to discover and make one's own another person's senses" (Lobok, 1997, p 464). The most interesting area of study of the sense making is the area of art, area of artistic creativity.

The concept of a complex cultural text includes an artwork itself as a semiotic text and different levels of historical and cultural contexts, by reference to which a artwork's semantic field is born. The contemporary musicology and music pedagogy develop in this methodological direction (Kholopova, 2012, Kudryashov, 2006, Cherednichenko, 2002). A detailed study of S.A. Gubaidulina's creative work is contained in the works of Kholopova, 2011; Tsenovaya, 2000; Shirieva, Dyganova, 2015, Moghaddam, 2015.

## **METHODOLOGICAL BASIS:**

The interdisciplinary approach allows to consider S.A. Gubaidulina's music composition In Croce as a semantic formation at the crossroads of several socio-cultural contexts: musical aesthetics, religion, psychology and pedagogics. The semiotic analysis reveals details of the semantic units, and the hermeneutic approach allows to synthesize an integral, generalized semantic concept.

The S.A. Gubaidulina's music composition *In Croce* for violoncello and organ composed in 1979 is dedicated to the cellist Vladimir Tonkha, Professor, National Artist of Russia, Laureate of the Moscow City Award, extremely delicate and profound musician, by definition of S.A. Gubaidulina herself.

It should be noted that there are three translations of this music composition's name from the Italian language that are slightly different from each other: *On the Cross*, *Criss-Cross*, *In the Cross*. The present study includes interpretation of all three options, which are offered as sections of this study.

The S.A. Gubaidulina's music composition *In Croce* analysis is advisable to start with the author's worldview characteristics and her fundamental outlook on task of the art in general. In her interview with the famous Italian musicologist and publicist Enzo Restagno, S.A. Gubaidulina presents her vision of the term "religion": Re-ligio is a purely musical term - means that something that was once tied became untied, and it is now re-tied, legato means restoration of ties between earthly and heavenly, material and spiritual substances. And essentially, this legato restoration is the sense of the artwork's form <...> Religion is what is given to us, and the art is what is specified to us. Though both types of activity are not identical, but they have a common goal" (Kholopova 2011, pp. 62-63). From this quotation, the author's deep essential link among the religious, philosophical and artistic creativity spheres becomes obvious; S.A. Gubaidulina sees her composer's task in the restoration and designation, for a person, of a deep connection between earthly and heavenly spheres.

## **DISCUSSIONS:**

### **In Croce - On the Cross**

The music composition's name reflects a profound philosophical reflection based on the evangelical story. It refers us to the symbol of the cross. Thus, based on the author's philosophic principles, the music composition's name *In Croce* should be translated as *On the Cross* and symbolize herewith the main event of the Christian history - crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and have the global spiritual and religious significance that the event implicates. According to the evangelical crucifixion story, Christ was martyred for the sins of the world and became a substitutionary sacrifice reconciling the holy God - the Creator with the sinful humanity.

It should be mentioned that in the first centuries of our era a crucifixion in the Roman Empire was a common type of execution for the lower society strata, but the history of Christianity has developed in such a way that a cross becomes the central symbol of the Christian religion with a deep ontological sense, which contains duality of the universe: horizontal space and vertical time. The unity of the space and time relationship is the definition of the chronotope concept (translated from the Ancient Greek χρόνος, "time" and τόπος "place"). M.M. Bakhtin (1975) defines a chronotope as the primary context for interpretation, which contains the basic concept of a piece of work (Bakhtin, 1975). In simple terms, interpretation of a piece of work sense - this is an interpretation of the space and time, in which its main events occur.

### **In Croce – Criss-Cross**

One more characteristic observation can describe the S.A. Gubaidulina's creativity: her many music compositions are composed as dualistic opposites: the *Voices...Silence* symphony, *Vivente - Non Vivente* music composition, *Light and Darkness* for organ, names of the parts in the *Ten Etudes* for Solo Cello cycle: *Staccato – legato*, *Consordino – senza sordino* и т.д. In the same row of the author's dialectical thinking there is also the *In Croce* music composition, in which the sense is in the unity of such opposites as the horizontal and vertical, divine and earthly, suffering and bliss, ascension and immersion.

The main "characters" of the unfolding drama - a violoncello and organ, which duet embodies the opposite of the divine and human. Below are the author's comments on the semantics of the instruments: "An organ for me is an instrument, which is above the earthly life" (Kholopova, 2011, p.75). "In this combination, the organ appeared to me a powerful superpersonality that sometimes comes down to earth to find a vent to its anger. However, the violoncello is, with its nerve strings, a completely human soul" (Kholopova 2011, 56).

The way how functions of the organ and violoncello are distributed in this interpretation is also symbolic. The organ, a huge and majestic instrument as the universe itself, which sounds at the beginning of the music composition very clean, light and somewhat distantly in the upper register, symbolizes the divine origin. A violoncello, which looks very similar to the human body, when moving in the low register painfully and heavily on a rare interval of less than a halfnote – microchromaticism - represents a suffering soul or Christ suffering on the cross.

That is how the author herself explains the need to overcome the tempered scale: "twelve sounds of the tempered system create too rigid frameworks that do not leave any free, unallocated space, which would correspond to the lunar subconscious part of a living organism" (Kholopova, 2011, p.50). So, the highest heaven divine order is marked, in the music text, with the periodic diatonic organ passages and even with playing off the pure "la majeure" arpeggio.

Another semantic detail of the musical texture is that throughout the music composition the organ part is moving gradually downward, and the violoncello part rises, on the contrary, from the bottom up. They are moving crosswise, what also has a deep symbolic sense. Based on the chronotope described above, a certain cultural idea develops; it is generated by means of musical expression. The following happens in the cross heroism of Christ: with his love, the Holy God comes down to people desiring to save them from the anger of his own, and Christ suffering for the sins of all rises in the end on the right hand of God the Father. Moreover, "a violoncello string, which seems to be "crucified" with a stand or glissando becomes the object of crucifixion" (Price, 2000, p.10).

Another expressive musical technique supporting the concept of transformation through suffering is transformation of expressive violoncello sound into flageolet. "Speaking about transition from the expressive tone to flageolet it is a sound that I meant and that has the property, the ability to soar up vertically - to the sky, to the spirit. The ordinary, trivial becomes heavenly, it can even be sacred" (Kholopova, 2011, pp. 37-38).

#### In Croce - In the Cross

In the climax section of the music composition, the author includes the musical structures that are called the "controlled aleatorics" in the musicology. The aleatorics comes from the Latin word *alea* meaning a dice game, chance, fate. This is the method of music composition with the free sound text. Aleatorics means a complete or partial composer's refusal of the strict control over the musical text.

The large text fragments that S.A. Gubaidulina leaves for relatively independent interpretation of performing musicians are, in our opinion, a deep sense of the open creative work as coauthorship and audience empathy. "The pain is a measure of faith, a way to get as close as possible to the suffering of Christ. To die with Christ and rise again, i.e. to carry out an act of absolute identification with the suffering of Christ on the cross, to bind oneself and Christ with an indissoluble thread" (Kholopova, 2011, pp. 62-64). So the author herself defines the sense of her creative work and, accordingly, the sense of our listening depth of coauthorship and empathy.

Interpretation of the music composition's name as In the Cross means, in this case, each person's involvement in the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ and self-awareness of each listener through the compassion on him in perception of the S.A. Gubaidulina's music composition. The author suggests to everyone to feel his/her involvement in the events that took place on the cross.

Summing up the theoretical part of the study, we can definitely assert that the S.A. Gubaidulina's music composition for violoncello and organ is the key to understanding the composer's creativity, whose artistic task is comparable to the understanding of the main spiritual and religiously philosophical principles of the universe.

## **EXPERIMENT**

The next stage of studying the sense making in the historical and cultural context consists in the study of the artwork's reception. Practical study was conducted as an experiment in April 2015 in the 7th grade of Kazan gymnasium No. 3. After the pupils had been listening to the music composition, they were asked to express the sense of the composition In Croce by S.A. Gubaidulina, before their teacher explained it to them and after the teacher talked about the content of the composition based on the theoretical study.

17 questionnaires were handed out, all were filled in, one answer to question 3 appeared indistinct, and it is not subject to any analysis.

Question 1. How would you describe the music composition In Croce by S.A. Gubaidulina?

Before the teacher told about the content of the music, just after listening to the musical composition the following answers had been received describing the S.A. Gubaidulina's music composition:

Sad; unusual; sharp; terrible; strange; quiet; nice; interesting; a little creepy; dramatic; worrisome; battle between good and evil; somewhat gloomy; restless; this music is a struggle between a good and evil hero; heartfelt; sometimes loud and rude in the middle; a confrontation might be described, it might be crucifixion of Christ; overanxious; someone might not know that he is being watched; feeling of some kind of spiritual struggle; with slow transitions; confrontation of good and evil; it symbolizes the world; there is a sense of fear and danger; frightening; melancholy; strict; tragic.

Such a variety of answers can be explained by a strangeness of the contemporary music for pupils. Some listeners evaluated their experience as a positive, and some pupils - as negative. Some assumed a figurative content of the S.A. Gubaidulina's music.

Question 2. Can be the music composition In Croce by S.A. Gubaidulina called lyrical, dramatic or epic?

Answers to the second question divided as follows.

## **RESULT:**

1. lyrical – 4 persons – 23.5%
2. dramatic – 7 persons – 41.2%
3. epic – 6 persons – 35.3%

These data suggest that the pupils may not see a fundamental difference between the dramatic, lyrical and epic composition, however, it may be noted that the majority of pupils still considered this music composition dramatic, which is a more accurate answer.

Question 3. Instruments in this duet include a violoncello and organ. What do you think, whose character represents the violoncello, and whose character embodies the organ?

Answers to the third question were set out in a comparative table.

Item no.	Violoncello	Organ
1	Evil person	Kind person
2	Not very good character	Carefree person
3	For evil image	For good image
4	This is an image of God	This is an image of the devil
5	Good character	Evil character
6	It symbolizes human nature	It symbolizes divine nature
7	Hero, which periodically appears in front of us	Some background of the music composition, nature or the place where the action takes place
8	Evil	Good
9	Someone evil and terrible	Someone good and generous
10	Demons who are afraid of the Savior	Son of God, enlightener of the people of Israel
11	Evil	Anxiety, good
12	It symbolizes a creature that follows another one	Innocent creature
13	It represents a bad side	It represents a good side
14	This is an image of good (God)	Image of evil (devil)
15	Evil	Good
16	Evil	Good
	11 negative connotations 3 positive connotations 2 neutral characteristics	3 negative connotations 11 positive connotations 2 neutral characteristics

Result: The most accurate characteristics of the figurative instruments' content are when the violoncello is correlated with a human and organ - with a divine nature. In general, the answers indicate that listeners felt the drama of the story "narrated" by the musical instruments, this implies determination of their perception of the "good/evil". Most of the negative connotations associated with the violoncello indicate that the pupils responded to the image of Christ's suffering on the cross, which children naturally tend to perceive as a negative phenomenon. From this point of view, their answers can be considered effective.

Question 4. It was asked after the author's content of the music composition had been described. What do you think, what is the main idea of this composition?

The following table lists all respondents' answers to the fourth question.

1	Confrontation of good and evil. I think the main idea is that good always wins.
2	Battle between good and evil.
3	Conveying thoughts to the people.
4	Confrontation of good and evil or God in human life.
5	I think that people can understand that life and people are always changing. Only God remain unchanged.
6	Crucifixion of Christ for the sins of mankind. Between heaven and earth.
7	Showing us or reflecting the events from the Bible.
8	Perhaps fight of feelings or battle between good and evil. In general, fight of some kind.
9	Confrontation of good and evil, and that good always ensures justice and wins.
10	It is likely the balance between good and evil. That is Jesus came down from heaven to make satisfaction for the sins of mankind.
11	Good and evil.
12	Crucifixion of Christ for the sins of mankind.
13	To make people pay attention to something that they never noticed.
14	The main idea of this music composition is that there is good and evil in the world, and they fight in this composition.
15	In my opinion, this music composition represents the attitude of the Creator and creation. God and human being. The purpose of this music composition is to let people know what they need to strive for.
16	To convey to us how Jesus stood up for us. About how he was sent to atone for the sins of men. The way he suffers, and the way it hurts him.
17	To show that the violoncello plays a role of a human being, and the organ – a lofty role.

Result: In order to comment on these answers, it would be useful to group them based on the completeness, inclusiveness and personal content in the answers. The following categories can be offered.

Detailed answers and answers with an expressed personal	Monosyllabic answers	Original answers
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content		
12 (70.6%)	4 (23.5%)	1 (5.9%)

Result: The result of these answers is that the vast majority of the respondents has given detailed answers with an expression of personal attitude. There were much less monosyllabic answers. This indicates that the listeners have penetrated into the subject of the story and fully understood the content of the S.A. Gubaidulina's music. On the other hand, it is obvious that the pupils could definitively and accurately formulate the music composition's idea works only after the teacher's explanation, what confirms the thesis of T.V. Cherednichenko that "People hear in the music that they have read about it" (Cherednichenko, 2002, p. 6).

## CONCLUSION

The study has shown that filling of a music composition with sense continues to remain logocentric in many respects in the contemporary socio-cultural space. In order to achieve understanding in the communication, people need "logos" - a word that carries an explanation of the semantic content of the composition. The second conclusion that can be drawn relates to the depth of sense making. The depth of penetration into the author's intent occurs if several historical and cultural contexts and a number of study methods intersect. The interdisciplinary study space actualizes in itself such cultural spheres as history, musical aesthetics, religion, psychology, pedagogics, on which degree of involvement in the research process depends the semantic richness of a particular artwork and the contemporary culture in general.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The article material is of interest to the professionals who are engaged in research on the history of artistic culture, cultural anthropology, anthropology of art, aesthetics, philosophy of art, hermeneutics, musical pedagogics and music psychology.

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