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THE TRUE SENSE OR TO MY ONLY DESIRE: THE MUSIC AS A REASON FOR SUN REFLECTIONS

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Abstract. The article presents musicological and existentialist philosophical discourses on renaissance and baroque structures in the works of two contemporary classical composers. The existentialist point of view is imposed due to the examination of contemporary music works in which historically conditioned practices are also found. *Being and Time* and *Introduction to Metaphysics* by Martin Heidegger serve as a starting point for the reflections. The two works *D’Om Le Vrai Sens* by Kaija Saariaho and Concerto Grosso “Sun Reflections” by Yordan Goshev are stylistically very different but the first bears renaissance and the second – baroque features respectively. In consequence, *Der Man* or *Das Man* is defined by the opposition between renaissance humanism and the metaphysics of Being.

Keywords: contemporary classical music; Kaija Saariaho; Yordan Goshev; metaphysics; Martin Heidegger

Although contemporary art largely denies the succession with regard to the practices of the past, the discovery of renaissance/baroque structures in the works of contemporary artists would show situation of creativity, which brings close contemporary art with historically connected musical practices. The progress of the arts stands on a peculiar development of continuity, which moves along an axis of upbuilding with accumulation and complementarity, rather than being the result of an isolated new construction.

It is surprising that, in order to study the works of contemporary composers from a musicological point of view in a complete way, it is also necessary to study them from a philosophical perspective. Reasoning from the point of view of a scientific analysis (musicology), we will probably come close to the *essence*¹. Why *Being and Time* and not the light of Renaissance and Baroque thought? Because the musical works are part of contemporary art, the intricate matter of *Being and Time* suggests the possibility of realising the essence of these works from today’s point of view. Despite the complex text with difficult to discover meanings, Heidegger regards music as a way of salvation in the modern technological society. (see Gioia 2022)² The

two works considered here *D'Om Le Vrai Sens* for clarinet and symphony orchestra by the Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho (1952 – 2023)³ and Concerto Grosso *Sun Reflections*⁴ for chamber orchestra by the Bulgarian composer Yordan Goshev (b. 1960) bear completely different stylistic characteristics. However, the discovery of the use of structures from baroque or renaissance practice in the works of individual character by these contemporary classical composers provides an opportunity to reflect on Heidegger's meaning of the *Being, the Being that we call Presence* and the *Temporality* (see Heidegger 1927/1996).

1. Establishing the criteria for the analytical comparison – what could be and what are the renaissance and baroque structures in the works under consideration? In this case, *structures* refers to elements that represent a specific part of the compositional practice/technique, the form of the work or its ideological content. They could be defined from a musical point of view as 'use of renaissance compositional techniques' or 'baroque genres in works by contemporary composers'. But because of their absolute heterogeneity and the complexion of terminology, the definition *structures* here will be applied to all of them – an instrument, convenient for ratiocination. In this regard, they will be divided into the following types: *Generic* (choice of form of the work from the genres typical of the Renaissance and Baroque periods), *Stylistic* (similarity of style in the compositional expression/sounding of the works), *Technical* (reference to various compositional techniques typical of the Renaissance or Baroque), *Programmatic* (relating to a programmatic/dramaturgical relationship from the Renaissance or Baroque periods), *Symbolic* (use of symbolic/allegorical practices from the Renaissance or Baroque periods). In contrast to Heidegger's text that is difficult to reveal in translation, the above-mentioned *musical structures* (that lead to ontic existence in other epochs), are clearly revealed. But it is difficult to understand the meaning of their being in relation to the existential time horizon (to paraphrase Heidegger again) presented now. **These structures can be separated and defined in the content of the whole work and represent a connection to renaissance and/or baroque practices.**

2. Comparative analysis

A parallel presentation of constructions for reflection (interpretation) to *Einführung in die Metaphisik* (Heidegger, 1935) in connection to the analysis of the structures in the works by contemporary composers: **1.** Experiment of understanding and experiment of creation; **2.** *To understand and yet not understand Being*;⁵ **3.** Taking a position (Heidegger 1935/1983, p. 80);

4. Language and time; 5. Definiteness and indeterminacy of the meaning of words; 6. Modality; 7. Repeatability of the occurrence over time.

They will be noted as numbers in brackets in the reasoning below.

2.1. *Analysis of the presence of renaissance/baroque structures in the work of Kaija Saariaho.*

2.1.1. *Information about the work.* The style of Saariaho's work has been defined as "spectral music" and can be classified in the category "sonoristic music" (1). A reason for Saariaho's choice to work with timbre as her main means of expression lies in the composer's relationship to all sounds – she has been sensitive to them since childhood, which lead her to "operate at the border of music and noise" (Wenger 2016) (4, 6). In the work *D'Om Le Vrai Sens*, the composer is not untrue to herself and the spectral technique is used in all movements. Saariaho wrote it in 2010, based on the mediaeval French (but Flanders-made) tapestries *La dame à la licorne*, dating from the late 15th to early 16th centuries. The six tapestries in the collection give programmatic names to the corresponding movements in the musical composition – also six in number: 'Hearing', 'Sight', 'Smell', 'Touch', 'Taste' and 'To my own (only) desire/According to my desire alone'. As a reflection of the allegory in the tapestries, Saariaho undoubtedly has chosen to set the symbolism as the basis for her work – and as many unsolved mysteries about the meaning of the tapestries remain to this day, there is as much abstractness and symbolism in Saariaho's work (4, 5, 7). It is essentially a concerto for clarinet and symphony orchestra⁶, and perhaps a direct recipient of the symbolism mentioned above is the clarinet soloist, who performs the solo part from various positions (onstage and even offstage) throughout the work – the dramaturgy of this presence gives a specific dynamism to the work's effect (3). The relocation of the soloist as a sound source around/behind the stage also has a sonic function – the timbre of the instrument thus changes, the overall 'colour' of the score begins to sound different to the listener – because the timbral impact is of fundamental importance in spectral music. Evidence for this effect can be sought in a parallel to the visual arts, where one of the ways to define space is through the use of colour (see Kandinsky 1967, pp. 66 – 67). In this respect, by using alterations of the timbre of the solo instrument through manipulation of its position on/offstage, Saariaho redefines the space of the work in a new way, allowing it to be experienced in its full-scale form only live in the concert hall. According to Saariaho, the role of the unicorn figure in the tapestries is assigned to the clarinet in the concerto (see Saariaho 2010⁷; Fleshier 2012). The virtuosity of Kari Kriikku (for whom the concerto was written) may be the explanation for this composer's decision – his playing is wizardry and is capable of enchanting the listener (see Välimäki 2011, p. 6) – just as the

unicorn has a mystical magical image in the legends and especially in the symbolism it had for the people of the Middle Ages (4, 6, 7). According to the beliefs of the time, the unicorn, in addition to its nobility, also possessed a violent, ferocious nature – here, in terms of expression, the clarinet also perfectly suits the image: the seemingly velvety and gentle sound of the instrument could also be fierce and frantic in the high outbursts, the often repeated tremolos and other quasi-improvisatory effects, which were left to the choice of the performer. The magical sound of the work is felt in more than one place contributing to its fairy-tale imagery – entirely corresponding to the inspiration for its composition, the French tapestry series. That leads to the reasoning of V. Jankélévitch about the metaphysical, almost magical power of music: “A metaphysics of music that claims to transmit messages from the other world retraces the incantatory action of enchantment upon the enchanted in the form of an illicit relocation of the here-and-now to the Beyond.” (Jankélévitch 1961/2003, p. 15). The concerto is a complex, multi-component and large-scale work – it certainly presents a challenge to its performers – soloist, orchestra and conductor alike (1).

2.1.2. *Information about the renaissance/baroque structures found.*

1) *Programmatic features* – the work is based on the mediaeval tapestries of the early French Renaissance “The Lady and the Unicorn”, based on a 15th century German legend – this is a thematic renaissance structure with historical relation built into the work. Unfortunately, Saariaho does not elaborate on the incorporation of the story into her work nor on the specific symbolism she integrated into its creation (Saariaho 2010). **Thus, the conclusions and analysis of the allegories embedded in both the tapestries and Saariaho’s music artwork provide material for reflection in the minds of listeners, leaving them with endless possibilities for conclusions in their search for the true vocation/purpose and meaning of man** (see next subsection) (2).

2) *Symbolism* – Saariaho was specifically impressed by an article on the hidden meanings in the letters inscribed on the last sixth tapestry. Thus, the title of the work emerged as a play and anagram of the motto of the sixth tapestry, a medieval French epigraph with a double meaning – “The true senses/the true meaning of man” (see Saariaho 2010) (*Figure 1*). In the title, the letter “v” is changed from “u” in the sixth movement – as it is in Latin (where $v=u$), the language used in the allegorical sentences on musical instruments before. Allegories and plays on words are typical of the Renaissance – an explanation about that lies in the understanding that “... [in those times] Music was considered to be a form of Vanity, and the motto had to provide a moral remedy – as much to say Music should be played to the glory of God, otherwise it was vain and evil.” (Hunt 1977, p. 245). Fur-

thermore, the addition of a motto is tied to the idea that the sense and true meaning will only be revealed to those who seek it, which is undoubtedly what Saariaho had in mind. Quite following the example of renaissance allegorical practices, Saariaho also raises the question of the true meaning of man/humankind through the title of the work. Moreover, the symbolic title ‘To my own/only desire’ finds practical expression in the aleatoric solution at the end of the sixth movement, which can be performed ‘to the wish’ of the performers.

In examining the “Critique of Pure Reason” and in his 1929 work “Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics”, Heidegger states that the hermeneutics of a text must involve a kind of violence to the text (“the interpreter must inevitably employ violence”) in order to better understand the author’s idea (see Heidegger 1929/1997). Saariaho cannot be referred to as having used violence, but she has interpreted the epigraph of the sixth tapestry in her own way to give the work its title. Ironically, by reinterpreting (shifting) the tapestry’s epigraph upon “her own desire”, Saariaho comes to reveal an even deeper message in the resulting title.

The image shows two lines of text in a large, black, sans-serif font. The top line reads "À Mon Seul Désir" and the bottom line reads "D'Om le Vrai Sens". Red lines connect the letters between the two lines, illustrating an anagram. A single blue line connects the letter 'u' in "D'Om" to the letter 'u' in "Désir".

Figure 1. The anagram of the motto from the sixth tapestry, giving the work its title, refers to renaissance symbolic/allegorical practices. In red are shown the literally displaced letters, in blue – the altered *u* in *v*

3) *Compositional technique* – the use of sonoristic clusters in the orchestration (for example, in the first movement the *strings/harp/celesta/vibraphone/timpani* are combined in a timbral cluster on one side vs. the *woodwinds/percussion* on the other; the brass instruments are the only group that changes its role and can be seen attached to both the first group and the second) has

the character of a quasi-late renaissance/baroque device, similar to the oppositions in the polyphonic music. Following the definition about the *polyphony of layers* given by V. Holopova and according to VI. Protopopov, for “a separate sub-division of the polyphony in which polyphonic textural layers counterpoint” (Holopova 1979, p. 7; Protopopov 1962, p. 66), it can be said that Saariaho used an altered quasi-polyphonic sonority technique applied with a different meaning from the generally accepted one based on the classical point – counterpoint: here it has acquired a new meaning of sound vs. sound (timbre vs. timbre) and even value vs. value (sense vs. sense). **This concept can be described as musical hermeneutics.**

2.2. *Analysis of the presence/use of renaissance and baroque structures in the work of Yordan Goshev.*

2.2.1. *Information about the compositional style of the author and the work.* The composer’s language of Y. Goshev is distinguished by its exceptional purity of expression, which brings him closer to the neoclassical style. The author’s extensive professional knowledge, his experience with various compositional techniques during different stages of his career, and the incorporation of folkloric intonations form his distinctive style: “The successful symbiosis between the elements borrowed from the folk music and the modern compositional techniques makes the piano works of Yordan Goshev relevant and accessible at the same time, yet the national character of the compositional style is clearly expressed” (Yovchev 2015).

Concerto Grosso “Sun Reflections” (2013) was originally created for a chamber ensemble of 10 performers, allowing for more direct and natural musicianship between the performers in order to achieve the typical “outplaying” of the genre. The programmatic title “Sun Reflections” points to the composer’s search for a bright, positive sound of the work – in contrast to many contemporary works that address serious philosophical issues through the light of musical art. Goshev’s work allows its performers to enjoy music-making in an accessible way, **which is the idea of music as art in general.** This is a form of an answer to one of the fundamental questions of Metaphysics (such as what is the source and beginning of origins). In the preface to the first edition of “Critique of Pure Reason”, Kant defines the field of the battle of disputes regarding the human experience and things beyond the limits of any experience as metaphysics. (Also, see Kanavrov 2021). On this field each thinker, respectively author, lays out the essence of his doctrine. In fact, this is what Goshev does in his works.

The work shows stylistic similarities to the classical concerti grossi – as from the early origins of the genre in the work of A. Corelli, as well as in later examples from the work of J. S. Bach (Stoyanov 2022, p. 98). Additionally to these, folkloric intonations are integrated into the work – an indication of such

inclusion is the opening of the work, where theme I is built on the basis of a pentatonic scale – typical of the Bulgarian folklore.

2.2.2 *Information on the renaissance/baroque structures found.* Here the parallels with the baroque structures are obvious because of the choice of genre. The structures found in the work of Goshev are stylistic and form-shaping:

1) *Form-shaping structures* – the presence of similarity to the baroque form of the work (the chosen genre “concerto grosso”) can be defined as a form-shaping structure. The work is composed following the format of the relationship between the groups of the soloists and tutti (*concertino – ripieno*) and with respect to the duration of the work in relation to baroque examples – both of these are considered form-shaping similarities. The work is written in a one-movement sonata form of a “hybrid type with pronounced features of complex ternary form” (Stoyanov 2022, p. 116), which is a sign of succession between the traditional and more recent practices. Although the literal music form of the work differs from the typical Baroque era examples, it retains the original structure (*ritornello – slow aria – ritornello*) through the variation of thematic material in the exposition (fast section), the development with cadenza for the soloists (slow section), and recapitulation (fast section) parts. Another indication of continuity/succession is the choice of instrumentation: Goshev places the wind instruments as soloists, a compositional device that corresponds to the choice in the works of J. S. Bach, but here modified by the addition of the clarinet – a relatively new instrument from a historical point of view, created at the end of the Baroque era. The tradition is thus followed in the manner of the old masters but updated and supplemented (in the sense of the already mentioned timeline of the development of contemporary art).

2) *Stylistic structures* – the approach to the handling of the material, the elaboration of the parts in the orchestration and their interaction in the work correspond to the baroque compositional practices. The work is written for a small ensemble (*sinfonietta/chamber orchestra*), with the role of soloists (*concertino*) assigned to the wind group – flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, French horn; and tutti (*ripieno*) – to the entire standard low and high strings in the ensemble. In Goshev’s variability of thematic material are found similarities with baroque practices – a distinctive feature of the theme sequences in the concerto grosso is the absence of contrast (in contrary to the instrumental concerto of the Classic era) (Newman 2020). There is a distinct absence of contrast in the first two themes (Stoyanov 2022, p. 99). The theme of the development is contrasting and functions as a second slow movement – the *concertino* part is omitted here so that it could be compensated for in the subsequent cadenza. Thus, in the development, the two otherwise parallel parts of *concertino* and *ripieno*, moving interchangeably, are separated and given dramaturgical independence, only to ‘meet’ again in the recapitula-

tion and complete the work in parallel (Figure 2). Thus, a dramaturgical denotation can be found in a seemingly programless work: initially, the parts of the *concertino* and *ripieno* “compete” with each other, in full synchrony with the meaning of the word *concerto* (“contest”), then separate, to show their independent qualities, and finish the work together, as if symbolically hinting that there can be no real competition in art.

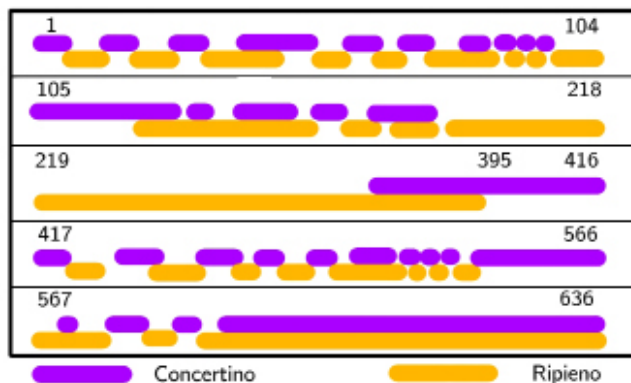


Figure 2. Motion analysis of the parts in Concerto Grosso "Sun Reflections". The numbers mark the bars of the score, where 1 to 218 is the exposition, 219–416 is the development (in which 395–416 is the cadenza), and 417–636 is the recapitulation and coda finale."

The general conclusion after the analysis can be that the structures found in Saariaho’s work belong predominantly to the renaissance type, while in the work of Goshev they are defined mainly as baroque type.

2.3. The Salvation of Art. *Der Man* or *Das Man*? Based on possible interpretations of the meaning of the six tapestries “The Lady and the Unicorn”, in which each of the senses is a symbol of virtue (in relation to the description in Guillaume de Lorris’ thirteenth-century “Romance of the Rose”⁸), that, according to Aristotle’s conception, can elevate the soul through the senses, we naturally come to the later Christian idea of *salvation* (see Beal 2019; Bruel 2000). The life of the human can move only in one direction – forward. Art, on the other hand, has the ability to be positioned simultaneously towards different temporal directions – “The task of the artist is to resist the aging of the world, the one-way and uniform course of time.” (Gradev 2019, p. 8). By examining the *time – artwork – audience* triad through the lens of phenomenology as a philosophy of experience and in relation to Martin Heidegger’s idea of human salvation through art (see Heidegger 1950/2008) the question of the audience’s need for art is addressed. Conclusions made upon reading Heidegger’s prominent work

The Origin of the Work of Art lead to reflections on the situation and norms in the contemporary arts (Thomson 2011, p. 63). Or, to juxtapose Jankélévitch: “The art of sounds ... is the intimate interior, the heart of hearts of other arts. To acknowledge that music translates the soul of a human situation, and renders this soul perceptible to our soul’s ear, one need not confer a vast transphysical reach upon music.” (Jankélévitch 1961/2003, p. 76).

The main direction in the development of Western European classical music has moved along an *axis of upbuilding with accumulation and complementarity*. While in the previous times this phenomenon was clearly traceable⁹, as we approach the contemporary history, the link with *the old* (the use of historically conditioned practices) seems to have been lost. However, the conceptual negation is a particularly active form of connection to the past. And the reason for that is the development of the arts occurs on the basis of continuity (even through rejection)¹⁰ or conceptual overturning and rearrangement. Or, as M. Foucault describes the practices of the great French avant-garde composer P. Boulez, pointing out the continuity in his work between past and present: “I think his object, in this attention to history, was to make it so that nothing remains fixed, neither the present nor the past. He wanted them both to be in perpetual motion relative to each other.” (Foucault 1998, p. 243). It could be claimed that thus a much more stable constructive coherence is created.

2.3.1. Functions of consciousness and psychological premises. On behalf of the audience and following Gestalt psychology’s principle on the perception of information, the discovery of a familiar form among a quantity of information/data facilitates the individual’s perception. Considering that, according to Philip Ball, “we are pattern seekers”, the discovery of familiar patterns and techniques from the past would make the perception of new works of art in terms of compositional form and means of expression more accessible, for both audience and performers (Ball 2010, p. 139). While the repetition in the modern world has a negative impact (“... the ‘differentness’ from the others can only be achieved by re-repetition, by deformation, by resurrection of the old forms.” (Petrova 2022, p. 79)), in the arts, the recurrence of old forms is positive because it leads to development. Richard Gray points out that audiences often have an aversion to modern classical music simply because “the human brain struggles to find the patterns it needs to understand compositions as music” (Gray 2010). **Thus, the renaissance and baroque structures are subconsciously familiar to audiences.**

2.3.2. Significance of the discovery of renaissance/baroque structures in contemporary musical works.

2.3.2.1. *Structures found within K. Saariaho’s work* – the discovery of renaissance structures in the work of Saariaho can lead performers to a new conception of classical polyphony – here the quasi-polyphonic timbral overlays can be examined as a different kind of new colour or timbral polyphony. This would be a

different perspective from the standard analysis of Saariaho's works, and would likely lead the performers to the conclusion that the composer's music can be even more complex and multilayered, with even more possibilities for performance approaches.

2.3.2.2 *Structures found within Y. Goshev's work* – the discovery of baroque structures in the work of Goshev is a much more natural process compared to that in Saariaho, due to the presence of genre classification of the work. However, an in-depth understanding of not only the compositional techniques typical of the genre but also of the hidden dramaturgy, would provide new insight into the work.

3. Conclusions

À mon seul désir becomes the artist's will for the salvation of art, and through this accomplished act, a message to the contemporary man, bewildered in his existence. As a result of the reflection on the collision of the Renaissance idea of humanism and Heidegger's existential thought, the opposition of *Der Man* and *Das Man* is reached. In the order of the quaternity *reflection – essence – metaphysical – ontological*, we ponder over the role of man, ordained by God as his exclusive creature, and as a consequence of this divine grace – the possibility of man to be a co-creator with God. 400 years ago, a Baroque thinker touched by the divine spark may have advanced the existentialism: "A physicist and metaphysician, [Blaise] Pascal focused his thought not on the knowledge of the natural world, nor on the construction of a philosophical system, but on the study of the human destiny." (Gradev 2023, p. 5). One could say that in Heidegger's discourse this possibility is lost, although according to Heidegger existence is ecstatic rather than passive and oriented towards its own possibilities (see Naess and Wolin 2023). It is no coincidence that one of the definitions that K. Jaspers gives to Heidegger's work is that it is "un-free". One of his more auspicious opinions about *Being and Time* is as "... the transformation of thought that is a call to a turning into aesthetic figurations, of the actually created through words into the cult of the word itself" (Jaspers 1986, p. 510). Perhaps in this judgement one can actually find the inextricable resolution of the humanism–existentialism opposition represented by the two thinkers (both German existentialists) – Heidegger on the existence, and Jaspers on the existence of the man.

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NOTES

1. “Entsprechend kann die Philosophie als solche verborgen bleiben oder sich bekunden im Mythos, in der Religion, in der Dichtung, in den Wissenschaften, ohne daß sie als Philosophie erkannt wäre.” (Heidegger 1928/1996, p. 3).
2. “I recently encountered a passage in Heidegger that seemed to promise a solution to the biggest issue of them all – how to live a valid life in the midst of a grasping, technology-driven society. And even more remarkable his solution was focused on *music*.” (Gioia, 2022).
3. It is a great regret that the composer Kaija Saariaho passed away while this study was being prepared. The article is dedicated to her memory and art.
4. Original title of the work in Bulgarian: *Concerto grosso „Слънчеви отблясъци“* [“Slanchevi otblyasitsi”].
5. “*Verstehen und doch nicht Verstehen des Seins*” (Heidegger 1935/1983, p. 80).
6. Although Saariaho has chosen the non-renaissance form instrumental concerto for this composition, in other works, a connection to the use of genres from the old practice can be found – for example, one of her most recent works is the science-fiction madrigal *Reconnaissance* (2020) – a work-bridge between past, present and future, and a peculiar link to the idea of “re-discovery of what we already [know]” (see Saariaho, 2020).
7. Author’s notes on *D’Om le Vrai Sens*.
8. Original French title: «Roman de la Rose».
9. As, for example, the Gregorian chant has provided the basis for the development of the polyphony and hence of the counterpoint.
10. As is the case with the avant-garde music. But no matter how distanced from the previous practices it may seem, it actually contains traces of even older, archaic examples, woven together in an unfamiliar way with new means of expression and form (for instance, folk songs involving quarter tones provide a source for the development of the microintervals (microchromatism) in the classical music from the avant-garde style).

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