

The Reception of Baroque Music in Selected Works by Rochberg, Schnittke and Szymański

Tomislav Bužić, Report for Interim Evaluation, June 2017

Music of the past is an important reference for the three composers which my thesis focusses on. Compared to neo-classical compositions which can be found almost throughout the 20th century, some of the works that I examine in detail show a new compositional path that may be characterized as “postmodern”.¹ During the 1960s, flirting with early music was a kind of a rebellion against socialist artistic policies (mainly Socialist Realism) in the Eastern bloc, while Rochberg’s Baroque-inspired works can be understood as a reaction against a prevailing trend of academic serialist composition in the US. In Soviet music culture, avant-garde music and early music were both considered as “anti-socio-realistic” tendencies.

Over the past year I have worked on two major areas of my PhD project. First, I tried to get in touch with the musical archives that own scores and other materials of the three selected composers and I have tried to contact experts on the music of Rochberg, Schnittke or Szymański. The most successful collaboration was established with the Schnittke Archive in London and especially with Gavin Dixon, a Schnittke specialist who gave me some valuable information and made a preliminary review of available sketches for the six *Concerti Grossi* which form the focus of my Schnittke-chapter. In autumn 2017, I am going to visit the Schnittke Archive in order to gain insight in the compositional process during which Schnittke appropriated elements and topics of Baroque music into his works. Regarding Szymański, I have received scores of *Partita III* and *Partita IV* directly from his publisher (Chester Music) and got into contact with Natalia Szwab, a Szymański specialist who send me her unpublished articles. During my first international presentation on Szymański’s music in Krakow (Young Musicology Today Conference) I established contacts to Polish scholars. Finally, most of Rochberg’s materials are in Paul Sacher Stiftung Basel, except 66 pages of holograph sketches which are kept in the New York Public Library.

The second area of my work was associated with the formation of an intertextual web between Baroque-influenced works of all three composers. I have found out numerous links between the composers: both Schnittke and Szymański took paintings by surrealist René Magritte as an important source for their new styles; in the second half of 1960s both

¹ In *Oxford Music Online* article on neoclassicism is stated that it is „difficult and even artificial to regard neo-classicism and postmodernism as separate except in historical sequence“, but I think that at least in terms of form we could say that neoclassicists usually prefer balanced forms, while postmodernists prefer distorted forms with excessive fragmentations and discontinuities.

Rochberg and Schnittke used baroque music to challenge systematized serial thinking and both were fascinated by the newly developed cinematic techniques during this period and consequently used Baroque music as “dramatic inserts” within a musical language indebted to musical modernity. On the other hand, the compositional techniques differ clearly: Rochberg always used distinct quotations, while Szymański favored stylistic allusion and Schnittke combines both techniques. Most of the musicological research in this field up to now is connected with narrative and postmodern theories, but what is still lacking is an intertextual study into such heterogeneous musical styles. In the following phase of my project, I will therefore continue to review the existing literature about musical borrowing and intertextuality comprehensively. I aim to elaborate a sophisticated and up-to-date theory of musical borrowing and intertextuality adequate to my case studies. I will start from theories by Harold Bloom (*The Anxiety of Influence*, 1973), Gérard Genette (*Palimpsests*, 1982), Peter Burkholder (*The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing as a Field*, 1994), Martha Hyde (*Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music*, 1996), David Metzger (*Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 2003) and Tobias Bleek (*Musikalische Intertextualität als Schaffensprinzip*, 2010).

Time schedule

Autumn, 2017: visit to the Schnittke Archive in London; consulting major studies on musical intertextuality

2018: visit to the *Paul Sacher Stiftung Basel* in order to consult materials of George Rochberg, completing the draft version of thesis

2019: deriving research conclusions and finalizing the thesis