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**A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE PRESENT:
THE MUSICAL REALIZATION OF AN ANCIENT POEM, “ADAM’S
LAMENT”, IN THE PENITENTIAL PSALMS BY ALFRED SCHNITTKE**

ZHANNA A. LEHMANN¹

zhanna.lehmann@gmail.com

The collapse of Communist regimes in the countries of Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.) in December 1991 turned a new page in the history of Russia and Russian music. Prior to that date, access by Western composers and audiences to contemporary music in the U.S.S.R. was severely restricted. This political change doubtless accounts for the delay in the West’s discovery of the music of composers such as Alfred Schnittke (1934–98), Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931), Edison Denisov (1929–96), and Arvo Pärt (b. 1935). The last decade of the twentieth century and the arrival of the new millennium witnessed greatly increased awareness and positive critical assessment of this important new body of choral music.

The late 1980s were a period of social and economic reforms (“Perestroika”) in the Soviet Union initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev, as well as a renewal of religious activity that included both the reopening and renovation of churches and monasteries in Russia. The rise of religious activity was a response to the years of state-mandated atheism and persecution of Christians in the Soviet Union. This period saw increased church attendance and new interest in the use of spiritual themes in film, literature, and music. The spiritual renaissance of music took two forms: (1) liturgical music based on traditional church genres, forms, and texts, and (2) “sacred concert music,” which did not follow these traditional parameters but synthesized Christian themes of repentance, catharsis, Russian choral traditions and contemporary forms. The latter was especially favoured by the leading Russian choral composers, allowing a bridge between religious and cultural spheres, making it possible to work without the strict limitations of the liturgical genres, and to expose this type of music to a broader audience. *Three Sacred Choruses* (1984), *Concerto for Choir* (1984–5), and *Stikhi Pokayannyye* [Penitential Psalms] (1987–8) by

¹ This contribution is part of Zhanna A. Lehmann, “Alfred Schnittke’s Quest for a Universal Musical Language in the *Penitential Psalms* (1987–88)”, Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2018.

Alfred Schnittke are among the many works utilizing sacred themes which allude to Russian Orthodox Church music styles.

The year 1988 marked the millennium of the Christianization of Russia. In 1987, Alfred Schnittke was commissioned to compose a piece for the celebration of this anniversary. The result was *Penitential Psalms* (henceforth *PP*), a cycle of twelve *cappella* pieces for mixed choir. Schnittke drew the texts from a 1986 publication, *Monuments of the Literature of Ancient Russia: Second Half of the Sixteenth Century*.² The editors of this publication selected eleven poems from six different manuscript collections dating from the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries and arranged them in a specific order, to which Schnittke adhered. Since the origins of these texts cover a long historical span, they embrace a variety of textual styles, all united under the theme of repentance. While the authors of these poems remain anonymous, the source of each poem can be traced back to specific point. These poems are not Biblical psalms in the literal sense; the term “Psalm” is an English interpretation of the Russian title, *Stikhi Pokayannye*, which is more accurately rendered into English as “Penitential Verses.”

Historically, the penitential texts have their roots in ancient monastic tradition, and were conceived to be sung. Thus, they belonged to the written tradition, which tends to be more rigid and prescriptive, reflecting the monopoly on literary production wielded by the Orthodox Church. As a result, this penitential poetry, rooted in the monastic tradition, is more refined intellectually and more expressive in its use of language and metaphor than secular folk poetry. Over time, awareness of these penitential poems spread to become part of folk culture and merged with the larger group of spiritual poems developed exclusively by oral tradition. These poems share a Christian thematic content linked to scriptural sources and enriched by other literary borrowings.³

The earliest penitential poems appear in fifteenth-century manuscripts as single items that make reference to no specific literary genre.⁴ Among the oldest poems is *Adam sat before Paradise and wept*, also known as “Adam’s Lament.”⁵ Ephrosin, a chronicler of the Kirill-Belozersk monastery, included Adam’s Lament in a collection dating from about 1470. In form, it is typical of the penitential poems that borrow (partially or fully) from the liturgical texts such as *The Lenten Triodion*.⁶ The musicologist N. F. Findeizen (1868–1928), who conducted research at both the Trinity-Sergiev and Kirill-Belozersk monasteries, pointed out that “Adam’s Lament” was sung by the *kliros* (church choristers), after vespers during the week prior to Lent. At that time, as part of the rite of forgiveness, the archimandrite of

2 L. Dmitriev, Likhachev and A. Panchenko, eds, *Monuments of the Literature of Ancient Russia: Second Half of the Sixteenth Century*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1986, 550–563.

3 N.S. Seregina and S.E. Nikitina., “Spiritual Poems”, *Orthodox Encyclopedia*, vol. 16, Moscow: Church and Science Centre “Orthodox Encyclopedia”, 2007, 424–428. See online: <http://www.pravenc.ru/text/180672.html>. Accessed 30 June 2018.

4 K. Korableva, “Penitential Poems as a Genre of an Ancient Russian Singing Art”, PhD diss., Moscow: Ministry of Culture, 1979, 8.

5 A.M. Panchenko, “Penitential Poems”, *Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House)*, <http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=4651>. Accessed June 30, 2018.

6 Panchenko, “Penitential Poems”, *Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House)*, <http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=4651>. Accessed June 30, 2018.

Korableva writes, “The sources of the [penitential] poems are found in the hymns of the liturgical cycle: penitential stichera (hymns of Orthros and Vespers sung in alternation with psalmic or scriptural verses), burial stichera, Theotokia stichera (devoted to the Mother of God), the Penitential Canon and so on.” K. Korableva, “Spiritual poems as Monuments of Znamenny Chant; Penitential Poems”, *Musica Antiqua IV; Acta Scientifica* 1975, 535–556; see p. 535.

the monastery served a beer or honey beverage to the monks.⁷ This poem is the first movement of Schnittke’s *Penitential Psalms* and the primary focus of the following discussion.

Schnittke chose to use the *a cappella* choral idiom to set the text precisely to reflect the historical nature of Russian liturgical music. In writing the *Penitential Psalms*, Schnittke did not seek the “conservation of Russian choral tradition, its literal reproduction,” but aimed for “a freely composed work that is not tied by tradition.”⁸ He remarked that he did not use direct quotations but rather quasi-quotations and allusions to the stylistic properties of other genres in the *Penitential Psalms*.⁹ Within his compositional output, the *Penitential Psalms* constitute a relatively late work, being composed a mere decade before the composer’s death. As the texts developed far beyond the limits of the traditional liturgical function, Schnittke’s music, while rooted in traditional styles and techniques, went far beyond its origins, envisioned through the prism of his overall life experience, religious beliefs and varied musical background. The style of Schnittke is inimitable and difficult to recreate because of its complexity, diversity and degree of synthesis. While specific elements can be isolated and even imitated, his musical style as a whole defies easy categorization, challenging the efficacy of traditional academic approaches to music.

Despite their unique and complicated musical language, Schnittke’s works are immediately identifiable to those familiar with his music. He tends to use a discrete body of specific musical structures or ideas in each of his works, albeit with modifications from one work to the next. These are his musical signatures, ideas that identify the music as uniquely his. This singularity is exemplified in Schnittke’s use of such musical structures as motifs, which are not self-contained, but interrelated in such a way as to render the chronology of their origin irrelevant. While motifs represent distinct ideas and create musical unity, their utility is much broader than units that have but one function. The appearance of the motifs together with monograms through the *Penitential Psalms* can be isolated and catalogued. I have created specific names for motifs derived from their linkage to specific words or ideas.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF THE MOTIFS AND MONOGRAMS

Motif/Monogram	Textual or Symbolic concept
“Sin”	Association with text broadly related to concepts of sin, iniquities, transgressions, and repentance.
“Repentance”	
“God”	Association with any conceptual appearance of names of God (Christ, Our Lord, Merciful and etc.), description of God and prayer to Him.
“Christ”	
BACH	Symbol of universality, infinity, immortal life, and a unity of all Christians.
“Man”	
DSCH	Symbol of universality, infinity, immortal life
Alfred Schnittke	Representation of himself

The resulting network of motifs is reminiscent of the nineteenth-century system of leitmotifs, in which individual musical ideas are directly connected to particular

7 N. F. Findeizen, quoted in Panchenko, “Penitential Poems.” <http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=4651>. Accessed 30 June 2018.

8 V. Kolosova, “Musical Repentance”, *Soviet Culture*, 11 February 1989, 4.

9 Kolosova, 1989, 4.

persons, places or events. Schnittke's appropriation of a system of motifs creates coherence and unity within the work. Motifs may appear either in their original format or as transformations involving extension, re-ordering, transposition, and/or combination with or inclusion in other musical elements. His treatment of motifs finds precedence in the developing variation technique created by Johannes Brahms; like Schoenberg, Schnittke adopted this procedure to prevent the "obvious and monotonous repetition" of the same musical material.¹⁰ The procedure of using musical ideas in association with the text also resembles the method used by Charles Ives in *Psalm 90*.¹¹

Schnittke introduces the motifs in the first movement. A symbolic parallel may be drawn: as the fall of the first man, Adam, initiated the emergence of sin in the world, the appearance of the motifs in the first movement similarly impels a musical development of the entire work; the initial motifs blossom into other musical transformations and figures, monograms, penetrate into and synthesize with other forms of the musical language. Being present in all movements, it creates a musical drama within an individual movement and serves as a musical generator for the dramaturgy throughout the piece.

The melodic motif representing "sin" uses the specific pitch classes, E \flat -D-C \sharp . This "Sin" motif generates numerous melodic variants, all of which share a common textual reference to sin and repentance. We can trace the expansion of this fundamental cell throughout the work.

EXAMPLE 1

A. PRIME SET



B. PP 3, BB. 26-27



C. PP 5, BB. 8-9; PP 8, BB. 19-20



The "Sin" motif appears in the work's opening movement, Adam's Lament, as a six-note figure repeated four times with modifications of pitch and rhythm to set the words "Adam sat before Paradise and wept: 'O My Paradise, Paradise, my glorious Paradise!'"¹²

¹⁰ Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*. Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984, 9.

¹¹ Chester L. Alwes, "Formal Structure as a Guide to Rehearsal Strategy in "Psalm 90" by Charles E. Ives", *The Choral Journal*, vol. 25, no. 8, ACDA April 1985, 21-25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23546819> Accessed July 31, 2018.

¹² In the comments of the critical edition of the PP, the editor Fr Ivan Moody noted that the Belaieff edition contains an error in the bass 1, m. 7; a sign "b" was misread and appeared as an additional e. See: *Stikhi Pokayannye* [Penitential Verses], eds. Ivan Moody and Aleksey Vulfson. Series IV, vol. 9 of *Alfred Schnittke: Collected Works. Works for Choir*. St. Petersburg: Compozitor, 2017, 73

EXAMPLE 2

PP 1, BB. 1-8

This motif refers to the concept of sin throughout the *PP*, appearing in conjunction with such words as “sinner, the fallen, transgressor of commandments, mindlessly, eternal torment, foul demons, the end (death), a wild beast alone, Dread Judgement, darkness, into the grave...”; it is not necessarily applied directly to such words, but alludes symbolically to “sin” by sprinkling its pitches throughout the musical fabric. Schnittke deploys this motif both melodically and vertically.

TABLE 2. SELECTED PRINCIPAL EXAMPLES OF “SIN” MOTIF IN PP 1

Measure	Part	Russian Text	English Text
5–8	B1B 3	Плакася Адамо пред раемо сидя: „Раю мои, раю, прекрасныи мои раю!	Adam sat before Paradise and wept: “O My Paradise, Paradise, my glorious Paradise!
18–19 ¹ 29–31	B1B2	Согрешихо, Господи, согрешихо,	I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned
20–21	B1B2	беззаконеновахо	I have disobeyed Your commandments

Schnittke transforms this motif into a subordinate array of related musical figures such as the chromatic scale, transpositions and permutations of the BACH motif, the monograms of Shostakovich (DSCH), Schnittke (both his initials (AS) and the full acronym [AFEDSCHE or AFEDGSCHE]), which appear in other movements of the *PP*.

The “Repentance” motif is a transposed version of the “Sin” motif, and is similarly constructed on the three-pitch prime set.

EXAMPLE 3. "REPENTANCE" MOTIF

A. PP 1, BB. 1 - 6



B. PRIME SET



TABLE 3. REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES OF "REPENTANCE" MOTIF IN PP 1

Measure	Part
1-7	B3
13-17	B1
18-21, 26-27, 30-31	B2
33	B1
35	B2

I label it the "Repentance" motif because it often appears together with the "Sin" motif, used with a broader description of sinful actions and the conditions of a man under sin. This motif's appearance with a variety of texts serves as a symbolic reminder of the universality of sin (e.g. *PP* 4, bb. 32-34).

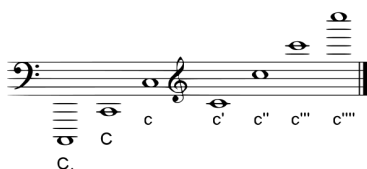
In situations where individual words require special emphasis, Schnittke may combine these two motifs, temporarily expanding the textural density of the vocal forces.

TABLE 4. COMBINATION OF "SIN" AND "REPENTANCE" MOTIFS

Measure	Part	Russian Text	English Text
5-8	B1B 3	Плакася Адамо пред раемо сядя: „Раю мои, раю, прекраснии мои раю!	Adam sat before Paradise and wept: "O My Paradise, Paradise, my glorious Paradise!
18-19 ¹ 29-31	B1B2	Согрешихо, Господи, согрешихо,	I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned
20-21	B1B2	беззаконеновахо	I have disobeyed Your commandments

These motifs are expanded and interpolated in a chromatic scale suggesting a lament. The first combination of these motifs to appear in *PP* 1 is supported by a drone: initially on c (bb. 1-8) and then on G (bb. 9-31);¹³ the movement concludes with the pitches C and G. The choice of these pitches is related to the motifs. The three-pitch prime sets of both motifs correspond to the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth partials of the overtone series based on the fundamental pitches G and C

13 Pitch notation is represented using the following scheme:



EXAMPLE 4. OVERTONE SERIES ON THE FUNDAMENTAL PITCH G



EXAMPLE 5. OVERTONE SERIES ON THE FUNDAMENTAL PITCH C



The use of the overtone series is a product of Schnittke’s research in the area of the acoustic effects of music. The history of Russian music in the 1960s involved experimentation with electronic music in which purity of sound, “. . . regardless of its expressive and emotional qualities,” was one of the main focuses of investigation.¹⁴ Electronic manipulations of the potential timbres of sound and the possibility of expanding the limits imposed by acoustic music were of great interest to composers.¹⁵ Schnittke, amongst others, worked in an electronic studio, using the ‘ANS (Alexander Nikolayevich Skryabin) synthesizer’ constructed by the engineer-mathematician E. A. Murzin, to investigate previously unexplored depths of the overtone series, up to the 32nd partial and further.¹⁶ These experiments, in Schnittke’s words, were “an endless process –numerous attempts to approach a direct expression of music, the constant return to ‘overtones,’ the search for new rational devices and an approach to truth open up more and more new fields of unattainability.”¹⁷ According to Schnittke’s notes, immersing himself in the riches of the overtone spectrum allowed certain rules of aural perception to come more clearly into focus: “the ear catches the first (basic tone) and gets accustomed to its overtones, it cannot imagine a different tone. It is quite happy with the first tone and the microcosm of its overtones.”¹⁸ Thus, it eliminates the possibility of modulation to other tonalities, such is the dominance of the fundamental pitch. Schnittke calls the overtone series “a natural phenomenon” that occurs from the sounds of the surrounding world.¹⁹

Schnittke believes that music based on overtones conveys “the impression of something good,” symbolically representing mystical things beyond earthly reality.”²⁰

14 Marina Lobanova, *Musical Style and Genre: History and Modernity*. OPA: Harwood Academic Publishers 2000, 31.

15 Lobanova, 2000, 31.

16 Alfred Schnittke, and Alexander Ivashkin, ed. *A Schnittke Reader*. Trans. John Goodliffe. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002, 95–96.

17 Schnittke and Ivashkin, 2002, 106–107.

18 Ibid.

19 Schnittke and Ivashkin, 2002, 12.

20 Alexander Ivashkin, *Conversations with Alfred Schnittke*. Moscow: Klassika–XXI, 2004, 137.

The pervasive presence of drones is the first and most fundamental expression of the power of overtones. Long, sustained low pitches generate the overtone series, and this enhanced sonority remains dominant in the ear of the listener.

Schnittke uses a succession of ascending perfect fourths beginning on F (F–B \flat –E \flat) to represent the “God” motif. The name for this motif comes from the first appearance of God’s name in *PP* 1 (m. 32). Schnittke uses two perfect fourths to signify God’s state of perfection.

EXAMPLE 6. “GOD” MOTIF



This combination of pitches is a musical metaphor associated with any conceptual appearance of the names of God (Our Lord, Merciful, etc.), descriptions of God, and prayers to Him throughout the entire *PP*.

For texts that describe transgressions against the Church and/or God, this motif is altered, effectively negating the notion of perfection. Two significant instances of this alteration appear in *PP* 3.

EXAMPLE 7. *PP* 3, vv. 22-23

22 *meno*
 S. Церк-ви Бо - жи - я не дер-жу - ся, От
 Zerk-wi Bo - schi - ja ne der-schu - ssja, Ot
 A. I M...
 T. Церк-ви Бо - жи - я не дер-жу - ся,
 Zerk-wi Bo - schi - ja ne der-schu - ssja,
 B. I M
 B. II

EXAMPLE 8. *PP* 3, vv. 32-35

32 *rit.* 5/8 - 4/4 2/4 3/4 4/4
 S. па-мят-лив, Без-за-ко - ни - я ис - пол-нен, Гре - хи свер - шен,
 pa-mjat-liw, Bes-sa - ko - ni - ja iss - pol-nen, Gre - chi sswer - schen, div.
 A. I M...
 T. -я не па-мят-лив, Без-за-ко - ни - я ис - пол-нен, Гре - хи свер-шен,
 -ja ne pa-mjat-liw, Bes - sa - ko - ni - ja iss - pol-nen, Gre - chi sswer - schen,
 B. I M... B.II div.
 B. II

The first appears with the text “I do not hold fast to God’s Church” (mm. 22 – 23), where E₄ replaces E₃ (and the pitch order is changed). Schnittke stresses the text’s negative implication by breaking the God motif. In Schnittke’s words, “depicting negative emotions – using broken textures, broken melodic lines to express a state of disintegration, tension, leaping thoughts – all this is of course a representation of a certain kind of evil, but not of absolute evil. This is the evil of broken good.”²¹ The second example occurs in bb. 34–35 in conjunction with the words “crowned by sins.” Here, Schnittke alters both intervals to become tritones, an even stronger negation of God’s perfection.

This specific collection of pitches to represent God may derive from Schnittke’s familiarity with a pitch system constructed by the composer and theorist Yuri Butsko (1938–2015). Butsko was known for his devotion to and research into the Russian Orthodox chant tradition. He described his system as “a kind of Russian dodecaphony,” because he found within ancient Russian chant (*Znamenny rospev*) a scheme that allowed the generation of all twelve chromatic pitches.²² This scheme involved the four diatonic major trichords and subsequent transpositions of them both above and below the original four groups; each trichord contains two whole steps and relates to its successor by a half-step: “as the notes get higher, flats predominate; and as they get lower, sharps. A kind of endless arch is formed”.

EXAMPLE 9. BUTSKO’S PITCH SYSTEM ORGANIZATION.²³

The “God” motif is drawn from the first pitch of primary (original) trichords (open noteheads are used to indicate the four original trichords, while blackened neumes indicate extensions of these trichords in both directions). Schnittke admitted using Butsko’s “intonational system” in his Fourth Symphony.²⁴ From that admission we may conclude that Schnittke’s use of the pitch set F–B₄–E₄ in the *PP* as his motif for God is an intentional reference to the historical tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church and the singing tradition of *Znamenny* chant.

In practice, Schnittke made the logical leap of extending the distinctive shape of the “God” motif to the original starting pitch (G) of Butsko’s primary trichord.

21 Ivashkin, *A Schnittke Reader*, 2002, 22.

22 Ivashkin, *A Schnittke Reader*, 14. See also: Ivashkin, *Conversations*, 2004, 122 and Ismael-Simental, Emilia, “Alfred Schnittke and the *Znamenny Rospev*,” *Schnittke’s Studies*, ed. Gavin Dixon. London and New York: Routledge, 2017, 33–34.

23 Ivashkin, *A Schnittke Reader*, 2002, 14.

24 *Ibid.*, 15.

EXAMPLE 10. EXTENSION OF THE “GOD” MOTIF



By sharpening those pitches to G \sharp –C \sharp –F \sharp , Schnittke generated the motif associated with Christ.

EXAMPLE 11. “CHRIST” MOTIF



In so doing, Schnittke honours the Baroque affective convention of using sharps (in German *Kreuz*) to symbolize visually the Cross and Christ.²⁵ Schnittke’s first explicit use of the “Christ” motif coincides with the appearance of Christ’s name in the text (*PP* 7, bb. 86–87); the same pitch collection appears elsewhere in the *PP* in conjunction with conceptual references to God or the Church. Schnittke occasionally extends the unique contour of the “God” motif further along the principal notes of Butsko’s system of trichords. Both motifs, “God” and “Christ,” may occur simultaneously (either as linear melody or vertical configurations) in other movements of the *PP*. Even more abstruse is Schnittke’s use of them scattered throughout the musical fabric in such a way that they are no longer audibly identifiable.

Schnittke was immensely interested in symbolism, magic, and the mystical aspects of Christianity. This interest is evident throughout his life in interviews and conversations; in music, this fascination was manifested by his use of such devices as monograms. He used them as a means of creating mystical “. . . dialogue with both the past and the future (by preserving selected names in an imaginary museum), which expresses mythic striving for the wholeness of time.”²⁶ This technique is crucial to creating a certain ambivalence in his compositions through the juxtaposition of discrete layers that contain both obvious and hidden gestures. Schnittke once said that “the more hidden things are in the music the more it makes the music bottomless and inexhaustible.”²⁷ He believed that, in a mystical way, these hidden musical elements would nonetheless be perceptible to an audience. The monograms used in *PP* all rely on letters drawn from composers’ names that can be expressed as musical pitches: BACH, DSCH (Dmitry Shostakovich), and his own monogram, which took several forms – as his initials (AS) and as letters extracted from his first and last name (AFDSCHE) or the variant that includes his middle initial (AFEDGSCHE).²⁸

For Schnittke, the composer Johann Sebastian Bach (1675–1850) was the ultimate and unsurpassed embodiment of compositional craft, his “number one.”²⁹ Schnittke emphasized the role of Bach in his life by comparing him with the sun

25 Jasmin Melissa Cameron, *The Crucifixion in Music*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006, 58.

26 Victoria Adamenko, *Neo-Mythologism in Music: From Scriabin and Schoenberg to Schnittke and Crumb*. Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2007, 127.

27 Ivashkin, *Conversations*, 2004, 65.

28 In the German music notation, B corresponds to B \flat , H to B \natural , ES to E \flat , and AS to A \flat .

29 Ivashkin, *Conversations*, 2004, 155.

that “shines in all directions. No matter what I do.”³⁰ In his opinion, Bach’s music produces physical and spiritual effects, in which “the spiritual is a continuation of the physical.”³¹ His use of the BACH monogram may serve as a musical bridge symbolizing the ecumenical unity of Christianity, thus expressing his belief that the Christianization of Russia was a universal event. The BACH monogram in its linear configuration is a symbolic representation of the Cross.³² Since the *PP* are a Christian composition, Schnittke’s use of BACH monogram is both relevant and appropriate. Schnittke uses the BACH monogram both in its original form and in various transformations that involve its re-ordering and transposition; thus, for Schnittke, monograms become “a building material, the same as a series.” The first appearance of the BACH monogram occur in *PP* 1, bb. 22–23 and bb. 25–26 in a re-ordered version.

In the very first movement, Schnittke begins a systematic combination of the fundamental motifs. In bb. 22–24 of *PP* 1, he creates an eight-pitch theme that combines a re-ordered version of BACH with consecutive variants of the “Sin” motif. In the following bar (25), Schnittke repeats those eight pitches, adding to them the four missing pitches to complete a full chromatic series.

EXAMPLE 12. PP 1, BB. 25-27



SUMMARY

PP 1 initiates the entire setting of the *PP* by introducing major musical elements and techniques that receive further treatment and development throughout the entire work: the “Sin” and “Repentance” motifs represent Adam’s fall, an emergence of sin in the world, and a plea for God’s mercy; BACH’s monogram appears as a symbol of universality and eternity; the presence of the “God” motif as the beginning and the destination of a man’s journey. These motifs are not self-contained but interrelated in various ways and serve as building structures for various formations. One such formation, a chromatic scale, is an allusion to a lament style that underlines the texts’ historical background.

Most scholarly commentary on Schnittke’s style focuses on the term “polystylism.” Such a conclusion seems at odds with his self-proclaimed desire to achieve a universality of expression. His life experience presupposes polystylism; while ethnically Jewish and German, Schnittke believed that his way of thinking, perception and praying was inevitably Russian; he emphasized that the spiritual part of life was embraced by Russian language.³³ This description is not limited to the identification of or combination of various discreet styles and genres. The most appropriate description of style for Schnittke is one that recognizes the complexity of his creative mind, the possibility of simultaneity of processes. His universal musical language creates a bridge between the liturgical practice in which this prayer text

30 Ibid., 36.

31 Schnittke, Ivashkin, *A Schnittke Reader*, 2002, 9.

32 Alexander Ivashkin, “The Schnittke Code,” *Schnittke Studies*, ed. Gavin Dixon. London and New York: Routledge, 2017, 201.

33 Ivashkin, *Conversations*, 2004, 38.

is essentially used and the concert hall. Schnittke's striving for freedom and his desire to expand the borders of traditional sacred music, his knowledge of the historical origins of the poems, Russian Church music traditions, and his intuitive perception of the text enabled him to compose a piece not only for the celebration of the Christianization of Russia, but one that would delight lovers of liturgical music, a piece that evangelizes and preaches. Despite the undeniable allusions Schnittke makes rationally to preceding stylistic processes, there is no point at which the listener feels that he is simply mimicking devices used by earlier composers; this composite effect is unique and unpredictable, a synthesis that leads one to a feeling of the infinite majesty of the universe.

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