

Serial principle in the music of Lithuanian composers of younger generation

Among modern principles of composition, the serial principle assumes a special place. Even if serial compositions do not make a half of all the new music, significant processes in development of the 20th-century musical language were closely related to it. It is true in case of digression from a system of major-minor tonality in the beginning of the 20th century, outburst of absolute rationalism in avant-garde, and also renaissance of traditional norms of musical thinking in the second half of the 20th century, as a reaction to serialism and avant-gardism in general. On the one hand, the serial principle was in good harmony with the priorities of non-repeatability in modern and avant-garde music (the novelty cult, dodecaphony, serialism, etc.), both in terms of aesthetics and technology. On the other hand, it adapted very successfully in the context of repeatability priorities of the post-avant-garde music (re-composition, stylisations, repetitive music, etc.). Although the main topic of this report refers to the relatively narrow episode of expression of the serial principle, in order to perceive the vitality and, in a sense, uniqueness of this principle, we cannot evade discussion of general problems, too. I would like to start presentation of my report with specification of the category of the composition principle. To my opinion, this is one of the main goals of myself as the author of this report, and also of the present conference.

Although the concept of **composition principle** is not very frequent in literature, it has still not been adequately defined. The term of composition principle is most often used in theoretical practice when referring to different elements of composition: harmony, polyphony, timbre, facture, etc., and is frequently met next to such terms as composition techniques, method of composition, etc. In order to delimitate this category of other related definitions, I would propose distinguishing between the general aspect and the specific aspect. In view of that, we will refer to consistent patterns, which lie in the essence of composition (acoustic structure) formation (composition), type of cohesion or just cohesion, which determine specific ways of articulation of acoustic material, i.e. the **composition technique**. However, clear separation of technique and principle is a complicated task. It is as problematic as separation of function and structure, contents and form, etc. Despite of that, it has to be underlined that in this dyad of technique and principle, the latter one is always hierarchically subordinate to principle, just like material (structure) is always subject to functional springs, form to contents, etc. The composition principle and composition technique are two categories, which are closely related and unfold at different cognitive points of the acoustic structure. In the first case, it is done by bringing the acoustic universal grounds forward (e.g., determinateness, differentiation, uniqueness, etc.), while in the second case, by highlighting the external side of a sound (specific types, rules, measures of acoustic articulation). In such light, the composition principle is subject to cognition through the composition technique just as the latter is motivated by the composition principle. Thanks to this principle, notional-logic field of possible material differentiations is unclosed, while the technique itself is first of all manifested as objectification-materialisation of the mentioned connection and rendering sound to it. In this dyad of principle and technique, principle is the fixed constant (encompassing the functions of generality, continuity), while technique is the variable constant (encompassing the functions of individuality and innovations).

Searching for continuous and successive features of the **serial principle**, we can come to a specific perception of sound universality lying in it, on the basis of which phonic continuum can be proportionally graded in advance, starting from the lowest point to the highest one, from the most silent to the most loud, from the shortest to the longest, etc. In the given case, sound universality is perceived as a certain differential whole, composed of elements defined with united criteria, which enable establishment of stable mutual connections of series. Structure and special character is given to every composition by construction of series made on the basis of different proportions, which go through the whole composition.

When we talk about innovations, we notice that increasing of the determined connection (expansion of series to all sound parameters, introduction of new strict rules for the use of series, etc.) was typical to the development of the serial principle in the second half of the 20th century, on the one hand. On the other hand, it was marked with decreasing of the determinateness, modification and breach of the very essential norms of serialism.

If the serial principle became popular in the Western Europe in the beginning of the 1920s (Schönberg, Berg, Webern, etc.), then the first instances of the Lithuanian serial music date back to the 1960s (Balsys, Barkauskas, Kutavičius, Balakauskas, etc.). A clear turn was evident at that time: from national romanticism, where professional art of Lithuanian music was maturing, to the more modern musical language. This meant the beginning of the phase of the new “modern” Lithuanian music.

The composers of the 1970s’ generation (Algirdas Martinaitis, Vidmantas Bartulis, Onutė Narbutaitė, etc.) have revised a number of ‘avant-garde’ attitudes of the earlier generation composers, namely, the absolute ‘newness’, complicatedness of the musical language, fetish of ‘dissonance’, etc. Their creation is marked with traditional norms of musical thinking, such as tonality, modality, partly thematic feature, rhythm, ‘return’ of harmony (in its classical sense), diatonicity of harmony, consonant feature, abundance of the past music reflections (pastiche, neo-neo tendencies), aims to revivify phonic material (minimalist tendencies), etc. Thus, it is natural that the serial principle has not been treated as the centre of their attention.

Tendencies of technological aspirations emerge again starting with the 1980s (Rytis Mažulis, Šarūnas Nakas, Ričardas Kabelis). It could be said that the last decade of the 20th century is a certain renaissance of the serial principle. The young generation of the composers of that time has expressed their interest in the avant-garde music of the Western Europe very intensively and enthusiastically, as if trying to compensate their search of the 1960s Lithuanian composers more continuously and radically. Such situation was partially determined by political changes of the state (collapse of the Soviet Union, free flow of information, etc.) and the fact that Osvaldas Balakauskas, one of the most consistent representatives of the serial music in Lithuania, started teaching at the Lithuanian Academy of Music. Nevertheless, the serialism brought back again to the composition practise by the young composers was affected by both post-avant-garde and post-modern context. Having given up the idea, typical to modernism, about the continuous advancement of art, they started to regard history and geography more freely, which resulted in the fact that post-modern compositions were often associated with cocktails of different eras and styles.

I would like to introduce three compositions by Lithuanian composers: *The Mystery of 7 Bridges* (1991) by Snieguolė Dikčiūtė, *Ancient Songs* (1993) by Antanas Jasenka and my own *Popludus* (2002).

Dikčiūtė’s *The Mystery of 7 Bridges* for choir, brass band, two organs and chamber orchestra (1991) is based on total serial techniques, which is a rare case in Lithuanian music. This one-hour-long composition consists of 14 parts: varied repetitions of *Bridges* (seven in total) and *On This Side* (six in total). The last part is called *On the Other Side*: it is made of seven crotchets of rests, a certain ontological, soundless Postscriptum. The parameters of pitch, rhythm, choice of registers, introduction of voices, etc., are determined in this composition in series. Next to the basic forms of the P I R R I series, the author employs five additional shapes of series, derived through rotation (see ex. 1). Symbolism of numbers is extremely important, as number seven is an essential structural and semantic proportion of this composition. The series of pitch is made of seven tones of diatonic sound sequence (a rest appears only instead of the seventh one: e, f, g, a, h, c, rest), duration of each element in the rhythm series equals to seven quarters, eighths, or sixteenth notes, each new voice enters at every seventh quarter (or eighth, or half-note), composition of the orchestra is formed on the basis of the number seven (seven choir voices, seven saxophones, seven violins, altos, cellos), the cycle structure, etc. However, the ‘strict avant-garde type’ sonic realisation of the serialism of Dikčiūtė goes far away of any kind of allusions to the sounding of classic serial compositions. This work is saturated with silent contemplation, diatonics (the whole composition is written for ‘white’ keys) and canons.

Dramaturgy of this composition is based on slow shift of more or less dense episodes (from three to 35 voices). With the increase of the number of canonical lines, they all merge into a single indivisible flow, where timbre and colour (sonoric) moments of sound come to the fore (see ex. 2). Thus, one can observe that the serial principle is implemented in this composition through symbiosis of different techniques: serialism, early polyphony, modal, sonoric, micropolyphonic sound, etc.

Jasenka’s *Ancient Songs* for carillon or electronic bells can be viewed as a certain ‘catalogue’ of interactions between determinacy and indeterminacy. In this composition, not only different sound parameters are employed for the serial principle, but also degrees of precision and relativity of notation. Emancipation of the serial principle from chromatics (typical to the most cases of the compositions in the second half of the 20th century) is witnessed by an interval sequence corresponding to the sequence of

natural overtones, chosen for a specific series of pitch (perf.12 – perf.5 – perf.4 - maj.3 - min.3 - maj.2 - min.2, see Ex.3), while for the macro-series (a sequence of series), nine ancient Greek modes are chosen: hyperdorian, hyperphrygian, hyperlydian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, hypodorian, hypophrygian, and hypolydian. The rhythmic series is formed on the basis of the Fibonacci series: 1-2-3-5-8-13-21-34-55. Its augmented and diminutive shapes are equated to the sound sequences of pitch macro-series. The dynamics series going from *fff* to total silence is closely related to the pitch series: the lower the sound, the louder; the higher the sound, the more silent it becomes.

The composition consists of nine parts, and each of them serves as an exposition of every separate sound sequence, created from introductions of the overtone series from all six tones of sound sequence (continuously downward). All nine parts are grouped by the composer to three larger ones: A - Dorian (A1), hyperdorian (A2), hypodorian (A3); B - Phrygian (B1), hyperphrygian-hypophrygian (B2), Phrygian (B3), C – hyperlydian (C1), Lydian (C2), hypolydian (C3).

Although a series is the basic determinant of the composition, its depletion defines both a separate part of the composition, and the whole composition. Different degree of determinacy is noticed in different levels of the composition. Three different types of sound relationship are expressed on the level of series: strictly serial, when all sound parameters are determined by the serial principle (A1, B3, C2), partly serial, when series is just approximately observed in the rhythm parameter, ‘allusion-type’ (A2, B1-B2, C3), and the ‘free’ one, when all parameters are defined by free observation of the score references (A3, B1-B2, C1, see Ex. 4, 5). All this is followed by three types of notation: specific, allusive and graphic. At the level of macro-series, serial principle is strictly followed continuously (each step ends after exhaustion of six-element macro-series). At the level of cycle, determinacy becomes weaker again: the composer does not regulate the order of three cycle parts (it is freely referred to by a performer during every performance), but repetition or omission of one of them is not allowed as well.

In a sense, *Popludus* for two pianos by Antanas Kučinskas is a hybrid of ‘mass’ (represented by thematic material of a pop ballad) and ‘elite’ (represented by the serial technique) music. A theme of the pop music period employed in the composition is treated as a series. The basis of the theme is a 15-tone row which I called a pre-seria (see Ex.6). Development of the composition is based on mutation of some sound row elements to the others. The mutation logic of it is based on the principle of rotation. As the sound sequence changes, the ‘pop’ theme-series changes as well (see Ex.7, 8).

In conclusion, I would like to underline again that interest of the younger generation of Lithuanian composers in the serial principle made an impact on the general Lithuanian and global tendencies of the music development. On the one hand, the younger generation was in a certain way striving to compensate serial quests of 1960s Lithuanian composers by employing this principle in a more consistent and radical way. On the other hand, its implementation (materialisation) was marked with symbioses of different, often contradicting techniques, in the result of which compositions of the mentioned authors often remind us of the hybrids of different eras and styles.

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Ex. 1S.Dikčiūtė *The mystery of 7 bridges*. Seria of pitches

Six musical staves, each showing a sequence of seven notes with slurs and fingerings. The notes and fingerings are as follows:

- Staff 1: Notes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.
- Staff 2: Notes 1, 6, 4, 3, 7, 2, 5. Fingerings: 1, 6, 4, 3, 7, 2, 5.
- Staff 3: Notes 1, 7, 2, 6, 3, 5, 4. Fingerings: 1, 7, 2, 6, 3, 5, 4.
- Staff 4: Notes 1, 5, 6, 2, 4, 7, 3. Fingerings: 1, 5, 6, 2, 4, 7, 3.
- Staff 5: Notes 1, 4, 7, 5, 2, 3, 6. Fingerings: 1, 4, 7, 5, 2, 3, 6.
- Staff 6: Notes 1, 3, 5, 7, 6, 4, 2. Fingerings: 1, 3, 5, 7, 6, 4, 2.

Ex. 2 S.Dikčiūtė *The mystery of 7 bridges*. *On this side III*

A full orchestral score for Ex. 2, featuring various instruments and dynamic markings. The score is written for the following instruments:

- Sax. I, II, III, IV, V, VI
- Cp.li
- Org. I, II
- V-ni I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII
- V-no Vln
- V-la I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII
- V-cl I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII
- Cb.

The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *ppp*, and *pppp*. The music is written in a complex, multi-measure format, with various rhythmic values and articulations. The score is divided into measures, with some measures containing multiple notes and rests.

Ex. 3 A. Jasenka Ancient songs. Seria of pitches

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Ex. 4 A. Jasenka Ancient songs

fff
A1

$\downarrow \approx 96$
(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

mf quasi mf quasi mp
quasi f E
quasi p

p
quasi pp
quasi fff

$\downarrow \approx 92$
(b) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

quasi mf quasi mp
quasi mf D
mf
quasi f

f
p
f
quasi pp
quasi ff
ff

ALICEA

Ex. 5 A.Jasenka "Ancient songs"

The image displays a handwritten musical score for 'Ancient songs' by A. Jasenka, organized into two systems of staves. The first system consists of three staves. The top staff is marked with a box labeled 'A2' and a dynamic of 'ff'. It contains a melodic line with notes numbered 1 through 8, starting with a forte dynamic and ending with a 'p' dynamic. The middle and bottom staves of this system provide accompaniment, with dynamics ranging from 'f' to 'p' and performance markings such as 'ca 15'' and 'ca 14'. The second system also consists of three staves. The top staff is marked with a box labeled 'A3' and a dynamic of 'f', with the instruction '« à vol d'oiseau »' written above it. The notes in this system are numbered 1 through 5. The middle and bottom staves of the second system continue the accompaniment, with dynamics like 'p' and 'mf', and performance markings such as 'ca 10'' and 'ca 5''. The score is characterized by its dense, expressive notation and dynamic contrasts.

Ex. 6 A. Kučinskas *Popludus*. Pre-seria of pitches

1-16 measures

17-32 measures

33-48 measures

19-64 measures

65-80 measures

Detailed description: This block contains five systems of musical notation, each consisting of a treble and bass clef staff. The notation is a pre-seria of pitches, represented by whole notes. The first system (measures 1-16) has notes numbered 1 through 8 in the bass staff and 9 through 15 in the treble staff. The second system (measures 17-32) has notes numbered 8 through 1 in the bass staff and 9 through 15 in the treble staff. The third system (measures 33-48) has notes numbered 4 through 1 in the bass staff and 12 through 8 in the treble staff. The fourth system (measures 19-64) has notes numbered 13 through 4 in the bass staff and 14 through 8 in the treble staff. The fifth system (measures 65-80) has notes numbered 7 through 1 in the bass staff and 15 through 14 in the treble staff.

Ex. 6 A. Kučinskas *Popludus*, measures 1-8

Detailed description: This block contains three systems of musical notation for measures 1-8. The first system is for the right hand, starting with a tempo marking of $(\frac{2+2+2}{8})$ and a dynamic of *mf*. It includes a sequence of notes with fingerings (1, 4, 2, 2, 4) and the instruction *non legato*. The second system is for the left hand, also starting with $(\frac{2+2+2}{8})$ and *mf*, with fingerings (1, 4, 2, 2, 4) and the instruction *simile*. The third system shows the continuation of the right and left hand parts, with the right hand ending with a final chord. The notation includes various rhythmic values and articulation marks.

Ex. 7 A.Kučinskas *Popludus*, measures 17-24

- 2 -

Ex. 8 A.Kučinskas *Popludus*, measures 33-40

Antanas Kučinskas

Serijinis principas jaunosios kartos lietuvių kompozitorių kūryboje

Greta kitų šiuolaikinių komponavimo principų serijinis užima ypatingą vietą. Nors juo grindžiami kūriniai nesudaro nė pusės naujosios muzikos, su juo susiję svarbūs XX a. muzikinės kalbos kitimo procesai. Viena vertus tiek estetinė, tiek technologine prasme serijinis principas puikiai derėjo su moderniosios ir avangardinės muzikos nekartojamumo prioritetais (naujumų kultas, dodekafonija, serializmas ir pan.), kita vertus, sėkmingai adaptavosi ir postavangardinės muzikos kartojamumo prioritetų kontekste (rekompozicijose, stilizacijose, repetityvinėje muzikoje ir kt.). Siekiant atskleisti tradicijų ir novacijų sąveiką serijinio principo aspektu neišvengiamai tenka paliesti ir bendresnio pobūdžio problemas, kaip, pvz., pačios komponavimo principo kategorijos patikslinimą.

Nors *komponavimo principo sąvoka* teorinėje literatūroje sutinkama neretai, ji vis dar nėra pakankamai esmingai apibrėžta. Dažniausiai komponavimo principo terminas teorinėje praktikoje vartojamas kalbant apie įvairiausias komponavimo elementus: harmoniją, polifoniją, tembrą, faktūrą ir pan., neretai sutinkamas greta tokių terminų kaip komponavimo technika, komponavimo metodas ir pan. Siekdamas atriboti šią kategoriją nuo kitų jai giminingų terminų, siūlau skirti bendrąjį ir konkretųjį aspektus. Šiuo požiūriu *komponavimo principu* laikysime kompozicijos (akustinės struktūros) formavimo (komponavimo) esmėje glūdinčius dėsningumus, sąryšingumo pobūdį ar tiesiog sąryšį, nulemiantį konkrečius akustinės medžiagos artikuliacijos būdus – *komponavimo techniką*. Šioje principo ir technikos diadoje principas – tai pastovioji konstanta (telkianti bendrumo, perimamumo funkcijas), technika – kintamoji konstanta (telkianti individualumo, novacijų funkcijas).

Ieškodami pastoviųjų, perimamųjų serijinio principo bruožų, pastebėsime jo esmėje glūdinčią specifinę garsinio universumo sampratą, kuria remiantis garsinė visuma iš anksto proporcingai laipsniuojama – nuo žemiausio iki aukščiausio, nuo tyliausio iki garsiausio, nuo trumpiausio iki ilgiausio ir pan. Kitaip tariant, garsinis universumas suvokiamas kaip tam tikra diferenciali visuma, sudaryta iš atskirų vieningais kriterijais apibrėžiamų elementų. Tai leidžia užmezgti tarp jų stabilius eiliškumą sąryšius.

Kalbėdami apie novacijas pastebėsime, kad XX a. 2-ojoje pusėje vienos serijinio principo technikos dar labiau didino determinuotą susaistymą (serijų išplitimas į visus garso parametrus, naujų griežtų serijų panaudojimo taisyklių įvedimas ir t. t.), kitos, modifikuodamos pačias pagrindines serijškumo normas, – mažino.

Pradedant 9-uoju deš. lietuvių muzikoje vėl ryškėja technologinių aspiracijų tendencijos (R. Mažulis, Š. Nakas, R. Kabelis). O paskutiniajame XX a. deš., galima būtų teigti, savotišką renesansą išgyvena ir serijinis principas. To meto jaunoji kompozitorių karta (S. Dikčiūtė, A. Jasenka, V. Germanavičius ir kt.) intensyviai ir entuziastingai domėjosi avangardine Vakarų muzika. Kita vertus jaunuųjų autorių vėl į komponavimo praktiką sugrąžinamą serialumą veikė ir postavangardinis, postmodernistinis kontekstas. Šių autorių serijiniu principu grindžiami kūriniai technologiniu bei akustinio rezultato aspektu primena skirtingų epochų ir stilių kokteilius.

Šiame straipsnyje aptariami trys kūriniai: S. Dikčiūtės „7 tiltų misterija“ (1991 m.) chorui, orkestrui, 7 saksofonams, dviems vargonams ir varpams, A. Jasenkos „Senovinės giesmės“ varpams arba elektroniniams varpams (1993), ir A. Kučinsko „Popludas“ (2001) fortepijonui. Pirmajame kūrinyje persipina serializmas ir senoji polifoninė technika, modalumas ir sonorika, antrajame matoma plati determinuotumo ir nedeterminuotumo sąveikų įvairovė, o trečiasis – tam tikra prasme „masinės“ (atsovaujamos popbaladės teminės medžiagos) ir „elitinės“ (atsovaujamos serijinės technikos) muzikų hibridas.