

Sacral Space in Requiem by Igor Vorobyov

A confession word is organic and valuable not just as a sacral or secret word. It is always said and read as the text of life itself even if it is a question of inevitability. It is impossible to die without confession as the absence of confession words in your sole means the absence of life itself – the eternal companion of death.

Michail Uvarov¹

In the diverse genre palette of musical art, the requiem certainly is among the most actual and eternal genres. The life and death duel being its main dramatic collision reflects the major problems of human life essence presented by its limiting edges. The requiem is an attempt, having raised a mourning veil to glance in a chasm of incomprehensible “other” world, it is possibility to pass and rethink the entire way of mankind, it is a genre highlighting the problems of spirituality and a moral-ethical choice.

Requiem by Igor Vorobyov², a representative of St.-Petersburg composer school, can be viewed as a part of the traditional direction, as an element of a spiritual “guarding” line of the modern musical culture reinterpreting initial genres in the nova musica sacra modus (Appendix 1).

In the opus under consideration, the author develops a priority western line in the approach to the sacral genres³ developed in the modern domestic music. He uses the medieval missa pro defunctis model as an archetype, the main canonic attributes of which are a completely preserved liturgical text⁴ and a traditional five-part structure musically embodied in a cycle of twelve pieces: I. «**Introitus**» (№ 1. Requiem aeternam, Kyrie); II. «**Dies irae**» (№ 2. Dies irae, № 3. Tuba mirum, № 4. Rex tremendae, № 5. Recordare, № 6. Confutatis, № 7. Lacrimosa); III. «**Offertorium**» (№ 8. Domine Jesu, № 9. Hostias); IV. «**Sanctus**» (№ 10 Sanctus, № 11. Benedictus); V. «**Agnus Dei**» (№ 12. Agnus Dei, Requiem aeternam).

The feeling of severe archaic character, the messages from time immemorial, is reached through the synthesis of a whole complex of cult musical means appealing to the stylistics of various epochs: medieval monody, Renaissance imitating polyphony, baroque arioso themes, elements of Russian antiquity, with characteristic connection of folklore and spiritual tradition. Such type of intertextual links transforms the author's text into a sample of «interpreting style» (M. Bonfeld)⁵, «new cantus thinking» (M. Katunyan) in which «the whole historical and cultural hypertext becomes a selected cantus prius factus»⁶. The composer staying off-screen and not revealing himself visibly in the musical material, builds his own concept, isolates sense-making dominants and creates a precedent, a problem situation with the help of citations, allusions, and pastiche.

So the basic concept of the composition is stated in № 1 Requiem aeternam. It is the theme of Gregorian chant the ascending hexachord of which in *d*-tone («death modus») is the leading intonation of the composition germinating in all directions of the musical fabric (Appendix 2). The parallel organum, the Renaissance antiphons, the Russian folklore heterophony, the four-part chant style resembling partes harmonizations of echoes chants, bell-play and Bach arioso declamation melos co-exist in the surrounding context.

Referring to the synthetic nature of Requiem's themes we can mark its semantic polyvalence, mobility, risomorphy, possibility of parallel interpreting of multiple senses included in one and the same theme. Nevertheless, having this variety it is possible to isolate the European and Russian musical complexes which exist as two types of religious world-view, as two types of the pray word – sermon and confession which are focused

¹ Уваров М. Архитектоника исповедального слова: СПб., 1998. С 13.

² Requiem for soprano, the mixed choir, wind and shock instruments, a piano and six contrabasses was written on request of Alexander Shilo – the organizer of the International Contrabass Players Competition named after S. Kusevitsky. Requiem was first performed on December, 17th, 2008, in the Small Hall of St.-Petersburg Philharmonic Society. Among the other author's compositions based on sacral texts we should mention the following: «Missa brevis» for the mixed choir (2002), «Magnificat» for soloists and the mixed choir (2007), «Stabat Mater» for soprano, mezzo-soprano, female choir, a flute, a harp, a piano, an organ, shock instruments and contrabasses (2010).

³ Requiems based on Latin text are written by A. Shnitke (1975), V. Artyomov (1988), V. Martynov (1995), V. Silvestrov (2000), S. Slonimsky (2003), B. Tishchenko (2010).

⁴ 13–15 stanzas of Dies irae sequence and some phrases from Offertorium are excluded.

⁵ Бонфельд М. Интерпретация как творчество в музыке XX века // Искусство XX века как искусство интерпретации /Сб. статей. Нижний Новгород, 2006. С. 45–57.

⁶ Катунян М. Новый комментарий как стратегия самоидентификации через миф // In the same place. С. 169.

on the dominant cultural archetypes: the masculine beginning – Heavenly Father (God) and the feminine beginning – Earth Mother (Virgin). Their dialogue is translated into two themes united by one intonation source: № 3 Tuba Mirum (a chant on the basis of Dies irae sequence) and № 5 Recordare (crying-wailing, improvised pipe folk tunes, birds' trills). Each of these symbols hides a huge, almost virtual set of musical, picturesque, poetic allusions. The chant is a symbol of ascetic devout belief; its iconic representation is «God Punishing», the severe Supreme Judge.

There is a collective image of Russia in Recordare theme. These are improvised shepherd's folk tunes («Lel's Song» by Rimsky-Korsakov, «Pipe» from Gavrilin's «Ringing»), the crying-wailing on a fortress wall, an icon of Divine mother and the broken drawing of flight of the Soul Beloved, the ringing Sviridovsky infinite space, and the bottomless blue heavens. The heart of the theme is a wave, the second leading intonation of the composition connected with the image of Soul.

Thus to conceptualize the life-and-death problem Igor Vorobyov places his own author's accents. His Requiem is a Latin mass «in Russian» where the suffering and struggling irrational Russian soul pulses within the limits of the laconic rationally built form.

The sacral space in Requiem is developing in the counterpoint of two perspectives: **ritual** and **existential**, co-operating under the principle of simultaneous contrast. Mythological and ethical chronotopos reflecting eternal static time-space of the God is combined with expressional subjective anthropological dimension of being. **The ritual perspective** is presented by the main plot of the entire Christian culture «Death and Resurrection» by means of two Latin genre models: missa pro defunctis (requiem mass) and danse macabre (Death dance). Being both of Bible origin, they reflect the medieval ideas of Paradise and Hell, death and immortality; they interpret the canon in sacral and exoteric, sanctuary and folklore modus.

The canonic structure of the Requiem is developed in the following parts: № 1. Requiem, Kyrie; № 2. Dies irae; № 3. Tuba mirum; № 8. Domine Jesu; № 10. Sanctus; № 12. Agnus Dei, Requiem. Its iconic representation «Last Judgment» sets the main spatial landmarks: the space of sinners, the hell, the flame, demons, groans, and a huge funnel, a spiral, circular rotation the amplitude of which increases and decreases now and then (№ 2. Dies irae); the space of righteous persons, paradise round dances, a shining rainbow, ascension to the clouds (№ 8. Domine Jesu) (Appendix 3).

Tuba mirum repeats the preset landmarks like a reduced picture of Last Judgment where the world is also divided into two parts; everything is extremely expressive and visual, up to the punishing gesture of the Supreme Judge repeated three times.

Closely intertwining with a danse macabre reverse plot the main sense-making spiritual aspects of the mass are dramatically reinterpreted. As a result of this sliding and semantic substitution the throne of the Tsar Heavenly is overtaken by the Death duplicating the traditional figure of Christ the Judge (№ 10. Sanctus). The Death performs its dance, rattles its bones, grimaces and laughs accompanying itself on a flute (fistula tartarea), involving in the round dance the representatives of all social strata: clergy and lay people, young and decrepit, alive and dead. It is the main upside down culmination under the spontaneous pressure of which the seemingly unconditional and objective semantic system of culture crashes down.

The narrative structure of Latin texts is rather close to the iconic structure of the Death Dance: every Latin couplet – of the king, the Pop, the bishop, the knight, the tournament herald, the doctor, the logician, the old man, the young man, the rich man, the judge, the lucky person, the young nobleman and so forth – is framed with the formula «to death I am coming», forming a rondo composition (round dance): «To death I am coming, the king. What are honors? What is the glory of the world? // Death's kingly path. To death now I'm coming...//. To death I am coming with a beautiful face. Beauty and apparel // The Death will erase beauty without mercy. To death now I'm coming...»⁷.

The regularities of an even rondo where the death acts as the main character can be also observed in the composition of Requiem by I. Vorobyov. Numbers 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 can be considered a refrain (with the reduced triad/seventh chord as the central element of harmony) and Numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 can be named episodes (Appendix 4).

As a result the value of christological sense of a Catholic mass with its main idea of Easter Dominical is called into question. What is better: ascetics, «death» in the present for the sake of the future revival, or a real life full of passions and pleasures without any guarantees in the future?

⁷ Реутин М. Ю. Пляска смерти // Словарь средневековой культуры. М., 2003. С. 362.

The allegorical genre of the Middle Ages painting and literature got the reducing sarcastic reconsideration in the Renaissance arts. It was also continued in romanticism and modernism existing in the form of the following plots «the Girl and the Death», «the Beloved and the Death», «Soul and Death», «Love of the Death» that fill the semantic space of the musical text with additional tiny allusions.

The **existential space** of the composition is connected with the passions genre, and the baroque plot of Jesus Christ sufferings and death enters the general plot and genre polyphony.

The passions theme, the theme of Christ-man for Bach, and the suffering person in general gets its tragic sense generating not Christian humility, but namely «fear and compassion» in their purifying and tragic cathartic meaning. In the musical text of Requiem the two «great affects» of culture are pulsation points of the Soul tearing between the Heaven and the Earth in the broken up integrity of the baroque universe. Their musical embodiments are fugues (№ 4. Rex tremendae, № 6. Confutatis) and arias la mento (№ 7. Lacrimosa, № 9. Hostias).

The Way mythologeme as the main mythologeme of the Christian culture is embodied in the musical text by means of the plot of the Passions of Jesus Christ which is developing against the background of ostinato step rhythm (figure circulatio) in Numbers 4–9, designating the basic eventful moments of the universal tragedy: № 4. Rex tremendae – desecration, № 6. Confutatis – crucifixion, № 7. Lacrimosa – mourning, № 9. Hostias – Death on the cross (Appendix 5).

The crucifixion and death scene «is musically visualized» up to the heart-freezing nailing (Confutatis), allusions Stabat Mater (Lacrimosa) and the last words of Jesus on the cross in symbolical Hostias (sacrifice).

Thus, the question of death or resurrection preset in the initial theme of the Gregorian chant by the blinking d-moll/D-dur, has two variants of the answer, two endings: ethic and anthropological (baroque) – in № 11. Benedictus and thanatological (medieval) – in № 12. Agnus Dei. In the first case immortality, comprehension of individuality in the unification with Christ, the flight of the revived immortal soul transferred in silence by means of numerous allusions of Bach themes, is reached through death (aria from suite D-dur, aria № 47. «Mercy upon me» of «Matthews Passions», etc.) and in the second – mortal passions of the «sentenced» Soul without expiation, death as a finite edge of life. Soul's theme deformed at a trombone.

So, the Death defeats Love, – who whom? And if the Soul is mortal, if there is no other life «on that side of the reality», where is the God, what for, what is He? Does He exist? The eternal question which many Russian artists «were sick with»: M. Musorgsky, P. Tchaikovsky, S. Rakhmaninov, A. Shnitke...

The author leaves this question open as well as the choice of his way. But for myself I have found the answer: accepting the death and thereby the fear of death, people lose any guarantees, but get life and themselves.

Translated by Alexandra Usacheva

Santrauka

Sakralinė erdvė Igorio Vorobjovo „Requiem“

XX a. pabaigos–XXI a. pirmojo dešimtmečio muzikos menas atspindi sudėtingus epochų sandūros procesus. Pokyčiai pasaulėžiūroje, estetiniai „popostmodernybės“ kanonai, eksperimentai su garsų forma rodo naujos kultūrinės paradigmos, naujos vienovės paieškas. Nauja sintezė vyksta dviejų pagrindinių krypčių dialogo kontekste, dviejuose muzikos tipuose, kurie gali būti apibūdinti kaip „tradicija – avangardas“.

Sankt Peterburgo kompozitorių mokyklos atstovo I. Vorobjovo „Requiem“ (2008) galima priskirti tradicinei krypčiai kaip dvasinę liniją, kuri kaip *nova musica sacra* „saugo“ modernios muzikos kultūros reinterpretavimo pradinius žanrus. Tęsdamas apokalipsės temą, filosofinį-teologinį mąstymą, kupiną maldos ir atgailos A. Schnittkės, V. Silvestrovo, S. Slonimskio, V. Artiomovo ir V. Martynovo sukurtuose „Requiem“, autorius vadovavosi Vakarų modeliu, nustatytu lotynišku pradiniu tekstu. Vis dėlto tradicinė struktūra dėl muzikinės kalbos originalumo yra gana įdomiai interpretuojama.

Stilių ir žanrų komponentų įvairovė (grigališkojo choralo elementai, Renesanso polifonija, baroko *arioso* tematika, neoromantinės alizijos, neofolkloristikos elementai, avangardo struktūralizmas) leido pasiekti organišką sintezę, sujungti paradoksalius reiškinius: antropocentrizmą ir konsiliarizmą, protestantinį racionalumą ir ortodoksinį genialumą, J. S. Bacho stiliaus instrumentiką ir rusiškas dainas, vaizdingus paveikslų afektus ir ikonografijos simboliką. „Lotynų“ archaikos ir „rusų“ folklorinės-romantinės muzikos kompleksų sąveika transformuoja kūrinį į unikalų autoriaus projektą, stabilizuoja dvasingumo problemas, moralinį-etinį pasirinkimą ir vertingą kultūrinių erdvių reintegraciją.

Appendix 1

Igor Stanislavovich Vorobyov – St. Petersburg composer, musicologist, graduate of Leningrad Choral school and Leningrad conservatory. PhD in art criticism, senior lecturer. Member of Russia’s Union of Composers, Director of the International Arts Festival “From Avant-Garde up to Now”. The author of monography “The Russian Avant-Garde and the Creativity of Alexander Mosolov in the 1920s–1930s” and articles on music.

Some of his compositions:

- Elizabeth Bum (D. Kharms) – opera,
- Don Jean, Assol – ballets,
- Chamber symphony, Symphony for a big symphonic orchestra,
- Stone Guest – symphonic suite,
- Concert for a contrabass with an orchestra,
- Requiem for soprano, mixed choir, wind and shock instruments, a piano and six contrabasses,
- Missa brevis for a mixed choir,
- Magnificat for soloists and a mixed choir, concerts and cycles for choir *a cappella*,
- Stabat Mater for soprano, mezzo-soprano, female choir, a flute, a harp, a piano, an organ, shock instruments and contrabasses.

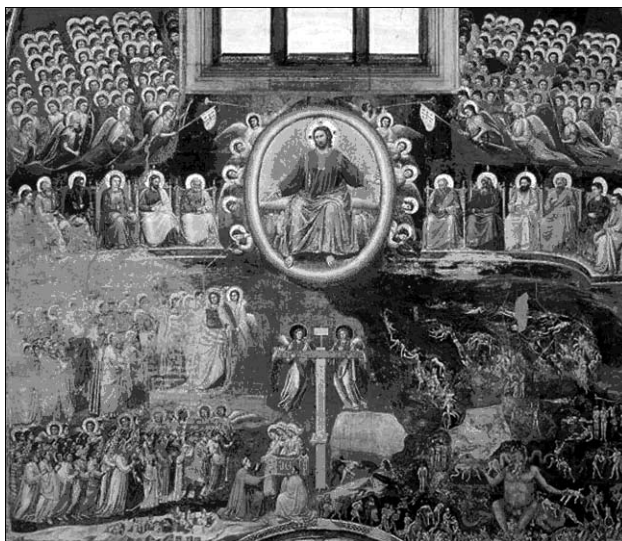
Appendix 2

The image displays a musical score for a Requiem, organized into several sections. The movements and parts are as follows:

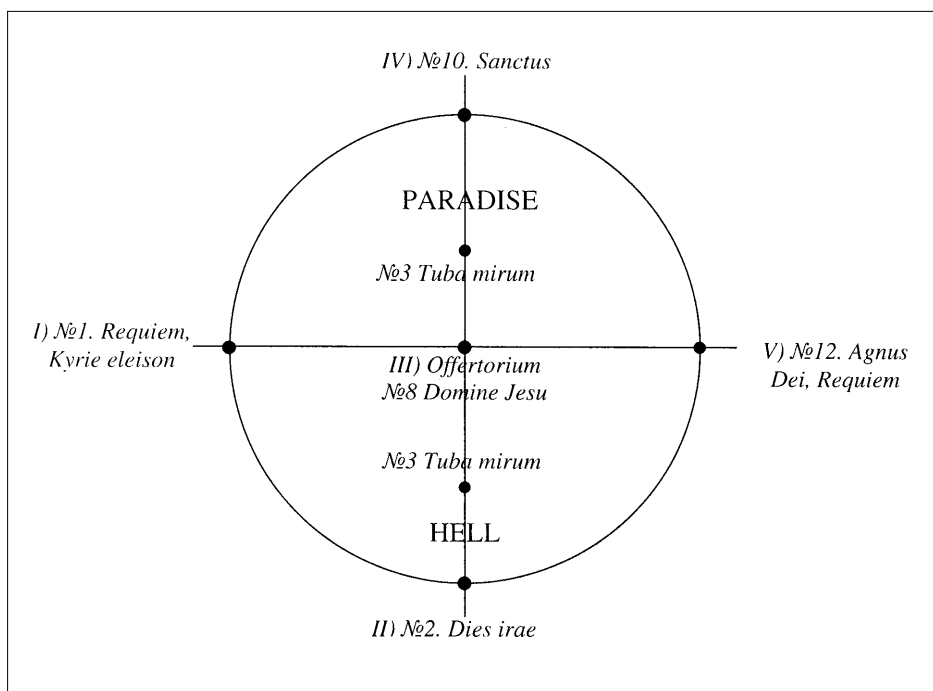
- Requiem**: Two staves of music with lyrics: "Re - qui - am a - gen - ti - am do - mi - ni - i." and "Re - qui - am a - gen - ti - am do - mi - ni - i."
- Requiem**: A single staff of music with lyrics: "Re - qui - am a - gen - ti - am do - mi - ni - i."
- Dies irae**: A single staff of music with lyrics: "Di - es i - rae, di - es i - l - la sol - vet sae - cul - um in fa - vil - la."
- Dies irae**: A single staff of music with lyrics: "Di - es i - rae, di - es i - l - la sol - vet sae - cul - um in fa - vil - la."
- Tuba mirum**: A single staff of music with lyrics: "ter - rap - pa - re - bit."
- Rex tremendae**: A single staff of music with lyrics: "Rex - tre - men - dae - ma - je -"
- Confutatis**: A single staff of music with lyrics: "Coe - lu - ta - tu - am - le - dic - tis."
- Domine Jesu**: A single staff of music with lyrics: "Rex - glo - ri - ac"
- Benedictus**: A single staff of music with lyrics: "Benedictus"
- Agnus Dei**: A single staff of music with lyrics: "Agnus Dei"
- Agnus Dei**: A single staff of music with lyrics: "Agnus Dei"

The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, time signatures, and dynamic markings like *f* (forte) and *Allegro*. The lyrics are written in Latin and are positioned below the corresponding musical staves.

Appendix 3

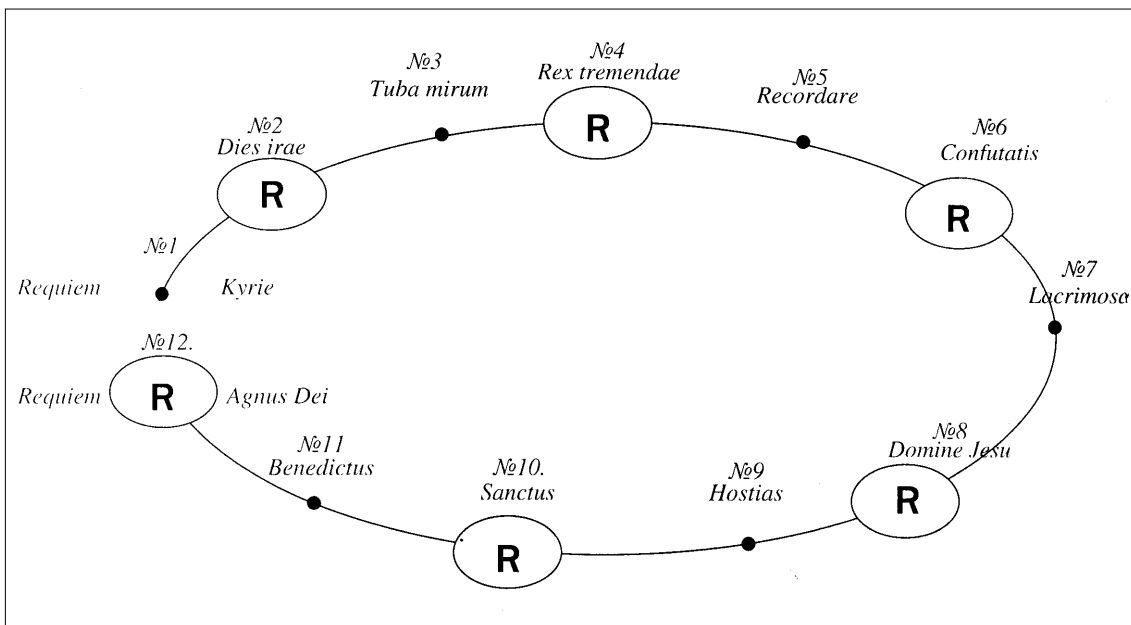


Dgotto. Last Judgment



Missa pro defunctis

Appendix 4



Danse macabre

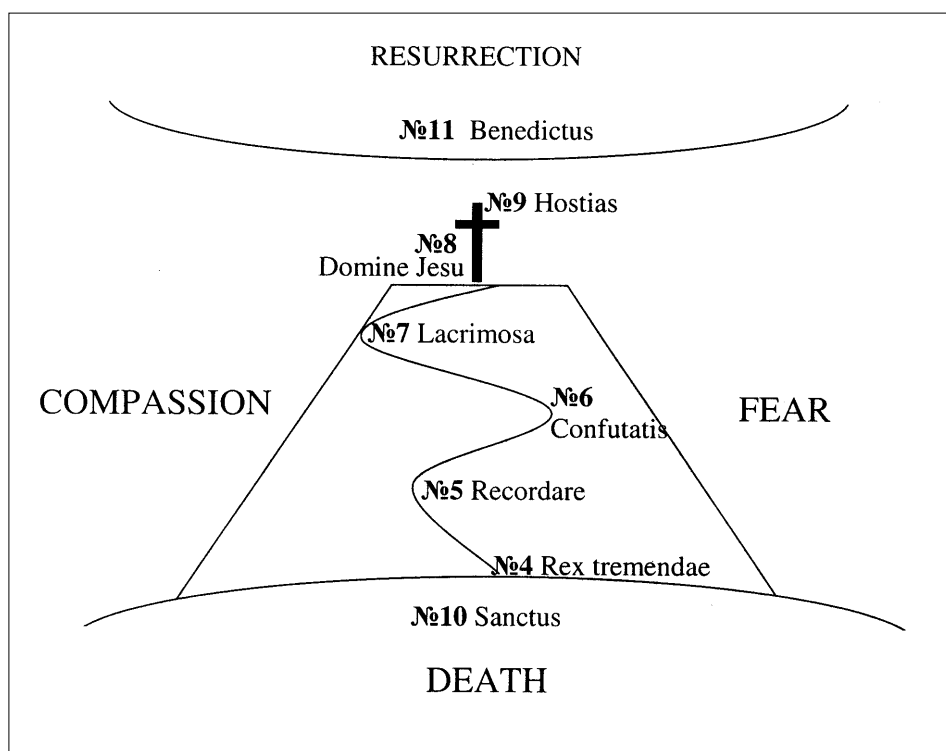
Appendix 5



Mantegna. Crucifixion



Rafael. Madonna



Passions