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Thesis

**Galina Ustvolskaya's "True and Eternal Bliss": Spiritual Creativity in the
Soviet Union**

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Abstract

This research project is focused on Galina Ustvolskaya (1919-2006), one of the most freewheeling and singular, yet nameless, paragons of the Soviet generation of composers in the twentieth century. The essay undertakes the analysis of Ustvolskaya's context and output from the point of view of the spiritual approach that she pointed out as the basis of her creativity throughout her entire career. Spirituality and religiosity constitute a common aesthetic approach of several composers in the context of the Soviet Union during the second half of the past century. Such an aesthetic insight is linked to cultural and historical common realities whose clout upon the specific case of Ustvolskaya will be described as a key factor in the development of her idiom, which reaches a clear culmination in the Second Symphony, "True and Eternal Bliss!" (1979).

The introduction of the project includes a brief approach to the concept of spirituality from the standpoint of its specific subject and featuring several descriptions of the term by different scholars as a reference. Then, the first step consists of a description of Galina Ustvolskaya's background as a Soviet composer: her historical and aesthetic context, which brings about a stylistic independence that gravitates towards the extremes, taking as a point of departure the most elemental and raw compositional procedures and resources while engendering an innovative expression yet connected to her past, present and future.

Next, the concepts of spirituality and religiosity are described within the historical context of the Soviet Union, focusing on the second half of the twentieth century. The main purpose of this chapter is to explain how the cultural and historical context affected the spiritual and religious insights of Soviet composers, how the Orthodox Church influenced their aesthetic insights, and which place Ustvolskaya occupies within the described reality.

The last step, and kernel of this research project, focuses on Ustvolskaya's output, described by herself as "true and spiritual, non-religious creativity", through the analysis of the features of the Second Symphony "True and Eternal Bliss!" (1979). The selection of this piece as one of the works that best epitomizes the spiritual approach of the composer will be justified, although displaying as well the challenges that such a choice poses while holistically assessing Ustvolskaya's repertoire. The study of the aesthetic traits will be based on their categorization into two different levels of aesthetic clout: the temporal level, related to the historical and cultural time and place where her activity was developed; and the spiritual level, related to her own abstraction

and her individual perception and assimilation of reality. The foremost features of the Second Symphony are subsequently examined in detail, after an overview of the overall aesthetic approach, including the study of the text, its origin, content and meaning, the relationship with the concept of the prayer, the structure and the motivic content of the piece emphasizing the importance of repetition, the temporal perception, and the three last direct analogies between the qualities of her idiom and several specific religious or spiritual realities: the concept of the icon, the ritualistic behavior and the influence of the old Russian singing tradition of *znamenny raspev*.

A conclusion undertaking a personal interpretation of the consequences of Ustvol'skaya's tendency towards an extreme expressivity throughout her output puts an end to the whole project, including proposals for further research and discussion. As an annex to the research paper, the complete structural analysis of the Second Symphony is disclosed in a chart.

Keywords

Galina Ustvol'skaya, Soviet Union, Orthodox Church, spirituality, spiritually inspired, Second Symphony (1979), prayer, repetition, time perception, ritualism, icon, *znamenny raspev*, extreme expression.

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1. Introduction

“True and Eternal Bliss!” is the title that the Soviet composer Galina Ustvolskaya (1919-2006) bestowed on her Second Symphony, one of the seven pieces overtly religious in her repertoire of works¹. Composed in 1979, this piece represents a reference for the analysis of Ustvolskaya’s compositional approach on the whole, focusing on the phenomenon that represented her main source of inspiration and motivation for carrying out the creative process: spirituality.

A departure point to examine a possible approach to Ustvolskaya’s aesthetic insight could be the following answer to one of the questions from the musicologist Thea Derks (1995) in an interview that took place in 1995 and during which the composer and editor of her official publisher (Musikverlage Hans Sikorski), Viktor Suslin (1942-2012), took Ustvolskaya’s place while replying to some of the topics due to the reluctance of the composer to argue:

- Yet you write that her music is typically Russian. Even typical of St. Petersburg. How are we to understand this?

[...] Music naturally knows two levels: the spiritual, and the temporal. This last level I refer to. Music such as hers could only develop in that place, and at that time. In this century St. Petersburg witnessed numerous horrors, of which the siege in the Second World War is only one².

The main objective of this research project is to trace a parallel between these two levels of musical influence upon the output of Galina Ustvolskaya that Suslin pointed out: “the spiritual and the temporal”, which are interpreted throughout this paper as the inner and outer realities of the composer. While analyzing the situation of religion and spirituality in the historical context of Ustvolskaya, it is possible to understand how this outer reality of the composer influenced her inner reality, characterized by the “true and spiritual, non-religious creativity” that she established (Ustvolskaya, 1994)³ as the aesthetic basis of her work. Ustvolskaya was, in Elena Nalimova’s words (2012, p. 105), “one of many people who wished to reinvest their life with spiritual meaning

¹ Those works are, in chronological order, Composition No. 1, *Dona Nobis Pacem* (1970-71), Composition No. 2, *Dies Irae* (1972-73), Composition No. 3, *Benedictus, Qui Venit* (1974-75), Symphony No. 2 “True and Eternal Bliss!” (1979), Symphony No. 3 “Jesus Messiah, Save Us!” (1983), Symphony No. 4 “Prayer” (1985-87) and Symphony No. 5 “Amen” (1989-90).

² The interview can be accessed at <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/interview.php> (retrieved January 21, 2021).

³ Galina Ustvolskaya, “Thoughts about the Creative Process” (1994). Retrieved November 10, 2020, from <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/creativity.php>.

after years of secularism”. In the context of the Soviet Union and its complex situation regarding culture on the whole, especially after the Second World War (1939-45), based on censorship featuring social realism⁴ as the aesthetic paragon, Ustvol'skaya represents a bizarre case that remained hidden and unknown for decades up to the 1970s and thereafter: she created a personal and newfangled idiom by taking to the extreme the elementary principles and components of the traditional musical expression of her culture. After stepping out of the silence, the composer experienced an evolution towards an openly spiritual approach which was common to other composers sharing a similar historical context⁵, bringing about the possibility of analyzing both their common reaction towards spirituality and the individual path chosen by Ustvol'skaya, conditioned at the same time by both this context (the historical level) and her own abstraction and inner interpretation of such a context (the spiritual level).

The motivation for approaching a research project featuring the profile of Galina Ustvol'skaya was born after completing a previous paper related to the compositional idiom of the composer from a more technical point of view, studying her evolution towards a greater systematization of her compositional procedures and creating tools for algorithmic composition through SuperCollider programming language based on some of those procedures. Such a greater systematization in Ustvol'skaya's music is especially evident during her last decade of compositional activity, the 1980s. This paper is nonetheless approached from a different perspective regarding Ustvol'skaya's aesthetic, dealing with what is probably the most important feature of her creative activity, as stated before: the spiritual insight. This topic is not approached from the technical outlook of the previous paper, but it is based on the analysis of the outer and inner realities of the composer, meaning the historical context and her interpretation of it through her musical output. This is the reason why this project does not feature a technical analysis⁶, but rather it uses the music of Ustvol'skaya, in particular her Second Symphony, to explain how religiosity and spirituality affected a composer's output in the context of the Soviet Union during

⁴ For a further explanation of social realism, go to chapter 2.1. “The outer reality: historical context of Ustvol'skaya”.

⁵ Composers such as the Russians Igor Stravinsky and Sofia Gubaidulina, the Estonian Arvo Pärt, the Englishman John Tavener, the Bulgarian Ivan Spassov, the Greek Michael Adamis and the Serbian Ljubica Maric (Ivan Moody, “Modernism and Orthodox Spirituality in Contemporary Music” (University of Eastern Finland, 1994), 22.

⁶ “Ustvol'skaya considers her compositional technique to be completely new, individual and not amenable to theoretical analysis” (Bakhmin, “Catalogue”: <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/catalog.php>).

the second half of the past century, and especially focusing on how the clout of the Orthodox Church tradition and its cultural elements, such as the tradition of the *znamenny raspev* chant, the iconicity or the ritualistic behavior, could have affected the compositional procedures and resources applied throughout her repertoire on the whole and, in particular, right through that symphony.

Regarding the research methodology, it is worth mentioning the origin of the read, quoted and studied resources during this research process. As stated earlier, Ustvol'skaya is still a relatively unknown referent from the Soviet generation of composers. Therefore, the catalogue of thesis and academic papers related to her life and work is not too extensive, especially in English⁷, existing a richer bibliography in Russian and some other writings in German, among other languages. One of the main resources for this paper in particular, as well as for many other writings related to the composer, is Ustvol'skaya's web⁸. This website was created in 2009 by Andrei Bakhmin, who is, from that year onwards, a researcher of the life and work of the composer, and keeper of her home archive, handed over to him in 2015 by Ustvol'skaya's husband for 43 years, Konstantin Bagrenin. He is also writing since the same year, the "first comprehensive biography of Galina Ustvol'skaya (without musical analysis) in Russian"⁹. This website collects, among other contents, some biographical information, historical documents and texts, Ustvol'skaya's catalogue and information about the pieces, bibliographic, visual and filmographic material, and one of the most crucial sources for this paper: the transcription of some of the interviews with Ustvol'skaya. These interviews with the composer provide raw material to work with, yet complex data to understand and use throughout an academic text. There is a total of three interviews transcribed to English and three more included in films about the composer.

The research methodology, after narrowing the topic to work on, was based on the complex quest of creating a primary account of bibliography, which then would provide a secondary catalogue of academic writings and papers quoted and referenced within the first

⁷ See other sources of information that were useful for this research process, although not referenced throughout it, such as: A. Shenton et al., "Contemporary Music and Spirituality" (2017); J. Arnold, "Sacred Music in Secular Society" (2014); S. Morrison, "Galina Ustvol'skaya Outside, Inside, and Beyond Music History" (2019); among others.

⁸ <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/>

⁹ All the information about the web and its author can be found at <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/contact.php> (retrieved January 24, 2021).

listing. This paper is specifically focused on Ustvolskaya's Second Symphony as one of the main points of its contents, hence an important source of information and deeper contact with the piece was the film "A Scream into Space" (*Schreeuw in het heelaal*¹⁰), directed by Josée Voormans and related to the rehearsal and performance of the piece in the Netherlands in 2005, conducted by Reinbert de Leeuw, also in charge of the piano part, one of the performers Ustvolskaya herself appreciated the most with regard to her own music, being Ustvolskaya highly critical regarding the interpretation of her output on the whole. Finally, the last important source of information for this paper was, evidently, the score of the Second Symphony, alongside other representative works by Ustvolskaya. The score is especially crucial when it comes to the study of the performance notes by the composer and the treatment of the text used in the piece.

1.1. The concept of spirituality

First and foremost, a key concept that requires a proper definition before getting into the kernel of this research project, but intrinsically linked to it, is the term "spirituality" and the differences between this concept and the notion of religion. Spirituality does not feature a straightforward, objective and stationary definition, but it is a very ambiguous, subjective, flexible and broad concept regarding its meaning and understanding. It is also important to insist on the fact that the aim of this chapter is by no means to exhaustively penetrate the depths of this complex term. Ustvolskaya herself defined the concept of spirituality, or rather the concept of her particular understanding of spirituality, in the before-mentioned film by Voormans (2005, 0:23:50), but her interpretation of the term turns out to be quite unclear and obscure:

*Spirituality is what remains of a person if you disregard the rest. A spiritual person is a great person, even without religiosity. My work is not religious, but it is definitely spiritual. Because I put everything into my work. My soul, my heart, everything I had in me I used for my work*¹¹.

A clear aspect from the latter quotation, nonetheless, is that religion and spirituality constitute two different concepts that are able to exist separately and independently. Iris M. Yob

¹⁰ The film can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ninHa6TggqM> (retrieved August 3, 2021).

¹¹ All citations from Voormans' film are literal transcriptions of the speech's translation into English, which is provided as captions throughout the video.

(2010, p. 146), explains the relationship and dichotomy between these two notions, but there is not a specific definition yet of either term throughout the following excerpt:

The question becomes incredibly complex when one begins to inquire into the word 'spirituality', for it appears there are many kinds of spirituality [...]. However, rather than claiming that each spirituality is a manifestation of religion, it might be just as easily argued that each religion is a manifestation of spirituality. [...] Such a reversal in thinking has immediate advantages: it frees spirituality from the domain of religion and makes room for other possible spiritual manifestations.

Professor Celia Kourie (2006, p. 22) claims that the concept of spirituality has a “fluid” meaning. For her, a possible broad and open definition consists of “the ultimate values that give meaning to our lives, whether or not they are religious”. Both concepts, religion and spirituality, are separated anew here and, although this split and yet possible close bond is quite obvious up to this moment, in this project the situation of religion in the Soviet Union will be studied as part of the essential context of Ustvolskaya and other composers who will be at least mentioned throughout the chapter 3.2. “Spirituality in the aesthetic approach of Soviet composers: how Orthodox Christianity influenced Soviet music”. Ustvolskaya’s insight of spirituality is not literally connected to any particular religion according to her words, but one of the aims of this research paper is to demonstrate the impact and the influence of the historical, social and cultural context of the outer reality of the composer upon her actual insight, whether it is conscious or unconscious. Therefore, the study of some traits of the Orthodox Church and its situation in the historical context of the Soviet Union is worthwhile due to its possible relationship with Ustvolskaya’s output and its probable influence on her style and aesthetic insight. This idea of the significance of the historical context and the importance of the cultural and social heritage is somewhat expressed by Kourie (ibid, p. 24), bonding again the two before-opposed terms of spirituality and religion: “Disaffiliated spirituality lacks a past and a future, and is not linked to an organic tradition [...]. Religion provides a locus which prevents spirituality from becoming rootless and isolated”.

Despite the lack of depth in this chapter due to its briefness and the complexity of its matter, Ustvolskaya’s approach to spirituality constitutes the overall conceptual framework of this entire research project. Nonetheless, the understanding of the term is also dependent on the concretization of the reality with which it is bonded in each specific case; in Ustvolskaya’s case, the analysis of her context, aesthetical approach and musical output constitute an alternative way

of expanding the apprehension of this complex and ambiguous notion. The meaning of spirituality and its clout upon her life and composition process, although spread throughout the whole paper, will be the special focus of a specific section, namely the chapter 4.1.2 “The spiritual level: abstraction and the inner reality”.

2. Galina Ustvol'skaya's background: outer and inner reality of the composer

2.1. The outer reality: historical context of Ustvol'skaya

An interesting analogy can be found between what happened to arts and religion in the Soviet Union between the 1930s and 1970s approximately. On the one hand, there was an overthrow of the powerful wave of modernism that was evident in Russia during the first decades of the 20th century. This constraint was temporary though, since from Stalin's death in 1953, the situation of the cultural policies started to gradually change, still influenced by the social realism, the official aesthetical insight until then. On the other hand, there was a “suppression of any manifestation of religious belief”, which “cut artists off from a significant part of the artistic heritage of their native country”, and “the generation that came to maturity during this period was severely compromised, and its relationship to any form of religious expression was inevitably distant or, more probably, non-existent”, as Ivan Moody claims (2014, pp. 97-105). Moody also explains that the situation went worse after the dismissal of the “relatively tolerant and highly cultured”, commissar Anatole Lunacharsky in 1929 from Narkompros, the People's Commissariat of Public Education. One interesting and common phenomenon to both realms, arts and religion, which sprung up from the revolutions of the early 20th century, was the composition of works featuring an alternative “religiosity” referring, for example, to the cantatas and other pieces composed for the glorification of, for instance, Vladimir Lenin, replacing god as the object of veneration. Some examples of composers who contributed to this particular phenomenon were Vissarion Shebalin (1902-1963), Georgy Sviridov (1915-1998), Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978) and Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)¹.

¹ Some examples of those pieces are: Dramatic symphony “Lenin”, Op. 16 for narrator, soloists, choir and orchestra (Shebalin, 1931), Ode to Lenin, for narrator, chorus and large orchestra (Sviridov, 1976), Ode in Memory of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, for orchestra (Khachaturian, 1948), and Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution, Op. 74 for large orchestra and choir (Prokofiev, 1937).

Galina Ustvolskaya was born in 1919 in Petrograd (later Leningrad, now San Petersburg) in the context of the Russian Civil War (1917-1923) and the constitution of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) in 1922. It is worth mentioning the extremely changeful and fluctuating nature of the historical context, especially regarding the culture field, between the 1920s and 1930s, although Ustvolskaya did not compose the first work included in her official catalogue until 1946², as these decades constitute her historical, cultural and social point of departure and the environment of her primary musical education. In 1917, Anatole Lunacharsky (1875-1933) was appointed as Commissar of Enlightenment by Lenin, bearing the task of watching out for the situation of arts and focusing on the “reformation and enhancement of education and culture” (Murrell, 2013, p. 8). During these years, artistic experimentation was tolerated and aesthetical diversity in musical compositions was a bet. Antoni Batista (2018, p. 128) explains in his book *La sinfonía de la libertad; música y política* (“Freedom Symphony; Music and Politics”) this atmosphere of splendor in the cultural field:

*The post-revolutionary USSR featured good moments regarding culture and art. Lenin and Trotski were cultured people and wrote excellent pages of political literature; furthermore, Trotski wrote interesting articles about art and culture, and even practiced literary criticism. They encouraged creators and appointed Anatoli Lunacharski as Soviet People’s Commissar responsible for the Ministry of Education and Culture.*³

During the postwar period, encompassing the years of the NEP (New Economic Policy, 1922-1928), the cultural field in the newborn Soviet Union featured a great number and variety of well-defined cultural organizations where composers and a broad spectrum of musical trades could enroll in order to take part into the artistic activity within the Soviet society. Some of those existing organizations between 1921 and 1932 which could be pointed out, as Alexander Samuel Popowich (2011, p. 34) enumerates, were the following:

- *Narkompros* (The Ministry of Enlightenment, namely the culture ministry)
- *Proletkult* (Proletarian cultural movement, active from 1917-1925)
- RAPM (The Revolutionary Association of Proletarian Musicians)
- ACM (RAPM's rival, the Association of Contemporary Musicians)
- ORKiMD (Association of Revolutionary Composers and Musicians)

² Her Concerto for piano, string orchestra and timpani, composed in 1946, but in point of fact not premiered until 1964 in Leningrad.

³ From the original text in Spanish, own translation into English.

- *Prokull* (Production Collective of Student Composers)
- The Saint Petersburg and Moscow Conservatories

Out of the previous list of organizations, the ACM embraced an estimated 90% of the performers and composers, as one of its foremost objectives was “to remain progressive and be mindful of innovations occurring throughout the compositional world” (Murrell, 2013, p. 9). On the other hand, the RAPM emerged from the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) and it was focused on the reaffirmation of the traditional Russian practices, despising the innovations from the West.

All these official organizations constituted a great network of composers, professional and amateur musicians, publishers, critics, journalists, musicologists, concert and festival organizers, and so forth, within a context of relative freedom, experimentation and openness, also supported, as mentioned before, by Lenin’s NEP, “which allowed for a liberalization of the economy after the austerity of War Communism” (Samuel Popowich, 2011, p. 36). However, after Lenin’s death in 1924 and some years of political turmoil, Joseph Stalin succeeded and took over from 1929 up to his death in 1953. The totalitarianism, as a result of a complex political situation both inside and outside the USSR, featured the control over the cultural field as a primary concern, and one of the foremost consequences of that was the abolition of such a variety of heterogeneous and diverse organizations from the former decade, especially the ACM due to its identification and association with the NEP and its cultural obeisance to Western technique and culture. Then, the ties that were springing up between Russia and the United States and Western Europe were subsequently discontinued. Later on, Lunacharski was sent to Spain as ambassador, dying during the journey.

The variety of cultural organizations was finally replaced by a foremost unique and centrally-controlled cultural association, the Union of Soviet Composers (USC), an evolution of the former RAPM, which had as a foremost objective to preserve the aesthetic doctrine of the social realism, as explained by Samuel Popowich (2011, p. 37):

According to Soviet dogma, the focus of cultural production had to be on the mass-market, with severe consequences for those who would not or could not produce music suitable for mass consumption (for example, in the attacks against formalism in 1936 and 1948).

The freedom for artists to decide whether or not to be enrolled in that organization was relative since one's support was extremely dependent on the membership due to the political environment, hence ruling out the apparent voluntary nature of this commitment. Active censorship became overt in the late 1940s when Stalin placed Andrei Zhdanov (1896-1948) in charge of cultural policies. As Lindsay S. Murrell explains (2013, p. 12), "Zhdanov stressed the importance of comprehension as music was always meant to serve and benefit the masses, and not simply be heard and appreciated by an elite group of musicians". A committee was devoted to assessing and judging all new works and, rather accepting them as suitable for their publication and possible performance, or deeming them inadequate. The criteria relied again on the work's embodiment of social realism.

Two concepts must be explained up to this point: the doctrine of social realism and the new label of formalism. Maya Krishnan (2010, p. 225) offers a simple definition of social realism: "The Soviet Union endorsed Socialist Realism as its official artistic style in 1932. This style used depictions of workers, factories and agriculture to idealize the Soviet State, essentially turning the arts into a form of government propaganda".

Patrick Bonczyk (2009, p. 117) also contributes to the definition of the doctrine providing this warning of the Union of Soviet Composers to their members:

Attention must be directed towards the victorious progressive principles of reality, towards all that is heroic, bright and beautiful. The Union demanded that artists focus on models of the past and adhere to typical nineteenth-century tropes, such as the incorporation of folk songs and overtly programmatic works.

Social realism has indeed part of its origins in the revolution of 1917, the state sponsorship of propaganda during the Russian Civil War throughout the following years up to 1921, and the foremost aim of "the use of art for social benefit" (Krishnan, 2010, p. 225). But this aesthetic trend was already inaugurated at the beginning of the century within the realm of literature, linked to the First Russian Revolution, the 1905 Russian Revolution. One clear example of social realism in literature is *Mother* (1907) by Maxim Gorki. The concept of social realism features itself a paradox: the term "realism" had the sense of representing the historical reality of the Soviet Union during its revolutionary formation and development; nonetheless, later on in its practice, social realism encouraged traits such as lyricism, heroism and an overall return to the Russian style and

aesthetics of the nineteenth century, although the objective of this inspiration was based on the idealistic social accessibility of the musical language. In 1932, Stalin defined the doctrine of social realism as follows: “The artist ought to show life truthfully. And if he shows it truthfully, he cannot fail to show it moving to socialism. This is and will be socialist realism” (Hoffman 2003, 161). Especially from the late 1940s, when Andrei Zhdanov attained the power upon cultural policy, composers and their works outside social realism were labeled as “formalist”. Antoni Batista (2018, p. 128) contributes to the approach of social realism with an interesting point of view:

The official canon of Stalinism [...] was named as Social Realism and its objective was to express the reality that dialectical materialism⁴ intended to transform into, but using understandable languages for the people. Not for the cultivated people from the 20th century, but for the people from the 19th century who did not know how to read.⁵

Social realism pursued, all in all, the transmission of values regarding the Soviet state; thus, social realism aimed to carry out, up to some extent, an educative task led to all citizens of the socialist society.

Coming back to Alexander’s definitions, he explains formalism as “a term which had been in general use for some time” (for instance, in literature), and that now “was imposed as a label to the heterodox position, negatively defined as an aberration from the established, orthodox doctrine of socialist realism” (Samuel Popowich, 2011, p. 50). Bonczyk (2009, p. 117) also explains that “in contrast [to social realism], the Union branded works rejecting this historical style in favor of new-age cultural diversity and anti-socialist sentiment as formalist”.

As this project has the aim of explaining how the historical context and the outer reality of Ustvolskaya affected her creative output, it is essential to understand how the composer dealt with this cultural situation during her first decades of compositional activity, although her output as a “spiritually inspired” composer sprung up later on throughout her career. Ustvolskaya graduated from the Leningrad Rimsky-Korsakov College of Music in 1947, the same year she joined the Composers’ Union. In 1948 she was starting a thirty-years teaching career in the same

⁴ Dialectical materialism constitutes, alongside its historical application (historical materialism), the philosophical outlook of Marxism-Leninism. It is based on the constant presence of contradictions, especially regarding the economical, political and social organization, and their overcoming throughout history, in order to understand the development and transformation of the social structures.

⁵ From the original text in Spanish, own translation into English.

institution, composing at the same time one of her most important large-scale orchestral works, *The Dream of Stepan Razin* (1949), premiered by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Yevgeny Mravinsky, praised as true nationalist art, adopted by the main Leningrad orchestras as a frequent piece within their repertoires and nominated for a Stalin Prize.

During the 1950s Ustvolskaya continued composing what could be called “official” works, as Bakhmin (2009) explains in Ustvolskaya’s web biography of the composer:

*In the 1950s Ustvolskaya wrote a number of vocal and instrumental works in a socialist realist style, most of which were performed once or twice: even in this official idiom, her music was considered too idiosyncratic.*⁶

However, and meanwhile, she continued composing “a secret, personal series of compositions [...] [such as] the Sonata for Violin and Piano, the Piano Sonatas 3 and 4, the Twelves Preludes for Piano, and the Grand Duet” (Jeremiah-Foulds, 2015, p. 268), phenomenon also highlighted by Susan Bradshaw (2000, p. 25):

It is at this point [the 1950s] that the murky distinctions between blacklisted ‘formalist’ and approved ‘socialist’ composers begin to make just a little retrospective sense: for Ustvolskaya was both, effortlessly satisfying the latter camp in the public domain even as her own more ‘formalist’ experiments were being conducted in a parallel realm of near total secrecy.

Nevertheless, the success of her first “nationalist work” decreased progressively throughout that decade and, as Bakhmin (2009) continues:

She subsequently excluded these works from her catalog, going to considerable lengths to destroy all traces of their existence. Her attitude towards the few manuscripts that survived was that they were written ‘for the money’. From 1962, despite difficult financial circumstances, Ustvolskaya devoted herself exclusively to true, ‘spiritual, non-religious creativity’.

Rachel Claire Jeremiah-Foulds (2015, p. 269) proposes a similar conclusion to Ustvolskaya’s experience regarding political pressure:

After a period of silence, Ustvolskaya preferred to live unknown and in relative poverty than compromise any longer with the state’s official requirements, and she devoted her life and music to the austere spiritual conviction for which she has become widely known.

⁶ The complete biography can be accessed on Ustvolskaya’s web, “About the composer”: <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/>

In 1948, after Ustvol'skaya's graduation and beginning of her independent career as a composer outside her educational institution, the Central Committee issued a resolution on music that presented grave warnings to students and graduates from the conservatoires, establishing what was exactly required from the Union of Soviet Composers and the consequences of despising those recommendations (namely labeling those works as formalist), and inaugurating the First Congress of Soviet Composers, where the Composers' Union was officially and legally born. This event deeply affected Ustvol'skaya's emerging career and explained her before-mentioned period of silence.

The recovering process after Stalin's cultural policies was extremely gradual, as Edmunds and Yang (2003, p. 76) claim in the following excerpt: "After May 1958, formalism and Socialist Realism were still used as sticks to beat composers. Any composer who strayed from the official line was branded 'formalist', and in extreme cases could be forced into exile".

The reason for a slightly more open insight was, as well and obviously, still politic: works in a more advanced modernist style were now accepted because "music of that kind would be deemed avant-garde enough to achieve foreign performances and win the approval of those who were enthusiastic supporters of modernism" (Edmunds, N., and Yang, H. 2003, p. 84). Therefore, social realism was not a fixed aesthetic trend but a stylistic imposition susceptible to change due to the social, political and economical interests and necessities.

Bradshaw (2000, p. 25) explains how this slight and gradual openness affected Ustvol'skaya's career from that point in the history: "[...] It was not until the late 1960s that the bulk of her twenty-year output of smaller-scale works began to see the light of the day", concerning works such as the Duet for violin and piano, the first four Piano Sonatas or the Trio for clarinet, violin and piano. The incredible gap between the year of composition and the premiere of her more private works, that is to say, the works from the late 40s up to the late 60s that actually remained in her catalogue, shows her reluctance, or rather impossibility, to submit such an output to public scrutiny, being aware of the fact that "times were decidedly inopportune for the presentation of music that signally failed to match up to Soviet expectations of a revolutionary optimism" (ibid.).

In chapter 3. “Spiritual creativity in the context of the Soviet Union”, a new aspect of Ustvol'skaya's aesthetic insight which began to see the light of the day from the 1970s onward will be explained: her approach to spirituality through the composition of overtly religious pieces regarding their texts, titles or subtitles. This opening process coincides with the period in which measurements against the universe of religious tradition in Russia started to experience a very gradual relaxation. Nonetheless, it doesn't seem that Ustvol'skaya shared her practice within the relatively newfangled trend of the “new spirituality” carried out by a younger generation of composers as it will be examined throughout the same chapter.

One of the most important features of Ustvol'skaya's biography, which will be explained in chapter 4.1.1. “The temporal level: history and biography, the outer reality”, is the fact that Ustvol'skaya spent her whole career in the same place: the currently-called city of St. Petersburg. The influence of the time and the place will constitute a key factor when it comes to analyzing Ustvol'skaya's output throughout this entire paper.

Ustvol'skaya met a relatively sudden international recognition from the 1980s and 1990s, when she travelled out of her city for the first time in her life, to attend some concerts and festivals featuring her music, especially in the Netherlands. Then she replied to a few interviews, let Josée Voormans record her for the 2005 documental, and died the year after, in 2006, in the same city where she was born and spent her entire career. Nevertheless, even after such a relative public apparition of the composer on the international scene, her fame is not comparable to the one of the vast majority of her contemporaries and composers from the former and later generations in the Soviet Union. Among other arguments, one of the reasons why Ustvol'skaya's music is not commonly performed in Russia, for instance, is that she expressed on several occasions her rejection towards Shostakovich, as explained throughout the biography of her official website: “Ustvol'skaya's frank statements, her denunciation of her teacher and exposure of his ugly side, caused a great scandal and remain one of the reasons why her music is still rarely performed in Russia” (Bakhmin, 2009, “About the composer”). The topic related to the contradictory relationship between Ustvol'skaya and her teacher Shostakovich won't be treated in this project although it is interesting to highlight that Shostakovich appreciated her student up to the point of

quoting her Trio in two of his pieces⁷, sending sketches of his works for her to review them, praising her and, eventually, asking her for marriage and being immediately rejected.

2.2. The inner reality; aesthetic context: the stylistic independence of Ustvolskaya

Although the most representative stylistic and aesthetic features of Ustvolskaya's output, with regard to the main topic of this research project, are those featured in the works composed from the 1970s onwards, the complete understanding of those features depends on the previous holistic study of the composer's career in order to trace parallels with the course of the historical events and take into account the perspective of the complete evolution of her creative process.

In this research paper, they will be nonetheless considered just the pieces by Ustvolskaya included in her "official" catalogue⁸, meaning the pieces that Ustvolskaya considered part of her genuine creative expression, excluding the works composed due to the necessity and duty imposed by the historical (social, cultural and political) circumstances throughout her lifetime. Ustvolskaya's catalogue was compiled for the first time in 1998 by the composer Viktor Suslin (1942-2012), editor at Musikverlage Hans Sikorski from 1984 and writer of several articles on Ustvolskaya in Russian and German.

The first work, in chronological order, included in Ustvolskaya's catalogue is the Concerto for piano, full string orchestra and timpani, composed in 1946 and premiered eighteen years later, in 1964 (figure 1). This piece was the graduation work of Ustvolskaya and it shares some common stylistic ground with Shostakovich's style overall, and several curious similarities particularly compared to Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 1, such as the tonality, C minor, and the way in which both pieces end, reaching the culmination point throughout an obsessive continuous striking of the C major chord, yet at very different paces. The rest of the 1940s and the 1950s constitute the most convulse and confusing times in Ustvolskaya's career mainly due to the historical circumstances before-explained throughout the historical context. Several authors have explained what happened during those years when, as mentioned in chapter 2.1. "The outer reality: historical context of Ustvolskaya", the composer continued composing more

⁷ Specifically, the Fifth String Quartet and the Michelangelo Suite No. 9.

⁸ The catalogue can be accessed at <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/catalog.php>

straightforward works to cover the financial necessities while secretly developing her own personal projects, which waited decades before being premiered. Some examples encompassed by this phenomenon are the Trio (composed in 1949 and premiered in 1968), the Octet (composed in 1949-50 and premiered in 1970) or the First Piano Sonata (composed in 1947 and premiered in 1974).



Figure 1: Ustvolskaya at the premiere of the Piano Concerto (composed in 1946) with the pianist Pavel Serebryakov at the Grand Hall of Leningrad Philharmonia in 1964. (Bakhmin, “Gallery: Galina Ustvolskaya”: <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/gallery.php>).

A key inflection point in Ustvolskaya’s career arrives in 1962 when, according to the biography of her official website (Bakhmin, 2009, “About the composer”) and despite her precarious financial situation, “Ustvolskaya devoted herself exclusively to true, spiritual, non-religious creativity”. It is, indeed, from this period when the first overtly religious pieces were composed, being the first of such Composition No. 1, *Dona Nobis Pacem*, for piccolo, tuba and piano, composed in 1970-71. Indeed, some scholars have stated that year (1962) as the turning page from her “early style” to her “mature style”. One of those examples can be found in Jeremiah-Fouls’ thesis (2015, p. 43); although she refers to the “early years”, she describes how some of the pieces, such as the Trio, the Octet or the Grand Duet for Cello and Piano, feature certain traits that can be identified in later pieces. Throughout this “first period”, she claims that Ustvolskaya’s

style evolved and escaped from her professor's, Shostakovich's idiom. The first work of this "second period" or "mature style", according to this author, is the Duet for Violin and Piano, composed in 1964, a work that "terminated all palpable connection with her former teacher's compositions" (ibid., p. 50), and the only conserved piece composed after Ustvolskaya claimed her creative sincerity as mentioned earlier, and before Composition No. 1, with a great gap of seven years in between. Jeremiah-Fouls (ibid., p. 52) also completes her explanation of this "mature style" with a quotation from The Independent that describes Ustvolskaya's music as follows:

With these unusual combinations of timbre came extremes of register (her dynamic markings range from ppppp to ffffff), abrupt shifts in texture and mood from a motionless contemplation focused on a single note or hypnotically rocking semi-tonal oscillation to violent and dense outbursts of rage.

Others, for instance, Murrell (2013, p. 51), prefer to claim that her evolution is rather continuous: "I believe that her works should not be separated into two distinct style periods, but instead be viewed as a continuous evolution or transformation of her original style or intent". The reason for that claim is the fact that, for this author, the theoretical characteristics that distinguish Ustvolskaya's music are present throughout her entire output, although her career "undergoes a process of refinement and simplification" (ibid.), through which the complexity present in some of her earlier pieces is thinned out towards her last decades.

Tracing a context of Ustvolskaya's aesthetic approach represents a challenge due to her reluctance concerning the explanation of her pieces, techniques or overall artistic insights. The short text written in 1994 by the composer, "Thoughts about the Creative Process"⁹ is one of the only verbal explanations of her aesthetic reflections, alongside some letters written to friends and a few interviews that took place at the very end of her career, and that were transcribed in her webpage¹⁰. Nonetheless, after revising her short verbal output, an interesting phenomenon comes across. Her explanations are focused on standing out her spiritual approach and her intensive, sincere and individual creative process, alongside her reluctance regarding others' analysis of her pieces and her little interest in the explanation of any technical aspects at all. All these texts were written from the late 1980s onwards, which means that the political, social and cultural situation

⁹ See footnote No. 3 of chapter 1, page 1.

¹⁰ The transcribed interviews can be accessed at <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/interview.php>

of Russia was definitely more straightforward since the Soviet Union were to crumble in 1991 under the government of Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev. Nonetheless, it is still interesting the fact that Ustvol'skaya was reluctant to talk about her technical procedures since they constitute the safest topic regarding the stylistic approach, rather than focusing on the more spiritual and abstract, prickly and perhaps thorny, aesthetic insights, somehow connected to religion and even to politics, since the "new spirituality" trend was precisely springing up among younger composers as a protest against the repression years, although Ustvol'skaya was apparently not taking part whatsoever into such a movement. Neither was she the only composer who has refused to talk about her creative process overall throughout history.

Ustvol'skaya's aesthetic insight is overall dominated by an extreme individualism, highlighted by Gerard McBurney in Moody's book (2014, p. 25):

The essence of [her] art is that she neither quotes, nor stylizes. There is nothing nostalgic, easily appealing or retrospective about her intentions, and her music, with its harsh relentless processions of tone-clusters and hammer-blows, yields nothing to conventional assumptions about what makes sense or what might sound aesthetically pleasing.

Other authors like Nalimova, have attempted to make a list of the possible roots of Ustvol'skaya's unique idiom, but having as a point of departure of such a task the statement that "many attempts have been made to describe Ustvol'skaya's compositional style and to identify its origins. Despite the diversity of views, no definitive consensus has been arrived at" (Nalimova, 2012, p. 133). She proposes five different possible origins for Ustvol'skaya's musical expression: the tradition of the Old Russian Chant (known as *znamenny raspev*, which will be introduced in chapter 4.3.7. "Influence of the *znamenny raspev* tradition"), the "speech-orientated musical language" of Mussorgsky, the Eurasian Heritage of Stravinsky, the influence of western musical tradition connected to composers like Webern, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Krenek or the French group known as *Les Six*, and Shostakovich and other Leningrad's modernists. Then, the author advises the reader that such an analysis of Ustvol'skaya's roots is just offering "a performer's view on the subject" (ibid.). Murrell presents a completely different approach to this matter, claiming that "scholars have suggested Hindemith, Bartók, Pärt, Messiaen and, of course, Shostakovich, as influencing her music; however, these are not the qualities that define her compositional approach" (Murrell, 2013, p. 19). Furthermore, she explains that "her affinity for asymmetrical polyphonic constructions, her obsession with repetitive motivic permutations, and her hypnotic

treatment of rhythmic pulsation, have each contributed to creating a style that is unparalleled by other approaches, past or present” (ibid.).

Another important aspect of Ustvol'skaya's aesthetic insight, although it could be regarded as a mere technical aspect, is the instrumentation of her ensemble pieces, which she rejected to consider as “chamber music” (as explained in chapter 4.3.6. “The concept of the icon and ritualism”). As it will be explained, regarding the specific case of the Second Symphony, in chapter 4.2. “Justification of the selection of the Second Symphony”, Ustvol'skaya's choice of the instrumental templates can be regarded as rather unusual. For Jeremiah-Foulds (2015, p. 89), it almost borders upon the absurd when it comes to her instrumentation choices and use of an extreme musical expression. The curious choice of instruments for most of Ustvol'skaya's pieces has intrigued most of the scholars who focused on the composer's music, being one of the first examples of this her friend and editor Viktor Suslin, who talks, for instance, in this way about the Third Symphony (Ernst Kuhn, 2002)¹¹:

Ustvol'skaya demands an unusual ‘instrumentation’ for an equally unusual artistic task: her orchestra in the Third Symphony (5 oboes, 5 trumpets, 1 trombone, 3 tubas, 2 bass drums, 1 tenor drum, piano and 5 double basses) in no way resembles that which is generally understood by the word ‘orchestra’.

There are two aspects regarding the instrumentation that are worth a further explanation, also because of their meaning when it comes to the spiritual approach of Ustvol'skaya to the musical expression:

- The role of the piano: the piano is excluded from the instrumentation of just one of the pieces of Ustvol'skaya's catalogue, the Fifth Symphony. This is the reason why it acquires a vital role, as it will be explained in the specific case of the Second Symphony, carrying out in most cases the task of a soloist and conductor of ensemble groups and orchestras. Piano Sonatas Nos. 5 and 6 (1986 and 1988, respectively) represent a great example of the two extremes reached by the piano writing style by Ustvol'skaya: on the one hand, used in its most extremely soft and calmly expression, featured by static chords and lone melodic

¹¹ The materials from Viktor Suslin have been compiled in the article “The Music of Spiritual Independence: Galina Ustvol'skaya”, from Russian and German texts published in the 80s and 90s in Germany (by the publisher Hans Sikorski) and in Russia (Music in the USSR, Moscow. 1990, April-June, pp. 22-23), and then published in the book by Verlag Ernst Kuhn. The materials are also accessible at <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/>

lines; on the other hand, used as almost a percussion instrument, bringing about the loudest possible dynamics and harshest articulation, and turning the tone cluster into one of the most common expressive resources of her output.

- The conquest of extremes, which will be further explained throughout the next chapter, 2.2.1. “The idiom: accessibility and the role of the performer in Ustvol’skaya’s output”, in connection to the approach of the performer to Ustvol’skaya’s music regarding its spiritual meaning and function. This might constitute one of the most important traits of the overall aesthetic insight of Ustvol’skaya and one of the bases of the final conclusion of this paper, approached both from the perspective of the technical resources of the composer’s idiom regarding virtually any possible musical parameter, and from the side of her spiritual and philosophical perspectives.

2.2.1. The idiom: accessibility and the role of the performer in Ustvol’skaya’s output

In chapter 4.3.6. “The concept of the icon and ritualism”, the role of the performer in certain pieces of Ustvol’skaya’s catalogue will be interpreted as part of her interest in creating what it could be called ritualistic situations and carrying out ritualistic behaviors in order to fulfill her spiritual aim. Nevertheless, it is necessary to previously discuss the relationship between the performer and the idiom that is being used by Ustvol’skaya in its rawest form (that is to say, regarding the objective musical tools and resources of the musical expression) and alongside the aesthetic context of the composer, previously examined in the former chapter. Precisely, the approach of the performer to this idiom constitutes an important part of the spiritual approach of Ustvol’skaya to musical expression overall, due to the fact that the performer is a necessary intermediary for the direct communication of the sound between the score, the primary source of the musical information beyond the composer’s cognition, and the audience.

One of the most important characteristics, highlighted in the previous chapter, among Ustvol’skaya’s aesthetic traits is the simplicity and austerity of the elements and tools that constitute her musical expression. Nonetheless, this apparent restraint of the means does not usually match the perception of complexity that some players experience when it comes to the performance of the piece. That is to say, the accessibility of Ustvol’skaya’s music to its performer

is limited at some point and for certain reasons that have been intriguing several scholars during the past decades. The thesis by Nalimova, “Demystifying Galina Ustvol'skaya: Critical Examination and Performance Interpretation” (2012), is a brilliant example of this concern, although it also represents a personal insight, especially when it comes to her view on interpretation and perception of Ustvol'skaya's music from the perspective of a performer.

For Ustvol'skaya, one important trait featured by a performer who dares to approach her music is that they are able to perform a piece exactly the way she felt it, just through the interpretation of the score, as she mentioned in a letter in 1994 when talking about Anatoly Ivanovich Vedernikov's performance of her Piano Sonata No. 2¹²: “Vedernikov did not ask me a single question when he was working on the Sonata, but himself found all the keys necessary in order to give a sufficiently strong and worthy performance”. This sentence has a meaning beyond a simple successful interpretation of the Second Sonata because it represents the success of the somehow divine communication between the player and the music itself for an utmost connection with god. That is the intention of Ustvol'skaya when writing music and only a performance that fulfills this ultimate aim would be worthy for the composer. And this is the reason why the concepts of simplicity and austerity, which ease the communication, regarding the musical expression, are key notions when it comes to understanding the spiritual insight of Ustvol'skaya. Another example of this attitude of the composer is evident throughout her interview with Olga Gladkova in 2000¹³ when she asked how often Ustvol'skaya met the performers of her music and if she considered it necessary to explain the score, obtaining Ustvol'skaya's subsequent answer that she rarely met the performers and she did not consider it necessary to explain the scores.

Without a doubt and for these reasons, Ustvol'skaya's most appreciated performer of all times was Reinbert de Leeuw (1938-2020) (figure 2), as stated on her webpage¹⁴:

The appearance of Reinbert de Leeuw in Ustvol'skaya's life dramatically transformed her attitude towards the performance of her works. Finally, an artist appeared who did not ask for any explanations as to how to play, who demonstrated a deep understanding of her music. Ustvol'skaya had been looking forward to his performances the most.

¹² The letter can be accessed at <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/performers.php>, “Galina Ustvol'skaya's statement about Sonata No. 2 performed by Anatoly Vedernikov”.

¹³ The interview can be found at <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/interview.php>, “Questions by Olga Gladkova”.

¹⁴ Regarding “best performers and recordings”: <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/performers.php>.

This can be noticed in a letter written by Ustvol'skaya on April 20th, 1994¹⁵: “Never in my life and my whole career have I met an artist as great as Reinbert de Leeuw. He manifests a deep inner understanding of my music and plays it as truly and marvelously as no other musician can”.

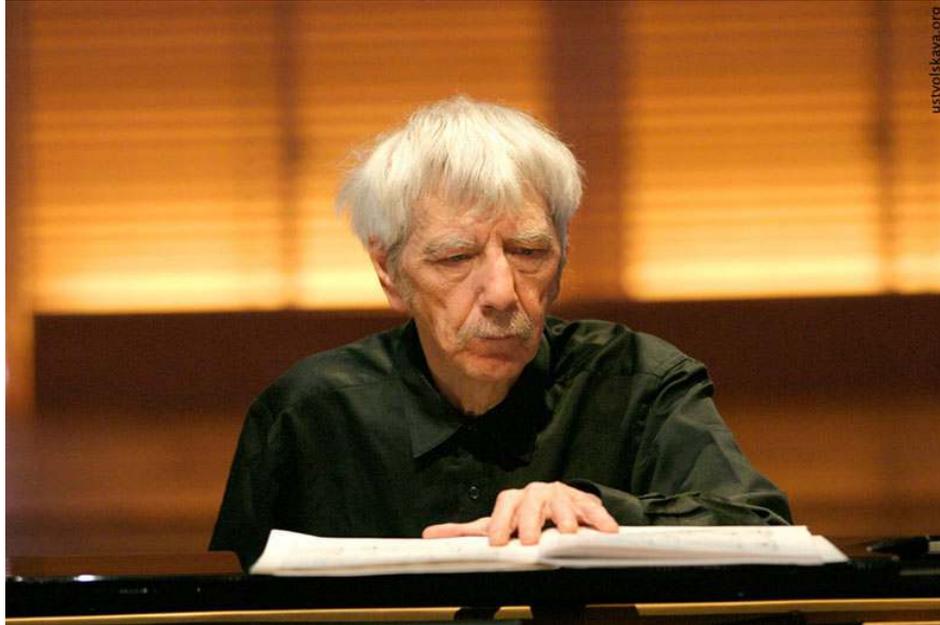


Figure 2: Reinbert de Leeuw at a rehearsal of the Second Symphony in 2005 in Hilversum, Netherlands. Bakhmin commented on about this premiere in the caption of this photograph: “She [Ustvol'skaya] was fully satisfied and gratefully commented: ‘my life was worthwhile’”. (Bakhmin, “Gallery: Amsterdam”: <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/gallery.php>)

The most important question when it comes to the spiritual insight of Ustvol'skaya's music in relation to the performer of her pieces is the percentage of personal contribution from that performer while interpreting Ustvol'skaya's works. Indeed, Ustvol'skaya's foremost concern about the performance of her pieces, as shown throughout the previously-mentioned letters, is the fact that the communication process of her message to the audience is properly fulfilled; thus, the most important task of the performer is to convey this message to the listener as directly as possible, including themselves as preliminary recipients. In that sense, it could be deduced that an excessively personal or individual approach to her music would suppose a problem because its meaning, in its purest and rawest state, would be distorted by the intermediary, the performer. This preoccupation featured by Ustvol'skaya is materialized through very specific indications and

¹⁵ The letter can be accessed at <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/performers.php>, “Galina Ustvol'skaya's statement about Reinbert De Leeuw”.

comments regarding how to perform her music. As it will be explained in chapter 4.3.2. “Text: origin, content and meaning”, this precision is especially evident when Ustvol'skaya explains to Dmitri Lagatsjov, the performer of the reciter's part in the 2005's performance of the Second Symphony documented in Voormans' film, how to interpret his role in a very specific way, and how to understand the overall character and presence needed to convey the exact meaning she was seeking.

In her thesis, Nalimova (2012, p. 155) poses an interesting yet slightly farfetched connection between the strict wishes of the composer regarding the performance of her music and the political situation that surrounded her during most of her career:

As a result of being a member of Soviet society, where freedom was replaced by Party order, Ustvol'skaya's musical texts throughout her life do not possess characteristics that encourage freedom of interpretation: the way the musical material is structured and presented, clearly demonstrates the composer's penchant for order, strict rules and control, and characterizes Ustvol'skaya as a 'product' of a totalitarian regime.

As it will be explained with regard to the specific case of the Second Symphony in chapter 4.3.6. “The concept of the icon and ritualism”, the extreme precision of the indications affects the behavior of the performer, not only in a direct manner through the comments during her immediate contact with the interpreters at the end of her career, but also indirectly through the performance indications on the scores. Some examples of these types of indications are shown in the before-mentioned chapter, but they are clearly not limited to the Second Symphony, as Nalimova points out: “Comments such as ‘very rhythmical beat, like a motor’, that first appeared in Sikorski's edition of the Duet for Violin and Piano, clearly indicate the composer's intention to restrict any attempts at performance flexibility” (Nalimova, 2012, p. 155).

Moreover, elements such as the instrumentation of her pieces or the overall performative style they are approached are also directly related to the spiritual communication and meaning purpose of the composer, as it can be noticed in the “Precision” section of her website (Bakhmin, 2009)¹⁶:

The instrumental groups were always carefully thought out by Ustvol'skaya and so she objected to any arrangements of her music and to transcriptions for other instruments. In

¹⁶ At <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/precision.php>, “Variations on the theme by Ustvol'skaya”.

her view, these changes diminished the prayerful power of her compositions, turning them into a kind of entertainment which was unacceptable.

Finally, Nalimova also explains that “Ustvolskaya rejected the idea of having a conductor for her Symphonies and Compositions, claiming that an additional person on stage would disturb the performance and distract the audience” (Nalimova, 2012, p. 155). It is usual, indeed, to play the compositions and symphonies without the presence of the conductor, so the piano player assimilates the role of the leader, also as kind of a soloist. This fact would be clearly linked to the necessity of conveying the meaning of the music in the most direct way, from the composer, through the performers thanks to a non-personal and precise interpretation, and to the audience. However, regarding the specific case of the Second Symphony, she was reluctant that the pianist, already carrying out a “vital role” in the piece, would also conduct, as she said in the 2005’s film by Voormans (2005, 0:11:46), referring to Reinbert de Leeuw’s performance: “Reinbert could play the [piano] part himself and let someone else conduct”. Nevertheless, de Leeuw argued against this statement (Voormans, 2005, 0:12:26):

I played it once with a conductor. But in this piece the conductor’s role is actually a waste of time. It becomes more exciting and requires more concentration to do it like we did [when the same person plays the piano and conducts simultaneously].

Reinbert’s sensations are directly linked to the before-mentioned idea of the unbroken chain of communication when highlighting the enhancement of the excitation and concentration, that is to say, the effectiveness of the receptive process, in the case of dispensing with the intermediation of a conductor.

Regarding the conductor’s role in some of the compositions by Ustvolskaya that theoretically would need this element in the communication chain, there is another important quotation worth mentioning. Ustvolskaya discussed this specific topic when Viktor Suslin was written a letter by her on April 16th, 1990¹⁷, related to the performance of the Fifth Symphony. In that letter, she accepted that a conductor might be needed for a proper performance of that piece, but she claims that “the minimum of external attributes (gestures and so) and the maximum of internal attributes, i.e. understanding, is demanded of whoever leads the performance of the Fifth

¹⁷ The letter can be accessed at <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/>, “Extracts from letters by Galina Ustvolskaya to Viktor Suslin” (publishing house Hans Sikorski, Hamburg). Retrieved February 14, 2021.

Symphony”. The most important statement is claimed right after those words: “the less he draws the listener’s attention to himself, the better”. She also admitted in this letter the problems that some musicians had to cope with when facing up to her output: “Apart from that, practice shows that even the best musicians sometimes demonstrate a lack of understanding when performing my music. It is possible to play the written notes faithfully but ruin a composition”.

The last feature of Ustvolskaya’s music worth a mention within this brief summary regarding the relationship with the performers and their behavior towards her musical idiom, is the conquest of extremes, already mentioned at the end of the former chapter. This notion is important in connection to the spiritual approach due to the embodiment process and the involvement that the performer experiences in pursuing such an extreme expression, which can even constitute a physical challenge. The extremes are reached in several manners and concerning many different musical parameters:

- Dynamics: the dynamic range sought by Ustvolskaya in most of her pieces borders the impossibility, especially in combination with the next point of this list regarding the extreme registers used at some points. For instance, the dynamic range of Piano Sonata No. 6 (1988) is maintained between *ffff* and *fffff* throughout the entire piece. The overall dynamic range throughout her repertoire includes dynamic markings from *ppppp* to *fffff*, although staying on the loudest side is a common trait to many of her pieces.
- Tessitura and timbre: tessituras are extreme in Ustvolskaya’s music both naturally because of the instrumental selection and forcibly because of the written register for each instrument. That is to say, given the example of Composition No. 1, *Dona Nobis Pacem* (1970-71), the choice of the instrumentation, piano, tuba and piccolo, constitutes already an extreme span of register. However, and furthermore, each instrument reaches an extreme tessitura per se throughout the piece, taking into consideration their average and usually most comfortable registers. The unusual instrumental combinations pose a challenge for performers who are not used to facing up such a timbrical aggregate, in which new balances and rapport need to be worked out. As mentioned before, the use of extreme registers is also combined with the extreme dynamics, sometimes not so suitable for those tessituras, turning Ustvolskaya’s pieces into a real challenge for the performer.

Finally, regarding the timbre, the tone cluster is worth an explanation within this section for its extremely extended use throughout Ustvol'skaya's repertoire:

- Tone clusters: the use of clusters throughout piano works and piano parts in ensemble and orchestral pieces is a separate topic worth mentioning within the timbral issue, especially regarding Ustvol'skaya's works from the 1970s and 80s, which demonstrates the culmination of the expressiveness of such a compositional resource¹⁸. Her singular notation of clusters as branches of pitches is combined with all sorts of different expressions for this compositional tool. Bruno Ruviano (2009, p. 3), in his article "Ustvol'skaya's Sixth Piano Sonata", categorizes the cluster chords as follows:

- Random selection of pitches, pointing out the top pitch, which features a thematic character.
- Widest selection of pitches within the given interval, indicating the top and bottom pitches.
- Specific selection of pitches using stems or branches which point to specific pitches.

The Sixth Piano Sonata features examples of all these types of cluster notations, as shown in the following examples (figure 3):



Figure 3: First, second and third types of cluster notations, respectively, present in Ustvol'skaya's Sixth Piano Sonata (1988) and, overall, throughout her repertoire.

Nalimova (2012, p. 158) translates from Russian the words of Oleg Malov, one of the foremost Ustvol'skaya performers who premiered most of her piano works, and who wrote that it is impossible to imagine a more suitable performing tool for expressing the composer's artistic intention than a tone cluster in

¹⁸ A great example and ultimate culmination of the use of tone clusters, due to its placement as the penultimate piece within Ustvol'skaya's catalogue, is the Sixth Sonata for Piano (1988).

Ustvolskaya’s compositions. It also contributes to the conversion of the piano into a mainly percussive instrument.

The use of clusters in Ustvolskaya’s music is related to the conquest of extremes as its foremost intention is to maximally enlarge the sonority and spiritual effectivity through it. Nalimova highlights another quotation by Malov that represents the overall relationship between extremes and the spiritual experience while claiming that “Ustvolskaya’s understanding of the performance process as a form of ritual, where everything is taken in its extreme forms in order to experience transcendental realities, made the tone cluster the most organic and suitable compositional tool” (Nalimova, 2012, p. 159)¹⁹.

One remarkable example of the use of clusters on the piano as a resource for expanding sonorities can be found in the Second Symphony, regarding, for instance, the passage from measures 99 to 103 (figure 4): the trombone is playing the main theme²⁰ whereas the piano is clearly expanding both the theme and the complementary cluster played by oboes and flutes by using just tone clusters, fulfilling the objective of building up a meta-timbre out of the combination of complex sounds.

The figure shows a musical score reduction for Trombone and Piano in measures 99-103. The Trombone part is in the bass clef, 4/4 time, and is marked 'solo' and 'ff'. The Piano part is in the treble and bass clefs, 4/4 time, and is marked 'ff non cresc.'. Arrows point to specific notes in the piano part, with '8vb' indicating an octave below.

Figure 4: Reduction of the passage for trombone and piano in mm. 99-103 of the Second Symphony (1979) by Ustvolskaya. According to the composer’s indications for performance, the arrows under the pitches in

¹⁹ Nalimova takes those quotations from the following source in Russian: Oleg Malov, *Metodicheskie rekomendatsii k osvoeniyu notnogo teksta v fortepiannoy muzyke XX veka* [“Methodical Recommendations on Mastering Scores of Twentieth-Century Piano Music”] (Leningrad: LGK, 1988).

²⁰ The motifs will be explained in chapter 4.3.4. “Repetition: structure and motivic content”.

the piano part mean: “Play with the fist. Touch the lower notes slightly, and emphasize the upper (principal) notes”. The wider tone clusters in the piano part (mm. 100 and 101) are expanding in register and timbre the tone cluster played by oboes and flutes at the same time.

- Temporality: temporality is framed into a constant beat or pulse at different paces depending on the work in question. This extreme invariability regarding the rhythm, although sometimes broken by certain irregularities, turns the simplest rhythmical and metrical organization into a real challenge, as it will be further explained in chapter 4.3.5. “Temporal perception”.
- Overall expression: as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the given indications by Ustvolskaya regarding the expression that must be attained by the performer are extremely precise and strict, turning the overall expression of the piece into an immersive experience for the players towards its exact meaning.

The research process carried out by Nalimova summarizes interesting reactions from different performers who have been in touch with Ustvolskaya’s output, and the resulting emotional and aesthetic experiences are extremely disparate, from the consideration of this music as extremely successful when it comes to the communication of its meaning, to the impossibility of relating to its expression, both physically and mentally. Nevertheless, this phenomenon is not exclusive to Ustvolskaya’s music and depends on several factors, being one of them the temporal and spatial connection between Ustvolskaya and the performer, such a claim which defines the kernel of this research project. One of the situations allowing a performer to be able to reach an effective emotional reaction or spiritual experience from Ustvolskaya’s music is the fact that they shared a common environment as the one Ustvolskaya experienced while writing and sharing her output, disregarding the huge spans of time between the date of the composition of several pieces from her repertoire and the date of their premiere. The displacement of a piece from its original time and place brings about a certain distortion of its emotional and overall aesthetic meaning, springing up the necessity of making a bigger effort in the task of relating to Ustvolskaya’s insight or being able to replace it by their own. As listed on her webpage, Ustvolskaya’s preferred performers were Anatoly Vedernikov, Reinbert de Leeuw, Frank Denyer, Markus Hinterhäuser, Alexei Lubimov, Vera Beths, Ivan Sokolov, Mstislav Rostropovich, David Arden, Kirill Rybakov,

Alexander Trostyansky and Alexander Rudin²¹ (being de Leeuw, the most praised by the composer, as already mentioned), most of them from Russia or rather from the Netherlands, main country, visited by Ustvol'skaya herself, where her latter pieces were widely performed; and coming from a similar generation as Ustvol'skaya.

A similar claim would be suitable regarding the audience and its emotional reaction towards Ustvol'skaya's output, taking again into consideration the fact that most of the works were not able to be experienced at the exact time they were conceived because of the before-mentioned gap between the composition process and the premiere of a great part of her repertoire. In the case of the listener, it is also a fact that they lack the physical experience of the performer, something that would represent either an advantage or disadvantage regarding the effectiveness of the emotional reaction towards the musical expression: it either allows the listener to focus just on the sound reception or it does away with the important part of the embodiment of the piece through the performative process. Nalimova (2012, p. 162) tries to answer the question of what "code of listening" is required to appreciate Ustvol'skaya's music nowadays, coming up with a similar conclusion as the one stated throughout the former paragraph regarding the importance of the time and place, hence the historical and cultural environments: "The nature of the audience perception often depends on the cultural disposition and musical experience of individual listeners; certain cultural beliefs and expectations play an important role in determining the character of response to music" (ibid.).

Summing the idea concerning how extremes are a key element in Ustvol'skaya's idiom, the ultimate purpose of this idiom trait is the maximum intensification of expressivity, especially in connection to the spiritual experience in order to make it as effective as possible. The extremes in Ustvol'skaya's music constitute by no means a compositional resource and aesthetic approach whose value is just considered in its intrinsic insight. Some other aesthetic approaches and stylistic trends are focused on the extreme in music as a value by itself, and a relatively recent example of this is Saturationism, inaugurated by composers Raphael Cendo and Frank Bedrossian in 2008. On the contrary side, Ustvol'skaya insisted enormously on the specific meaning that each element of the music language should feature beyond its intrinsic value.

²¹ The list can be accessed at <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/performers.php>.

3. Spiritual creativity in the context of the Soviet Union

3.1. Religiosity in the Soviet Union: historical context

As it was introduced in chapter 2.1. “The outer reality: historical context of Ustvol’skaya”, one of the foremost traits of Stalin’s government was the restriction and suppression of any manifestation of religious belief and practice. Atheism was a central paragon, encouraged through education, and the obliteration of religion was somehow successful, according to Jeremiah-Fouls (2015, p. 69), by “following the militaristic ideology of the Bolsheviks, the harsh suppression of religious practice by Stalin and a fierce anti-religion campaign by Nikita Khrushchev”. The decades of the 1920s and 1930s were especially damaging for the Orthodox Church and its members, who were strongly harassed.

It is interesting to study the historical sources of information about the development of this situation: for instance, in 1955 Timasheff (1955, p. 329) describes a “spectacular change that occurred [during the years 1939-45] in the antireligious policy of the Soviet government”. According to Timasheff, “the pattern of direct persecution was discarded and replaced by a subtler pattern of ostentatious compromise in combination with direct pressure”. This compromise was materialized during the National Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, which took place in January and February of 1945, and whose foremost objective was to choose a new Patriarch. There was also the intention of granting the Churches permission to exist as officially recognized bodies and avoiding the harassment applied to believers, churches, holy images and so forth, lowering taxes and relaxing anti-religious propaganda, in exchange for the church acknowledging that the Soviet government had never persecuted them. However, the plan did not succeed, as Timasheff (ibid., p. 330) explains: “The compromise, however, never signified that the Soviet government had abandoned its plan to make the Russian nation scientifically atheist”. Therefore, the antireligious education was still promoted in schools and the believers continued to be troubled.

Suddenly, in 1953, a more aggressive and systematic anti-religious campaign was launched through several articles, especially edited by *Pravda*¹, reaching its culmination in 1954. The author narrates the reopening of anti-religious museums in 1954, which depicted religion as

¹ *Pravda*, still in circulation, was the official newspaper of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. It started to be published in 1912 and its paper version is today run by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

the enemy of science and progress, and the promotion of regular scientific-atheistic lectures delivered by doctors, teachers and agronomists among villages, focused on the irreconcilability of religion with science and communism. This situation was, nonetheless, eased again throughout the same year, as Timasheff (1955, p. 333) explains, and always taking into consideration the historical perspective of an article from 1955:

In capitalist countries, religion is counter-revolutionary; so, it was in the Soviet Union during the first years after the revolution; then the Soviet government had to combat it. But now, with the victory of socialism and the liquidation of the exploiter class, the situation is quite different. Now [...] the vast majority of the clergy is loyal to the Soviet government. Therefore, the struggle against religious superstition must take the form of an ideological contest between the scientific and materialistic philosophy of communism, and the anti-scientific philosophy of religion.

This explains the fact that anti-religious campaigns were confined to the level of a theoretical contest between religion and atheism (Timasheff, 1955, p. 334). Considering the overall view of these years summarized by Timasheff, and despite the quite aggressive antireligious campaign carried out in 1954, the most remarkable fact is that many religious mores survived while keeping their incompatibility with Soviet communism at that time, especially regarding the “long and sometimes extravagant celebration of religious holidays” (ibid., p. 338). Nevertheless, and from a truly worthwhile perspective of that historical moment, Timasheff claims that, compared with the pre-revolutionary situation, religion had substantially declined: the absolute atheists were not numerous, but an increasing number of people were religiously neutral or indifferent, a state of mind which was quite rare 40 years earlier, according to the author (ibid., p. 343). Alongside this general situation, there can be pointed out other facts such as the less regular tradition of churchgoers and the weaker transmission of religious knowledge to younger generations through family traditions. Notwithstanding, it was still quite impressive, according to the author, that “[religion] remain[ed] a formidable force, the only organized force in Soviet Russia allowed to convey to the people ideas diametrically opposed to the official doctrine” (ibid., p. 344).

Over a decade later, is it possible to approach the situation through the words of David Powell, Assistant Professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland in 1967, uncovering a similar reality: “Over the course of nearly half a century, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has endeavored to undermine the religious ties and inclinations of its citizens”

(Powell, 1967, p. 366). According to him, it was not possible to accurately assess the scope and effectiveness of antireligious Soviet propaganda because the authorities weren't publishing the latest surveys on religious belief. Nonetheless, he claimed that, "that religious belief is less widespread today [in 1967] than it was before the Bolshevik Revolution, cannot be denied" (ibid.). Moreover, and some years later, Philip Walters (1993, p.3) insisted again on the same situation: "The first 70 years of Soviet power saw a sustained offensive against religion on a scale unprecedented in history". Not that sustained if the words by the before-cited Timasheff are taken into consideration, something that, nevertheless, Walters also points out when detailing that "exceptions to the general norm at any date are always to be found, and within any chosen phase there are policy modifications and even reversals" (ibid.). The latter assertion makes it prickly to summarize and clarify the entire development of the religious insight in the Soviet Union. One interesting detail is that during the 1930s, "antireligious agitation and propaganda was decentralized" (ibid., p. 14), so the campaign was in fact been partly carried out by the people itself but just because the government encouraged some public and voluntary organizations, such as the Young Pioneers, the worker's Clubs and the League of Militant Atheists (ibid.), to undertake those kinds of initiatives so the process seemed to turn into a spontaneous effort by the masses, rather than an array of government initiatives. Education was definitely the most powerful weapon of the antireligious campaigns, taking care of the different strategies to follow regarding educated and uneducated people. One important side effect of the educational clout was the fact that official publishing of religious literature was extremely limited; thus, it was hardly impossible to access any kind of information.

Starting in the early 1920s, the antireligious activity was mainly addressing the Russian Orthodox Church. Then it expanded its scope to all religious denominations, especially from the 1930s onwards, which is the decade when the violence increased alongside the educational strategies, as Walters explains (1993, p. 15) from the historical perspective of two years after the crumbling of the Soviet Union:

With the end of NEP [New Economic Policy] came the start of forced collectivization in 1929, and with it the terror [...]. Bishops, priests, and lay believers [...] were arrested, shot and sent to labor camps. Churches were closed down, destroyed, converted to other uses.

According to Walters, the ease of persecution came in 1939 and onwards, as explained before through the words of Timasheff, although featuring ups and downs. The Second World

War had started and the menace of the Nazi power after the violation of the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 materialized through the invasion of the USSR by Hitler (1941). In return for the before-mentioned concessions to religious bodies, “[they] were expected to continue their patriotic efforts, encouraging the population to resist the aggressor” (Walters, 1993, p. 17). After the war, the Orthodox Church was still carrying out the task of consolidating Soviet territorial gains and maintaining its power in Orthodox Churches such as the ones in Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia. This mainly strategical and territorial clout of the Church was maintained until the later 1980s, although a certain amount of persecution of believers was been quietly resumed. Atheist propaganda changed its focus several times, but “it never showed any signs of ceasing” (ibid., p. 25), not even during the 1970s, when a resolution on strengthening the atheist education of the population was issued.

One of the foremost causes of the revival of religiosity and spirituality experienced in Russia during the late 1960s and 1970s was a common feeling of protest from the artists against those years of oppression when all insights related to religion or spirituality were forbidden, alongside the resurgence of a creative movement returning to ideas closer to the Marxist or Leninist era. Some younger Soviet composers in this context, according to Nalimova (2012, p. 103), “were inspired by religious texts and images, and some, like Sofia Gubaidulina and Alemdar Karamanov, embraced Orthodox Christianity and became truly religious”. Although Ustvol'skaya was not taking part in this new trend, “it seems [that the composer] sought spiritual comfort from the marginalized existence in which she felt forced to retreat” (Jeremiah-Fouls, 2015, p. 69).

Something to take into consideration, both as a summary of this chapter and the link to the main discussion of this entire research project, is that the first overtly religious piece composed by Ustvol'skaya was Composition No. 1, *Dona Nobis Pacem*. It was written in 1970-71 and premiered in December 1974 in Leningrad. Virtually all pieces composed from this moment onwards were overtly religious works, meaning that they featured explicit religious content other than the abstract instrumental expression, namely titles and texts with a religious origin or from religious sources. But even the Fifth and Sixth Piano Sonatas alongside earlier pieces of her repertoire were then considered by the composer and admitted to be equally spiritually inspired, despite the fact that they don't include any literal religious trait such as a title or text. This timeline detail is also a consequence of the historical context formerly explained. Walters (1993, p. 27)

narrates that “from the mid-1970s, the pace of proliferation of all kinds of unofficial religious activity had been accelerating, particularly in the major cities and amongst educated young people”, the scope of people where it is possible to situate the younger generation of “new spirituality” composers. The activity carried out among that group was encouraged by the searching process for spiritual values against the disenchanting feeling due to the former official ideology. Nevertheless, the arrest of human rights and religious activists continued up to the 1980s, according to Walters (*ibid.*, p. 28), when “there was equally apparently still no possibility that this official ideology could concede any kind of positive role to religious ideas either in the historical past or in the present day [meaning 1993]”.

The negative conclusion of Walters in 1993 is worth a mention since, at that time, the compositional activity of Ustvol'skaya that is known was already over and, therefore, it can be said that all her “true, spiritual, and non-religious creativity” was carried out under a relative and fluctuating oppression of spirituality around her. It is one of the aims of this project to point out the importance of this historical context and its clout on Ustvol'skaya's output.

3.2. Spirituality in the aesthetic approach of Soviet composers: how Orthodox Christianity influenced Soviet music

As explained before, whereas Ustvol'skaya's output was starting to spring up featuring an overtly religious character, especially regarding the choice of the titles and texts featured in the pieces, some younger Soviet composers were showing a growing interest into religious and spiritual artistic expression, in many cases connected to a desire of freedom and the aim of conveying the disagreement with the years of religious oppression imposed by the political situation, and through an increasing attraction to Russia's ancient Church.

Although not a Soviet composer, an interesting parallel can be traced from some of the comments of Moody on the English composer John Tavener (1944-2013), whose output consists mainly of religious works as one of the most important paragons of the “new spirituality” that arose during the second half of the 20th century, and who converted to the Russian Orthodox Church in 1977. The concept of the prayer, reflected in what Moody calls the “initiation process”,

that is to say, the path pursued in to reach a certain state of grace, and which will be commented on in chapter 4.3.3. “The prayer”, is also present in Tavener’s approach (Moody, 1996, pp. 66-67):

The work [‘Prayer for the World’ by John Tavener] was not well received at its premiere in 1981 and has not been widely taken up since. Nevertheless, its austerity, its uncompromising concentration on the text makes it a truly remarkable work of sacred art. It is a genuinely mystical work, in that it requires a certain level of initiation, remaining otherwise an impenetrable mystery, and this is of course precisely why it failed as a concert piece. [...] [It] is far more dissonant [than ‘Ikon of the Trinity’ and ‘Ikon of Light’, such pieces much more successful] in [their] harmonic language, in spite of [its] astonishing austerity.

This is definitely relatable to Ustvolskaya regarding the reception of some of her music and the overall features of her stylistic choices which knock into shape her idiom.

Regarding the origin of the texts used by Ustvolskaya, for instance, and precisely in the Second Symphony, they belong to the Roman Catholic Church tradition. The same phenomenon can be found throughout the output of another mystical composer, Arvo Pärt (1935-), who belongs to the Orthodox Church and was born in Soviet Estonia, worth a mention by cause of these coincidences. His use of the text, however, is sometimes defined as “cold” and “inexpressive”, and those qualities could somehow relate to the austerity, severity and strictness of Ustvolskaya’s music up to a certain extent. It is also possible to establish a connection between these stylistic traits and the “deliberately flat, geometrical style of ikon painting” (Moody, 1996, p. 69), an association that will be explained in chapter 4.3.6. “The concept of the icon and ritualism”. Moody (ibid.) concludes that such austerity, which could be relatable to both Pärt and Ustvolskaya, leads to “a different form of listening and, as one must suppose was the composer’s intention, to the contemplation of higher things”.

Another great example of Soviet composers as paragons of the spiritual artistic inspiration is Sofia Gubaidulina (1931-), defined by Richard Taruskin (2009) as “the post-Soviet composer of actual Central Asian (Tartar or Mongolian) descent, now living in Germany, whose predilection for religious subject matter had been considered a mark of political dissidence in the waning years of Soviet authority”. She was indeed a member of the Russian Orthodox Church and, in an interview conducted by Moody (2012, pp. 31-35), she declared that all her works are religious. She also presents an interesting dilemma related to the Orthodox Church and the religious or spiritually-inspired composition of the non-choral pieces by the already-mentioned composers

and the ones that are about to be mentioned. This paradox is actually extensible to all production of religious music, besides those linked to the Orthodox Church, that is conceived as “concert music”, which could be considered as a secular context, instead of bearing a pragmatic religious function:

Orthodox tradition does not recognize the use of instruments, only voices. And there is the problem. Who will win in me, the artist or the believer? The artist won. I am not saying that it is a sin, but it is a non-liturgical work, for concert performance ... and other composers also wrote not only for the liturgy but also for concerts.

The list of examples could be endless and it is the aim of this paper to focus on the profile of Galina Ustvolskaya and her Second Symphony. But it is worth explaining that her devotion to religious or, better specified by the composer herself, “spiritually-inspired” composition, was not an isolated trend in the Soviet Union, especially among composers born between the 1930s and the 1940s, whose pieces sprung up from the 1960s and 1970s onwards. They could be mentioned, as a closure to this chapter, a few more examples of remarkable religious compositions by Soviet composers such as Rodion Shchedrin (1932-) and his liturgical work “The Sealed Angel” for mixed choir, soloists and flute (1988), Alfred Schnittke (1934-1998) and his Requiem for mixed choir and instrumental ensemble (1972-75) and Choir Concerto for mixed choir (1984), and, although somewhat older, Georgy Sviridov (1915-1998) regarding his choral cycle “Hymns and Prayers” (1980-97). Out of these examples, and regarding the relationship between these composers and the Orthodox Church, Schnittke experienced a religious dilemma in choosing between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, and Shchedrin was raised by his parents within the Orthodox faith. Sviridov represents a special and rare case in which the composer was constantly praised by the authorities as kind of a paragon of the ideal Soviet artist, later on developing an increasing interest in Orthodox spirituality, being praised, at the same time, and after the crumbling of the Soviet Union, by the Patriarch of Moscow. This “no man’s land” situation is explained by Richard Louis Gillies (2019, p. 227): “[...] He belongs neither to the ‘old guard’ of Soviet composers such as Prokofiev, Shostakovich, nor to the younger generation of so-called ‘unofficial’ composers that included Valentin Silvestrov, Alfred Schnittke, Arvo Pärt and Sofia Gubaidulina”.

4. Ustvol'skaya's "true and spiritual, non-religious creativity"

4.1. Two levels of aesthetic clout

In this chapter, the two main origins of the aesthetic clout that affected Ustvol'skaya's output will be described: the temporal and the spiritual level or, in other words, the outer and the inner realities of the composer. As it was stated in the introduction of this research project, the starting point of this approach is what Viktor Suslin claimed as the answer to a question from Thea Derks (1995) during an interview with Ustvol'skaya, which is worth being repeated here¹:

- Yet you write that her music is typically Russian. Even typical of St. Petersburg. How are we to understand this?

[...] Music naturally knows two levels: the spiritual, and the temporal. This last level I refer to. Music such as hers could only develop in that place, and at that time. In this century St. Petersburg witnessed numerous horrors, of which the siege in the Second World War is only one.

4.1.1. The temporal level: history and biography, the outer reality

As Murrell claims in her thesis (2013, p. 8), "although Ustvol'skaya would not publish her first official work until 1946², it is important to recognize the years that led up to this creation, as the political environment would have a great impact upon her formative years". Indeed, these formative years have major importance precisely because Ustvol'skaya was initiated into her musical education during that period. This project, as stated in its introduction and historical context, features the foremost aim to explain how the immense clout of the historical, social, political and cultural environment of a specific place and time affects the individual creative output of a composer. This chapter will gather some of the traits of Ustvol'skaya's outer reality that possibly had influence and impact upon her aesthetic behavior, besides all realities already pointed out throughout the previous chapters, and especially focusing on the point of view of those who interpreted her works and had direct contact with the composer.

The temporal level featured in this chapter is related not only to the specific time but also to the specific place where Ustvol'skaya's creative activity was developed. Ustvol'skaya spent her

¹ See footnote No. 2 of chapter 1, page 1, for the source of the quotation.

² Revise footnote No. 2 of chapter 2, page 7.

entire life in St. Petersburg. This means that she developed her entire compositional career in the same place, as her last work (the Fifth Symphony), at least among the pieces by the composer that are known and included in her catalogue, was composed in 1989-90, before her first getaway outside that city, which occurred in 1995. As Bakhmin (2009) explains in Ustvol'skaya's web biography ("About the composer"³), "Ustvol'skaya firmly rejected the suggestion that she emigrate from Russia. She lived as a hermit and only left her hometown a few times in order to attend festivals of her music". Therefore, the outer reality of the composer literally consisted of one city and its surroundings, whose natural spaces were extremely appealing to her, as she explained in Voormans' documentary film (Voormans, 2005, 0:01:37): "I walked, and I enjoyed the nature here [referring to the landscape near Pavlovsk, a municipal town in Pushkinsky District of St. Petersburg]. And in my mind, I composed. Without paper"; and continues later: "This is where I composed the Second Symphony. I've been here a lot and I've become very fond of this place" (figure 5). Her further excursion outside the city before her international opening occurred during the Second World War when she served in a military hospital in Tikhvin, a district situated roughly 180 km away from St. Petersburg. At that time, the siege of Leningrad (1941-44), one of the most important and devastating historical events of the Second World War in Russia, had started. Jeremiah-Foulds (2015, p. 16) contributes to this discussion with the following quotation from an e-mail interview⁴ with Konstantin Bagrenin, Ustvol'skaya's husband:

For about a year she was attached to a military hospital as a watch holding a rifle. She was saying the classical: 'Halt! Who Goes There?'. It was a difficult experience, of course, but I cannot tell how it influenced her music.

Such a single city she spent her entire artistic career and life in did nonetheless change its name several times⁵ before Ustvol'skaya died, showing out evidence that the historical context of the place could have brought about enough inspiration for a whole life of creative output and so it seemingly did.

³ The complete biography can be found at <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/>.

⁴ According to Jeremiah-Foulds, the interview took place in 2010 and was translated and received via Andrei Bakhmin, the developer of Ustvol'skaya's website.

⁵ Ustvol'skaya was born in Petrograd (1914-1924), then Leningrad (1924-1991), and she died in St. Petersburg (1991 onwards).



Figure 5: A photograph by Josée Voormans of “a birch-strewn alley in Glinki village (near Pavlovsk, Ustvolskaya’s favorite place) where Ustvolskaya worked on her Second Symphony” (Bakhmin, “Gallery: Pavlovsk and its surroundings”: <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/gallery.php>).

Some of the closest relationships of Ustvolskaya often mention concepts such as “the Russian soul” and this fact constitutes also a sign of the inspiration that the place she lived caused a great influence upon her creative output. Continuing with Voormans’ film (2005, 0:02:52), Reinbert de Leeuw explains precisely such a notion of the “Russian soul”:

The soul, the Russian soul. We listen to Russian music and we often talk about the Russian soul. But none of us really know what it is. But it is something that comes from an entirely different world. And we make close links with that to the Russian landscape, the climate, how the people look. And history, of course. I can’t imagine this music coming from anywhere else but Russia’s interior [referring to Ustvolskaya’s Second Symphony].

Viktor Suslin contributes to this discussion in the same film, answering Voormans’ question about what was 20th-century Russia like: “A huge catastrophe. For Russian culture it was one big disaster. And Ustvolskaya embodies that catastrophe” (Voormans, 2005, 0:05:26).

Viktor Suslin was indeed one of the greatest defenders of the importance of the place and moment that Ustvolskaya was living in when it comes to her artistic output. In her thesis, Nalimova (2012, p. 15) claims that “in Suslin’s opinion, Ustvolskaya’s stylistic and aesthetic isolation, as well as her specific idealism and fanatical determination, were typically Russian ‘St. Petersburgian’ characteristics”. It is quite interesting to discover texts written when the composer

was still alive and realize the extremely late response from a wider audience to her output, as it can be seen in Bradshaw's article (2000, p. 31), who describes her as "very much a local composer even as her later, uncompromisingly radical work, began to attract an increasingly international audience".

In her thesis, "Demystifying Galina Ustvolskaya: Critical Examination and Performance Interpretation", Nalimova (2012, pp. 129-132) suggests several features of Ustvolskaya's city, (currently) St. Petersburg, that could have inspired or influenced Ustvolskaya's music, being some of them the geometry of the city, characterized by large open spaces, horizontal lines and limited forms; the extreme contrasts between the upper classes and the poverty and deprivation; the atmosphere, governed by the lack of sunlight and frequent fogs; or the mixed architecture between European and barbaric Eurasian influences. Other authors, like Jeremiah-Foulds (2015, p. 223), bet on an approach truly based on the naturalness of the Russian folksong language and *znamenny raspev* old chant tradition (see chapter 4.3.7. "Influence of *znamenny raspev* tradition") against the "unnaturalistic" canon of the "cultured" western art music and the restrictions imposed by its practice, providing Ustvolskaya with an opportunity to escape those imposed constraints and return to music in its purest "natural" form.

Moving on to the time perspective within the outer reality overview, the historical events already discussed in chapters 2.1. "The outer reality: historical context of Ustvolskaya" and 3.1. "Religiosity in the Soviet Union: historical context", which are directly connected to Ustvolskaya, should be acknowledged again as a contextual base and departure point for this chapter. Ustvolskaya, in a letter to Marita Emigholz written in 1994, complained about Marianne Schroeder's performance of her Piano Sonatas as follows: "In some concerts, Ms. Schroeder might play six sonatas in a row (her own idea), but I did not intend that. The sonatas were written at different times, and each has its own content. For this reason, in Ms. Schroeder's work, much of each sonata is lost..."⁶. This usually common practice of playing in a row the several works proposed as a collection throughout the entire catalogue of a certain composer is not usually problematic, although the importance of the time each one of the pieces was composed at, regarding its understanding and emotional perception, is highly obvious. Nevertheless,

⁶ The letter can be accessed on Ustvolskaya's website: <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/performers.php>, "A letter from Galina Ustvolskaya concerning Marianne Schroeder's play".

Ustvol'skaya seems to be especially aware of this phenomenon. Piano Sonatas Nos. 1 to 4 were written in a span of 10 years (from 1947 to 1957). On the one hand, these sonatas were composed alongside some of the “more accessible” pieces, as stated in her official catalogue, that were finally not destroyed by the composer (unlike some other works and film scores from the 1950s) such as “The Dream of Stepan Razin” (1949), the Poems for orchestra No. 1 (1959) and No. 2 (1957), and the Suite for orchestra (1959). On the other hand, these sonatas occupy a place in the catalogue parallel to some other examples of the “secretly-composed” pieces, such as the Trio (1949), the Octet (1949-50), the Sonata for Violin and Piano (1952) or the Twelve Preludes for piano (1953), being both the sonatas and these works premiered from the late sixties onwards at the soonest. On the contrary, Piano Sonatas Nos. 5 and 6 (1986 and 1988, respectively) constitute the very of last Ustvol'skaya's compositions alongside the Fifth Symphony (1989-90), all of them being premiered the year after at the latest (figure 6). The comparison of these two extremely opposed situations shows the importance of the historical situation linked to the political, social and cultural environment. Indeed, in a different letter, also dating from 1994, Ustvol'skaya claims that “[Anatoly Ivanovtch] Vedernikov played the [Second] Sonata at a time when [she] was persecuted: people did not buy [her] music, did not publish it and did not play it [...]”⁷.

⁷ The letter can be accessed as well at <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/performers.php>, “Galina Ustvol'skaya's statement about Sonata No. 2 performed by Anatoly Vedernikov”.



Figure 6: Detail of the manuscript of the first page of Piano Sonata No. 3 (1952) on the left, and No. 6 (1988) on the right (Bakhmin, “Gallery: Manuscripts”: <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/gallery.php>).

4.1.2. The spiritual level: abstraction and the inner reality

Place and time, as analyzed in the previous chapter, constitute key factors for describing the aesthetic and stylistic choices of an artist as their output consists, in part, of the reflection, even if unconscious, of such an environment through the creative expression of music in the case of a composer. This environment, the outer reality, constitutes an external level of clout and influences directly an inner level of inspiration and expressive necessity which, in the case of Ustvolskaya, features the spiritual approach as a filter for recognizing and interpreting the external or outer reality. Abstraction in this context is the process through which Ustvolskaya, like other spiritually-inspired composers, reaches the state of “grace” that boots up the creative activity.

At some point in her career, most evident from the late 1960s or early 1970s, Ustvolskaya decided not to bear as a foremost aim to communicate with the general public, with the masses, as required during the most censored decades of the Soviet Union, especially during the 1950s.

Her music is rather thought and composed as a medium of communicating with her own idea of god. Andrej Petrov, in Voormans' film (2005, 0:04:32) comments that "everything she makes is closely linked to the intimacy of a confession". As quoted in chapter 1.1. "The concept of spirituality", for Ustvolskaya, "spirituality is what remains of a person if you disregard the rest", a quite obscure affirmation as the nature of that "rest" is not clarified, introducing this way the ineffability of the concept of spirituality. She insists on the fact that spirituality is possible "even without religiosity" and points out the fact that her work is not religious, but rather strongly spiritual. Throughout the whole documentary, there can be found several moments when Ustvolskaya expresses the awful amount of energy depleted during the creative process, being a crucial example her two well-known statements related to the Second Symphony: "I put everything into my work. My soul, my heart, everything I had in me I used for my work"; and: "It cost me a lot of effort to bring it into this world"; being the second one almost referring to the piece as if it did not belong to "this world". This draws attention to the emotional intensity of her creative process up to the extreme of exhaustion. Furthermore, this intensity can be linked to the continuous tension perceived in her works and commented on by Robert Sholl and Sander van Maas (2017, p. 12), who highlighted "the way in which Ustvolskaya's personal vision articulates a domain of spirituality in tension with, but apart from the religious", establishing once again, a division between the concepts of spirituality and religion.

This insight related to the direct communication with god is also linked to the Orthodox Church tradition: as Moody (2014, p. 19) explains, "In traditional Orthodox art there is no room for the imagination of the individual; rather, the artist becomes a channel for the reception and transmission of divine realities". However, it is important to clarify what "god" actually meant for Ustvolskaya, and that question will remain unanswered, although there are some pieces of the incomplete puzzle that could contribute to building a bigger picture. As it was explained in chapter 3.1. "Religiosity in the Soviet Union: historical context", many Soviet composers became truly religious as a form of protest against the years of oppression when religion and spirituality, especially the kind of spirituality related to religion (unlike Ustvolskaya's), were socially and culturally excluded. But the religious or rather spiritual insight of Ustvolskaya, although it could have been inspired in part by such a feeling of protest, seemed to be quite different, also due to her belonging to a former generation of composers. As mentioned before, Nalimova conducted some personal interviews with Konstantin Bagrenin, Ustvolskaya's husband, for her thesis

(Nalimova, 2012, p. 103), obtaining interesting information. For example, he claimed that Ustvol'skaya "never attended religious service neither did she ever pray" and that "Ustvol'skaya refused a commission from a western publisher, claiming that the decision to compose depends not on her but on God". Nalimova (ibid., p. 106) explains that "by claiming that her music is spiritual, Ustvol'skaya emphasized the non-material intent of her art", meaning that "her music was not concerned with worldly interests but exemplified an individual artistic vision of the world". Jeremiah-Fouls contributes with similar ideas regarding this contradiction between the strong spiritual insight and the refusal of any specific religious implications of her creative activity, claiming that "Ustvol'skaya did not practice any particular religion and did not refer directly to a Christian god but frequently acknowledged a superior existence that has ultimate knowledge and control of the world to come" (Jeremiah-Fouls, 2015, p. 69).

The music of Galina Ustvol'skaya, referring to the overtly religious works, including the Second Symphony, doesn't seem to express a praised or glorified image of god, but rather it presents it as an existence that all humans should respect as fearsome, or feel superior to them. A different excerpt⁸ from the same text used in the Second Symphony is featured in the Third and Fourth Symphonies and contains an interesting detail that contributes to the justification of the former claim. The word *fortis* from the original text in Latin by Hermanus Contractus (as it will be analyzed in chapter 4.3.2 "Text: origin, content and meaning"), is translated to English as "almighty", and to Russian, the language that Ustvol'skaya actually used, as *krepkij*, whose meaning is "strong" or "hard". It is not the most common term used in Russian for the meaning of "strong" or "powerful": the word sounds more fatal and it is not common to use such a concept when referring to god. Using that term in relation to the concept of god emphasizes the nature of deity as something intimidating to humans, or just as a superior force who acts regardless of them.

Coming back to Nalimova's thesis (2012, p. 108), leaving aside the parallel traced by the author between Ustvol'skaya's aesthetic insight and Russian sectarianism at that point of the 20th century, which might seem quite farfetched, Ustvol'skaya is placed as an unorthodox composer

⁸ A different sequence (6b) from the same collection of texts by Hermanus Contractus, *De sanctissima Trinitate: Deus fortis, Dominus iustus, future pater saeculi, princeps pacis, Iesu Messia, nos salva*; translated into English as: "Almighty God, True God, Father of eternal life, Creator of the world, Jesus Messiah, Save us!", last verse giving the title to Ustvol'skaya's Third Symphony.

Retrieved June 2, 2022, from <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/hermannus.php#s2>.

regarding the church and the state structures of her time and place, also according to other scholars such as Bradshaw (2000, p. 31): “She was renowned for her secretiveness and her hostility towards the outside world; her music was akin to a dissident religious phenomenon that was both generated by and existed in opposition to the Soviet orthodoxy”. Bradshaw is at this point talking about specific works, namely Composition No.1, *Dona Nobis Pacem*, and also pointing out the fact that religious music would encompass certain traits towards which Ustvol'skaya's personal approach would be opposed: “Despite the religious implications of its subtitle (*Dona Nobis Pacem*), Composition No. 1, for piccolo, tuba and piano, contrives to suggest the pagan violence of a screaming intensity, subsiding into a slowness verging on the void”. One last example of this sort of paradox between Ustvol'skaya's expression and the orthodoxy of religious music is explained by Samuel Popowich (2011, p. 54):

The view of Ustvol'skaya as spiritual in a non-ecclesiastical, even pagan sense, the sense of music as witchcraft, as enchanting, situates her life and work beyond both official structures of church and state, but also beyond (or before) reason and science.

Partially commented on in chapter 2.2.1. “The idiom: accessibility and the role of the performer in Ustvol'skaya's output”, the way the compositional process is carried out by Ustvol'skaya could be strongly linked to her spiritual insight, for instance, because of the intensity it seemed to bring about, as Suslin explains to Thea Derks (1995) while talking about how Ustvol'skaya never used the piano to compose: “Each work has a very long period of coming into being, after which she simply writes it down”. Throughout the extracts from letters by Galina Ustvol'skaya to Viktor Suslin, there can be found several examples explaining the spiritual approach of the composer. As it will be mentioned in chapter 4.3.3. “The prayer”, even every dynamic is written down for a reason and should be played meaningfully. Ustvol'skaya wrote in 1990⁹: “I would gladly write something for your [Suslin's] publishing house, but this depends on God, not on me. God gives me the opportunity to compose something, then I will do it without fail”. This demonstrates how the whole compositional process depends exclusively on her contact with her own idea of god, and how every note, dynamic or any other element of her music is written with care, following a long process during which each musical event is transformed into a meaningful spiritual expression. This is the reason why, for example, and as commented on in

⁹ All extracts from letters by Galina Ustvol'skaya to Viktor Suslin are published on Ustvol'skaya's web (<http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/>) thanks to Hamburg's publishing house Hans Sikorski.

previous chapters, her catalogue is quite short considering the length of her life, and also the reason why the effectiveness of a piece requires a very specific way of performing, bestowing the performer with hardly any or any flexibility at all when interpreting one of her pieces.

As a conclusion to the long duration and special care of Ustvol'skaya's creative process, the composer writes in another one of those letters, this one dating from 1989:

I do not believe composers who produce hundreds of compositions by the production method... Sophocles once said that three of his verses represent three days' work. "Three days!", cried a mediocre poet. 'I could write hundreds in that time!'. 'Yes', answered Sophocles, 'but they would only exist for three days!'

4.2. Justification of the selection of the Second Symphony: the challenges of selecting one reference piece and an introduction to Ustvol'skaya's repertoire and its properties

One of the biggest challenges posed throughout this research project was the selection of pieces for the analytical task that had as a foremost aim to bring a practical and concrete demonstration of the studied and described concepts so far. Ustvol'skaya's repertoire is quite brief, only including 25 pieces throughout her "official catalogue", although the list excludes various works rejected by the composer¹⁰, many of them not only ruled out but even physically destroyed by herself. The scope for this study was reduced to the already-mentioned seven pieces out of her repertoire that are overtly religious-inspired because of their titles or featured texts. The following paragraphs will clarify why the Second Symphony (1979) was chosen among them.

Some comments given by Reinbert de Leeuw in Voormans' film (2005, 0:30:24), when asked about what he thought the Second Symphony (figure 7) meant to him and Ustvol'skaya, are key to understanding why the choice of the main piece to analyze posed a real challenge. For de Leeuw, the Second Symphony "is more or less a very central piece", but, nevertheless, he claims

¹⁰ Those works are the poem "Man from Vysokaya Mount" for baritone, male choir and orchestra (1952), "Young Pioneers' Suite" (1953), "Song of Praise" for four trumpets, percussion, piano and boys choir (1961), and a string quartet, a sinfonieta and a sonata for cello, the three of them destroyed by the composer in the middle of the 1960s. This dismissed output also includes some film music such as "Mordovian ASSR" (1951), "Pushkin in Boldino" (1951), "Russian Museum" (1954), "Gogol" (1954), and the most famous one, "The Girl and the Crocodile" (1956). All this information was collected from Ustvol'skaya's web (Bakhmin, "Catalogue": <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/catalog.php>).

that, regarding her repertoire on the whole, “Ustvol’skaya is the type of composer who actually always composes the same piece”. Another example of this type of composer, according to de Leeuw, is Bruckner, who created “those huge symphonies, first one, then another, then one that is even more similar”:

Ustvol’skaya’s work is like that too. She focuses on one thing. And in this piece, I think the emphasis is on..., it’s the severity of the piece, the inaccessibility of the language, the form she found and the instrumentation, which is very unusual. In this piece it has a huge impact. It is not very different in language from her other pieces. It’s always the same compelling sound. If you look at the notes, they’re only made up of crotchets. There’s hardly any rhythm. Most of her music is like that. But in this piece, it is like a kind of clenched ball in form, in instrumentation and in sound. So yes, it is a very crucial piece in this oeuvre, I feel.

Apart from the dichotomy of Reinbert de Leeuw’s comments, about the Second Symphony being especially crucial yet featuring the average Ustvol’skaya’s language, it is clear that somehow this piece is a paragon among Ustvol’skaya’s creations, at least among her maturity works from the 1970s and 1980s. The amount of energy that Ustvol’skaya depleted while composing this specific piece was already mentioned in the former chapter and she reaffirms the impact of this work on her repertoire when Voormans (2005, 0:09:16) asked precisely if the Second Symphony was important to her: “It certainly is. I invested a lot in it: my strength and energy, my heart and soul. I put everything I had in me into it”. Jeremiah-Fouls (2015, p. 72) also simply claims that “[the Second Symphony] can be argued [to be] her most important work”.

The following conversation between Voormans and Ustvol’skaya (Voormans, 2005, 0:31:32) concludes the film and, indeed, it goes beyond a simple justification of the selection of this piece as a central work in Ustvol’skaya’s repertoire. It emphasizes, once again, the cost of energy and the effort that the compositional process of this piece entailed for her, but furthermore, it expresses how the music epitomizes such an internal and personal emotional reaction, or rather how Ustvol’skaya embodied the meaning of the piece itself as an aesthetical representation of her inner reality, in this case, characterized by the plea for help, the loneliness and the deep sadness, derived from the historical context of the outer reality that surrounded her during her entire life:

- I understand that you are very fond of this symphony. Why is that exactly?

Because it cost me a lot of effort to bring it into this world.

- But this piece says something about you?

Yes, of course.

- Is that how you felt at the time?

Yes, that's right.

- Does this symphony still mean the same to you now?

Yes, of course. What do you expect?

- Do you still ask God for help?

Certainly.

- And do you still feel lonely?

Yes, I still do, I still do.

- Isn't that really sad?

Yes, that's really sad. But so is my life.

There is, eventually, an objective reason why this piece would be chosen for an analysis of the overall aesthetic approach of Ustvolskaya. The Second Symphony is one of the pieces that most clearly shows the vast majority of Ustvolskaya's compositional resources and tools. Moreover, it reveals how those "technical" procedures influence the ultimate aesthetic result of the overall piece.

Symphonies. The title of the Second Symphony, “True and Eternal Bliss!”, draws attention to the group of “overtly religious” pieces, previously specified in the introduction of this paper¹², and the text has the same original source as the one featured in symphonies Nos. 3 and 4, as it will be explained in chapter 4.3.2. “Text: origin, content and meaning”. Its roughly twenty minutes of duration place this piece as one of the longest works in Ustvolskaya’s output. The premiere took place in Leningrad on the 8th of October of 1980, carried out by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra with Vladimir Atrschuler as the conductor, although the most iconic and best-known performance is the one documented in the film by Voormans in 2005, conducted by Reinbert de Leeuw, and assisted by Ustvolskaya herself.



Figure 8: Set up of Ustvolskaya’s Second Symphony during its performance in Hilversum, Netherlands, in 2005 (Bakhmin, “Gallery: Amsterdam”: <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/gallery.php>)

Indeed, the film directed by Voormans is a precious source of information since it features direct dialogues with the composer about the piece and its compositional process. Such a creative process was usually held in a place near Pavlovsk, a natural space located about thirty kilometers from St. Petersburg as mentioned in chapter 4.1.1. “The temporal level: history and biography, the outer reality”. The following analytical research will study, after an overall aesthetic approach

¹² See footnote No. 1 of chapter 1, page 1.

to the piece, the basic features of the work including the motivic content, structure, rhythm and meter, and temporal perception, yet tracing the connection to the spiritually-inspired personal insight of Ustvol'skaya. Furthermore, it will include some of the concepts directly related to the Orthodox Church tradition, not as sort of a hidden relationship established but never accepted by the composer, but as a possible clout factor from her culture, history and environment on the whole: the featured text, the concept of the prayer, the analogy with the icon painting, the notion of ritualism and the presence of traits from the *znamenny raspev* tradition as a possible source of inspiration.

4.3.1. Overall aesthetic approach

Reinbert de Leeuw, in conversation with Voormans, described the overall aesthetic approach of the Second Symphony after claiming that Ustvol'skaya's very precise ideas, especially regarding the interpretation of the reciter, are not so evident throughout the score itself, and therefore the 2005's performance of the piece was one of the most accurate as Ustvol'skaya herself gave instructions to the reciter in order that he performed his part exactly as she wanted him to (Voormans, 2005, 0:26:21):

- Is it hard to play?

Yes, it is, like a lot of her music. It's extreme, so the number of fortes we have to play is extreme. It is always explosive. Not that it is particularly loud, but it is a kind of primal scream. But with huge expression and release.

There are several terms in the former description that connect with some of Ustvol'skaya's features already mentioned in chapter 2.2. "The inner reality; aesthetic context: the stylistic independence of Ustvol'skaya". The word "extreme" is applied here mainly to the dynamics, but it may describe other aspects of her output such as the registers, the textures, rhythm and meter, overall character and so forth. The fact that "it is always explosive" alludes directly to the idea of the lack of release of tension that would be explained in chapter 4.3.5. "Temporal perception": the lack of release and, therefore, the absence of contrast, provokes the loss of directionality and the creation of an alternative way of narrative non-dependent on such opposition between tension and distension. The "release" expressed in the last statement could be understood as the powerful expression that constantly depletes all the energy invested during the performance of the piece.

The “primal scream” is a key concept within the description of Ustvolskaya’s music as raw and primitive in the sense that it springs up an extremely innovative and individual style, yet based on the avoidance of any kind of elaboration or decoration of the essential components of the conventional musical language. This premise will be demonstrated while analyzing the basic technical aspects of the piece throughout the next chapters.

4.3.2. Text: origin, content and meaning

One of the most interesting traits of the catalogue of Ustvolskaya’s pieces is definitely the fact that each one of the five symphonies includes a vocal part, either sung (symphonies 1 and part of 4) or recited (symphonies 2, 3, 5 and part of 4). Except for the First Symphony, the rest of the pieces in this category feature a religious text. Symphonies Nos. 2, 3 and 4, indeed, share a common source for the text: a collection of sequences in Latin titled *De sanctissima Trinitate*, written by the 11th-century Benedictine monk Hermannus Contractus¹³.

Victor Suslin, in conversation with Thea Derks (1995) about Ustvolskaya’s Third Symphony, explains how the composer “got to know this German poet who lived in the 11th century, through translations that appeared in Russia at the time”. He continues talking about the meaning of this poetry for Ustvolskaya:

It is very intense, deeply felt poetry that is pervaded with God. It was written by a monk who was almost completely paralyzed, and could hardly speak. His poems, translated from Latin into Russian, have such strength that Galina devoted three symphonies to them [...].

Symphonies Nos. 3 and 4 share the same excerpt of this text (sequence 6b), whilst Symphony No. 2 features a different set of verses (sequence 4a) as follows: *Optima veraque aeternitas, aeterna et optima veritas, vera aeternaque bonitas*; and whose translation in English would roughly be: “True and blessed eternity, eternal and blessed truth, true everlasting bliss”, including several repetitions of the word “Lord” before and after this excerpt.

¹³ According to Ustvolskaya’s website (<http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/hermannus.php#s2>), “Galina Ustvolskaya found the Russian translation of this sequence in ‘Monuments of Mediaeval Latin Literature from the tenth to twelfth centuries’ (Nauka, Moscow 1972) and used the highlighted parts in her Symphonies Nos. 2 – 4”.

The following chart (figure 9) displays the structure of the text throughout the piece with the aim of showing its repetitive and systematic treatment and its technical features in each section, after a purely instrumental passage up to measure 52¹⁴:

¹⁴ A more detailed structural description of the piece, especially based on motivic organization, can be found as an annex at the end of this paper (Annex: “Structural analysis of Galina Ustvolskaya’s Second Symphony”).

Text	Translation	Number of repetitions	Measures	Time signature / duration	Dynamic	Instrumental accompaniment
First block						
<i>Ay, ay!</i> <i>Gospodi!</i>	<i>Lord</i>	3	53-57	7/4	<i>fff, fff, ppp,</i> respectively	No
		1	90		<i>fff</i>	
		1	110		<i>fff</i>	
		1	157	11/4	<i>ppp</i>	
Second block						
<i>Istinnaya</i>	<i>True</i>	2	158	One note value per word (quarter or half note, indicated as “free, may be longer”)	<i>f / sf</i>	Yes
<i>I blagaya</i>	<i>And blessed</i>	2	159-160			
<i>Vechnost</i>	<i>Eternity</i>	3	160-161			
<i>Vechnaya</i>	<i>Eternal</i>	2	166			
<i>I blagaya</i>	<i>And blessed</i>	2	167-168			
<i>Istina</i>	<i>Truth</i>	3	168-169			
<i>Istinnaya</i>	<i>True</i>	2	174			
<i>Vechnaya</i>	<i>Everlasting</i>	2	175-176			
<i>Blagost!</i>	<i>Bliss</i>	3	176-177			
Third block						
<i>Ay, ay!</i> <i>Gospodi!</i>	<i>Lord</i>	1	277	7/4	<i>ppp</i>	No

Figure 9: Structure and treatment of the text throughout Ustvolskaya’s Second Symphony.

As it can be seen in the previous chart, the text of the symphony consists of a single sentence, also used as the title of the overall piece, “True and Eternal Bliss!”. That sentence, built up from three different notions, namely “truth”, “eternity” and “bliss”, is repeated three times throughout the second block of the symphony (mm. 158-247). Each of these times, the order of

the words is switched or rotated, thereby obtaining the three sentences indicated in the chart: “True and blessed eternity”, “Eternal and blessed truth” and “True and everlasting (or eternal) bliss”. Throughout the first and third blocks of the piece (see complete structure in the annex: “Structural analysis of Galina Ustvolskaya’s Second Symphony”), the reciter repeats the declamation “Lord!” alongside a primal scream “into the depths of the universe”, as Ustvolskaya explains in the performance notes on the score.

The role of the reciter or singer is essential, not only in this piece, but throughout the four symphonies that are based on religious verses (Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5), due to the possibility of including a text with a specific meaning, and therefore making explicit the spiritual content of the piece, other than through the mere abstractness of the purely instrumental music itself which, for Ustvolskaya, was seemingly enough in many other pieces of her later output considered by the composer spiritually-inspired music as well. In the film directed by Voormans (2005, 0:20:37), Ustvolskaya describes the function of the Second Symphony’s text as a cry for help to god:

- Is it the voice of a lonely person?

Yes, a lonely person, who cries into space. He gets into a situation and sees no way out. And he falls with every step. I’m telling you the idea behind the symphony. In the piece itself there is no conversation. He keeps falling and asks God for help. He says: Lord. Lord. So, he asks God to help him. That is the essence of the symphony.

Those rare film materials clearly show the importance of the role of the narrator to Ustvolskaya, especially when she explains to Dmitri Lagatsjov, who interpreted the part of the reciter in the 2005’s performance documented in Voormans’ film, how to interpret the primitive scream at the beginning of each declamation in the first and third blocks, and how to behave on the whole in order to convey the exact meaning she was seeking. According to Jeremiah-Fouls (2015, p. 72), “the narrator is symbolic of all mankind, crying out in the darkness of the blackened stage in an unarticulated howl to God”.

Therefore, one of the possible explanations for the constant repetition of text and materials consists of the concept of the piece and Ustvolskaya’s personal interpretation of the text: a desperate plea for help, insisting on each one of the words several times to emphasize this desperation while the character “keeps falling with every step”, as she explained. Another important nuance of Ustvolskaya’s description is the idea of the monologue when she claims that “in the piece itself there is no conversation”. It emphasizes the purpose of the piece as a vehicle of

communication with god, an attempt of getting in touch with it, but not the representation of the actual communicative action. It could also embody the idea of the actual failure in the communication with god, represented by the hopelessness and loneliness of Ustvol'skaya's life and the historical context of her past and relative present.

Dmitri Lagatsjov (figure 10) describes and interprets the role of this main character as follows, encouraging the performer and the listener, in other words, the recipients of the piece, to embody the situation of the reciter and adapt it to their own realities (Voormans, 2005, 0:22:42):

It's obvious that this person has this great wish to have his voice heard in heaven. He wants God to listen to him. 'Just listen to me'. That is the crux of this piece: you can put what you want into it. I have my own pain and feelings.

In the edition of the score by Sikorski, some performance notes related to the reciter, called "the soloist", are given as follows in the next quotation. They seem to be transcribed directly from Ustvol'skaya's comments during the last performance of the Symphony that she attended, which was held in 2005 and documented in Voormans film as already mentioned. The notes describe the outfit of the soloist and the movements he should practice while declaiming the text, curiously detailed as if it were an actual theatrical and performative component and not just a static conventional recitation:

The part of the soloist (canto) is taken by a young man, wearing black shirt and black trousers. He should have a microphone. The soloist should read the text in a subdued manner, as if he were praying fervently to God. As he begins to declaim 'Ay!', the soloist places his hands at the sides of his mouth; declaiming the word 'Gospod'i!', he raises and joins them ('as if in prayer'), and holds them up above his head.



Figure 10: Dmitri Lagatsjov and Galina Ustvol'skaya during one of the rehearsals of the Netherlands performance of the Second Symphony in 2005. Source: Josée Voormans, “Scream into Space” [*Schreeuw in het heelal*] (VPRO Holland, 2005).

4.3.3. The prayer

The first apparition of the vocal part in the Second Symphony, at measure 53, is accompanied by the following performance note: “A cry into the depths of the universe! Praying to God”. This note draws attention to the concept of the prayer and the function of Ustvol'skaya's output as a prayer to her conception of god. This fact is not only important to interpret some of the technical aspects of the Second Symphony, but also essential to comprehend the approach to the compositional process beyond this technique and the composer's attitude towards such a creative expression. Other representative examples of this notion are the Fourth Symphony, whose title is “Prayer”, and the Fifth Symphony, titled *Amen*, which features the Lord's Prayer as a text that can be read in any language with the only condition that the reciter and the public understand it¹⁵. A side note regarding this introductory paragraph, although already mentioned in other parts of this paper, is worth a reconsideration: even though words such as “interpretation” or “comprehension” are applied here to Ustvol'skaya's technical and aesthetical properties, she constantly repeated during her life that her compositional technique was “not amenable to

¹⁵ From the explanatory comments in the section “Precision” on Ustvol'skaya's web, regarding the reciters in Symphonies Nos. 2, 3 and 5 (<http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/precision.php>).

theoretical analysis”¹⁶. It is important to understand that all the explanations and conclusions reached here are based on a process of personal analysis and reflection, and do not have to identify themselves with Ustvolskaya’s true intentions. Indeed, her approach to composition attains a level beyond anyone else’s comprehension, especially regarding the emotional and spiritual realms. Some of her comments in her short paper “Thoughts about the Creative Process” (Ustvolskaya, 1994) bring some light on the inaccessibility of the kernel of Ustvolskaya’s creative output on the whole:

I put my entire ‘I’ into my works, all my might, then it’s necessary to listen to me in a new way, and to put all your might into listening to it as well! [...] It seems to me that musicologists, if they are creative in their work, ought to penetrate as deeply into music as I do, should be as intensive in their work as I am in mine. I prefer that nothing be written about my music than to disclose the first superficial feelings [...].

In any case, and continuing with this personal interpretation, the concept of the prayer, as referenced in Ustvolskaya’s performance notes, is one of the features of the Second Symphony strongly related to her spiritual approach. This trait has been connected to the Orthodox Church tradition by various scholars such as Moody (1996, p. 66), as he explains:

Orthodoxy speaks of the mind entering the heart – this is the condition for real prayer – and this must be, at least partially, what is required for the composition of sacred music. [...] It is a very Orthodox concept, the idea of the mind going into the heart, so that you pray no longer with the mind – Orthodox monks incline their heads towards their hearts when they pray.

Ustvolskaya’s reluctant attitude towards the explanation of her technical work and the analysis of her pieces by musicologists and music theorists, especially from a technical point of view, comes from the strategy of replacing the words with notes, expanding the mere meaning of the text through the music in order to establish a more direct connection with god. This matches the idea of Moody related to the “mind entering the heart” when praying. At the same time, every element in Ustvolskaya’s musical idiom seems to have a specific meaning beyond its musical sense. For instance, Marita Emigholz was written a letter by Ustvolskaya in 1994, complaining about Marianne Schroeder’s performance of all her Piano Sonatas in a row, already mentioned in

¹⁶ Mentioned in the introduction of her catalogue on Ustvolskaya’s website, which can be found at <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/catalog.php>.

this paper, in which, furthermore, she claimed that “strength (*fff*) and rest (*ppp*) should be meaningful in them and not just a change of dynamics”¹⁷.

Nalimova (2012, p. 102) collects in her thesis some of the few comments by Ustvolskaya related to this attitude towards the composition process, being the following one strongly connected to this relationship between the “mind” and the “soul” when composing, and the concept of the prayer:

*I don't write music the way other composers do. I start writing when I enter a special state of grace [...]. The whole process of creation happens in my mind and soul. Only I can predict the way my compositions will go and decide their future fate. I pray: 'God, give me strength to compose'.*¹⁸

4.3.4. Repetition: structure and motivic content

As mentioned in footnote No. 14 of chapter 4 (page 52), a detailed structural analysis of the whole symphony mainly based on the motivic content by bars and sections, and explaining the textural properties and instrumentation of each motivic element that will be examined in detail throughout this chapter, is included as an annex at the end of this paper.

The Second Symphony is one of the best examples of Ustvolskaya's treatment of the motivic content throughout her overall late output. The analysis of this aspect of the piece may constitute one of the most important and decisive in order to understand and assimilate the final sounding result of the work. The piece requires a deep and nuanced analytical process on the score (although always catering to the sound result) for this aspect with the aim of unraveling the extremely complex network of extremely simple material used as a point of departure and in its most underlying and rawest disposition.

Nonetheless, and due to the foremost objective of this research project of focusing on the spiritual insight of the piece, this part of the analytical approach will be as brief as it is barely able to be in accordance with its inevitable cruciality. In chapter, 4.3.2. “Text: origin, content and

¹⁷ The letter can be accessed on Ustvolskaya's website, <http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/performers.php>, “A letter from Galina Ustvolskaya concerning Marianne Schroeder's play”.

¹⁸ The quotation is referenced as “a note signed by Ustvolskaya and dated 1 January 1994, kept at the UCPSS, Basel”, in Nalimova's thesis, footnote No. 1 of chapter 4, p. 102.

meaning”, a possible overall structure, which could be completed by looking at the motivic structural chart in the annex, and which is indeed very conditioned by the several interventions of the solo voice, was traced as follows:

- Introductory instrumental block presenting two different themes (mm. 1-12 and 12-52).
- First block (mm. 53-157): the first apparition of the solo voice, declaiming “Lord”, takes place three times (mm. 53-57). Then, three sub-blocks follow, alternating the orchestra and a new declamation by the solo voice up to three times (mm. 58-157).
- Second block (mm. 158-247): three passages of solo voice appear subsequently alongside instrumental accompaniment and independent instrumental content, each of them featuring one of the three sentences of the solo voice text, repeating each of its three words 2, 2 and 3 times respectively, as shown in the text chart of chapter 4.3.2. “Text: origin, content and meaning” (mm. 158-181). Then, a third instrumental motif is presented within a new sub-block in three different versions depending on the instrumentation (mm. 182-247).
- Third block (mm. 182-282): the motifs of the piece start to degrade into their rawest version. The instrumentation reduces to solo instruments and the last apparition of the solo voice repeats the declamation “Lord” for the last time. The solo piano closes the piece as it opened it.

The number three is common as an important quantity regarding a great variety of aspects, not only in this piece but also addressing several works by the composer. The number three has always had a special meaning in several cultures, especially with regard to Christianity-related religions, such as the Orthodox Church, but there is no evidence that this fact constituted a reason of choice for Ustvolskaya. Nevertheless, it is still another feature that demonstrates the systematic and quasi-ritualistic approach of the composer, especially in her later works. For instance, a great example of this is the Fifth Sonata for piano (1986), in which the number three is usually present in the number of repeated motifs or sections, the number of notes within a motif per se, and further structural properties of the piece (figure 11).



Figure 11: Opening of the Fifth Piano Sonata (1986), featuring three repetitions of its iconic cluster.

This characteristic, consisting of emphasizing the number three, has been evident throughout the already-mentioned text chart and the latter description of the overall structure regarding the apparition of the solo voice, but it has not been explained in connection to the instrumental material. Throughout the next paragraphs, the instrumental material will be examined in terms of motivic content, both as a purely structural feature and as a source of conceptual meaning regarding its semantic substance:

Paying attention to the merely instrumental motivic content, the Second Symphony features and combines three different and basic thematic motifs, being the one presented from measure 12 (figure 13) the most important one out of them due to its predominance and ease of recognition throughout the entire piece. The second one in this order of importance would be the one presented by the piano from the very beginning and reincorporated later on by the brass from measure 71 onwards (figure 16). The last thematic material is introduced at measure 182 (figure 18). All these three materials are presented in the most varied combinations, instrumentations, layering and so forth without losing their extreme simplicity, and bringing about a supreme level of density and constant tension.

Before introducing the three main motifs of the symphony from a closer look, the process of rhythmic displacement (figure 12) is worth a mention as it constitutes the most important resource for motivic variation and polyphonic construction in this and other pieces. This simple compositional tool consists of the displacement of a motif a specific number of pulses in opposition with an earlier apparition of the same motif, as it happens in a canon, for instance. In the case of the Second Symphony, the motifs appear displaced one, two or up to three pulses (for example, motif 1 is displaced one pulse between woodwinds and trombone at mm. 93-96, two

pulses between woodwinds and trumpets at mm. 12-25, and three pulses between groups of flutes at mm. 193-194). These different levels of rhythmic displacement bring about different levels of polyphony even without varying the original material.



Figure 12: Excerpt from Ustvolskaya's Fifth Piano Sonata (1986), 1st movement, systems 2 and 3: a three-pulses rhythmic displacement is applied to the left hand alongside a transposition of half a step (and two octaves) down. The whole phrase is entirely built out of this simple procedure.

Throughout the whole Second Symphony and for the duration of its approximate 20 minutes, only three motifs are presented in different dispositions, combinations and distributions, but just three of them, which always conserve their extreme simplicity and essential properties, and whose reductions are examined all through the following examples. This restraint of the motivic content is the key feature contributing to the flexibility and versatility when it comes to adapting such an economical amount of thematic substance to such a great variety of different characters, meanings and levels of tension:

- The first motif, consisting of just two different pitches a major second apart and repeated, is often presented alongside its retrograded (or inverted) version and transposed a minor second up (G-A becomes B \flat -A \flat), although these two versions (original and retrograded) may combine with each other and repeat in different ways and orders. The motif in its rawest version can be found at the penultimate measure of the Symphony (m. 281), in the piano part, which presents just one repetition of the original motif, with no retrograded complements. This motif is approached from four

different strategies throughout the whole symphony, turning out to be the most versatile of the three motifs, also due to its extreme simplicity:

- In tone clusters, whose top and main pitch is emphasized thematically, for instance from measure 12 in flutes, oboes and trumpets, or 25 in the piano part.
- Melodically, as a single line, for instance from measure 94 in the trombone, 114 in the tuba, 193 in the flutes or 271 in the piano part.
- As part of chords, from measure 158, visible as the top voice of the oboes' complexes (the motif here has been rhythmically augmented).
- As a rhythm, in the bass and tenor drums, for example, from measure 114 alongside the theme in the tuba, or from measures 129 or 264, just by themselves. The drums are unpitched, but they conserve the difference between the two pitches of the motif due to the different timbre and tessitura of each one. Thus, the difference between the original and retrograded themes is still noticeable.

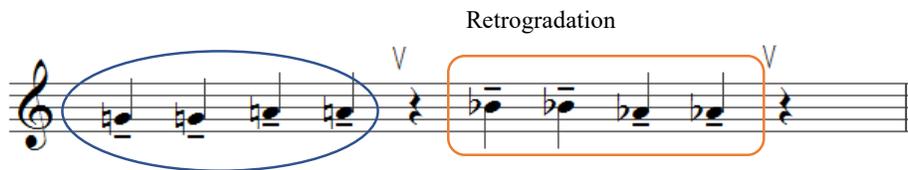


Figure 13: First motif (blue) alongside its transposed retrogradation / inversion (orange).

At measures 233-237 (figure 14) and 241-245 (figure 15) there can be found an interesting use of the first motif that might be connected to the overall meaning of the symphony: as mentioned in the chapter related to the text meaning, 4.3.2. “Text: origin, content and meaning”, Ustvolskaya describes the character represented by the reciter as “a lonely person, who cries into space. He gets into a situation and sees no way out”. She adds that “he falls with every step. I’m telling you the idea behind the symphony” (Voormans, 2005, 0:20:52). This idea of the character falling and breaking could be associated with the breakage process of the first motif in the oboe III, as it can be examined in figures 14 and 15, with a subtle variation. The motif is displaced three pulses compared to the oboe I part and disrupted by a pause:

Figure 14 shows a musical score for Oboe I and Oboe III, measures 233-237. Oboe I plays a motif of alternating notes with dynamics *mf* and *sf*. Oboe III plays a similar motif with dynamics *mf* and *sf*. A red box highlights the first motif in Oboe III, comparing it to Oboe I.

Figure 14: Breakage of the first motif in oboe III, compared to oboe I (mm. 233-237).

Figure 15 shows a musical score for Oboe I and Oboe III, measures 241-245. Oboe I plays a motif of alternating notes with dynamics *mf* and *sf*. Oboe III plays a similar motif with dynamics *mf* and *sf*. A red box highlights the first motif in Oboe III, comparing it to Oboe I.

Figure 15: Breakage of the first motif in oboe III, compared to oboe I (mm. 241-245).

- The second motif is in fact the first one exposed in the symphony if paying attention to the piano part at the very beginning. However, its perception is not as evident since it is completely masked by tone clusters at this point of the piece. It consists of the combination of just two pitches within an interval of a minor third and its culmination into a third pitch, the note filling that minor third, but an octave higher (D-F-E'). It is possible to reduce the motif to its three last pitches because the major seventh leap is recognizable enough when it comes to identifying the theme. Furthermore, the number of repetitions of the alternating two first pitches is variable as it was regarding the number of repetitions of the first motif when combining its original and retrograded version. This motif is approached in two manners:
 - In tone clusters: for instance, in the piano part from measure 1.
 - Melodically, as a single line: for instance, from measure 71 in the trombone.
 The following reduction of the motif is not its only version since the number of alternations between the two first tones before arriving in their culminations may vary, as mentioned before:



Figure 16: Second motif, basic form. Its most essential content is pointed out in blue. The rest is variable.

Compare this raw form with the first apparition of the theme from measure 1 in the piano part and identify its elements (figure 17):

Espressivo ♩ = 60

Basic motif, D-F-E'

Percussive element

Alternation of the first two pitches (variable)

Percussive element

Figure 17: Second motif as it appears at the very beginning of the Second Symphony (mm. 1-3) in the piano part. All arrows pointing to the pitches from below are indicated as “play with the fist. Touch the lower notes lightly and emphasize the upper (principal) notes”, as a performance note.

- Finally, the third motif appears for the first time in the trumpets at measure 182 consisting of sort of an echo in which the given rhythmic pattern is imitated a quarter note after and a half tone lower, culminating into a downward undetermined glissando performed by the first voice of that echo unless the motif is interrupted (which is the case, for instance, at measure 184). That characteristic rhythm is reused, as an answer of the piano to the trumpets, at the end of the same measure 182 for instance, and as a new echo again in the drums at measure 183. It is worth observing the fact that the tones featured by this motif represent the same exact cluster of four tones as the first motif, and are combined in a similar manner, almost as a retrogradation (or inversion) of it. The rhythm and the glissando are used for the last time in the piccolo from measure 271 simplifying it even more.

The most important fact regarding this third motif is that for the first time in the entire symphony, the note value of the quarter note is broken; thus the contrast that

such a motif brings about at that point of the symphony, roughly towards the last third of the piece, is extremely significant and crucial.

There is an interesting parallel between the third motif and the first motif of the solo voice, presented for the first time at measure 53, and even keeping the same intervallic relationship between the written pitches even though it is not supposed to be sung but spoken (*parlato*, as indicated on the score). The connection is especially evident at the very end of the piece, when the last apparition of the solo voice follows the penultimate apparition of the solo piccolo featuring the most simplified version of the third motif, without the echo (figure 19). Both performers share the same exact rhythm and the glissando at the end. Therefore, it would be licit to claim that this third motif is already being presented at measure 53 by the solo voice and that the motif introduced from measure 182 consists of an instrumental development of its vocal, unpitched version.



Figure 18: Third motif, basic form. Essential motif in blue and echo in orange.

The image shows a musical score for measures 275-278. The Piccolo part starts at measure 275 with a dynamic of *p* and a tempo marking of *espr.*. The Cantor part begins at measure 276 with the lyrics "Ам. а - ш - - - - - ы! Господи!". The Cantor part includes performance directions such as *rubato*, *solo espressivissimo*, *lunga*, *gliss.*, and *parlato*. The instrumental parts (Oboe, Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba, C. t., Gr. c.) are marked with dynamics like *ppp* and *sf*.

Figure 19: Detail of the piccolo and reciter, both playing the third motive at the end of the symphony (mm. 275-277). Notice the similarities between the recited and instrumental versions.

Repetition constitutes, on the whole, a fundamental feature in Ustvolskaya’s music as Murrell (2013, p. 33) claims in her thesis: “The element of repetition is a ubiquitous ingredient found in some form throughout all of Ustvolskaya’s compositional designs and is an integral component in the creation of both unity and diversity within a composition”. Therefore, regarding repetition in Ustvolskaya’s output applied to the large scale of the overall structure of a piece, one of the most common traits in a wider selection of works from Ustvolskaya’s late period is the recapitulatory development of those pieces that “match the motivic material of their opening with that of their culminating close” (Bradshaw, 2000, p. 31). This characteristic is featured in important pieces such as the Fifth and Sixth Piano Sonatas (1986 and 1988, respectively), the Grand Duet for cello and piano (1959) and the Duet for violin and piano (1964), for instance. It is common, therefore, that a piece ends the same way it started or, more correctly said, that it features the opening materials at its end, most likely transformed or distorted in a way that a closure is reachable in terms of structural coherence. The Second Symphony is not an exception from this common trait, although the “restatement” of the material is not as literal as in other works. After a long time and the introduction of the third main motif, as explained earlier in this chapter, the first theme comes back from measure 193 and stays up to the very end at measure 281 in the piano part (figure 20). The fact that the voice resumes the first declamation for the last time, “Lord”, reinforces this recapitulatory nature.



Figure 20: Final two bars of the Second Symphony in the piano part (mm. 281-282): the before-described first motif, and main motif of the symphony, is presented in its rawest, simplest version at the very end of the piece as its utmost closure, and utterly switching its character and meaning regarding its perception.

The intimate connection between repetition and the ritualistic component of the Orthodox Church tradition, which will be explained in chapter 4.3.6. “The concept of the icon and ritualism”, is already pointed out here in the words of Jeremiah-Foulds (2015, p. 244): “In Orthodox theology, repetition impresses the prayers, faith and practices upon the congregation, and strengthens the power of the request”.

4.3.5. Temporal perception

Temporal perception is one of the most affected features regarding the clout of the spiritual approach of not only Ustvolskaya but also other composers who engendered a repertoire of religious or spiritually-inspired works. The phenomenon observed in most of Ustvolskaya’s pieces is a lack of directionality as a result of the absence of contrast between tension and release, maintaining just one of those states throughout an entire section or even an entire work. The tension is clearly present more constantly throughout many pieces, although there can be found several passages of extreme subtleness and softness. This lack of direction derivates precisely from the concept of the work as a player, being the main objective of it, not to present a comprehensible and evolving narrative drawing the attention of the listener within their perception of time, but to enter into the same “state of grace” claimed by Ustvolskaya when referring to the compositional process.

Moody comments on this phenomenon in relation to the idea of mysticism: (Moody, 1996. P. 69):

Time is suspended, and that is another important element of mysticism. In an ikon there is no perspective, that is to say, it is not situated in reality. Similarly, mystical music must suspend real time in order to create its own ‘two-dimensional’ level into whose metaphorical

simplification the initiate may enter in order to understand the multi-dimensional mystery thus presented.

The “initiate” here is the prayer, or the subject seeking this state of grace through the spoken orison or the music. Leaving apart the heavy symbolism of Moody’s text, the analogy traced with the concept of the icon is worth a further examination and will be explained in the next chapter, 4.3.6. “The concept of the icon and ritualism”.

Ustvolskaya’s Second Symphony includes a performance note at the beginning of the score related to metrical organization which is, indeed, applicable to other pieces:

The structural organization of the music is indicated by broken lines. These are not identical [to] the bar lines which are merely intended to facilitate the vertical arrangement of the music. Quarter notes form the most important metrical units in Galina Ustvolskaya’s music.

This performance note is common to the Third Symphony, as Jeremiah-Foulds states (2015, pp. 242-243), and, according to her, that explanation indicates that “metric hierarchy has been definitively removed and rhythmic freedom prevails, juxtaposed against her obsessive crotchet pulse”.

Bar lines are a very interesting topic in Ustvolskaya’s music. Some authors claim that the use of bar lines at the beginning of her career had the only purpose of fulfilling the Soviet authorities’ preference regarding traditional music, avoiding the most evident signs of innovation or radicalism. This is the case of the First Symphony, originally written with just a few bar lines to indicate strategic separations, but published with periodic and more conventional bar lines and time signatures¹⁹.

Therefore, vertical bar lines are virtually never a reference for the organization of note values or the distribution of metrical accents in Ustvolskaya’s music. Her works, especially during the last decades of her compositional activity, feature no bar lines at all, and this is the case of, for instance, the three “Compositions”, the Piano Sonatas from 2 to 6, the Grand Duet for Cello and

¹⁹ See the chapter 6.2.3. “Rhythm and metre”, in Rachel Claire Jeremiah-Foulds, “Forging the ‘Lady’s Hammer’: A Profile of Influence in the Life and Music of Galina Ustvolskaya” (PhD diss., Goldsmith College, University of London, 2015).

Piano, etc. In addition, in pieces featuring bar lines, one could be able to change their position without affecting the rhythmic or metrical properties of the music.

The absence of clearly discernible patterns, regularities or periodicities regarding the metrical accents, that is to say, the absence of bar lines or the presence of bar lines featuring non-coincidental accents with regard to the metrical stress that would fit within those bar lines, alongside the fact that the rhythmic momentum is commonly provided by a unique note value, brings about an ambiguous sense of meter despite the apparent regularity of the pulse or beat. Perhaps the easiest way of understanding Ustvolskaya's metrical organization would be to consider each beat unit as an accent, as a metrical unit, as a separate entity that should acquire a meaning per se. This is supported by the already-mentioned fact that some pieces have no bar lines at all, also by the evidence that some of the pieces featuring bar lines include a one-four time as their time signature, no matter how many beats are included between each bar line. This latter case is a feature of the Second Symphony.

Despite this apparent metrical freedom, Ustvolskaya made up different strategies to separate motifs or phrases and to organize the material on the whole:

- The most common sign for indicating a brief separation is the breathing mark (figure 21) which appears between motifs and phrases in the vast majority of the works. This rest or pause can be interpreted in a quite freely way by the performer, so the understanding of the pace regarding these rests or breaks varies according to the soloist. An example of this sign can be already seen in bar 2 of the Second Symphony in the percussion part, and also throughout the following score excerpt (figure 21).
- As mentioned in the previously-quoted performance note, the “broken lines”, or discontinuous bar lines, constitute another option for the synchronization marking and structural organization of the music (figure 21). Those bar lines are set from the very beginning of the symphony.

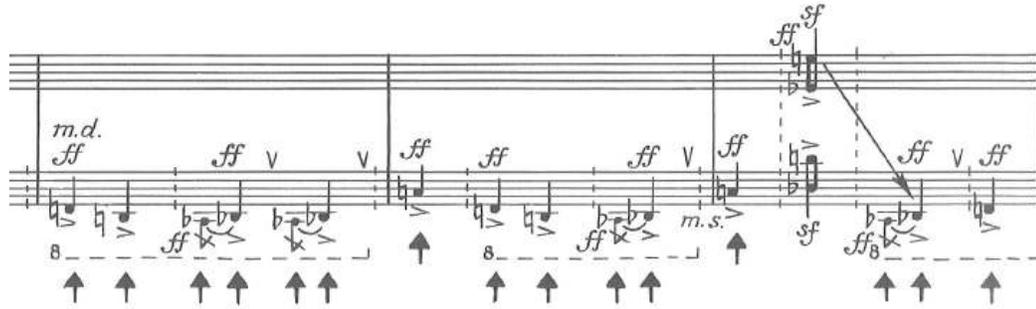


Figure 21: Second Symphony, piano part (mm. 5-7): the breathing marks represent brief pauses, whereas the broken bar lines separate the motivic units.

- The next example, far from the Second Symphony yet very representative of this concept of temporal organization, is from the Grand Duet for Cello and Piano composed in 1959. Two strategies are used in this example: a short bar line separating motivic unities applied independently for each instrument, and a discontinuous bar line applied to both players, setting common vertical organization in bigger units. Those indications are organized towards and susceptible to the flexibility of the motivic content, not based on any specific regularity or constant periodicity. The example (figure 22) shows how the small bar lines can be set differently for each instrument depending on the motivic content and how the discontinuous bar lines are common to them both:



Figure 22: Grand Duet for cello and piano, page 7, first staff (bars 21-22). This is also a great example of the rhythmic displacement strategy, as commented on in the previous chapter, 4.3.4. “Repetition: structure and motivic content”, between the cello and the right hand of the piano.

- The time signature when there are no bar lines, as well as in many of the late pieces with bar lines, is most commonly a one-four time, and the duration of the rests, always

represented as quarter-note rests, is marked with a number, as indicated in the performance notes of the Second Symphony as well.

The performance note quoted at the beginning of this chapter is also related to one of the most discussed stylistic questions regarding Ustvolskaya's output: her possible relationship with the aesthetic trend of minimalism, especially when it comes to the constant pulse of the quarter note. This is a parallel traced by several authors, like for instance, Murrell (2013, p. 19), although she also establishes a boundary between both worlds:

Many of the surface attributes of her works appear at first to align well with the principles exemplified in a minimalist aesthetic [...], particularly her use of continuous rhythmic momentum for long periods of time, sparse textures, references to modal or tonal relationships, and her employment of repetitive melodic cells; however, her reliance upon continuous motivic permutations and the concealment of the processional design betray the foundation of the minimalist aesthetic.

Other authors try to explain the differences between each insight as well, being this the case of Moody once again. Ecstatic repetition is the concept that sometimes draws attention to minimalism due to the fact that it may be a common characteristic featured by both minimalistic works and spiritually-inspired works such as Ustvolskaya's or other examples given by Moody, specifically referring to Arvo Pärt, Henryk Górecki or John Tavener. Here, the author (Moody, 1996, p. 70) refers to spiritual-inspired music as "mystical" once again, and establishes the connection with the nature of the prayer and the attributes of the Orthodox Church's rituals:

Repetition with the aim of inducing an almost trance-like state and thereby exaggerating the impact of a harmonic or melodic shift, is far from being mystical music. Repetitive and incantatory music with a religious mystical function does indeed exist, but it is within eastern religious traditions (India, Morocco, Japan, for example), not in Western Minimalism, at least as a general rule. Repetition and a sense of hypnotic incantation certainly have a place in the music of both Tavener and Pärt, though they are far from being the technical core of their work; this, I would argue, is akin to the state of prayer, though of course in order actually to be completely effective in this way the music needs to be prayed and not merely sung. It is an element [that] very clearly derives from the liturgical rhythm of the Orthodox Church.

Regarding the use of quarter notes as a metrical unit, this is one of the most important features present in almost Ustvolskaya's entire official catalogue of works and one of the reasons why the tension is constant and the directionality, subsequently, and at least within the western traditional comprehension of music, non-existent. Except for the moments of silence that separate

each of the sections in the work, every single pulse is filled up with a quarter note, although varying the instrumentation and other parameters throughout each repetition of the material. Nonetheless, there are two exceptions to this constant flow of quarter notes in the Second Symphony, also very common all through her output, which might be considered:

- As mentioned before, the breathing marks constitute a great strategy to turn the rhythmic discourse into a constant flow somehow freer, more expressive and natural. It also allows the composer to organize the motivic materials throughout a piece that, leaving apart the necessity for clarity in case of a group performance, would have been written with no bar lines at all, as already mentioned.
- The second exception is a procedure very common in works such as the Grand Duet for Cello and Piano and, of course, the Second Symphony. Bradshaw (2000, p. 30) uses the term “metric dislocation” (figure 23) applied to procedures such as this one. This dislocation consists of the introduction of a note value different from the chosen metrical unit which is usually the quarter note and which is constantly repeated. This disruption brings about the breakage of the perpetual pulsation: the unalterable quarter-note pulse is displaced using this interjection and it is not subsequently balanced back again. The note value used for that interjection is commonly worth half of the metrical unit duration or one and a half times the metrical unit duration. For instance, if the metrical unit is the quarter note, the introduced disruption could be either an eighth note or a dotted quarter note. The first example of this resource appears at measure 27 in the Second Symphony.

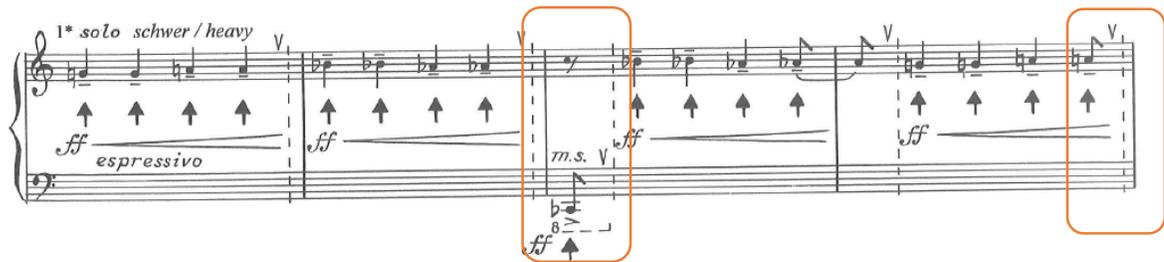


Figure 23: Second Symphony, piano part at mm. 45-48. Two examples of metric dislocation are shown: the second repetition of the main motif is an eighth note longer, whereas the fourth repetition is an eighth note shorter. Motives and added values are separated by discontinuous bar lines.

Apart from that, and as mentioned before, in the Second Symphony, any rest only takes place between the different sections, for instance at measure 52, when the instrumental introductory block is completed and before the first apparition of the solo voice; and the constant flow of quarter notes is only stopped with the intervention of the solo voice, excluding the second block from measures 158 to 181, when there is an instrumental accompaniment to the voice and every pulse is, once again, filled up with a quarter note. Nevertheless, regarding the overall use of the voice in Ustvolskaya's pieces from her last decade of compositional activity, especially attending to Symphonies 2 to 5, as it will be discussed in chapter 4.3.7. "Influence of *znamenny raspev* tradition", and according to Jeremiah-Foulds (2015, p. 232):

These pauses provide the narrator with a similar syllabic freedom that [is] demanded from a cantor in the znamenny tradition, providing the musical line with relief from strict metric pulsation, redolent of the znamenny practice of pausing at the end of a line of text.

One of the most interesting possible interpretations of the repetition and temporal organization in Ustvolskaya's music, besides the technicalities explained throughout this chapter, is intimately connected to the ritualistic feature coming from the Orthodox Church tradition and other religious practices, as it will be examined all through the next chapter, 4.3.6. "The concept of the icon and ritualism".

4.3.6. The concept of the icon and ritualism

The two most important parallels between Ustvolskaya's music and Orthodoxy, already traced by several scholars and worth a mention in this research project, are the iconicity and the Russian chant tradition of *znamenny raspev*. In this chapter and the next one, respectively, these two approaches to Orthodox Church culture will be briefly explained within Ustvolskaya's output, taking into account, as a point of departure, that the relationship between both parts was not literally stated at any point by the composer, who defined her music several times as non-religious, but "spiritual creativity". Nevertheless, the fact that such a parallel caught the attention of various authors turns it into a topic worth of discussing in case it is eventually useful to understand Ustvolskaya's insight from the point of view of Russian culture and, more specifically, the Russian Orthodox Church heritage, which was definitely part of her surroundings.

Moody introduces the concept of the icon (also written as *ikon*, which is a painting, usually on wood, of a holy character of Christianity, common in Russian and Greek religious cultures) and its relationship with several composers from the twentieth century who stayed somehow close to Orthodox Christianity, such as Arvo Pärt, Michael Adamis or John Tavener. According to Moody (1996, p. 65), “an ikon, for an Orthodox Christian, is a holy presence to be venerated. It is not a religious picture, and it cannot be truly apprehended in terms of art history only: in that sense it is mystical”. Therefore, as the words of a prayer edify the ears, the image of an icon stimulates the eyes. The word mystical is prickly to define, and so is the whole concept of the icon, especially for someone that is not emotionally or philosophically acquainted with such a culture and tradition. The two definitions provided by the Oxford English Dictionary, mentioned by Moody, are, according to the author, somehow misleading: something “mystical” is something spiritually allegoric, mysterious and awe-inspiring, or it rather refers to the one who seeks the union with or absorption into the deity. It is possible that the relationship between the concept of the icon and Ustvolskaya’s insight is closer to that second option, and Jeremiah-Fouls (2015, p. 65) stated something similar when claiming that “the iconostasis may be understood as the boundary between one world and the next”, being the iconostasis a collection of icons put together usually on the main wall of the church in the context of Eastern Christianity. The author (*ibid.*, p. 66) continues explaining this idea as follows:

The icons in the Iconostasis function as a window between this world and the heavenly realm, bestowing a route through which human frailty can bear witness before God. The icon coincides with a spiritual vision within human consciousness, enabling a focus and consequential entrance into the heavenly sphere.

Tracing the same analogy, Ustvolskaya’s output could have the intention of forging such a window through the ear instead of through the eye, and therefore building a “sonic icon”. Other elements in Ustvolskaya’s music contribute to the implementation of ritualistic traits besides iconicity, meaning that some features of her music seem to follow a specific and fixed conduct and practice, typical of a tradition or devotion, and fervently respected. For instance, although Ustvolskaya’s works do not fulfill either a specific religious or liturgical function, she stated on

several occasions that the best place for a performance of her pieces would be a church. Bakhmin (2009) explains this preference in Ustvol'skaya's website "Precision" section²⁰ as follows:

She considered a church or a temple to be the ideal space for her music. In her opinion, a secular environment had the opposite effect of her intentions, and diminished the prayerful spirit of her music with which the performer and the listener should ideally be saturated.

Nevertheless, when Victor Suslin mentions the same topic in conversation with Thea Derks (1995), he stresses a new perspective of the site choice: "Her music would benefit from being performed in a church, because only there the acoustics would be good enough to do justice to the tremendous power of expression of her music". This would mean that such choice features a technical function, yet is still connected to the pursued potency of the spiritual expression: the spiritual function still remains within the "tremendous power of expression of her music" which, according to Suslin as well, "springs directly from the contact she feels with God and doesn't have any liturgical meaning".

There is also the fact that Ustvol'skaya refused to apply the term "chamber music" to her own music. She wrote about this matter in "Thoughts about the Creative Process" (Ustvol'skaya, 1994):

The non-chamber quality of my music is novelty, the fruit of my tormented life, devoted to creative work! And I'm not talking here about the number of performers, but about the essence of the music itself. It's very difficult for me to read over and over again: 'chamber music', 'chamber symphony'. For example, all my Sonatas, Grand Duet, Duet for Violin and Piano, Compositions and other works are not chamber music!

According to Jeremiah-Fouls (2015, p. 71), "her music undeniably contains ritualistic elements, as the sound adopts the capacity to transcend the physicality of sonic experience". Some of those elements are connected, apart from the place of performance, to the attitude and role of certain performers, and the function and meaning of certain instruments. Some of those elements are precisely and strongly present in her Second Symphony.

Alongside the conceptual role of the narrator, already commented on in chapter 4.3.2. "Text: origin, content and meaning", Ustvol'skaya contributed to the performance shown in Voormans' documentary (2005) with exact indications regarding how he should dress, something

²⁰ The quotation can be found within the paragraph "The use of the music of Ustvol'skaya in different forms of stage performance", at <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/precision.php>.

that is also stated on the score as one of the performance notes²¹. The primitive exclamation included at the beginning of several declamations throughout the piece constitutes a performative element acquiring a quasi-ritualistic character, as so does the role of the solo percussion accompanying the voice at the end of the Symphony No. 3. Indications throughout the scores are usually very specific so the composer has complete control over the behavior of the performers. For instance, on the Second Symphony's score some indications, very precise regarding the expression and specific character, are given, being some examples the following ones: "very short, even and forceful strokes", "very precise quarter notes", "very firm and forceful strokes", "very precise, vigorously", "very precise and sharp, play quarter notes without delay", "play precisely, and each note separately", or "play expressively and with feeling, non-legato".

Another magnificent example of the use of certain instruments in a ritualistic manner is the implementation of the wooden box as a percussion instrument in her Composition No. 2, *Dies Irae* (1972-73). This instrument (figure 24) was designed by the composer with a specific shape and seeking a very concrete sound: "a cube of 43 x 43 centimeters of dimension, made of 2-centimeters thick chipboard, and struck with two mallets. The cube is completely closed" describes the "Precision" section²² in Ustvol'skaya's website. Bakhmin explains that Ustvol'skaya tested several attempts made by carpenters by knocking on each new variant of the instrument. The chipboard instead of wood produced eventually the muffled sound that Ustvol'skaya was looking for.

²¹ "The part of the soloist (*canto*) is taken by a young man, wearing black shirt and black trousers. He should have a microphone" (performance note No. 4 in Sikorski edition from 1983).

²² More information on Ustvol'skaya's cube at <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/precision.php#cube>.



Figure 24: “The cube (43cm x 43cm) designed by Ustvol'skaya for her Composition No. 2, *Dies Irae* (1972-73). She could not find an appropriate material until discovering chipboard. The tuning fork indicates the scale of the cube. The handle and signature were added when the cube traveled to Amsterdam in 1995” (Bakhmin, “Gallery: Apartment”: <http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/gallery.php>).

As mentioned in the former chapter regarding rhythm and meter, the ritualistic component that constitutes the base of one possible interpretation of Ustvol'skaya's music, is also present in her treatment of those parameters, especially when it comes to the already-examined obsessive quarter-note pulse, as Jeremiah-Foulds explains (2015, p. 243): “The obsessive crotchet pulse in Ustvol'skaya's music also has further resonance in the repetition that is constantly palpable in Orthodox ritual”. This phenomenon is materialized into several practices and celebrations in which the number three is again a key quantity within these rituals. Coming back to the nature of the prayer alongside the ritualistic behavior, “in Orthodox theology, the repetitive song that accompanies this practice promotes this [...] sense of communal expression, aiding semantic expression and, ultimately, enabling audibility of the prayers” (ibid.).

4.3.7. Influence of the *znamenny raspev* tradition

The vast majority of authors who cover the topic of Ustvol'skaya and her spiritual approach draw attention, in more or less detail, to the relationship between her style and the Russian old chant tradition of *znamenny raspev*, especially when it comes to the melodic or motivic content. Moody (2014, p. 25) mentions that “Ustvol'skaya's work, all of which she claimed was religious in intent, betrays an obvious preoccupation with the structure and melodic style of

Russian chant (particularly *znamenny*)". Nalimova (2012, p. 113) also claims that "her music is rooted in the tradition of Russian folklore and the basic chant of Medieval Russia, *znamenny raspev*". Her Second and Third Piano Sonatas (1949 and 1952, respectively), as well as her Twelve Piano Preludes (1953), are often quoted as a paragon of this parallel. In this last chapter, it will be analyzed the reason why this connection between Ustvolskaya's music and this tradition has been so interesting to several scholars.

The tradition of *znamenny raspev* has its origins in the Byzantine culture and constituted part of the Russian medieval mores. This chant tradition was not notated linearly but rather using special signs; a parallel could be traced between this system and the notation of neumes in Gregorian chant, at least in the European western tradition. However, some authors have studied and transcribed this notation, as it will be explained later on, so it is possible to read it in today's linear notation. Nalimova (2012, p. 111), alongside some other scholars, proposes some features of this tradition, from this modern interpretation of the notation, that clearly remind of Ustvolskaya's style, such as:

- Quarter notes and half notes as the main note values, with the rare presence of eighth notes or sixteenth notes.
- Absence of metrical organization through bar lines.
- Predominance of conjunct motion throughout melodic passages, only using leaps of fourths or fifths in "cadence" points or points of "inflection". Melodies featuring scale excerpts are very common in Ustvolskaya's pieces, however, they usually include some kind of melodic deviation which breaks the scalar tendency (figure 25), the vast majority of the time following a pattern commonly used in classical counterpoint: the double neighboring tone. For instance, if the melodic line of the first flute is followed from bar 249 up to 260 in the Second Symphony, the line in figure 25 can be traced. The melodic deviations of chromatic double neighboring tones are indicated in orange:

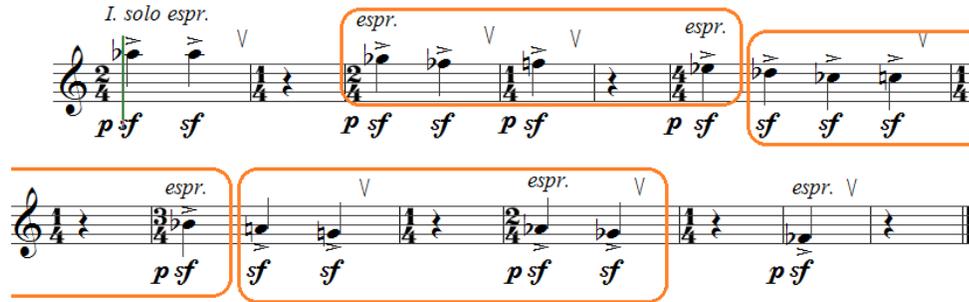


Figure 25: Melodic deviations (chromatic double neighboring tones) in the scalar passage of the flute between mm. 249-262 of Ustvolskaya's Second Symphony.

- Importance of semi-tonal and tonal relationships (Jeremiah-Foulds, 2015, p. 233), in the case of Ustvolskaya, expressed either vertically through the use of tone clusters, diatonic or chromatic, and chordal constructions, or horizontally through the before-mentioned predominance of conjunct melodic motion.
- Notes are grouped in patterns of two or three pitches. This fact is also emphasized by Murrell (2013, p. 32): “The melodic foundations of Ustvolskaya’s compositional designs are based upon short, compact motifs or motivic configurations established at the onset of each work”; and described by Nalimova (2012, p. 134) as simple “melodic ‘theme-formulas’, with extensive use of repeated short melodic units combined with rhythmic periodicity”.
- Nalimova (2012, p. 135) adds a rather farfetched yet interesting last connection:

As with medieval composers, who aspired to simplicity, absence of external effects and unnecessary decorativeness in order to preserve the depth of thoughts and feelings, Ustvolskaya abandoned any forms of external ornamentation in favor of ascetic sonorities created by means of unisons and pure timbres.

It is extremely important to emphasize the fact that Ustvolskaya denied these connections herself. Regarding her overall aesthetic, she was absolutely reluctant about what musicologists were interpreting in her pieces and that was one of the reasons for writing the already-mentioned short text about her creative process (Ustvolskaya, 1994). From an overall comment such as “I’d like to advise musicologists to renew the way they look at music, since music deserves that” (ibid.), up to the specific criticism of the analogies made up by them:

They write [...] that my music has early-Russian roots. [...] I prefer that nothing be written about my music than to disclose the first superficial feelings. It's necessary to think a lot. What kind of early-Russian roots can be found, let's say, in my Compositions? In which of my works is there an old Indian epic? That's the pure fiction of musicologists.

Therefore, this chapter and all the connections on the whole of this paper between Ustvol'skaya's music and external references that were not directly stated by her, have to be understood as an interesting parallel when it comes to the comprehension of such a different and unique style, rather than as an evident or obvious relationship (of course, this could have been what musicologists had in mind as well, when writing about Ustvol'skaya's music). The process of understanding a language or artistic expression that is not common to the listener is more straightforward when it is possible to compare it with features and elements present in other languages or expressions which different recipients of such an idiom or cultural trait could be acquainted with. Those connections or comparisons function as sort of sounding or conceptual metaphors although it is always possible to misunderstand its meaning and that is the situation Ustvol'skaya was the most afraid of. According to Jeremiah-Foulds (2015, p. 219), this reluctance regarding the aesthetic categorization of her work is intrinsically connected to her spiritual aims: "This wish to be remote from all influence suggests a further elevation of the spiritual content of her work: her intention was ultimately to dislocate it from any man-made practice".

Coming back to the tradition of the *znamenny raspev*, the main source of information about this practice for Ustvol'skaya, as Nalimova and Jeremiah-Foulds claim, was the book "The Early Russian Art of Church Singing" by Nikolay Uspensky, published in Leningrad by Muzyka in 1968. Nikolay Uspensky (1900-1987), was a Russian musicologist focused on church history, and that book constituted one of the best examples of the before-mentioned transcriptions of *znamenny raspev* to the current conventional linear notation. Uspensky worked at Leningrad's conservatory, as well as Ustvol'skaya did, and at a similar time in history, so his research on Russian liturgical melodies could somehow have been more accessible to her. This book was in fact one of the only overtly religious sources which came out through publication and became available for the Soviet generation of composers. Other examples of composers influenced by this tradition that came to light are Yuri Butsko (1938-2015) and his Polyphonic Concerto (1969), and Alfred Schnittke (1934-1998) and his Hymns for Chamber Ensemble (1974-79). This publication could have been useful and inspirational for Ustvol'skaya and her overtly religious works from the

1970s and 1980s, including the Second Symphony. However, and as mentioned before, the best examples of the application of *znamenny raspev* featured in Ustvol'skaya's music are the Piano Sonatas Nos. 2 and 3, and the Twelve Preludes for Piano, all of them composed, however, before Uspensky's publication.

Both before-mentioned rhythmical and melodic features shared between the early Russian church singing tradition and Ustvol'skaya's music have one common characteristic: simplicity and sobriety. Within the tradition of the old chant, a simple melody made it easier to understand the text, so the one-part chant, and its version in Ustvol'skaya as "one-part" melodies, feature the humbleness and solemnity that are part of the essential qualities of Orthodox spiritual approach, being a common principle to many other religions, indeed. The overall tendency of Ustvol'skaya towards the use of the most essential elements and parameters of the musical language could therefore rely on this purpose of conveying the meaning of the music in the clearest and most accessible manner. As Murrell claims (2013, p. 51), "throughout her career, her style undergoes a process of refinement and simplification. In her later compositions the surface complexity that was present in the earlier works, the intricate relationships of numerous layers, is thinned out".

5. Conclusions and further research

As it was explained throughout the introduction of this paper, the number of resources for this research project, especially referring to the sources that feature topics directly connected to Galina Ustvol'skaya, is very limited when it comes to the English language. Therefore, one of the most basic, yet utopic paths for further research, is to dive into other languages, with a special mention to the Russian literature because of its proximity to the matter, and whose approach usually differs from the average insight of western musicology and research on the whole.

When I consciously listen to Ustvol'skaya's Second Symphony, while looking at the score at the same time, I always find some new relationships, conflicts and solutions; thus, it is not possible to say for certain that this analysis is complete or that it is possible to conclude it in the future in order to understand the piece as deep as Ustvol'skaya did while composing it. As she

concluded in “Thoughts About the Creative Process” (Ustvol'skaya, 1994), the composer preferred that “nothing be written about [her] music than to disclose the first superficial feelings”.

Before any lists of possible topics to look further into could be done, it is essential, within the impossibility of being exhaustive, to map which aspects of Ustvol'skaya's output have been treated before by scholars, including this before-mentioned new world of Russian sources and sources in other languages. It is obviously possible to deal with a topic already discussed because our own filters, personal background, interests and objectives are never going to be the same whilst doing research. However, it is also important to broad Ustvol'skaya's world due to the relative unknown she is still living within, and in order to escape from the convention of the main topics that may be more appealing or interesting at first glance.

Taking into consideration the already-mentioned necessity of mapping those topics throughout the literature about Galina Ustvol'skaya, I would assert that this project has featured a specific matter, but also a wide one; therefore it was possible to offer a broad overview of the most important points of Ustvol'skaya's overall aesthetic and stylistic insight in connection to the spiritual issue, but impossible to seek the details and nuances of the different features of her idiom and their impact on her aesthetic and philosophic insight on the whole. One of the most intriguing traits of Ustvol'skaya's idiom for me is the use of clusters, surely already discussed, especially regarding her Piano Sonata No. 6, written in 1988. Another consequence of Ustvol'skaya's compositional tools is the lack of dialectical relationship between tension and distension that occurs extremely frequently in Ustvol'skaya's pieces, which defies the most important of the western music bases for the structural organization and temporal perception. These and other topics could be susceptible to further study.

After this brief proposal of further research, barely reaching beyond the pure technique, I would like to trace some conclusions derived from the overall project and taking into consideration my own individual understanding of Ustvol'skaya's insight, always bearing in mind the research work carried out by the referents mentioned throughout the whole paper. The main question regarding Ustvol'skaya's music (and a largely-discussed question regarding many composers) is the communicative aspect of her artistic expression and the consequences it brings about catering to the understanding of this expression from the perspective of the recipient of the message, the listener. I came to the conclusion that the foremost feature of Ustvol'skaya's music is

the expression of the extreme from many different viewpoints. Such a feature embodies two different functions, or two different consequences in case those functions take place effectively eventually:

- The conscious function for Ustvolskaya: the use of the extreme expressivity features a clear pragmatic function for the composer related to her spiritual approach. The ultimate objective is that the performer and the listener could saturate themselves with a prayerful spirit. In this case, the maximum and most extreme expressivity has as its utmost result the most effective and direct of the connections with god.
- The unconscious function for Ustvolskaya, since Ustvolskaya never expressed this aim through words, although it could have been consciously thought: the use of the extreme expressivity as a means for interpreting the extreme situation of her contextual reality, that is to say, her time and place.

It could be possible to sum up, once again, the aesthetic features of this Soviet composer as follows: Ustvolskaya's music is based on the rawest and most elemental (one could say primitive), not only elements of the musical expression, but also compositional procedures and strategies for placing, combining and varying those elements. With regard to the specific case of the Second Symphony, those tools and resources are as essential and straightforward as the extreme tendency towards repetition, the simple canon or voice displacement, the continuous rhythm with no complexity other than some metric dislocations which bring about a minimal flexibility, a primal scream from the reciter and just three motifs consisting of two or three pitches barely varied in essence throughout roughly 20 minutes of music. There is nothing else other than that, at least from a technical point of view. Absolutely nothing else: there is no rhythmical or harmonic complexity, no matter how rich tone clusters may be, no textural entanglement, no motivic or melodic complex variation or structural intricacy. There is nothing else here. It is all raw, exposed, naked, a clear, direct message, excluding any kind of decoration or complement at all. It is an explicit, straightforward and sober spiritual expression, as it is explained in the composer's biography on her official webpage: "It is exceedingly expressive, brave, austere, and full of tragic pathos achieved through the most modest of expressive means" (Bakhmin, 2009, "About the composer").

This is the reason why Ustvolskaya wanted to walk away from any kind of intermediary during the communication process: she was not interested in conductors for orchestras or ensembles unless strictly essential and she did not want the performers to interpret her music from an individual or personal insight; hence her indications for performance are exceptionally specific and expressive, and her rejection towards any kind of reinterpretation of her music, for instance, through performative art, is absolute during the years that she was still alive while her music was reaching further international recognition. She considered that the best space for the performance of her pieces was a church and she dwelled repeatedly on the importance of the humbleness of musicians' outfits and overall attitude during the concerts. The only thing that Ustvolskaya was interested in, beyond the objective reality of the sound, is the pragmatic purpose of reaching the maximum possible expressivity with the aim of attaining the most direct and effective of the communication processes between the recipient and the divine, being the composer, performer and conductor, if applicable, mere intermediaries who, driven by the spiritual inspiration, carry out the task of offering themselves as a mean (a window, a sonic icon) for enabling the connection with god.

As one main conclusion for this research project, I would like to focus on the expressive tools and resources used by Ustvolskaya in her compositional process. Some of the scholars quoted throughout this paper claim that Ustvolskaya's style and aesthetic insight are unique, individual, disconnected from her relative past, present and even future. In other words, they regard Ustvolskaya as an anachronism who did not stylistically belong to her own reality. On the contrary, other scholars, theorists or musicologists have tried to seek possible relationships, parallels and forefathers for her style and aesthetics. After the analysis presented throughout this paper, certain traits of such a yet unique and individual language are undeniably connected to idioms that already existed, furthermore, to traditions and to an overall culture that is not new, so to say. Ustvolskaya's style is, beyond its singularity, connected to her own reality and the one from her past. What Ustvolskaya innovates in is the way she uses those common tools and resources of artistic expression embedded in her outer reality and filtered by her inner certainty: she pushes all those raw, primal and essential elements to the extreme in all its forms. This is nothing but her own expressive interpretation as a conscious or subconscious compromise with the reality that surrounded her at the specific time and place she emotionally reacted to.

Ustvolskaya did not need to create a new language, but a new expressivity within an already-existent and shared language, because *ex nihilo nihil fit*¹, or “nothing comes from nothing”.

¹ From Boecio: *De aeternitate mundi*. In RAE (Royal Spanish Academy), 2020.

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Annex: Structural analysis of Galina Ustvolskaya's Second Symphony

This structural analysis of Ustvolskaya's Second Symphony is mainly based on its motivic content. The Second Symphony is built out of three simple melodic units that are combined and orchestrated in several manners, as it will be explained throughout the subsequent chart. Repetition is one of the most important traits of this piece on the whole, where the number three acquires greater importance concerning the number of sections featuring the same motif, the number of variations or different instrumental combinations of the same melodic unit, or the number of larger structural sections in the piece overall.

It is important to insist on the fact that this structural scheme is just one of the several possible ways of organizing the material throughout this piece. Due to the absence of meaningful bar lines and the meager presence of motivic or rhythmic variation, the organization of blocks and groups of sections shows great flexibility and the choice could be properly assessed by the personal auditive experience of the recipient of the piece. Another element that conditioned this specific insight about the Second Symphony's structure is the presence of the voice (see the chart related to the distribution of the text throughout the piece in chapter 4.3.2. "Text: origin, content and meaning").

The motifs 1, 2 and 3 are identified as previously described in this research project (especially in chapter 4.3.4. "Repetition: structure and motivic content"), being a short reminder of where to find a clear example of each of them the following list:

- Motif 1 appears from measure 12 in flutes, oboes and trumpets.
- Motif 2 is shown from bar 71 in the trombone.
- Motif 3 appears from measure 182 in trumpets.

In addition to the previous reminder, it was considered necessary to clarify some of the terms that were explained and applied to the analytical comments throughout this research paper, which could be misleading in case the chart is used independently of the previous chapters, as it is included within this project as an annex:

- The word "complementary" is used here to refer to the materials that complement the motivic content of a section. The word "accompaniment" has been avoided as

Ustvolskaya considered all musical materials in her pieces to be equally essential and meaningful.

- A rhythmical displacement is an elementary compositional tool consisting of the displacement of a motif a specific number of pulses with respect to an earlier entry of the same motif. Therefore, it could be explained as a simple canon-like imitation. In the Second Symphony, there can be found displacements of one, two or up to three quarter notes, which provide different polyphonic complexes without needing to vary the original material.
- A metric dislocation consists of a disruption of the constant flow of the metrical unit, which in Ustvolskaya is usually the quarter note. A value different from this metrical unit is inserted, breaking the constant pulsation and not being balanced back again (hence the metrical consequences). The note value commonly used for this interjection is the eighth note (half of the metrical unit) or the dotted quarter note (one and a half times the metrical unit).

Motivic material	Number of repetitions	Measures	Textural properties	Instrumentation	Overall dynamic
Introductory block (instrumental)					
Motif 2	2	1 – 3 (3 – 9 extension)	Tone clusters with thematic top pitch	Piano (motif 2) + drums (complementary strokes)	<i>ff</i>
		9 – 12			
Motif 1	4 (grouping the sets of motifs)	12 – 25	Tone clusters with thematic top pitch Rhythmic displacement of 2 quarter notes	Flute, oboe and trumpet (motif 1) + piano and drums (complementary strokes)	<i>p / fff</i>
		25 – 32	Tone clusters with thematic top pitch Metric dislocation	Piano (motif 1)	<i>ff</i>
		33 – 44	Tone clusters with thematic top pitch (an	Flute, oboe and trumpet (motif 1) + piano	<i>p / f</i>

			octave lower + con sord.)	(complementary clusters)	
			Rhythmic displacement of 2 quarter notes		
		45 – 52	Tone clusters with thematic top pitch (excluding low register)	Piano (motif 1)	<i>ff</i>
			Metric dislocation		
Block 1 (alongside voice henceforth)					
Solo voice section ("Lord") = motif 3	3	53 – 54	Single line	Solo voice (<i>A cry into the depths of the universe! Praying to God</i>) – in all declamations of "Lord"	<i>fff</i>
		55 – 56	Dynamic contrast		<i>ppp</i>
		57			
Sub-block 1, instrumental passage + voice (measures 58-90)					
Motif 1	1	58 – 70	Tone clusters with thematic top pitch	Flute, oboe, trumpet and piano (motif 1) + piano (complementary clusters)	<i>p / ffff</i>
			Rhythmic displacement of 2 quarter notes		
			Winds transposition (a fifth lower)		
Motif 2 + motif 1	3	71 – 77	Motif 2: single melodic line	Trombone (motif 2) + piano (motif 1 and complementary clusters)	<i>f / fff</i>
			Motif 1: tone clusters and rhythmic displacement of a quarter note		
		77 – 83	Motif 2: single melodic line	Trombone and tuba (motif 2) + piano (motif 1 and complementary clusters)	
		84 – 89	Motif 2 (only sustained last	All winds except for trumpets (motif 2) + piano	<i>f / ffff</i>

			pitch of the motif) Motif 1: tone clusters	(motif 1 and complementary clusters)	
Solo voice section (“Lord”) = motif 3	1	90	Single line	Solo voice	<i>fff</i>
Sub-block 2, instrumental passage + voice (measures 91-110)					
Motif 2 + motif 1	3	91 – 97	Motif 2: single melodic line Motif 1: tone clusters (flutes, oboes and piano) + single melodic line (trombone) Rhythmic displacement of a quarter note Expansion of each gesture through piano clusters	Solo trumpet (motif 2) + flute, oboe and piano (complementary clusters) + flute, oboe, trombone and piano (motif 1) +	<i>f/fff</i>
		97 – 103	Motif 2: single melodic line Motif 1: single melodic line Expansion of each gesture through piano clusters	2 trumpets (motif 2) + flute, oboe and piano (complementary clusters) + trombone and piano (motif 1)	
		104 – 109	Motif 2 (only sustained last pitch of the motif) Motif 1: single melodic line Expansion of each gesture through piano clusters	4 trumpets (motif 2) + flute, oboe and piano (complementary clusters) + trombone and piano (motif 1)	

Solo voice section (“Lord”) = motif 3	1	110	Single line	Solo voice	<i>fff</i>
Sub-block 3, instrumental passage + voice (measures 111-157)					
Motif 2 + motif 1	3	111 – 117	Motif 2: tone clusters + piano tremolo for sustained last pitch Motif 1: single melodic line (tuba) and tone clusters (flutes, oboes and trumpets) Rhythmic displacement of a quarter note	Piano (motif 2) + trumpet (complementary clusters) + flutes, oboes, trumpets, tuba and drums (motif 1)	<i>ff / fff</i>
		117 – 123	Motif 2: tone clusters + piano tremolo for sustained last pitch Motif 1: single melodic line		
		124 – 128	Motif 2 (only sustained last pitch of the motif): piano tremolo Motif 1: single melodic line		
Motif 1	1	129 – 137	Strokes	Drums (motif 1) + tutti without voice (complementary clusters)	<i>ff / ffff</i>
Athematic section (register glissando)	2	138 – 142	Waterfall cluster (downwards scalar passage featuring chromatic inflections)	Tutti (no voice): from highest to lowest register + second time including drums	<i>ff / fff</i>
		142 – 146			

	2	146 – 150	Growing static cluster	Tutti (no voice): from highest to lowest register	<i>fff / ffff</i>
		151 – 156			<i>fff – ffffff</i>
Solo voice section (“Lord”) = motif 3	1	157	Single line	Solo voice	<i>ppp</i>
Block 2					
Voice speech + motif 1 + motif 2	3	158 – 165	Motif 1: chords with thematic top pitch and rhythmic augmentation Motif 2: single melodic line	Oboe (motif 1) + tuba (motif 2) + voice speech + bass drum (complementary roll)	<i>pp</i> (<i>mf</i> for top thematic pitch) + <i>f</i> (voice)
		166 – 173	Motif 1: chords with thematic top pitch and rhythmic augmentation Motif 2: single melodic line Piano introducing later flute melody in block 3 (from mm. 167, using clusters)	Oboe (motif 1) + piano (motif 2) + voice speech + bass drum (complementary roll)	
		174 – 181	Motif 1: chords with thematic top pitch and rhythmic augmentation Motif 2: single melodic line (an octave lower) Tuba introducing later flute melody in block 3 (from mm. 175)	Oboe (motif 1) + tuba (motif 2) + voice speech + bass drum (complementary roll)	

Sub-block, motif 3 (measures 182 – 247)					
Motif 3 + motif 1	3 (grouping the sets of motifs)	182 – 191	Motif 3: single melodic line + rhythmic echo in clusters and strokes	2 trumpets + piano and cassa tenor	<i>ff</i>
		192 – 202	Motif 3: single melodic line + rhythmic echo in clusters and strokes Motif 1: single melodic line + rhythmic displacement of 3 quarter notes	2 trumpets, piano and cassa tenor (motif 3) + 4 flutes (motif 1) + rest of the trumpets (complementary sustained cluster)	<i>ff</i> (<i>pp</i> for the complementary sustained cluster)
		203 – 212	Motif 3: single melodic line	Piano (motif 3) + piano and drums (complementary clusters and strokes)	<i>fff / ffff</i>
Moti 1 + motif 2	3	213 – 217	Motif 1: single melodic line + rhythmic displacement of 2 quarter notes	2 oboes (motif 1) + piano (motif 2) + rest of the oboes (complementary sustained cluster)	<i>f</i> (<i>p</i> for the complementary sustained cluster)
		218 – 223	Motif 2: single melodic line / tone clusters with top thematic pitch (second repetition) + rhythmic displacement of 2 quarter notes (a minor 2 nd down)		
		224 – 229			
Motif 3 + motif 1	3	230 – 236	Motif 3: single melodic line Motif 1: single melodic line (oboes) + rhythmic displacement of 3 quarter notes + tone clusters with thematic top pitch	2 trumpets (motif 3) + 2 oboes and piano (motif 1) + rest of trumpets (complementary sustained cluster) + piano (complementary occasional cluster)	<i>mf</i> (motif 1) / <i>ff</i> (motif 3)
		237 – 242			
		243 – 247			

			(piano, rhythmically scattered)		
Block 3					
Scale motif	1	248 – 263	Single melodic line	Flute (scale motif) + piano (complementary clusters)	<i>p</i> (flute) / <i>mp</i> (piano)
Motif 1	1	264 – 270	Strokes	Drums	<i>f</i>
Motif 3 + motif 1 + Solo voice section ("Lord") = motif 3	2	271 – 276	Single melodic line	Piccolo (motif 3) + piano (motif 2)	<i>p</i>
		277 – 282	Single melodic line	Piccolo (motif 3) + piano (motif 2) + solo voice	<i>ppp</i>