

**Self-Referencing in the Music of Alfred Schnittke:  
A Case Study in the Context of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

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## Abstract

A large volume of Alfred Schnittke's musical output is filled with strategies that reference a style, an era, or other existing pieces of music. To achieve this referential quality, he incorporated allusions and direct quotations. One rather unusual source of his quotations was his own other compositions, namely his film music. While quoting his film music in his concert music however, his compositional process went further than merely creating "collage" works, instead it was a matter of interconnecting them with the main materials of the composition and even building whole movements and pieces based on them.

This research aims to delve into Schnittke's self-referencing of his film music in the contexts of both 20<sup>th</sup> century western classical music, and his own compositional life and processes. This will be done by using *Concerto Grosso No.1* as a quite comprehensive case study of this phenomenon, and contextualizing it by examining 20<sup>th</sup> century quotation and self-quotation trends, his relationship with the Soviet regime, his viewpoint on "art" and "entertainment" music (film and concert music in this case), the intertextual significance and associations of the references, and the recontextualization of the materials leading him closer to the "universal musical language" he was after. This will help with synthesizing a concise but rather multi-faceted narrative regarding Schnittke's self-referencing approach, an aspect of his compositions that is more often than not neglected.

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All figures are taken and reprinted from *Concerto Grosso No.1* (1977) by Alfred Schnittke

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# 1. Introduction

“No musical style begins *ab ovo*.”<sup>1</sup>

Musicians have used and based their new music on existing materials and tropes for as far into the past as we can see. No music exists that in one way or another doesn't rely on some other existing idea from the outside of its own boundaries. The amount of this reliance is of course not always the same, and perhaps not always the first thing that comes to mind either. Using the same musical instrument is a rather weak reliance (depending on the context and the “norms” of its surroundings), but an exact quote from a well-known piece of music is more likely to trigger a recognition in the mind of the audience.

The strength of this relationship (specially quotations and direct references) has been varied during the different periods of the western classical music and has had its rises and falls in different eras and with different composers. We are broadly talking about “musical borrowing”, as a stronger type of this relationship, as reusing recognizable material from another work in a new musical creation; A practice that has prevailed since the appearance of notated chants.<sup>2</sup> Incorporating a *Cantus Firmus* (a pre-existing melody, most often a Gregorian chant) was a vastly used technic for creating polyphonic music during the renaissance (and even before that). Later, Bach would incorporate Lutheran chorale melodies without any concurrent text, or with completely different texts in his pieces.<sup>3</sup> Schumann, Rachmaninoff, and Richard Strauss all quoted Beethoven's symphonies. On the other hand, integral serialism composers during the 20<sup>th</sup> century tried to avoid referring to the past and build a standalone musical system, which meant moving away from many forms of musical borrowing (at least in theory). This phenomenon will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

In the case of the presence of musical borrowing however, it is almost always a reference to musical material by another composer (or musician in general). Yet, there is another source from which a composer can borrow from, and that is their own previous music. This self-borrowing of material can add another layer of associations, some of which are perhaps more personal to the composer and harder to decipher. It is definitely a less common approach, but again existing since the previous eras from Schubert to Stockhausen. Among the 20<sup>th</sup> century composers who have used this technic, Alfred Schnittke has maybe the most cases and the most extended usage of self-borrowing. His intriguing source material (film music), his extensive use of self-borrowings both in the structure of the same piece and in other pieces in general, the socio-political environment he developed this technic in, and the infrequency of self-borrowing in western classical music makes his music a valuable case study for this musical approach.

Although in the case of Schnittke, he is mostly known for quoting other composers or creating allusions, but another (usually neglected) aspect of his music is that he has also referenced and, in many cases, completely reused his own themes and materials in his compositions. This external connection between the pieces is observed mostly between his film and concert music, but can be found anywhere in between. One of the main outcomes of this process is that it creates an immediate bridge between different pieces by the use of familiarity.

This familiarity requires the listener to have a knowledge of both sides (the original material and the piece referencing it), to be able to create the connection. The meanings of quotations are not objective entities,

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Ballantine, *Charles Ives and the Meaning of Quotation in Music* (The Musical Quarterly 65(2), 1979), 167.

<sup>2</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, *The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing as a Field* (Notes, 50(3), 1994), 863.

<sup>3</sup> Ballantine, *Charles Ives and the Meaning of Quotation in Music*, 173.

and require the pre-conceptions of the listener to emerge. In this manner, both the contents and the layers of depth of meanings can (and will) vary for each listener.<sup>4</sup> If the listener is not familiar with the origins of a quotation or allusion and what associations it bears, some of the intricacies of the music might stay hidden. Referencing his own film music (some of which might not even be well-known in the western culture) might render recognizing these associations even harder, since more often than not the audience will not be familiar with the films or their soundtracks either. Moreover, the more references used in a piece of work (as is the case with quite a few of Schnittke's multi-referential works), the more of this familiarity by the listener is required; not only to recognize the origin of the material and its possible distortion by the composer (extra-musicality), but also to understand the web of associations meaningfully created using them inside the piece. This, of course, is combined with the recognition of the cultural references and musical allusions often residing in Schnittke's music, even in the original starting material that is being referenced. Hence, the narrative of the music will be an outcome of the work's contents, combined with the interpretations of the listener based on their knowledge of the incorporated associations, the composer, and of the work itself.<sup>5</sup>

As all the mentioned associations and relationships have an inherent quality of residing in the past, a closer look at the various ways they might be interpreted can lead to a better understanding of musical borrowings. Schnittke had a profound relationship with the past, and by following the paths of composers such as Mahler, Berg, Shostakovich, and Ives, who used different source materials to create their pieces, developed his so-called polystylistic approach.<sup>6</sup> In the case of self-references however, there is a quite obvious difference, which is the sources are almost always his film music. Something that is uncommon, or is at least by no means found as extensively and elaborated as in Schnittke's music. The usage of contemporary (or not too old) film music makes arguing about their relationship to the past quite difficult and mostly ambiguous. However, examining them from the viewpoint of nostalgia might be beneficial still; a subject that will be discussed further. But as we will see later on, not all the roots of this choice necessarily come from the past, but from yet another driving force, helping him with unifying all types of music in his mind.

Using film music as his source material was not a very unusual path for him to take however, considering his prolific and long-lasting experience with working with the film format. Something that also partially led him to the manner in which he approached form in his music. As the source material is in direct connection to the visuals and narrative of the film, its structure and length is tailored to the specific media and is closely synchronized with it. Referencing them in another work injects the pre-existing structure into the new piece, leading to a different narrative treatment of the composition. This narrative treatment is enhanced by the pre-existing implications and associations embedded in the source material; however, they will be recontextualized one way or the other in the context of the new piece.

As it can be observed, there are many intricacies to self-referencing in the music of the composer other than simply quoting a pre-existing material and moving on with the music. Adding the manner in which he approached developing the materials (or not), and the complications of his musical and personal life regarding the Soviet regime will only add even more dimensions and complexity to his choices. Subjects that will be discussed further later on.

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<sup>4</sup> Ballantine, *Charles Ives and the Meaning of Quotation in Music*, 180

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Benoît Tremblay, *Polystylism and Narrative Potential in the Music of Alfred Schnittke* (PhD Thesis, 2007), 165.

<sup>6</sup> Alex Ross, *Schnittke Interview* (The New York Times, 1994).

## 1.1 The Research

Studying the various approaches of different composers can help us recognize both novel solutions, and long-established methods of referencing existing musical materials, at the same time.<sup>7</sup> For us to understand the significance of self-referential materials and the ways Schnittke incorporated them, we need to examine the socio-musical atmosphere of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and glance over a few examples of self-references by other composers of the century to find similarities and differences in their approaches. We will then use Schnittke's *Concerto Grosso No.1* as a case study of a piece filled with self-references, go through each reference in more detail, and try to find a relevant narrative. Along the way, we will also need to answer some questions and clarify some of his core concepts in composing music.

Of course the first *Concerto Grosso* is not the only work in which he uses self-references as the building blocks of the composition, so we will discuss how this specific piece compares to the other instances of this phenomenon which will explain why it is of interest to us as a case study. This will also reveal that much of the referenced materials in all of the other instances come from his film music as well. Hence, we need to decipher his relationship with film, "entertainment" music, and "art" music. The connection between the different categories for him indeed goes further than just the self-referenced materials, as will be seen.

Going back to the references themselves, some questions regarding the types of the materials arise. What are their qualities? Are there any similarities or connections between them? Do they have recognizable associations, and if so, how are they recontextualized in their new piece? And by trying to answer them, we can also look further into the subject of whether they are just bound to the world of the same piece or if there are extra-musical associations to the repetition of the same themes for Schnittke.

Aside from associations and meanings, we have to also consider the roles that the self-references play in the piece from a more technical standpoint. This will involve a closer look at how they are used as structural materials for introductions, developments, transitions, or cadences. On a grander scale also, by considering the film-narrative nature of the reused materials, we will try to find the formal schemes and solutions of his concert music influenced by the film music medium.

Besides what is happening in the music, we can still uncover a lot by learning about the surroundings of the composer, especially by the constraints and his solutions to deal with them. In this case, we will have to delve into both the external factors (his relationship with the Soviet regime) and internal ones (nostalgia for a lost home and sense of belonging). Not only the role of music censorship and nostalgia can put the music in a clearer context, but they might also lead us to some reasons why he might have incorporated self-references from his film music, especially when we consider the chronological order of the film soundtracks and the concert music.

In order to try to answer these questions and to discuss the relevant subjects, a rather multi-dimensional approach is required. Not only a study of various books and articles regarding the mentioned subjects was crucial, listening to the mentioned pieces of music, analyzing their scores, and watching the films which Schnittke has referenced the music of were invaluable in gaining a broader view of the subject matter. Combined with other examples by the 20<sup>th</sup> century composers, a narrative was prepared that might shed light on this perhaps lesser studied aspect of Schnittke's music.

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<sup>7</sup> Burkholder, *The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing as a Field*, 851.

## 1.2 Definitions

Before delving into the subject matter, some of the main concepts that will be dealt with need to be clarified. This will help with setting boundaries around what does and does not concern us.

As a disclaimer, large categories such as "borrowing" or "quotation" will not suffice, as there are many solutions for incorporating existing musical materials. Depending on the definitions and the specificity of the outlines, categories such as modeling, variation, paraphrasing, arranging, collage, cantus firmus, and quite a few more can be used to describe the various manners in which composers have used existing material in their works. A model of this categorization, with two appendixes containing historical contexts and relevant questions to ask are devised in J. Peter Burkholder's article "The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing as a Field"<sup>8</sup>. This model and the questions and categorizations are by no means absolute and can be elaborated on further, but it can be a good starting point for further inspections.

### 1.2.1 Quotation

Quotation is the usage of parts of pre-existing music in a new musical work. This direct usage of materials differs from paraphrasing and allusions, which aim to evoke the experience of styles, textures, and in general other works.<sup>9</sup> Recognizing this separation is especially important in our case, since Schnittke extensively uses allusions in many of his pieces as well, many times alongside quotations and sometimes self-quotation.

One aspect of quotation to keep in mind is that it has two components: the original and its transformation.<sup>10</sup> We will be focusing on both the original and its transformation in our case study, which can help us find a clearer connection between the two and decode any possible associations they might carry.

This connection however, can be placed on a spectrum. At one end, the quotation will carry its original meaning without any alterations, and at the other end, the meaning will be completely changed. The countless possibilities between these two absolute conditions will depend on the treatment and the context of the new, compared to the original.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.2.2 Self-Reference

Self-references in the musical context are references that originate from the material composed by the same composer. By this definition, all variations and repetitions pointing towards the original thematical material within a piece, in sonatas or fugues for example, can be considered self-references.<sup>12</sup> Since music has limited means of pointing beyond itself (especially compared to other media),<sup>13</sup> self-references have become one of the main tools of musical development in western classical music.

However, we are interested in self-references beyond the dramatic boundaries of the piece. As a more tangible example, recalling the previous acts in Donizetti's opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* during the "mad scene" is a self-reference, but within the boundaries of the same piece.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> David Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, (Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 2007), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Ballantine, *Charles Ives and the Meaning of Quotation in Music*, 168

<sup>12</sup> Werner Wolf, *Metafiction and Metamusical: Exploring the Limits of Metareference*, (Mouton de Gruyter, 2007), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 1.

In the case of our subject matter, the self-references are quotations from pieces (of film soundtracks) composed as different standalone entities which are then used in a completely different piece, creating an extra-musical connection to the other works of the composer.

### 1.2.3 Intertextuality

Intertextuality was originally defined as a linguistic concept. The term was coined by Julia Kristeva, who pointed out: “*The idea invites the reader to interpret a text as a crossing of texts*”. This concept can be easily used to describe the same type of relation in other types of media as well.<sup>14</sup>

By expanding this concept to a more generalized state, and considering that nothing forms in and/or exists in the void, we can argue that “meaning” itself can always have an intertextual undertone. Every piece of media will inevitably have associations ranging from the personal to the global scale. These associations and relations need not be only connected to the same type of media (e.g. music), but they can come in any form and shape, be it a memory or an internationally recognized trope. These intertextual connections and patterns help us form a meaning, perhaps without us even realizing most of the times. There is no outside-the-intertext.<sup>15</sup>

However, this effect can be emphasized by the creator as a means of focusing the attention to a specific reference, making the outcome more accessible, or for any other reason. Some of the common means for achieving this are quotations, paraphrasing, allusions, parody and pastiche, all of which are well-known strategies used by various composers throughout the ages. However, there are countless ways of creating such emphasis, and it can be done by simply connecting different works together in any perceived manner.

### 1.2.4 Recontextualization

*“Recontextualisation is a process that extracts text, signs or meaning from its original context (decontextualisation) and reuses it in another context.”*<sup>16</sup>

This definition can of course be expanded to musical contexts as well, by replacing “text” with “musical ideas” or even a more naïve “musical notation”. In any way, even if the musical figures and gestures stay exactly the same, since there will be a change of context by its nature, the starting meanings will go through (big or small) changes no matter what.

In the case of Schnittke’s self-references however, we will see that he uses self-quotations either because the concepts remain mostly the same even in the new contexts, or at least some of their significance is carried over by their embedded cultural associations.<sup>17</sup> This obviously is concerned with the outer layers of the music, and the complexities begin when the self-references begin developing, distorting, merging with other quotations, and coming after one another (or other novel materials). These complexities create distance between the old and the new, and every new piece is to an extent defined by the amount and nature of this distance.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Violetta Kostka, Paulo F. de Castro, & William A. Everett (Eds.), *Intertextuality in Music* (Routledge, 2021), 13-14.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> John H. Connolly, *Recontextualisation, Resemiotisation and Their Analysis in Terms of an FDG-Based Framework*, (*Pragmatics*, 24(2), 2015), 377–397.

<sup>17</sup> Tremblay, *Polystylism and Narrative Potential in the Music of Alfred Schnittke*, 150.

<sup>18</sup> Ballantine, *Charles Ives and the Meaning of Quotation in Music*, 167.

The similarity in concepts (or at least moods) in the self-referenced materials is not a sign of thoughtless gluing, but a deliberate expansion of a meta-narrative for the composer himself. A choice that can suggest extra-musical motivations on its own.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.2.5 Nostalgia

Nostalgia was first defined as a physical disease. Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer created the term by combining two ancient Greek words; nostos (return to home) and algos (suffering). Nostalgia had already turned into its now-famous emotional concept by the nineteenth century, by a longing for the past and not just home. An experience that covers emotions from moments of joy to depths of loss.<sup>20</sup> The works of the composers discussed here deal with this sense of loss in one way or another.<sup>21</sup> A fine example of loss in the music of Schnittke can be seen in his *Piano Quintet* (1976), which he was done composing a year before *Concerto Grosso No.1*, our main focus for this study. The nearly unbearable sense of loss in the last movement of the *Piano Quintet* is not only provoked by his feeling of homelessness and a lack of belonging, but also by the death of his mother, the dedicatee of the work.<sup>22</sup>

The meaning and shape of nostalgia can be very different for different composers and even in different compositions. For example, the childhood nostalgia that Ives dealt with (that will be discussed later) carries a different feeling and meaning than a nostalgic sense of homelessness, or even nostalgia for different eras. As a common theme however, nostalgia positions the past, as Susan Stewart says, “*impossibly distant in time*”. This means that the object residing in the past can never be experienced or recovered as it once has been. An unstable, uncertain, and unfulfilled present, leaves the nostalgic to believe that the cure can be found in this impossibly distant past.<sup>23</sup>

Discussing nostalgic tendencies in Schnittke’s music is quite complicated however, since in an interview with Schnittke, Alex Ross mentions:

*“Some commentators, and some imitative composers, have mistaken this approach for mere nostalgia. “That’s one of the major inaccuracies,” Mr. Schnittke said. “The style [of my music] was never focused on the past, nor, for that matter, on the future.” The most remarkable aspect of his work is how a distinctive and recognizable voice emerges through an impossible variety of material. The composer of the present is emphatically, grippingly in control.”*<sup>24</sup>

### 1.2.6 Distortion

Distortion is any modification made to a recognized musical pattern, timbre, style, or other musical topics. This modification is inconsistent with the current state of the context, but cannot be defined as an individual unit and is recognized as a part of the primary state.<sup>25</sup> This definition of distortion not only can be useful for analyzing the procedures inside a musical piece, but it can also be applied to the relations between the elements of the borrowed material from another piece and its usage in the new context.

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<sup>19</sup> Ulrich Krämer, *Quotation and Self-Borrowing in the Music of Alban Berg* (Journal of Musicological Research, 12(1–2), 1992), 62.

<sup>20</sup> Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 20.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 78.

<sup>22</sup> John Webb, *Schnittke in Context* (Tempo, 182, 1992), 22.

<sup>23</sup> Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 19.

<sup>24</sup> Ross, *Schnittke Interview*.

<sup>25</sup> Bruno Alcalde, *Mixture Strategies: An Analytical Framework for Musical Hybridity*, (Music Theory Online, 28(1), 2022), 7.

Of course, the intensity of the distortion can vary quite a bit. To the point that a subtle change of instrumentation (or timbre) which might go unnoticed can still be considered a distortion, while fragmentation and/or development of the original material can perhaps be thought of as a more substantial form of distortion. Nonetheless, both cases will be of interest and relevance to our case study.

### 1.3 Literature Review

We will now take a glance at a few of the resources used to conduct the research. As it will be seen, each one has a different point (or points) of focus, which means no piece of literature is necessarily going to be sufficient on its own. Hence, the endeavor is to connect the dots given to us by each resource, and fill in the gaps until a meaningful narrative can be synthesized.

- **Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music (2003)** by David Metzger, is one of the main resources for studying the cultural and socio-musical aspects of the musical quotation during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It by no means covers all the aspects of quotation, or even its full chronology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but still gives us a rather comprehensive look at its associations within the contexts of race, childhood, madness and mass media. The subjects are not only discussed in the western classical sphere, but also within a broader spectrum of musical styles including jazz, pop, and hip hop. Something that is perhaps not very useful to the subject matter of the study, but still worth mentioning.

However, Schnittke's name (among other composers) is mentioned as being deliberately left out of the discussion, after this proclamation: "*Many musicians who might be expected to appear in a study of quotation are either not discussed or only mentioned in passing.*"<sup>26</sup> Hence, this book will not directly help us with Schnittke's music, but is still a valuable resource for contextualizing his music during this era, and how some other composers might have approached the same (or similar) subjects. For instance, the discussions regarding nostalgia, resurgence of quotations in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the examples by Stockhausen and Berio proved to be very useful for our subject matter.

- **Selling Schnittke: Late Soviet Censorship and the Cold War Marketplace (2016)** is an article by Peter J. Schmelz which delves into Soviet Union's censorship of the music, with a focus on Schnittke's music and the Cold War era. It also sheds light on his various interactions with the regime, and the interpretations of his musical life abroad.<sup>27</sup> It also examines some of the "myths" regarding Soviet censorship and explains how things were in actuality, which leads to the narrative created (especially by the western audience) around Schnittke's music to the point of even "branding" him for something he was not necessarily going through for the rest of his life.

This subject is of importance to us, since the atmosphere he was living in almost definitely led to some of his compositional decisions, and taking up film music and reusing them could have been some of them.

- **Polystylism and Narrative Potential in the Music of Alfred Schnittke (2007)** is Jean-Benoît Tremblay's doctoral dissertation which (as the title suggests) examines the narrative potential made possible by polystylism in a few examples of Schnittke's music. Although a generally useful topic, our point of interest is the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of this study. This is where he focuses on the first *Concerto Grosso*, and analyzes the piece in a structural and material-based manner movement by movement. He also uses Schnittke's own sketches

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<sup>26</sup> Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Peter J. Schmelz, *Selling Schnittke: Late Soviet Censorship and the Cold War Marketplace* (The Oxford Handbook of Music Censorship (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press, 2016), 414.

to decipher the references he uses in the piece, and discusses the narrative associations of some of the strategies he incorporates, such as using the Tango.

This is an invaluable resource for us, since Schnittke's first *Concerto Grosso* is the piece that will be used as a case study for his self-referencing strategies, which means having a deeper narrative and structural analysis can already show us a great deal in regards to the roots of the associations of the references.

- **A Schnittke Reader (2002)** edited by Alexander Ivashkin is a mixture of Schnittke's conversations with Alexander Ivashkin, his writings and articles regarding his own music and on the music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and other musicians' opinions about him and his music.

Although this is less of a focused academic work, it can give us important insights into the composer's concepts regarding classical music, pop music, film music, and films in general. Subjects that can help us identify the roles and the sources of his self-references with more confidence, since they have all been recurring elements in his compositional life. Moreover, he clearly talks about the "unity" in musical language he has been pursuing, both in "entertainment" and "art" music. A topic that can lead us to an understanding of his compositional choices regarding the usage of different sources in his pieces, and the manner in which he treats them.

## 2. Background

Providing a background to the relevant parts of the composer's life and surroundings will prove necessary in revealing the probable influences on Schnittke's decisions and ideology. Furthermore, discussing the quotation culture during the 20<sup>th</sup> century will contextualize his pieces and compositional strategies. Topics that will help with analyzing the case study more confidently further on.

### 2.1 The Composer

*"His Jewish father was a communist and an atheist; his mother, of German descent, was from the Volga region of Russia. His first language was German, but Schnittke considered Russian his native tongue. He knew neither Yiddish nor Hebrew, nor was he well acquainted with Jewish culture. Moreover, when Schnittke turned 48 in 1982, he was baptized as a Catholic."*<sup>1</sup>

It is as if this collage of a backstory had leaked into his polystylistic approach in his music too. Not only that, but also not having a stable sense of "home" or "belonging" could have been a major cause for an unending nostalgia lurking all over his compositions.

Schnittke was composing music based on a tradition he grew up with but felt alien towards, while being inspired by another tradition he longed for, but could not claim because of geopolitical events.<sup>2</sup> We will never fully understand the personal manifestations of these feelings in his compositional processes, and considering his comments regarding nostalgia in Ross' interview mentioned earlier, we might be dealing with a more complex and multi-faceted type of nostalgia. A nostalgia quite different from Ives' more straight-forward childhood and American subjects, something that will be discussed in the next section.

Whether or not this nostalgia was the direct cause of his various referential technics towards the past, is a rather speculative discussion. He used direct quotations from other composers, and even based full

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<sup>1</sup> Solomon Volkov, *The ABCs of Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998)*, (Tempo, 206, 1998), 37.

<sup>2</sup> Gerard McBurney, *Schnittke and Stylistic Borrowing*, (Programme booklet of the 1990 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival).

compositions on them. In his *String Quartet No.3* for instance, he directly quotes Orlando di Lasso's *Stabat Mater*, Beethoven's *String Quartet No.16*, and Shostakovich's musical cryptogram *DSCH*, and builds the whole piece by developing, fragmenting, distorting, and recontextualizing the quotations. Techniques that are familiar within the musical language of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Although, there is usually more than one explanation for such compositional decisions, and not all of his references were necessarily residing in the distant past either. Schnittke was already using all the categories of referential technics: allusions, quotations, paraphrasing, structural and programmatical models, all based on existing materials and styles of different composers and eras. So, using his own materials in the same manner seems to be a logical next step and not out of place.

The source of the materials (film music) however, is rather intriguing as stated before. Schnittke had an extensive relationship with film music, which was rather ambivalent depending on the project he was working on. This relationship was in direct connection with the decision to reference his film music in his concert music, something that will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

Of course, studying the composer's musical output will begin to make more sense as soon as we draw a picture of its immediate and further surroundings. For that matter, we will have to take a glance at how the quotation culture thrived during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and how the concepts revolving around it can be connected to our subject matter directly or indirectly.

## 2.2 Quotation in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

After the Second World War, a notion of pushing western classical music far and forward appeared, so that it could act as an almost standalone entity without the burden of tradition. Serialism was one of the main outcomes of this atmosphere.

After the planning and exploration of integral serialism by the members of the so-called "Darmstadt School", a few of the composers such as Berio, Stockhausen and to some extent Rochberg, began experimenting with quotations and creating musical collages, as a means of freeing themselves from the boundaries of such logic-based and often strict musical languages. Using quotations and allusions were some of the direct counter-movements that opened the gates of the past and tradition to the musical language once again.

The promise of collage idioms centered around two dynamics: expansion and connection. The use of quotations caused a substantial expansion of the available musical materials. While the serialists were looking inwards, creating more and more complex systems, collage composers on the other hand gained access to a vast outside realm, providing them the opportunity to give new life to existing materials in new compositions. This massive deviation changed the direction and shape of much of the classical music created in the 1950s and 1960s. The collage music movement did not end with simple quotations; the composers used these materials as layers with immense variety in their music, signifying the collage effect even further.<sup>3</sup>

These composers were greatly fascinated by the act of connection in collage works, a fascination that comes through in Berio's talk of "interrelationships", Stockhausen's models of "intermodulation", and Rochberg's accounts of "ars combinatoria".<sup>4</sup> These connections are mostly concerned with the materials used withing

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<sup>3</sup> Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 110.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

the context of the piece (paratext), which can also be seen in many of Schnittke's works while employing quotations and allusions. However, as it will be seen further on, the case study of his selected self-referential composition will show a quite different and straight-forward approach.

As mentioned before, this act of connection has been directly linked to the past, and two different attitudes can be observed when it comes to the composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century dealing with the past (and existing materials). Works such as Berio's *Recital I* and Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King* show that some found the magnitude of the past to be overwhelming.<sup>5</sup> The darkness is not just of madness but also of the past. They create a limitless expanse into which the past can flow, our only possible understanding of the future being as a continuation of what has happened before. With such outcomes, the past has subsumed the present and the future, and time itself has become an embodiment of insanity. These are works that focus on the oppression of the past and memory.<sup>6</sup> This oppression can have its roots in personal experiences of the mind and memories, or in enforcements by some outside powers. For Schnittke, both would be true. His sense of alienation and loss for almost all his life, and living as a composer under the Soviet regime had taken a toll on the composer's mindset, at times resulting in very dark and/or "dissonant" expressive passages in his quotation and allusion riddled music. For him however, the expression of "evil" and to some extent the aforementioned insanity at times manifests itself through "popular" music, an approach that can be seen with his usage of the Tango for instance.

However, not all twentieth century works drawing upon past materials share this cultural fear and anxiety over the past. At times, they view instead the blend of past and present as regenerative and enriching.<sup>7</sup> Works such as Berio's *Sinfonia* and Stockhausen's *Hymnen* are a sign that other composers viewed the past as inspirational. These works are typical of the different responses composers had to the past during this time.<sup>8</sup> As it will be discussed later on, Schnittke uses both attitudes when it came to his quotations and allusions. The various sources to his references play the role of an all-encompassing force to gather everything in one piece. His *Symphony No. 1* (1974) is a great example of him following Mahler's idea of a symphony to "be like the world" and to "contain everything".

Although he holds the musical outputs of the past masters such as Bach as the symbols of high-quality art, the sheer number of quotations and allusions he incorporates, and the variety of the sources mean that they have been eventually used for both "positive" and "negative" situations and anything in between nonetheless. Using music from the past centuries, especially in such quantity, can impose the heavy weight of tradition on contemporary musical endeavors, which can sometimes lead to creative suffering.<sup>9</sup>

It does not however necessarily need to be awaking musical tradition. One important 20<sup>th</sup> century composer that goes beyond this concept and is a substantial influence to quotation culture and Schnittke himself, is Ives. He was vastly absorbed by the ideas of childhood and nostalgia. A clear example is the song *The Rainbow*, where the child is depicted as a pure entity, and the adult as a fallen from grace figure, who still has a connection with childhood. Meanwhile, in many of his other pieces, such as *The Fourth of July*, Ives is restless with nostalgia and stacks quotations as if it is a wall made out of the past.<sup>10</sup>

This nostalgia (however not so specific to childhood) can be found in almost all of the mentioned composers' works. The feeling of loss and an unreachable past/idea/utopia can manifest itself in insanity,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 17,21.

hope, ambivalence, and other attitudes by different composers. As we can see with Ives, the quotations are not mere transcriptions of his aural memory. Instead, they carry the symbolic *attitude* regarding the original material to the new context created in the new piece.<sup>11</sup> This “attitude” can be seen quite clearly as a consistent manifestation of duality in our case study, *Concerto Grosso No. 1*, which will be further pointed out.

Another point relevant to us regarding Ives, is that quite often his quotations are of American origins, and this naturally signifies or even evokes the American experience, at least to a degree.<sup>12</sup> This leads back to our subject of familiarity. The same holds true with Schnittke’s self-references. If the audience is not familiar with the film music he is quoting, and perhaps the general atmosphere of the film and what role the soundtrack plays during that moment in the film, or even the fact that he wrote so many film soundtracks, some part of the experience will be left unfulfilled.

This means that no matter the composition, either the 20<sup>th</sup> century audience generally requires a broader knowledge of various sources of music, or needs to be in a socially relevant situation to appreciate the references made by the composer. This implies that the quotation is not only dependent on the manner (and how clearly) the composer incorporates it, but also on the degree in which the audience recognizes its effects, especially considering the variety of quoted sources starting from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3. Three Instances by Other Composer

The practice of self-referencing by no means began during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it simply became more self-aware and complex during this era. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the term *Reminiscenzen* was used for such an approach. However, it was incorporated in various manners, based on the quantity of the reused materials, the strength of the connection between the original and the quotation, and its role in the new piece.<sup>1</sup> The same considerations apply to our 20<sup>th</sup> century instances, or any other self-referencing composition. An important figure of this practice was Schubert, with the rather well-known example of using the theme of his colloquially named *Ave Maria* lied during the first movement of his *Piano Trio in E-flat major*. This was however not the only instance by Schubert himself, or the composers before and after him. But for the purposes of this study, we will focus on the 20<sup>th</sup> century for a more relevant contextualization.

Although the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a vibrant time for the quotation culture in western classical music, there aren’t as many cases of direct self-referencing found in the repertoire, compared to quotations from other sources. Here, we will examine three examples from both the first and the second halves of the of the century, just to provide a better understanding of the different strategies the composers used, and the various roles the materials were given in the first place.

#### 3.1 Schoenberg’s *Erwartung* (1909)

*Erwartung* is a single act monodrama composed by Arnold Schoenberg in 1909.

In the closing scene of *Erwartung*, Schoenberg self-borrows an earlier song of his, *Am Wegrund*. It was written four years earlier and as the woman (the main role) is dealing with the past, Schoenberg uses fragments of this earlier work to evoke a past beyond its dramatic boundaries.<sup>2</sup> This is similar to how

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<sup>11</sup> Ballantine, *Charles Ives and the Meaning of Quotation in Music*, 168

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 176.

<sup>1</sup> Scott Messing, *Self-Quotation in Schubert: "Ave Maria," the Second Trio, and Other Works*, (University of Rochester Press, 2020), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 74.

Schnittke also provokes references to his other compositions and to himself as a composer, as an element beyond the boundaries of the drama of a certain piece, creating intertextual relations.

The opera bears the weight of a contradiction between the memory of the music and the libretto. The music, with its non-repetitive nature seemingly recollects nothing, while the text does not cease to remember. “*In other words, Erwartung recalls nothing from its musical past.*”<sup>3</sup> This effect of forgetfulness however is manifested in Schnittke’s instances in other manners, by distortion resulting in the disintegration of the material, since the element of text is not present.

Near the end of the monodrama – the climax of this representational tension – a quotation of Schoenberg’s earlier song “Am Wegrund” emerges.<sup>4</sup> Schoenberg first offers traces of the borrowed materials and then a more complete presentation. The presentation is not so complete, for once again we have just fragments.<sup>5</sup> This can be in contrast with how Schnittke treated such self-quotations, as no matter how distorted and fragmented they are, we will always hear the “full” quotation either in the beginning or the end of the process nonetheless.

Going back to the reference to “Am Wegrund”, it may be a musical memory, but whose? It is most likely not the woman’s. The memory may well belong to Schoenberg.<sup>6</sup> This entails that the intertextual relations are not only established between the different pieces, but they encompass the medium and contain the composer’s experience as well. This experience can manifest itself using different viewpoints of the past, and as mentioned before, one of the ways of dealing with the past by the composer is the dark and gloomy approach, which can represent itself in madness, an element well familiar with the music of Schoenberg which can be observed here too.

As the lack of text in Schnittke’s case study keeps the music from having a “story-like” narrative, such elements can be found in his usage of the *Tango* for instance, which brings the same dark madness to the piece with a huge contrast compared to its surrounding materials.

### **3.2 Berg’s *Wozzeck* (1922) & *String Quartet Op.3* (1910)**

Another instance from the second Viennese school. Studies revolving Berg’s quotations mostly have focused on their extra-musical side. A great example of this subject is his quotation of the first measure of *Wozzeck* in *Lulu*, which is Alwa’s proclamation: “*Über die ließe sich freilich eine interessante Oper schreiben*” (“*One could certainly write an interesting opera about her*”).<sup>7</sup> This again is rendered possible by the existence of text, an element that adds yet another dimension to self-quotation.

Regarding *Wozzeck* however, the majority of the self-references originated from fragmentations of sonata movements dating to 1908 and 1909. The main theme of the fourth sonata is the most famous of these self-references, which was reused as the beginning section of *Wozzeck*’s interlude from the third act. Furthermore, another passage from the same sonata manifests itself as the climactic first recapitulation of the same interlude, although with minor registral and temporal differences.<sup>8</sup>

Yet another instance of self-referencing in *Wozzeck* can be found during the so-called “bible scene” in the beginning of the third act. The material was taken from a piano fragment in F minor (*Österreichische*

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>7</sup> Krämer, *Quotation and Self-Borrowing in the Music of Alban Berg*, 53.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 66.

*Nationalbibliothek, Fonds 21 Berg*), which is then texturally altered from having a homophonic accompaniment to a polyphonic composition.<sup>9</sup> Again, although recognizable, not all the self-references are presented in their full form.

With the earlier *String Quartet*, the self-borrowing originates from the second main subject of fragments for his fifth sonata. This material appears near the end of the first movement of the quartet, during the recapitulation of the first subject. The developimentary and motif-based texture is cut off by this rather intricate and previously unheard theme. Compared to the source material, the melody stays intact for the most part, while the accompaniment is almost nowhere to be seen (aside from a half measure maybe). Nonetheless, this unexpected theme eventually is engulfed by the preceding motif-based and polyphonic texture.<sup>10</sup> Here we can see the quotations are embedded in variations and fragmentation, and even a change in the accompaniment. These are all of course used in Schnittke's music too, but it is becoming more and more apparent that he also had the urge to showcase the exact original idea at some point in the piece as well.

In general, Berg incorporated the practice of reusing pre-existing materials in a new work and finding a satisfying solution regarding their structural connection to the rest of the piece, as a creative motivation. However, a simpler and more personal argument could also be that he wanted to save certain (even fragmentary) musical ideas that were important to his musical language from being forgotten and unused.<sup>11</sup> The latter argument can simply be true for Schnittke as well, although this "rescuing of ideas" might have had more to do with the censorship of both his film and concert music to some extent instead.

### **3.3 Berio's *Recital I (for Cathy)* (1972)**

Another monodrama, *Recital I (for Cathy)* was composed in 1972. An example of self-referencing and quotation from the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the case of Berio's monodrama, quotations almost act as the main role. There are more than 40 quotations throughout the whole piece; from early baroque to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including his own previous compositions. This is now closer to the more post-modern approach to composition that Schnittke incorporated as well: Drenching the composition in quotations (and allusions), creating a narrative out of many stylistically discrete elements, and referring to the composer's own compositions, all in the span of the same piece.

The reason for Berio to go to this extent however, is mostly a narrative one. The character is a singer with a substantial repertory of pieces, so it feels only natural for her to express herself with the emotional tool she knows the best, music. At this point, there are compositions available to her for every occasion and from every era, meaning that no matter how mad it all appears to be, there is a rather "logical" connection between what is happening and what is heard.

The musical quotations connect not only with lines from the monologue but also with each other, binding together to form both tonal and topical clusters. The repertory the singer has accumulated over the years and quotes from, is not just a symbol of madness, but also a haunting burden and source of oppression as well.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>12</sup> Metzer, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 94.

This is another piece which includes text, deals with madness, and has a rather negative relationship with the past. Not all these attributes are necessarily present in Schnittke's instances of self-referencing, which makes them quite different. The lack of text means the narrative is more abstract and the quotations do not contain text. The self-references also are not always represented as dark entities (although they exist too) and there are both "light" and "dark" flavors for each, the duality that will be examined in chapter 5.

It is also worthy to mention that the source of the references in the discussed examples are all from other concert music, while Schnittke almost exclusively used film music. This has its own implications regarding the structure of the pieces and the conceptual process of the composition, which will now be discussed further.

#### 4. Context and Intention in Schnittke's Self-Referencing

The quotation on its own is not a representation of the musical expression. The expression instead arises from the relation between the original material's meaning, and its new recontextualized meaning.<sup>1</sup>

We know that quotation is nothing alien to Schnittke's music, and while it is paired with allusions as well, he sets no boundary for the era and the style they might be originating from. Of course, we are talking about the resources that he was interested in and not *everything* per se, but we can still see some of the "everythingness" regarding his musical materials, especially in his larger scale works like his symphonies.

Maybe a more important subject for us than the origin of the materials, is how he treated them conceptually. Schnittke, more than any other composer, treated quotations and allusion as genuine and natural parts of his compositional language and process.<sup>2</sup> The references are by no means superficial or sarcastic (although sarcasm and the grotesque can often be found in his music as well). They are used as sincere forms of expression, often away from any sort of parody. At the same time, there is certainly a "difference" between them and the surrounding "new" materials, as they are always of another time and place. Metzger puts this quality as such:

*"With quotation, the borrowed material is most often familiar or, if not so, it at least stands apart by virtue of being out of context. Such conspicuity intensifies the engagement between old and new, as we can hear how easily or reluctantly the borrowing settles into its new locale. Once inside, it continually points outside, as the prominence of the borrowing prods us to look back to its origin. [...] Manipulations of the pre-existent material adds another dimension to the play between old and new, as we hear what new guises the old can assume."*<sup>3</sup>

In order for us to understand the relationship between Schnittke's old and the new, we need to familiarize ourselves with some of the concepts, and previous and contemporary situations relevant to his compositional processes. Any provocation of the past reveals the current perception of that time period, and at the same time the perception of the present relative to that period.<sup>4</sup> This can include his socio-political surroundings, his relationship with film music, his search for unity in music, the chronology of the pieces, the technicalities of implementing the self-references in the new piece, and how the original materials could have influenced the shape of the new pieces.

It is worthy to note however, that the true intentions of the composer by self-referencing their own compositions may never be revealed to us. Alfred Einstein comments on this regarding the self-quotations

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Pruslin, *Maxwell Davies's Second Taverner Fantasia* (Tempo, 73, 1965), 2–11.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Moody, *The Music of Alfred Schnittke*, (Tempo, 168, 1989), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

of Schubert, who just like Schnittke had an intriguing source for his references, his own Lieder. He declared that any endeavor to explain a composer's potential intentions for self-referencing their own compositions reveals a "*secret we shall never be able to decipher – and probably never should know*".<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.1 Soviet Oppression

The blunt term censorship fails to capture the entire spectrum of artistic control in the USSR.<sup>6</sup> It was a complicated bureaucracy with many layers and levels, and no certainty in any of them, and often even filled with contradictions. Schnittke's Faust cantata, *Seid nüchtern und wachet . . .* was banned, but his first symphony was not (although it wasn't premiered in a major city by a major orchestra), while both were "novel" and unorthodox compositions in the authorities' eyes. As Schnittke himself mentioned, "*no one ever gave any kinds of central directives about this matter*."<sup>7</sup>

As chaotic of a system it was, there was still some vague understanding of this matter for the higher ups, which itself would strengthen or weaken based on the political atmosphere of the day. The authorities knew that they could not prohibit all new music from emerging and it was going to progress one way or the other, so they only limited it to institutes and/or within some boundaries.<sup>8</sup> This however does not mean it was all sunshine and rainbows for all the composers by any means. During the same era, Schnittke never obtained a number of domestic performances comparable to other successful Soviet composers from his generation, nor was he allowed to travel abroad with any frequency.<sup>9</sup> This could also be partly rooted in his behavior as an artist in the Soviet regime.

For instance, both Shostakovich and Prokofiev composed musical propaganda occasionally, and abided by the official guidelines regarding the styles of even some of their more prominent works, in order to satisfy the Soviet regime and survive.<sup>10</sup> However, this was not the case with Schnittke. Although he was sometimes favored by the Soviet regime for a variety of (sometimes unknown) reasons, he did not delve into deliberately creating propaganda or state-approved music. He never received a Lenin or Stalin prize, never composed propaganda oratorios, never earned any noteworthy payments from the Composers Union for his concert music, and did not have any facilitated international fame to start with, all unlike Shostakovich and Prokofiev.<sup>11</sup>

Schnittke faced many obstacles regarding the public performances of his compositions. The authorities would cause problems of various types and intensities for performers who included Schnittke's work in their repertory, and would sometimes directly cancel Schnittke's music performances at the last minute. Moreover, his scores were not purchased by the Ministry of Culture, while more abiding composers were generously rewarded. Even his foreign commissions were deliberately disrupted by the higher ups, and when that proved unsuccessful, he was forbidden to travel abroad to attend the premieres of his own music.<sup>12</sup> Aside from his rather un-bending character towards the Soviets, another reason for this harshness might have been his geographical and cultural origins. His half Jewish and half Volga German origins were not in

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<sup>5</sup> Messing, *Self-Quotation in Schubert: "Ave Maria," the Second Trio, and Other Works*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Schmelz, *Selling Schnittke: Late Soviet Censorship and the Cold War Marketplace*, 418.

<sup>7</sup> Peter J. Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music During the Thaw*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), 189-190.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 194.

<sup>9</sup> Schmelz, *Selling Schnittke: Late Soviet Censorship and the Cold War Marketplace*, 419.

<sup>10</sup> George G. Weickhardt, *Dictatorship and Music: How Russian Music Survived the Soviet Regime*, (Russian History, 31(1/2), 2004), 134.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 135.

<sup>12</sup> Volkov, *The ABCs of Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998)*, 36.

his favor, since both were highly rejected by the Soviet Union. “*He was a composer whose every attribute would seem to have been unacceptable to the Brezhnev regime.*”<sup>13</sup>

Composers living under the Soviet regime were certainly confined to the pre-defined boundaries, but they were not put aside completely.<sup>14</sup> For example, as mentioned, while Schnittke was forbidden by Khrennikov to travel abroad to attend the premieres of his compositions, his scores could still be freely exported.<sup>15</sup> All this meant that most of his music before around the 80s (and the gradual dissolution of the Soviet Union) was performed and pushed by and because of performers such as Gidon Kremer, Yuri Bashmet, and the Kronos Quartet. Starting from the 80s, Schnittke began to get commissioned for more and more pieces, and received a few different prizes by various entities around the world. He lived long enough to see his success and relative freedom as a composer, and moved to Germany in 1990 for the last 8 years of his life, albeit struggling with poor health.

This was however only the latter part of his life, and prior to that his concert music would not make him a living. In order to deal with this problem, he began teaching parttime at the Moscow Conservatory, and further along started making film music in 1962.<sup>16</sup> He became prolific with film music, to the point that he scored more than 60 titles by the end of his life. Writing film music for income because of oppression wasn’t anything new, Shostakovich also did so, but he was not as prolific and eager to do so as Schnittke.

The films he wrote music for were not free from the constraints of censorship either. Their releases could often be delayed even for years, or they could be straight up banned. Nonetheless, not only writing film music brought him much-needed income, it also allowed him to experiment with new ideas and approaches, while his concert music was rarely allowed to be performed.<sup>17</sup> This would create a two-sided process for Schnittke. On the one hand, he could experiment with musical materials that he would not be able to hear in the concert hall in his film music, and on the other hand he could reuse the materials from the films which were not allowed to be screened or were not received well by the authorities or the audience in his concert music.

## 4.2 Film Music and Concert Music

Aside from the discussed monetary and political reasons involved in Schnittke’s film music career, he had a more personal and complex relationship with it. As he mentions in one of his writings on film and film music:

*“For several years I experienced an inward urge to write music for the cinema and theater. At first I enjoyed doing this, then it became a burden, and then it dawned on me: my lifelong task would be to bridge the gap between serious music and music for entertainment, even if I broke my neck in the process.”*<sup>18</sup>

This meant that he viewed film music as valid and expressive as concert music, and did not take it lightly, an approach that can be seen in his usage of quotations and allusion in general as well. He clearly states this as such: “*What I did for the cinema was serious, not mere hack-work.*”<sup>19</sup> As much as they are categorized as “entertainment” music, more often than not, the subjects and themes of the films he worked on were

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<sup>13</sup> Weickhardt, *Dictatorship and Music: How Russian Music Survived the Soviet Regime*, 135.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 140.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 136.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 136.

<sup>17</sup> Volkov, *The ABCs of Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998)*, 37.

<sup>18</sup> Alfred Schnittke, *A Schnittke Reader*, (Ed. Alexander Ivashkin, Indiana University Press, 2002), 45.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

rather dark and heavy. Moreover, his relationship with film music surpassed only being a part of his career, to the point that he became acquaintances with a few film directors, and dedicated his *String Quartet No.2* to Larisa Sheptiko after her death (The director of *The Ascent*, a film which will be brought up during the next chapter).

This dedication to film music however, did not stop him from being criticized for the repetition of familiar materials, specifically from his film soundtracks. Of course, reusing the same material (especially from a “low” form of music from the point of view of the critics) can be a double-edged sword. Musical borrowing bears the weight of fears such as lack of originality and desperation, and at the same time can signify the composer’s ability to create new music using pre-existing materials and be empowering.<sup>20</sup> But as we will see, his reusing of materials is thoughtful and not out of desperation, and they play a main role in the creation of the pieces, both structurally and conceptually. Schnittke himself words his intentions as such (although perhaps a bit romanticized):

*“There is a moment when I think, “I’ve used this before, and if I reproduce it precisely as it was, I am guilty of falsity because repetition is bad.” But in reality I am wrong to think that because the truth has to be expressed in different ways at different moments, so there has to be this constant repetition.”*<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, before he found the connection between his film and concert music, he was struggling with a split:

*“At first the situation was that what I was doing in the cinema had no connection with what I was doing in my own compositions. Then I realized that this would not do: I was responsible for everything I wrote. This kind of split was inadmissible.”*<sup>22</sup>

He was clearly looking for a uniformity, a connecting network that could encompass all his (and other) musical forms.

### **4.3 A Unified Musical Language**

Schnittke clearly states that *“The language of music has to be unified, as it always has been; it has to be universal. It may lean one way or the other, but there cannot be two musical languages.”*<sup>23</sup>

This might seem like a quite rigid and limiting viewpoint, but what he was looking for, was to simply blur the lines between categories and open up the possibility of using any source from any era or location for expressive purposes. He even goes as far as stating that *“Cultural boundaries must not be preserved.”*<sup>24</sup> This is not however solved by simply stitching everything together and hoping for a narrative to reveal itself. Hence, he was trying to create a musical language that could act as a basis for all the different musical materials to thrive in. This is in accordance with the constant and diverse media consumption of an interconnected and social species such as ours (even more so during the 21<sup>st</sup> century).

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<sup>20</sup> Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 10-11.

<sup>21</sup> Schnittke, *A Schnittke Reader*, 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

He puts it as follows:

*"I have this dream of a unified style where fragments of serious music and fragments of music for entertainment would not just be scattered about in a frivolous way, but would be the elements of a diverse musical reality: elements that are real in the way they are expressed, but that can be used to manipulate – be they jazz, pop, rock, or serial music."*<sup>25</sup>

The realization of a search for a "universal" musical language would lead him to use recontextualization as one of his main composition tools. This could either mean that the various allusions, quotations, and styles would need to be used and manipulated in a manner that they could coherently live in the same piece of music far from their origins, or the exact same material would be reused and unavoidably recontextualized in a completely different setting. Once again, his first *Concerto Grosso* is a rich example of this universality:

*"I dream of the Utopia of a united style, where fragments of 'U' (Unterhaltung) [entertaining] and 'E' (Ernst) [serious] are not used for comic effect but seriously represent multi-faceted musical reality. That's why I've decided to put together some fragments from my cartoon film music: a joyful children's chorus, a nostalgic atonal serenade, a piece of hundred-percent-guaranteed Correlli (Made in the USSR), and finally, my grandmother's favourite tango played by my great-grandmother on a harpsichord. I am sure all these themes go together very well, and I use them absolutely seriously."*<sup>26</sup>

This is the utopic attitude that Metzger tells us about regarding the 20<sup>th</sup> century composers: A hope that past and present can be reconciled. Such optimism in turn inspires the dreams of renewal and utopia.<sup>27</sup> This shows that it is not a concept specific to Schnittke, and can be seen in the music of Stockhausen, Berio, Rochberg, and Pousseur. However, he dealt with it differently, and in a purely musical manner.<sup>28</sup> The main difference here is that the utopia for the other composers was a concept revolving around a positive social awareness of the people around the world, and the possibilities of co-existence and connection, and it was interestingly enough happening in the middle of the Cold War and the Space Race (which is a subject out of the scope of this study). For Schnittke on the other hand, the utopia was mostly concerned with the different styles, genres, and eras of music. A network of all of his musical experiences would be created in one place, no matter old or new, and no matter the source or the context; hence, "purely musical".

His purely musical utopia does not necessarily paint a fantasized and unreachable position however, since it is based on the precepted happenings of the world around him:

*"Contemporary reality will make it necessary to experience all the musics one has heard since childhood, including rock and jazz and classical and all other forms, combining them into a synthesis... The synthesis must arise as a natural longing, or through necessity."*<sup>29</sup>

This sounds a lot like how Ives approached references, something that sounds like a mishmash of *everything* one has experienced, but under the surface there is a "natural longing" towards some nostalgic object(s).

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, (Phaidon Press, 1996), 140.

<sup>27</sup> Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*.

<sup>28</sup> Tremblay, *Polystylism and Narrative Potential in the Music of Alfred Schnittke*, 121.

<sup>29</sup> Claire Polin, *Interviews with Soviet Composers* (Tempo, 151, 1984), 10–16.

## 4.4 Form and Narrative

One other thing to keep in mind regarding Schnittke's "serious" involvement in film music, is that working in movies almost certainly affected the manner in which he approached musical form. The synchronization of the picture and music is a task that cannot be neglected by the composer. Of course, a huge amount of care can be put into the process of creating an effective mix of the two by the film editor, but there are still boundaries that the film composer has to follow nonetheless. Schnittke acknowledged this based on his own experience as well: "*In film much of what is in the music – its form, its dynamics – is defined by the director.*"<sup>30</sup>

This means that the structural form, the length, the highs and lows, and even the general attitude of the music are easily affected by the film's requirements. This might seem to be a separate subject from concert music, but considering the amount of film music Schnittke had worked on, his seriousness in the task, and his "lifelong task" of marrying entertainment and art music, his musical thinking and as a result his compositions had clearly been affected by it. This effect is more pronounced when he reuses his film music material in a concert music context, which means the latter will bend its structure (at least temporarily) in favor of the film music references. This results in an interesting "dialogue" between the formally packed film music references and the freer rest of the materials (which is only possible in concert music), something that can be clearly seen in our case study piece:

*"I can transfer one or another of the themes into another composition, and by contrast with the other material in that composition, it acquires a new role."* He even specifically brings up the Tango from the film *Agony* used in his first *Concerto Grosso*, and how he tried to change its meaning by placing it in a contrasting setting and providing a development unlike the original.<sup>31</sup> This takes us back to the recontextualization subject, something that seems to reappear throughout Schnittke's compositional processes.

The second thing to consider, is that the referenced film music materials already have a narrative pre-embedded into them. Bringing multiple instances of this type of material into a piece can unsurprisingly result in a more episodic form of narrative. Furthermore, by considering his extensive film music experience, we can assume that the narrative technics used in film music had already made their way into his concert music as well, even when direct self-references were not present. This could present itself simply as a more "visual" or "narrative-like" approach to concert music dramaturgy, or by having "characters" and arcs, at least in the mind of the composer (something that will be discussed further in the next chapter).

## 4.5 Distortions

No matter the origin and style of the reused material, it appears in Schnittke's music in two forms. It is either a complete iteration of the original material, fully recognizable and structurally complete, or it goes through distortions and manipulations, or a combination of both (as is the case with *Concerto Grosso No. 1*).

The reason for incorporating distortions can be twofold. Firstly, it can have a developmental and structural root, by assigning the reused material the role of any other original theme or texture which goes through changes, deconstruction, and reconstruction to create the tension and release economy of the piece. This is not surprising, as "development" is one of the main topics in western classical music, and distortion is one of its main tools.

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<sup>30</sup> Schnittke, *A Schnittke Reader*, 51.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

The other side of things can be interpreted as a more conceptual and dramaturgical layer of the music. An already fully stated theme going through deconstruction and distortion can be reminiscent of distance and forgetfulness, struggles and constraints, doom and unjust, and many other usually “negative” connotations. On the other hand, a fragmented theme coming together in the end can evoke salvation, success, or a finalization of matters.

Considering real-life applications though, it is almost never one or the other, and distortion of the material will provide us with results from the both worlds eventually, depending on the interpretation. This is no different for self-referenced materials, perhaps with the addition of adding another layer of extra-musical “temporal distance” and “first iteration” of the original material to the interpretation.

#### 4.6 Chronological Order and Derivation

Finally, we can take a look at the timings of the creation of the pieces and their quotation. It is the case that (at least in our case study) all the film music has either been already composed, or it was contemporary with the concert music. This means that some of the music was used in both the film and the concert music in parallel (or almost in parallel), but as a general observation it is the film music that comes first and is used as a source of self-referencing, not the other way around. There are however other materials outside of film music as well, and discussing them is out of the scope of this study, but they will be briefly mentioned shortly. This includes cases where a movement or a piece is an arrangement of a previous piece without any (or with minimal) changes.

### 5. Case Study

There are a few examples of self-references in Schnittke’s music. The main theme of the film *Adventures of a Dentist* is used as the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement in *Suite in the Old Style* and his *Symphony No. 1*. In turn, the Menuet theme from *Suite in the Old Style* was used in *Musica Nostalgia*. The Ballet theme from the same piece is used in the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement of his *Symphony No. 1*. The Tango from the film *Agony* is not reused once, but twice both in *Concerto Grosso No. 1* (which will be discussed here), and also later in the opera *Life with an Idiot*. The opening to the Waltz from the same movie is used in his Piano Quintet. Music from the film *Glass Harmonica* is heard both in his *Violin Sonata No. 2* and *Concerto Grosso No. 1*.

However, we will be focusing on his first *Concerto Grosso* as a case study for our subject matter. It is perhaps the piece with the most instances of self-references, where he uses themes and materials from 5 of his film soundtracks, and in one case multiple themes from one film. At the same time, the whole piece is rich with allusions and quotations from other composers, which helps us differentiate between “other” references and referencing his own works. Furthermore, it contains no text, which means unlike the Shoenberg, Berg, and Berio examples the potential of referencing text material is not possible (the usage or the lack of it is another story).

The usage of existing music can only be understood while taking into account the function and the composition process of the source material, and the other present references as well, as they have overlapping boundaries and histories of evolution.<sup>1</sup> Hence, we will examine the self-references from the music of these films, and try to find the recurring ideas, strategies, and the nature of the duality in the materials and the piece itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Burkholder, *The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing as a Field*, 859.

## 5.1 Concerto Grosso No.1

Schnittke started writing his first *Concerto Grosso* in the middle of 1976 by the request of violinists Gidon Kremer and Tatiana Grindenko. The piece was delivered in early 1977 and was performed and recorded several times by the end of the year.<sup>2</sup> It is written for two solo violins, prepared piano, harpsichord, and 21 strings. The name suggests a neo-classical baroque concept for the music, and it is structured as 6 movements.

*“The nostalgia in composing a concerto grosso is not necessarily related to a return to tradition, but rather to exploit it for developing new expressions: a fusion of past and present aimed at the utopian future of [Schnittke’s] unified style.”*<sup>3</sup>

This might also be one of the more extreme examples of the outcome of the search for a unifying musical language, by fitting the temporally far concept of contemporary entertainment music in a baroque form.

The piece has a mysterious opening section, incorporating the prepared piano (which itself is a self-reference and will be discussed further). Then a recurring and rather inactive material is announced by the two solo violins, and by using these seemingly unpromising materials, combined with quotations from the music of other periods (especially Bach), and self-references from his film music (unknown to the western audience), he creates an intricate and interrelated musical network.<sup>4</sup> This sets the tone for the whole piece, as the banal and the complex, the referenced and the original, and the old and the new merge together immediately in an unsuspecting manner as if they were already made for each other.

Our focus will be the self-references from the 5 films however: The BACH harmonization from *Glass Harmonica* (Andrej Khrzhanovsky, 1968), the opening and the two other themes from *How Czar Peter the Great Married Off His Moor* (1976), the tango from *Agony* (Elem Klimov, 1974, USSR release in 1985), the distorted main theme from *The Ascent* (1976), and the cadential figure from *Butterfly* (Andrej Khrzhanovsky, 1972).

The source materials of the self-references have clear and strong meanings in their original context of the movies. In *Glass Harmonica*, the BACH motif is used as an element of salvation, opposing the authority and the greed driving it. In *Agony*, the tango signifies the moments that Rasputin has to make a decision between sin and virtue (or their remembrance). The cadential figure used in *Butterfly* signals turning points in the story. All these elements play equally significant roles in *Concerto Grosso* as well, which denotes their intertextual connections furthermore.<sup>5</sup> This holds true for the music of the two other films as well, but perhaps with a less strong clear-cut symbolism.

### 5.1.1 BACH Harmonization from *Glass Harmonica*

*The Glass Harmonica* (Стеклянная Гармоника) was created in 1968 by Andrei Khrzhanovsky, at the end of an era when Soviet censorship was relaxed, between early 1950s and mid-1960s, dubbed Khrushchev’s Thaw.<sup>6</sup> Even so, it was still banned because of its unorthodox art style and score, equivocal message, and its general contradictions with the socialist-realism style doctrine pushed by the regime. The film itself visually alludes to or borrows from famous paintings by Bosch, Goya, Dürer, El Greco, Magritte, and a few

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<sup>2</sup> Schnittke, *A Schnittke Reader*, 45.

<sup>3</sup> Alcalde, *Mixture Strategies: An Analytical Framework for Musical Hybridity*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Moody, *The Music of Alfred Schnittke*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Tremblay, *Polystylism and Narrative Potential in the Music of Alfred Schnittke*, 151.

<sup>6</sup> Solomon Fenton-Miller, & Jennifer Iverson, *Compositional Strategies in Alfred Schnittke’s Early Polystylism* (In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 2016), 22.

more in the manner of “visual quotations”. A technic well-known in the music of Schnittke as well, and well-fitting for his “polystylism”.

In the film, based on the opening description, the Glass Harmonica which plays the BACH motif “inspired high thoughts and fine actions.” This motif not only plays a role of salvation for the people of the film, but also acts as a unifying element against all opposing forces. During the piece, the motif is uttered in distorted variations a few times in the middle point of the Toccata movement alternating between the solo violins and the string orchestra (Figure 1). Finally, it appears in the Rondo movement with the full voicing from *Glass Harmonica* (Figure 2), although as an accompanying figure in the orchestra played by the violas. This final form could have the same unifying and salvation effect after all the distortions, interruptions, and textural uses of this motif. An idea struggling to present itself, going through iterations and getting suppressed by surrounding elements, but emerging as a whole in the end, although subtly and not in a “heroic” manner.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the Toccata movement, illustrating the BACH motif. Each system consists of two staves: Solo Violins on the left and String Orchestra on the right. The first system (measures 78-85) shows the Solo Violins playing the motif B A C H in the upper staff and C H B A in the lower staff. The String Orchestra part (measures 85-92) features a dense texture with the motif BA. The second system (measures 86-93) shows the Solo Violins playing H C A B in the upper staff and A B H C in the lower staff. The String Orchestra part (measures 93-100) features the motif BAC. The third system (measures 94-101) shows the Solo Violins playing C A B H in the upper staff and B H C A in the lower staff. The String Orchestra part (measures 101-108) features the full motif BACH. Ellipses indicate that the notation continues beyond the shown measures.

Figure 1

*Toccata*  
Measures 78 onwards, 86 onwards, and 94 onwards

50

Figure 2

*Rondo*  
Measures 50-58

This interpretation does not seem improbable, both by comparing the dramaturgical function of the motif in both the film and the piece, and how Schnittke viewed Bach's music as a higher manifestation of art. This is apparent in one of his conversations with Ivashkin:

*"Bach's music produces its own form of physical effect, although not one of loudness or harshness. In fact, one could call it a spiritual effect. But in Bach's music one ceases to be conscious of the boundary between what is spiritual and what is physical, or, to be more precise, the spiritual is a continuation of the physical, not something quite distinct from it."*<sup>7</sup>

Although this material was not directly created by Bach himself, the BACH motif was. In that sense, such usage of another era's repertory by the composer to evoke a specific subject, mood, or idea can be similar to Berio's *Recital I* that was discussed earlier. Although here, instead of the singer remembering and using the repertory in order to provoke the present's happenings, the composer takes that role instead. Of course, Berio is the one doing so as well, but it is done through the drama of the piece acted by the singer and using text, elements which are not present in *Concerto Grosso*.

Another consideration is the strength of the recognition of intertextual relationships regarding the references. Both composers use quotations from other composers and their own music in *Recital I* and *Concerto Grosso*. This means there is a higher chance of recognition of the references and associations for the audience while quoting a rather famous concerto or aria, compared to using a banned Soviet film soundtrack. The subjective topic of familiarity lurks in here once again, but this does not mean the compositions cannot be perceived as standalone entities otherwise, instead, it simply implies that the pieces include layers that can only be experienced by being familiar with the source materials; a statement that holds true for all the upcoming self-references as well.

### 5.1.2 Themes from *How Czar Peter the Great Married Off His Moor*

This film (Сказ про то, как царь Петр арапа женил) created in 1976, is a satirical and mostly inaccurate take on a part of the life of Abram Petrovich Gannibal (Ibrahim in the film). There are three main themes from the film that are used in the piece, making it the most quoted film among the others. The quotations are placed in structurally important sections of the piece, and even are used as the main materials for the development of movements.

The first and the foremost quotation is the very opening material of the piece. This theme is heard around two-thirds into the film during a stormy night, while the protagonist talks about the thunder and his love interest with his friend. In the film, the theme is played by orchestral chimes with rhythmical support from

<sup>7</sup> Schnittke, *A Schnittke Reader*, 9.

a tam-tam (or possibly gong). In *Concerto Grosso* however, it is played by a prepared piano, giving it the bell-like quality, but in a more distorted and dark manner (Figure 3). It is also briefly heard later on during the first movement with the harpsichord, but it is mostly masked by the more foreground solo and orchestra elements.



Figure 3  
*Preludio*  
 Measures 1-11

Not only this theme opens the piece, but it is also heard at the very end of the 5<sup>th</sup> movement (*Rondo*), signifying its dramaturgical importance. The theme is presented in its entirety in both of the appearances. During the opening version, the prepared piano has no accompaniment, which results in even more focus on the sound quality and the simplicity of the theme, and perhaps its eerie nature. In its second appearance however, it is put against a moving cluster texture in the strings which rises in pitch in canonic manner. (Figure 4) This cluster continues to the last movement, creating the bed for the ending of the piece.

The second quoted material is heard in the film not too long before the first one. It is briefly played during a scene in a crowded shipyard, where the protagonist is walking against the sunset. This quickly transitions to an animated sequence, where a character on a flying cart in the sky is struck by lightning and falls off, which interrupts the music and turns it into a grotesque version of itself. The same figure is also used in the opening of the film as a part of a satirical pop influenced song retelling the story of the protagonist up until now. The figuration is once again heard in an orchestral context as the ending music of the film, showcasing it as perhaps the main theme of the film.

This material is used as the opening of the *Rondo* movement (Figure 5). Here, the material is turned into a full-on theme and is developed very quickly (often as a question and answer against the orchestra) with a few iterations. It is indeed the returning theme of the *Rondo* and can be heard all over this movement. The *Tango* that also comes in this movement (which will be talked about in the next section) uses the same figuration but in a completely different context, to the point it can be considered a very elaborate variation on the *Rondo* theme.

190

Prepared Piano

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Figure 4

*Rondo*  
Measures 190-195

1

Solo Vln.1

Solo Vln.2

Harpsichord

Figure 5

*Rondo*  
Measures 1-8

The approach to these two materials incorporates reiteration as a source of development, structural integrity, and creating familiarity. These reiterations are not mere repetitions however, as they are often either developed or recontextualized in the span of the piece, as will be seen with the other following self-references too. This approach is different from what is for instance observed in Schoenberg's usage of self-references in *Erwartung*, where repetitions and remembrances are almost annihilated on purpose as discussed. This of course fits perfectly with the narrative of the piece, but could also possibly be affected by the general avoidance of repetition in serialist technics. Schnittke on the other hand, uses remembrance (or the gradual fading of it, as will be seen) almost as symbolic elements in this composition, creating strong and often times clear narrative points in the music.

The third and the last quotation is taken from near the end of the film, during a "good ending" sequence with the protagonist and his love interest walking amidst fireworks. In the film, it is played by a harpsichord and two high flutes. Of course, the instrumentation in *Concerto Grosso* consists of the two solo violins instead of the flutes.

This theme is heard during the Toccata movement starting from rehearsal mark 6 (Figure 6). It is the second main theme of this movement and is mostly unchanged from the film version, but is soon joined by Schnittke's idiomatic dense chromatic canons in the string orchestra and is finally cut off by the orchestra before it is fully heard. This can be similar Berg's self-reference in *String Quartet*, where a rather distinct theme appears and is then absorbed by the texture further on. However, Schnittke's usage of his theme is embedded as a main element in Toccata's form and persists until the end of the movement.

31

The musical score for measures 31-39 of the Toccata movement is presented in two systems. The first system includes Solo Vln.1, Solo Vln.2, and Harpsichord. The Solo Vln.1 and Solo Vln.2 parts feature a melodic theme with chromatic movement and slurs. The Harpsichord part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and eighth notes. The second system continues the Solo Vln.1 and Solo Vln.2 parts, showing the continuation of the melodic theme.

Figure 6

*Toccata*  
Measures 31-39

The theme does not appear in its full version afterwards and the movement moves forward until the end with mostly chromatic, intense, and dense textures. It is then the only of the materials in the piece that is not presented in its complete film version and is cut off in the middle, although it is still completely recognizable and emphasized nonetheless. However, it appears as fragmented and distorted versions of itself throughout the movement as developmental materials, just as the first theme of the movement and just as structurally important.

### 5.1.3 Tango from *Agony*

*Agony* (Агония) was created around 1974 and its USSR release was delayed by the regime until 1985. It follows the final months of Rasputin's life until he was killed in 1916. Schnittke's "grandmother's favorite tango" which was mentioned earlier, plays during a few turning points in the soundtrack of the film. It depicts Rasputin's fall to sin and lust, and aside from being played by a chamber ensemble, it is also twice sung by a female voice (on a phone line heard by Rasputin) to signify its importance in one of the scenes. Near the end of the film (and Rasputin's life), we hear the same melody but distorted and played by an organ while he gets a glimpse of a portrait of the woman who was singing the tango melody earlier.

The tango becomes the symbol of his irresistible desires, sins, and inner demons.<sup>8</sup> This usage of the tango as the manifestation of sin and evil is no coincidence, for Schnittke truly believed there is no better way of expressing evil other than popular music, as he elaborates:

*"It is natural that evil should be attractive. It has to be nice and tempting, it has to take the form of something that can creep into your soul without difficulty, something pleasantly comfortable. ... And pop culture is a good disguise for any kind of devilry, a way of creeping into your soul. So I can see no way of expressing evil in music other than by using elements of pop culture."*<sup>9</sup>

This is indeed an intriguing take on the workings of pop culture, but the reason he viewed pop culture and pop music as a manifestation of evil is even more intriguing. He explains:

*"Nowadays what is often called 'pop culture' is the most direct manifestation of evil in art. Evil in a general sense. Because evil has a localized coloration. Every locality shares a common tendency of its people to stereotype thoughts and feelings, and set patterns are the symbol of this process. ... And this is the greatest evil: the paralysis of individuality, making everyone like everyone else. The product itself, the cause of all of this, is itself part of pop culture."*<sup>10</sup>

We need to consider that no matter the friction and disagreements Schnittke was going through with the Soviet regime, the "new" pop culture and pop music he encountered during his era was nonetheless directly associated with the western way of living, and perhaps with getting away from Russian traditions and ideals. This on itself could have negatively affected his view of popular music other than on a purely musical level, and it can be seen by his not-so-eager stance regarding his son, Andrei, being active as a rock musician.

Although this viewpoint might be a bit rigid, this usage of the tango in the piece makes sense however, maybe not as a literal symbol of evil, but as an obstruction and fall into chaos. Contrary to the usage of the BACH motif, the tango is presented as a whole quite early in the Rondo movement after the introduction and development of the Rondo theme (Figure 7), and only then starts to descend into chaos and distortion

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<sup>8</sup> Tremblay, *Polystylism and Narrative Potential in the Music of Alfred Schnittke*, 159.

<sup>9</sup> Schnittke, *A Schnittke Reader*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

more and more. This deconstruction is the opposite of what happens with the BACH motif (gradual construction and finally the full manifestation), which could signify their contrasting roles in the pieces.

The image shows a musical score for measures 90-99 of the Rondo movement. It consists of three staves: Harpsichord, Solo Vln.1, and Solo Vln.2. The Harpsichord part starts at measure 90 with a dynamic of *mp* and features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line with chords in the left hand. The Solo Vln.1 part begins at measure 91 with a dynamic of *mp* and has a melodic line. The Solo Vln.2 part begins at measure 95 with a dynamic of *mf* and has a melodic line. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 7

*Rondo*  
Measures 90-99

Not only this tango was used in the Rondo movement of *Concerto Grosso No.1*, he later on used it in his opera *Life with an Idiot* in 1992. This double self-referencing of a material shows its significance, or at least the reach of connotations it has had for the composer throughout all these years. Not only this, but the tango from his *Faust* cantata has a direct connection to the literal “devil”, which again can confirm his intentions by using such a genre of music.

We have now encountered the duality found in this piece, a concept that Schnittke clearly had in mind during his compositional process. Not only the two violins represent the two “beings”, but the types of the materials have this duality embedded in them as well. It can be (perhaps naïvely) claimed that the BACH and the upcoming *Butterfly* materials have “positive”, and the Tango and the *Ascent* materials have “negative” connotations. This idea is not necessarily based on speculations, as Schnittke himself writes about this in his sketches for this piece. A more detailed discussion of these ideas can be found in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Tremblay’s paper, under “Sketches: Program”.<sup>11</sup>

#### 5.1.4 Closing Materials from *Butterfly*

This material comes from another short animation by Khrzhanovsky called *Butterfly* (Бабочка) in 1972. It is used as the main theme of the animation and is played multiple times and during important scenes. It signifies freedom and salvation, and it is usually accompanied by images of butterflies flying against the sky or their natural habitat, in opposition to the image of imprisonment and the cityscape. The symbolic

<sup>11</sup> Tremblay, *Polystylism and Narrative Potential in the Music of Alfred Schnittke*, 139.

meanings are mostly left to the interpretation of the audience, but a clear distinction between “good” and “bad” are visible in the imagery, the plot, and the musical gestures.

In its usage during the Cadenza and Rondo movements, it plays the role of the ending point to the previous material, the transition, and the opening point to the new material (and the new movement the first time), contrasting with the rather “dissonant” materials coming before or after it, solidifying itself as one of the “brighter” elements of the piece.

In its first appearance, it is only performed by the solo violins (Figure 8), but on the next iteration not only it is performed an octave higher, but also the string orchestra joins the violins, filling in the harmonies (Figure 9).

This musical score shows two staves for Solo Violin 1 and Solo Violin 2. The music is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first violin part begins with a dynamic marking of *ff* and includes a long, sweeping melodic line with a fermata at the end. The second violin part provides a harmonic accompaniment with a similar dynamic marking.

Figure 8  
*Cadenza*  
Measures 25-29

This musical score shows a full string ensemble including Solo Violin 1, Solo Violin 2, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The music is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The solo violins play a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *fff*. The rest of the string ensemble provides a harmonic accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *f*. The score includes various articulations and dynamics throughout the measures.

Figure 9  
*Rondo*  
Measures 186-189

This is the shortest self-reference of the piece, and although structurally very significant, it appears twice and without any further development. It is a rather different material from the rest and appears in a quite sudden way in both instances. Its shortness and the structural role it plays, combined with the rather consonant major-minor exchange, gives it a bitter-sweet and longing quality. The simplicity, fleeting, and lightness of this material can be reminiscent of Ives' discussed naïve childhood nostalgia, although perhaps in a smaller format and different context. As mentioned, it definitely fits into the “positive” side of the duality found in the piece, and when it appears the second time surrounded by chaotic and dark materials before and after, it seems to be even closer to a glimpse of a nostalgic “lost innocence”; again, a concept that was heavily explored by Ives.

### 5.1.5 Distorted Main Theme from *The Ascent*

*The Ascent* (Восхождение) which was created in 1976 follows two Soviet partisans who fall into the hands of the Germans during the Second World War. The referenced material is heard in the second half of the film, during an intense scene where the wounded protagonist is struggling to stay alive, while promising his surrounding prisoners to take the blame the coming morning, to save them. This textural material is used as the opening for the Recitative movement (Figure 10). Schnittke uses his chromatic canons once again, but this time slower, quieter, and in no more than 3 voices. Although, as the material develops, more voices (even with contrary motion) are added and the texture becomes even denser and more varied in dynamics. Many of the statements of this material are separated by solo violin lines (with or without accompaniment), and the whole of this movement is built upon the figurations of *The Ascent* soundtrack.

The musical score for Figure 10, titled "Recitative Measures 1-6", is arranged for a string ensemble. It features four staves: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins with a dynamic marking of *pp non vib.* and transitions to *mp* by measure 6. The music consists of a chromatic canon where the same melodic material is played in different octaves and registers across the instruments. The texture is dense, with multiple voices playing the same material in different octaves and registers.

Figure 10

*Recitative*  
*Measures 1-6*

The original self-referenced material is itself a distorted and denser version of the main theme in the film, so not only the Recitative movement is referring to the specific part of the soundtrack, it is also referring to the main theme of the film in an indirect way, creating even a more distant intertextual relationship between the two pieces of music.

Both the atmosphere of the film, which is the source of this material, and also the creeping slow chromatic cluster-like canons doubled in the range of 5 octaves in the strings, most definitely radiate a “negative” feeling in the duality spectrum, contrasting with the *Glass Harmonica* and the *Butterfly* themes. At the same time, it still begins in a less dense and chromatic manner, but with its development it becomes even denser, more chromatic, and darker.

## 5.2 Discussion

By examining each of the self-referenced materials in *Concerto Grosso No.1*, we realize that although they all seem to be from different worlds, they are not out of place in the piece by any means. Albeit their intertextual connection to the films, they are not treated as external factors in the concert music. Not only that, but they are completely recontextualized even as the main nodes of the structural network of the new composition.

Providing such clear and important roles to the self-references strengthens the fact that Schnittke used quotations and allusions (and in general all types of references) seriously, and not just as parodies. Moreover, the references (or at least most of them) had strong associations for him that he counted on as strong expressive and dramaturgical tools. An intriguing observation is that the general gist of the associations remains the same between the film music and its concert music counterpart, perhaps creating real-life leitmotifs in Schnittke’s mind, that carried over to different compositions. This idea seems more appealing while we consider the “duality” discussed in regards to *Concerto Grosso*.

One element that makes this duality spectrum in references possible and lets it thrive in the composition, is the sheer number of the references during the span of one piece, with each being assigned a “positive” and “negative” quality or anything in between. Although Schnittke’s *Symphony No.1* would be a better example for a higher quantity of references, *Concerto Grosso No.1* still references and alludes to numerous eras and composers (including himself), something that can be observed in Berio and Ives as well. Although Schnittke’s strategy was different in that his references were individually focused on and developed (at list in *Concerto Grosso*), while Berio and Ives would usually line or stack them up, or connect them through grammatical subjects and tonality. In the case of Berio however, one reason for this might be that it was only *one* of the many tools and styles of compositional processes he incorporated in his compositions, while a large volume of Schnittke’s music used quotations and allusions. This meant that he had developed a deep focus on multi-referential pieces and explored its possibilities in detail, more akin to Ives’ relationship with references and the important roles they played in his compositions.

Another outcome of assigning such important roles to the self-references, is that the form and dramaturgy of the concert piece is changed to a certain extent, in order to facilitate the inherent narrative and “synchronized to picture” characteristics of the film music extracts. This means that not only the new piece will manifest some traits found in film music (especially the form), it will also naturally move towards an episodic and narrative way of composition as well to create a basis for all the different materials to be able to work together.

Of course, the major contributor to these consequences is that the source material is specifically film music. Although Schnittke’s relationship with the Soviet regime definitely created numerous hardships for him which led him to write film music for monetary reasons, it was by no means his sole reason for gravitating

towards film music, and although some of the films he worked on were either plainly banned or not well-received (*Glass Harmonica*, *Agony*, etc.), it was hardly the only reason for him to reuse his film music in his concert music either. Rather, he truly believed that this was one of the ways he could achieve his unified musical language, and film music was a part of this unified world too.

## 6. Conclusions

*“Determining why a borrowing is present involves all the usual pitfalls of understanding compositional process, purpose, and motivation.”*<sup>1</sup>

The scope of this study was to provide a somewhat multi-faceted look at Schnittke’s self-referencing, which seems to be a rather ignored aspect of his music in research. This was done by providing a socio-political and personal context during the 20<sup>th</sup> century regarding his music and ideas, by exemplifying works by other composers and how they might be relevant, and by using *Concerto Grosso No.1* as a quite complete sample containing many types of referential (and other) technics. However, it is by no means enough to fully understand the intentions and the intricacies of his approach towards self-referential materials, especially the chronological changes of his compositional processes during his lifetime.

As showcased, although some of Schnittke’s compositional decisions were dictated by his not-so-appreciated position as a composer in the Soviet regime and his own dilemmas, he had strong personal goals to follow in regards to unifying “entertainment” and “art” music and creating a musical utopia. This meant that self-referencing his own film music was not an act of desperation in search for compositional materials, but a deliberate choice to both explore the possibilities of materials from different sources thriving coherently in one piece, and to also use their inherent previous embedded qualities and associations. To signify this, he developed the materials just as any other concert music material and did not hesitate to use them as the pillars of the various movements, even in the context of a concerto grosso, a topic with a noticeable temporal distance from 20<sup>th</sup> century film music. Combined with the intertextual association of the referenced materials, and the recontextualized significant roles they play in the new pieces, we can recognize the uniqueness and importance of his self-referencing strategies in the context of the 20<sup>th</sup> century western classical composition.

This recognition however, is quite lacking in the research world, as the current available literature seems to be quite limited in delving in the details of the self-references of the composer, and even a relevant writing specifically containing information regarding the references in *Concerto Grosso No.1* only contained information about 3 out of the 5 film music extracts.<sup>2</sup> Even then, the implications of self-referencing film music specifically, compared to other forms of music, are almost nowhere to be found. Although this was discussed during the study from the point of view of the inherent changes in the form and narrative of the material, his film music is generally not considered for further research. The rest of the literature is also mostly concerned with quotation and self-quotations in general (and specifically during the 20<sup>th</sup> century), which has been useful for providing a general overview of the quotation scene nonetheless.

Hence, a substantial part of this information could be, and was, extracted and synthesized using the analysis of the original and the new music, and by watching the films to discover their original associations. At the same time, Schnittke was vocal and clear about his musical ideas, and by comparing his words to the actual resulting music, we can confirm that they are accountable resources for understanding his music. Many of

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<sup>1</sup> Burkholder, *The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing as a Field*, 864.

<sup>2</sup> Tremblay, *Polystylism and Narrative Potential in the Music of Alfred Schnittke*, 150.

these insights can be found in his conversations with Alexander Ivashkin, his own writings about film music, and his comments on the sketches of *Concerto Grosso No.1*.

Further study of the available literature can definitely provide more detailed viewpoints both on Schnittke's approaches and also the subject of self-referencing in western classical music in general. On the other hand, as there aren't any resources that necessarily are only focused on Schnittke's reusing of film music, we need to close this gap ourselves by connecting the dots between the different subjects and resources. That is how this research was planned and executed, but clearly there is much more to be said and, in more detail, and more of his compositions need be analyzed in regards to self-references. This is something that was not in the scope of this study and can be achieved by further research, since the narrative implications and connections of the composition process for media and concerts can be of significant relevance, especially to the contemporary composer.

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