

HARMONIC SYNTAX IN THE “SERIAL” WORKS OF DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

BY

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### Abstract:

The works of the last decade of Shostakovich's life are peppered by a peculiar phenomenon; the inclusion of twelve-tone rows. Classification of these works, often labeled (and subsequently unlabeled) as "serial," remains problematic. Elements of Western serialism are present, albeit in highly unconventional forms. To start, Shostakovich does not utilize the familiar canonic operations of serial theory including transposition, inversion and/or retrograde. Alternative techniques instead include the use of multiple rows, juxtaposition of serial and non-serial elements, and the near exclusive use of the row as a linear rather than harmonic resource.

No discussion of Shostakovich's serialism would be complete without a survey of Soviet music at the time. Isolated from the West throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Russian composers had limited access to Western "formalist" scores. Given such isolation, it is little wonder that composers developed their own stylistic approaches. These experiments—fueled in part by lack of information and natural curiosity—shaped the development of a Russian school of serialism based on a range of "twelve-toneness." According to such definitions, Shostakovich's music overlaps with the broad category of twelve-tone, allowing for a preliminary examination of his harmonic grammar according to both serial and non-serial stylistic features.

Recent research regarding the composer's late harmonic style in turn allows for a more detailed form of codification. Most importantly, Peter Child's article on interval collections in late Shostakovich centers around the reconciliation of serial and non-serial elements in his Symphony No. 15. Stephen Brown, on the other hand, describes a mapping and coordinate system in which harmonic and melodic intervals can be graphed spatially. Brown notes Shostakovich's propensity to use ascending fifths as a primary aspect of harmonic syntax and

ascending semitones as a neighbor-note feature of melodic motion. The present inquiry, then, will focus primarily on the historical background and harmonic idiolect of Shostakovich's so-called "serial" works, composed between 1967 and 1974. The analysis will center on pertinent collectional similarities shared by his serial and non-serial approaches to pitch organization.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

Several works of the last decade of Shostakovich's life are connected by a particular phenomenon—the inclusion of twelve-tone rows. Classification of these works—often labeled (and unlabeled) as “serial”—remains problematic; elements of Western serial techniques are present, yet often in conjunction with highly unconventional practices. Given such a problematic identity, then, it is no surprise that Shostakovich's brief interest in serialism has escaped serious notice until recently. When scholars do turn their attention to his unique serial grammar, it is typically brushed off in a cursory phrase or two. Descriptions of his serial technique often remain couched within a tonal framework. Still, a surge of more systematic scholarly approaches has given rise to a renewed perspective on the harmonic syntax of Shostakovich's late works.

Shostakovich's use of dodecaphonic technique accounts for a very small percentage of his general output. Within this output, only nine compositions have been classified as displaying “serial” characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Even more intriguing, these works are highly concentrated, written within a span of seven years and across seventeen opus numbers. The first work of Shostakovich's aligned with this new style is the song cycle *Seven Romances on Poems by Alexander Blok*, op. 127 (1967), and specifically the sixth song, appropriately titled “Mysterious

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth, I will use the term twelve-tone in my descriptions of Shostakovich's harmonic grammar. As will be explained later, Shostakovich's use of the total chromatic in his so-called ‘serial’ works does not adhere to Schoenberg's definition of twelve-tone technique.

Signs.” Later that same year, his Violin Concerto No. 2, op. 129, also incorporated twelve-tone techniques. Laurel Fay argues that the String Quartet No. 12, op. 133 (1968) of the following year marks the first work in which twelve-tone techniques play a substantial role.<sup>2</sup> Continuing chronologically, Shostakovich’s “twelve-tone” works include the Violin Sonata, op. 134 (1968); the Symphony No. 14, op. 135 (1969); the String Quartet No. 13, op. 138 (1970); the Symphony No. 15, op. 141 (1971); the song cycle *Six Poems by Marina Tsvetayeva*, op. 143 (1973); and the String Quartet No. 15, op. 144 (1974).

These nine twelve-tone works were written in the last ten years of Shostakovich’s life, marked by a rapid deterioration in the composer’s health. This change in creative output followed his first heart attack and final solo performance in the spring of 1966. His worsening condition and obsession with mortality have led many to interpret his use of all twelve pitch classes as symbolic of death.<sup>3</sup> What makes Shostakovich’s use of twelve-tone techniques even more unusual lies in his conflicting attitudes toward the principle. In the 1950s, the composer’s attitude towards serialism followed the official party line when he wrote that “this still-born art [of dodecaphony] gains no recognition from the broad public, it attests to the ideological impasse, the crisis of bourgeois culture.”<sup>4</sup> More pointedly, Shostakovich later said, that “Dodecaphony, serial, pointillist and other kinds of music are one of the greatest evils of 20<sup>th</sup>-Century music.”<sup>5</sup> The sincerity of such statements given at the height of the Thaw may, of course, be called into question.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Fay argues that Shostakovich privately admired Western

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<sup>2</sup> Laurel Fay, “The Last Quartets of Dmitri Shostakovich: A Stylistic Investigation” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1978): 17.

<sup>3</sup> According to Lyn Henderson, it is commonly held that the number twelve symbolized death in Shostakovich’s music. To be sure, he seemed preoccupied with death at the end of his life. See, “Shostakovich, The Passacaglia, and Serialism,” in *A Shostakovich Companion*, edited by Michael Mishra (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Laurel Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 214-5.

<sup>5</sup> Peter J. Schmelz, “Shostakovich’s ‘Twelve-Tone’ Compositions and the Politics and Practice of Soviet Serialism,” in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel Fay (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 303.

<sup>6</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich*, 215.

twelve-tone composers. Such admiration may explain Shostakovich's later defense of his own twelve-tone technique to the effect that:

I did use some elements of dodecaphony in these works. Of course, if you take a theory and use solely this theory, I have a very negative attitude towards this kind of approach. But if a composer feels that he needs this or that technique, he can take whatever is available and use it as he sees fit. It is his right to do so. But if you take one technique, whether it is aleatory, dodecaphony, and use nothing but that technique, then it is wrong.<sup>7</sup>

### **Shostakovich and Serialism in Current Scholarship**

In recent years, several authors have paid variable attention to Shostakovich's use of twelve-tone techniques. In discussing the *Alexander Blok* songs, for instance, Tim and Jesse Langen do not mention Shostakovich's use of twelve-tone technique at all and simply label his harmonic writing as "chromatic."<sup>8</sup> By comparison, Peter Schmelz, in his work on Russian serialism, argues that Shostakovich uses twelve-tone rows exists primarily as a surface feature that does little more than disrupt the harmonic coherence of the work as whole.<sup>9</sup> Those who have attempted to reconcile Shostakovich's use of twelve-tone techniques have done so with some degree of difficulty, including Fay in her doctoral dissertation on the Shostakovich Quartets. In short, she describes the serial characteristics in largely imprecise, ambiguous terms, citing similarities according to "vague melodic contours" and harmonic tendencies that include "tonal implications" and "highly compressed chromaticism."<sup>10</sup>

Any detailed approach to Shostakovich's twelve-tone works will have to come to terms with his unusual use of the total chromatic according to Western serial theory. To cite just one

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<sup>7</sup> Schmelz, "Shostakovich's 'Twelve-Tone' Compositions and Soviet Serialism," 344.

<sup>8</sup> Tim and Jesse Langen, "Music and Poetry: The Case of Shostakovich and Blok," in *Intersections and Transpositions: Russian Music, Literature, and Society*, edited by Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Studies in Russian Literature and Theory* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 157.

<sup>9</sup> Schmelz, "Shostakovich's 'Twelve-Tone' Compositions," 334.

<sup>10</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich*, 22.

instance, his twelve-tone rows regularly make use of what Fay calls “expansion” in which a pitch class is repeated before the row concludes.<sup>11</sup> In fact, many of the rows (not to mention their subsequent development) appear to be melodically if not also motivically-derived, lending greater credence to Schmelz’s summary interpretation. More than that, the rows are nearly always linear and often incorporate rhythmic elements that also play an essential role in the work.

### **Coincidence of Disparate Harmonic Elements**

To be sure, the most notable characteristic of Shostakovich’s twelve-tone works is the deliberate juxtaposition of serial and non-serial elements. In the String Quartet No. 13, for example, the viola opens the work with a twelve-tone row in solo texture. The rest of the ensemble soon enters but in an openly triadic fashion. Lyn Henderson calls this phenomenon the “disappearing tone row.”<sup>12</sup> By this, of course, Henderson is referring to Shostakovich’s penchant for inserting an isolated twelve-tone row into an otherwise broadly diatonic or octatonic setting.<sup>13</sup> In many cases, the row itself incorporates explicit tonal elements; in the first row in the String Quartet No. 13, for instance, each tetrachord points to a harmony within B-flat minor (Example 1.1). Still, the inclusion of the total chromatic within an unsupported melodic context works to disrupt the sense of tonal stability. In some cases, the weakening sense of referential pitch centrality arguably borders on atonality.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Lyn Henderson, “Shostakovich, the Passacaglia, and Serialism,” in *A Shostakovich Companion*, ed. Michael Mishra (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), 426.

<sup>13</sup> Langen, “Music and Poetry,” 157.

<sup>14</sup> Schmelz, “Shostakovich’s ‘Twelve-Tone’ Compositions,” 309.

Example 1.1, Shostakovich String Quartet No. 13, mm. 1–7

**B-flat min                      A dim                      G min**

The intersection of tonal, atonal and serial elements presupposes a number of apparent contradictions. As Milton Babbitt noted, the grammars of tonal and twelve-tone music rely on fundamentally dissimilar principles. Hence, the diatonic scale underlying tonal motion depends on hierarchical functions relating to the combination of individual intervals within each seven-note collection, whereas twelve-tone logic denotes a numbering of the entire chromatic aggregate and thus differentiates itself by the permutation and ordering of the intervals themselves.<sup>15</sup> David Headlam’s study of the music of Alban Berg helps to reconcile some of these apparent contradictions. Like Shostakovich, many of Berg’s later works utilized material external to their serial elements. In fact, Headlam notes, such usage might generally lead these works to be classified in a manner that cannot be considered twelve-tone. As he summarizes:

The basis of Berg’s pitch language in his later music continues to be the cyclic collections of his earlier period, developed with regard to order-position relationships and aggregate completion, and still capable of tonal allusion by registral spacing and intervallic emphases, but similar enough to his atonal music that Berg’s adaptation of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone ideas marks a difference in degree rather than in kind.<sup>16</sup>

Further, Headlam argues that Berg’s late works cannot be classified as a thoroughgoing “fusion” of serial and tonal elements since “the two systems are fundamentally incompatible.”<sup>17</sup> Instead, he sees piece-specific musical coherence as the primary issue and declares that Berg’s

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Mead, *An Introduction to the Music of Milton Babbitt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 9-11.

<sup>16</sup> Dave Headlam, *The Music of Alban Berg* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996):195.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

juxtaposition of serial and non-serial elements can be characterized as twelve-tone only in a contingent sense when “musical coherence does not depend on the row as the main referent.”<sup>18</sup>

## Methodologies

Headlam also comments on another feature that Berg shares with Shostakovich: both composers utilize multiple twelve-tone rows. Zachary Cairns’ discussion of multiple rows in the Russian serial music of Andrey Denisov may shed some further light on this phenomenon. Cairns defines the use of multiple rows as more than one statement of the total chromatic in which subsequent statements are not related to the original by any conventional canonic T, I, R, or RI operation.<sup>19</sup> Cairns also notes that although rows within the piece may not be related through conventional transformations, other similarities may exist. For example, succeeding rows may be extracted from the original row. Cairns describes such similarities in terms of their intervallic properties, citing Ilomäki’s work in this regard.<sup>20</sup> For him, rows may be classified according to interval vectors, subsets and the succession of intervals between the pitch classes within them.<sup>21</sup> Interval succession can also be used to determine similarities and differences among multiple row scenarios. More importantly, the use of multiple rows is often motivated by melodic/motivic functions.<sup>22</sup> Citing Peter Schmelz’s discussion of the *Alexander Blok* songs, Cairns notes that Shostakovich uses the row as a singular, unchanging melody. Later he expands his argument to include instances in which rows count as entire themes.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Headlam, *Alban Berg*, 198 (emphasis mine).

<sup>19</sup> Zachary Cairns, “Multiple-row Serialism in Three Works by Edison Denisov” (PhD diss., University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 2010): 65.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

Stephen Brown's methodological approach to the mapping of interval space adds an important perspective to this study. His dissertation centers on the tracing of directed harmonic and melodic intervals as a means of examining post-tonal harmonic syntax. In general, his methodology resembles a tonnetz-based, Neo-Riemannian framework; Brown, however, does not explicitly adopt this approach, preferring graph theory instead. He creates a spatialization of intervals to describe and illustrate 20<sup>th</sup>-century music that behaves in a directed, yet explicitly non-tonal fashion. Brown argues that such music often features harmonic fields "based on the interaction of two interval classes."<sup>24</sup> He defines his arrangement of interval motion, or "dual-interval space" as "a Cartesian coordinate system in which the x-axis corresponds to one interval class and the y-axis to the other."<sup>25</sup> Choosing the proper intervals for clarification across dual-interval space is entirely dependent on the harmonic idiolect of the composer. For example, a sequence of major thirds descending by whole step could be graphed according to ic2/ic4 space. As we will see below, Brown identifies Shostakovich's harmonic language with a specific subset of dual interval space.

Before any detailed discussion of Shostakovich's serial procedure can proceed, we must explore several more specific aspects of dual-interval space. In the first case, dual-interval space serves well to illustrate the relationship among pitch classes in any given collection. Common transformations include transposition, inversion and interval exchange. The first and "simplest"<sup>26</sup> operation is transposition, "a rigid translation [of a set class/coordinate/graph] by some combination of horizontal and vertical moves."<sup>27</sup> The example below describes a transposition of sc 3-2 in ic1/ic2 space (Figure 1.1). The white, unshaded regions depict the particular

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen Brown, "Dual Interval Space in Twentieth Century Music" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1999):1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 4. When describing the choice of intervals, Brown is careful to note that the smaller interval class precedes the larger—that is, ic2/ic4 space, not ic3/ic1.

<sup>26</sup> Cairns, "Multiple-row Serialism," 14.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



relationship between the sets in question, with the shaded region indicating the harmonic field within which they move.<sup>28</sup>

Figure 1.1, Transposition across ic1/ic2 space

7	8	9	T	E
5	6	7	8	9
3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5
E	0	1	2	3
9	T	E	0	1
7	8	9	T	E

Inversion along the dual interval space graph can describe one of three operations:  $I_x$ ,  $I_y$  or  $I_{xy}$ . Brown labels the first two inversion types  $I_x$ , and  $I_y$  as “partial inversions” and the final  $I_{xy}$  as a “full inversion.”<sup>29</sup> The first,  $I_x$ , denotes an inversion across the y-axis (Example 1.2a,b).  $I_y$ , on the other hand, describes inversion across the x-axis. This is clearly illustrated in the following example of  $I_x$  inversion, where the horizontal (x-axis) intervals are inverted while the vertical (y-axis) interval(s) remain invariant. The opposite is true for  $I_y$ . Unlike transposition, inversion does not always involve set-class invariance. That is, in transposition, the set class remains invariant regardless of the number of operations it undergoes. The final type of inversion, however, does preserve set-class invariance. This designates an inversion along the x and y axes, allowing for two axes of inversion (Figure 1.2c). In addition, Brown notes that

<sup>28</sup> While Brown’s notation is based on pitch class letter names (A, B, C, etc.), the present study will utilize numeric equivalents with T denoting 10 (B-flat), and E denoting 11 (B).

<sup>29</sup> Brown, “Dual Interval Space,” 16.

Jonathan Bernard's notions of "infecting" and "unfolding" can be compared to similar partial inversions in dual interval space.<sup>30</sup>

Figure 1.2a,  $I_x$  in ic1/ic4 space

**Axis of inversion**

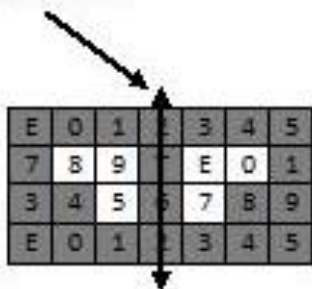


Figure 1.2b,  $I_y$  in ic2/ic5 space

**Axis of inversion**

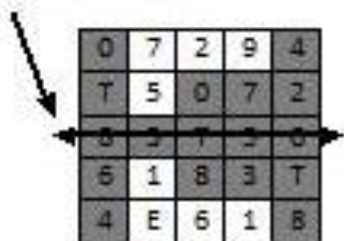
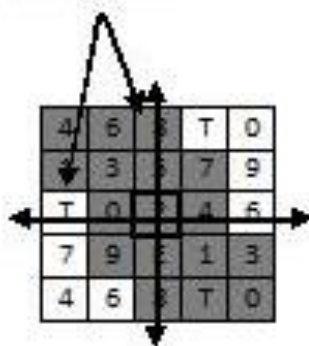


Figure 1.2c,  $I_{xy}$  in ic2/ic3 space

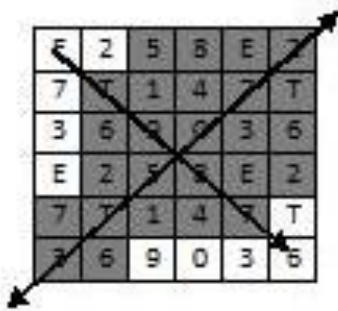
**Axes of inversion**



<sup>30</sup> See Jonathan W. Bernard, "Ligeti's Restoration of Interval and its Significance in his Later Works," *Music Theory Spectrum* 21/1 (Spring 1999): 1-31.

Brown's final operation involves not a horizontal axis of inversion, but a diagonal one in what he terms "interval exchange."<sup>31</sup> Here, he writes, "interval exchange swaps the x and y coordinates of a given location."<sup>32</sup> As the example below illustrates, neither set class nor cardinality remains invariant in interval exchange. This is also true for partial inversion.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Brown orders the operations for dual interval space as follows: interval exchange, inversion, transposition.

Figure 1.3, interval exchange in ic3/ic4 space



As stated above, dual interval space is particularly applicable to the late works of Shostakovich. In fact, Brown devotes an entire chapter to this topic in his dissertation. More specifically, he notes that Shostakovich's music has a particular affinity for mapping itself according to ic1/ic5 space.<sup>34</sup> According to Brown, the directed intervals for Shostakovich's works most often conform to a perfect fifth (i7) along the y axis and an i1 along the x-axis.<sup>35</sup> In many cases, Shostakovich utilizes chains of fifths to accomplish this. These chains sometimes result in different set classes, but they still map well onto ic1/ic5 space.

In describing Shostakovich's music, Brown (like Headlam) is cautious in his classification of tonal progression. Still he argues that a sense of tonic centrality is present based

<sup>31</sup> Brown, "Dual Interval Space," 23.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

on a number of parameters, including triadic support, linear motion, register, and formal function.<sup>36</sup> Such discussions of centricity within Shostakovich’s work remain important for this study as the referential tonic and its fifth will continue to serve as the i7 within ic1/ic5 space. Moreover, melodic motion often appears as i1 neighbor-note motion. A model of this dual interval space is shown in below.

Figure 1.4, ic1/ic5 space

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	T	E	0
6	7	8	9	T	E	0	1	2	3	4	5
E	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	T
4	5	6	7	8	9	T	E	0	1	2	3
9	T	E	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	T	E	0	1
7	8	9	T	E	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	T	E
5	6	7	8	9	T	E	0	1	2	3	4
T	E	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	T	E	0	1	2
8	9	T	E	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Of particular interest for the present study is Brown’s analysis of the String Quartet No. 12. To start, he names the form of the movement as something like an arch structure in which the three primary “key centers” D-flat, A-flat, and D relate according to ic1/ic5 space.<sup>37</sup> At the same time he argues against any classification of sonata form, for although these key centers follow an expected pattern, the sectional nature of the work negates any sensation of forward motion.<sup>38</sup>

Brown subsequently turns his attention to the presence of several tone rows throughout the work that are not distinctly related by any conventional mode of transformation. Further, he

<sup>36</sup> Brown, “Dual Interval Space,” 89–90.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 105.

observes that the rows appear primarily isolated, in a single voice; this textural characteristic is common among Shostakovich's twelve-tone works. Brown also notes that the rows occur at a similar dynamic range and are often tied to important transitional stages within the overall formal structure. Most importantly, however, he designates the first twelve-note sequence as the "main row" of the work.<sup>39</sup> Although he does not define this concept in much detail, it is clear Brown has hit upon an important characteristic of Shostakovich's serial works.<sup>40</sup> A single row within his works—most often the first—does indeed tend to serve as the "original" from which all other rows are derived, both intervallically and motivically.<sup>41</sup> In his thesis, he notes how the row is built on a chain of rising fourths, balanced by a descending fifth at the end, which works to "convey a subtle sense of inversional balance in the ic5 dimension"<sup>42</sup> (see Figure 1.5). Finally, the return of the main row is taken to signal formal balance across the movement overall. In Brown's words, the "culminating moment of ic5 symmetry comes after the main row's return; that is, right when the movement as a whole achieves symmetrical balance in the formal dimension."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Brown, "Dual Interval Space," 106.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Although not explicitly stated, it seems Brown's reasoning for labeling the first row as the "main row" derives from its position and regular recurrence within the movement. As Cairns argues, "Of all the rows in the movement, the first one clearly functions as the main row. Played by the cello, it opens the entire movement and later returns in the coda as the final confirmation of the movement's arch form."

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 113–4.

Figure 1.5, Shostakovich String Quartet No. 12, op. 133, mm. 1–2 in ic1/ic5 space

1	2	3	4
6	7	8	9
E	0	1	2
4	5	6	7
9	T	E	0

Peter Child’s work concerning Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 15 likewise marks an important contribution to the discussion of harmonic grammar within Shostakovich’s twelve-tone works. Child defines a twelve-note theme as one in which “no pitch is repeated until all twelve members of the total chromatic have been stated.”<sup>44</sup> He asserts that such themes often appear within a diatonic (or at least triadic) context and argues that such themes can be expanded by transposition and inversion. He then extends his previous definition to allow for twelve-note themes as either linear or harmonic phenomena. Then, Child cites instances in the second movement of the Symphony in which he defines arpeggiated motion as “harmonic” while more “conjunct” melodies remain linear.<sup>45</sup>

Besides this, Child notes that Shostakovich often changes the order of the pitch classes within a row, thereby accounting for the lack of any conventional transformation. Shostakovich also has a tendency to break up rows before their completion, a technique which seems committed to developing more supple melodic contours; such characteristics, of course, argue for a motivic (rather than harmonic) approach to the row. Indeed, Child reinforces this point by citing the following comment from Norman Kay:

<sup>44</sup> Peter Child, “Voice-Leading Patterns and Interval Collections in Late Shostakovich: Symphony No. 15,” *Music Analysis* 12/1 (March 1993): 74.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

[The twelve semitones] are not used in rotation; they do not form a single pervasive entity on which *as a totally recurring unit* [Kay's emphasis], the rest of the movement is based. Indeed, the one feature they share with other chromatic statements in the movement is the mere fact that within their scope, all possible semitones have been incorporated. The order, the position in the sequence of notes varies freely....This explains the fact that almost unlimited 'twelve-note rows' can be uncovered in the course of the movement, without any one of them dominating the melodic potentialities.<sup>46</sup>

At this juncture, Child introduces a point of comparison between the tonal and twelve-tone aspects of the work. To do so, he argues for partitioning its structural harmonies along tetrachordal lines. More specifically, he finds the tetrachords sc(0156) and sc(0167) to be the primary harmonic determinants of both dimensions and further identifies the trichordal subset sc(016) as a contributing factor.

## Historical Context

One final aspect of Shostakovich's twelve-tone technique remains to be considered: namely, the precise relationship between his particular idiolect and the broader range of Soviet serial dialects. Plainly these techniques were no trivial surface feature; instead, they represented a sophisticated hybrid phenomenon, illuminating a broader repertoire of not only technical, but also aesthetic and cultural dispositions. Given the scope and complexity of this topic, extended consideration will be given to it in the next chapter. The following four chapters will then present a number of case studies drawn from Shostakovich's serial corpus; five key works have been chosen for their differing twelve-tone attributes and are further grouped according to genre: song (*Seven Romances on Poems by Alexander Blok*, op. 127, *Six Poems by Marina Tsvetayeva*, op. 143), solo chamber (Violin Sonata, op. 134), string quartet (String Quartet No. 12, op. 133), and symphony (Symphony No. 15, op. 141).

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<sup>46</sup> Child, "Voice-Leading Patterns," 78.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SERIALISM IN RUSSIA

#### Introduction

No discussion of Shostakovich's serialism would be complete without a survey of the music that influenced him the most—or at least the music most geographically available. Isolated from the West throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Soviet composers had limited access to Western “formalist” scores. Given such restrictions, it is little wonder that the composers developed their own styles and methods regarding serial technique. In fact, Shostakovich is not alone in his idiosyncratic use of twelve-tone writing. Many Russian “serial” composers such as Andrey Denisov, Avro Pärt, Alemdar Karamanov, and Alfred Schnittke experimented with twelve-tone conventions. Principal among these Russian serialists is Andrey Volkonsky, the first Russian composer to publish serial music. This chapter will survey the adoption of serialism in Russia, paying particular attention to the contributions of Volkonsky and the technique's defining characteristics as practiced by Russian composers.

The introduction of serial technique came about during a period in Soviet history known as the Khrushchev Thaw. Prior to the Thaw, Stalin's regime held almost complete power over the output of all creative artists. Following the death of Stalin in 1953, Khrushchev assumed power and loosened the government's totalitarian control. Under Khrushchev's rule, Western scores became increasingly—though not freely—available. Peter Schmelz, writing on the state of Russian avant-garde music during the Thaw, concentrates primarily on the first generation



educated during this era of relative freedom. Still, he finds that any definition of the music of this period is contradictory at best. Schmelz begins his description as follows:

[The music of these composers] reflected the tumultuous period in all its contradictions. They wrote music that drew heavily upon the examples of Western avant-garde, as they used the opportunities afforded them by the new freedoms of the Thaw to peruse both new scores and older scores that had been officially off limits under the Stalin regime. Their music inhabited the hazy world between official sanction and unofficial toleration.<sup>1</sup>

In practice Schmelz narrows his classification of the Thaw to incorporate the years 1956-74, a period which begins with the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress and coincided with the completion of the first recognized serial work, Andrey Volkonsky's *Music Stricta*.<sup>2</sup> Defining the Thaw in terms of musical technique, Schmelz centers on serialism as the predominant interest of composers, especially the so-called "young" generation of composers.<sup>3</sup>

A number of factors can account for the sudden interest in dodecaphony.<sup>4</sup> In particular, Schmelz identifies the allure of "forbidden fruit."<sup>5</sup> Although the Thaw represented a period of relative creative freedom, ownership—and imitation—of Western scores was still very much discouraged. In more than one case, these actions led to expulsion from state-run institutions.<sup>6</sup> Official criticism typically encouraged artists to remain within the doctrine of Socialist Realism, first instituted in the mid-1930s. Translated into music yet rarely defined in any concrete terms, Socialist Realism called for accessibility—party officials wanted a product that was understandable to the masses.<sup>7</sup> As Ned Kirk writes, "music not understood by the masses [was]

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<sup>1</sup> Peter J. Schmelz, "Listening, Memory, and the Thaw: Unofficial Music and Society in the Soviet Union, 1956-1974" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2002), xiii–xiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>3</sup> Peter J. Schmelz, "Andrey Volkonsky and the Beginnings of Unofficial Music in the Soviet Union," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 58/1 (Spring 2005): 140. This designation of "young composers" was primarily given to the generation attending musical training at conservatories in the 1950s and 60s.

<sup>4</sup> In describing their interest in Western serialism, I have chosen to use "serialism" and "dodecaphony" as synonymous terms. When describing the individual style of any given composer, I will use twelve-tone for reasons described in the previous chapter.

<sup>5</sup> Schmelz, "Andrey Volkonsky," 140.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>7</sup> Ned Charles Kirk, "Grazyna Bacewicz and Social Realism," (DMA diss., University of Washington, 2001), 13.

vulgar and without value.”<sup>8</sup> In nearly every way serialism broke these strictures with its air of individuality and detached academic logic.

Another reason Schmelz cites for the turn to serialism includes the “novelty” of the genre for Russian composers.<sup>9</sup> Considering the relative newness of the contrasting styles and the younger generation’s somewhat belated “discovery” of the technique, it is hardly surprising that composers found themselves so attracted to it. Once exposed to the style of Debussy, Webern and Boulez, experimentation and imitation naturally followed. Critics from both East and West were quick to point out that such diversions were less experimental than facsimiles of innovations by now at least three decades old. Schmelz cites the criticism of Russian author Dmitri Kabalevsky reprimanding the younger Karamanov’s use of Western influence:

I cannot understand what A. Karamanov is searching for. If he is searching for new and sharp sounds (and thus it often seems), let him be deluded no longer: the contemporary Western avant-gardists’ have gone much further forward in comparison with his ‘discoveries.’ Would it not be more fruitful to turn his attempts towards new greater, vital themes?<sup>10</sup>

Criticism from both sides was persistent, but the attraction to this newfound technique continued.

The notions of “sounds” and “sounds like” is particularly important within the development of Russian serialism. That is, without much formal understanding of the technique, audiences were first exposed—and attracted—to the sonic qualities conveyed by each work. Audiences could little distinguish between pieces that followed strict dodecaphonic procedures and those that merely imitated them. As young composers (and at some point the officially sanctioned ones) began to explore serialism, differing responses emerged. As was the case with Shostakovich, some composers never felt the compulsion to compose strictly, while others like Denisov and Volkonsky began to develop a more strict (though by no means “conventional”) approach.

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<sup>8</sup> Ned Charles Kirk, “Grazyna Bacewicz and Social Realism,” 13.

<sup>9</sup> Schmelz, “Andrey Volkonsky,” 142.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

## Political Implications of Serialism in the Soviet Union

As Schmelz suggests, the role of serialism in Russian music must always be viewed through a political lens. Beyond any simple interest in new sounds and techniques, composers also adopted the method as a response to Soviet Realism, and more broadly to Communism itself. In fact, Schmelz argues that the technique became a symbol of resistance in a highly charged political atmosphere.<sup>11</sup> Most typically Soviet composers took on the practice as a form of non-verbal protest.<sup>12</sup> In opposition to the relative simplicity of Socialist Realism, Schmelz writes, serial technique thereby “became a symbol of intellectual and moral integrity.”<sup>13</sup> The final reason for an increasing attraction to serialism is what Schmelz describes as the presumed abstraction in its apparent “denial of content.”<sup>14</sup> Lodged within the safety of a wordless art form, composers found an outlet to express themselves while transmitting a covert message of anti-Soviet sentiment.

Ostensibly safe as they may have been, serial composers in Russia could not expect to find broad support for their works from the official press. Many composers experimenting with twelve-tone techniques, most notably Volkonsky, found themselves unofficially banned from public concerts and the possibility of publication. Schmelz describes these circumstances as follows:

During the 1960’s Soviet Composers were actually, if not nominally, segregated into two groups, the “official” and the “unofficial.” The two groups represented, respectively, the composers who wrote in officially-sanctioned styles and whose works were more controversial and thus were pulled from concert programs or denied publication.<sup>15</sup>

The majority of these unofficial composers were part of a younger generation that received their musical training in the wake of the Thaw. Though creatively mature and certainly no longer

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<sup>11</sup> Schmelz, “Andrey Volkonsky,” 143–4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Schmelz, “Listening, Memory, and the Thaw,” xix.

youthful Conservatory students, these musicians retained this damaging designation for the duration of their careers.

The political role of serial composers in Soviet Russia is indeed curious. Schmelz suggests that they were largely classified, if not openly condemned, as “leftist” thinkers.<sup>16</sup> Far from conservative, twelve-tone composers were experimenting with avant-garde techniques. It is no wonder, then, that they were shunned from the officially sanctioned arena of Communist artists—characterized by ultra-conservative stylistic conformity. In her study of Romanian composers active during the Thaw, however, Valentina Sandu-Dediu suggests that this might not be the case. Discussing the reception of serial music in the Ukraine during the 1970s, she argues instead that many protesting young composers were actually reacting negatively to “leftist” ideology and therefore situating themselves as “rightists.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, the general compositional trends had long since moved on to more avant-garde experimental procedures. Thus, as was the case in the West, serialism was now being utilized as a conservative option, largely confined to an academic collective rather than a genuinely progressive coterie.<sup>18</sup>

### **Andrey Volkonsky**

As previously noted, Volkonsky was the first Soviet composer to compose serial pieces, and his work was highly influential for many composers in the Soviet Union. Considering his well-known lineage, perhaps it is not surprising that Volkonsky became the public figure that he did. Volkonsky’s family were descendants from the aristocrat immortalized as A. Bolkonsky in Tolstoy’s literary masterpiece, *War and Peace*. This “noble” lineage, however, also made him a

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<sup>16</sup> Schmelz, “Andrey Volkonsky,” 141.

<sup>17</sup> Valentina Sandu-Dediu, “Dodecaphonic Composition in 1950s and 1960s Europe: The Ideological Issue of Rightist or Leftist Orientation,” *Journal of Musicological Research*, 26 (2007): 178.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

target.<sup>19</sup> As a child, Volkonsky spent most of his life in Paris and Geneva before emigrating to the USSR in 1947. Story has it that Volkonsky didn't want to leave Geneva and actually hid from his family until the train was delayed to look for the boy.

Given such a European early training, it is little that wonder the composer carried Western influences with him to the Moscow Conservatory. Once there, Volkonsky's use of bold dissonance landed him in trouble with both the Soviet Union of Composers and the Moscow Conservatory administration. In 1952, he was given "academic leave" and finally expelled two years later. Though his avant-garde techniques and complicated style were not cited as the cause for his expulsion, it is generally accepted that they prompted his exit.<sup>20</sup>

Following his expulsion, Volkonsky continued to experiment with an increasingly pronounced use of dissonance, straying further and further from the acceptable realm of Socialist Realism. Yet, instead of finding himself banned and isolated from the musical community, Volkonsky's works became the focus of divided public opinion. Schmelz argues that until the mid-1960s, officials in the press could not decide whether to see Volkonsky as their darling or a lost cause.<sup>21</sup> Such controversies only fueled his popularity among audiences. Indeed, this controversial coverage seemed to be good press as Volkonsky reaped the benefits of his prominence. By 1962, however, officialdom finally despaired of any redemption and instituted a ban on the public performance and publication of his music. This ban, Schmelz writes, must have been unofficial as some of his pieces continued to be performed over the succeeding decades.<sup>22</sup> By this time, indeed, he had developed a rather devoted following. All of this attention might be

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<sup>19</sup> Schmelz, "Listening, Memory, and the Thaw," 64.

<sup>20</sup> Schmelz, "Andrey Volkonsky," 151.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

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

felt to crystallize around his first serial experiment, the piano piece *Musica Stricta*, composed in 1956. Describing the work later in life, Volkonsky observed:

I decided that I didn't understand [twelve-tone] technique very well. I did [it] in principle. But there [in *Musica Stricta*] I did everything incorrectly...there are octaves, for example, which Schoenberg forbade, and there are also triads which he also forbade. But I simply didn't know that. I thought I had written 12-tone composition. And it is true that [those techniques] exist in places [in this piece]. But I named it *Musica Stricta* because of those strict techniques, although I used them entirely according to my own manner.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Musica Stricta*: Analysis**

Volkonsky's assessment rings true. *Musica Stricta* can hardly be seen as belonging to any Western definition of serialism; along with octaves and triads, other technical idiosyncrasies emerge. One such feature, Schmelz notes, involves Volkonsky's avoidance of a single row which might unite the entire work. Indeed, Volkonsky utilizes multiple rows in all movements but the first.

In fact, the first movement is sub-twelve-tone, as the primary series is made up of just four pitch classes. The series is motivically structured and subsequently transformed and developed in the sense that Volkonsky inserts chromatic accumulations that actually serve to break up the primary thematic material.<sup>24</sup> These rows—or as Cairns calls them “melodic aggregates”—are found primarily in the middle section of the movement.<sup>25</sup> The tetrachord sc(0126) constitutes the basis for the melodic/motivic patterning. The opening material returns in the final section.<sup>26</sup>

The second and fourth movements are fugal and do not portray any strict sense of serial procedure. The second movement, for example, takes advantage of four distinct rows in constant

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<sup>23</sup> Schmelz, “Andrey Volkonsky,” 171.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 163–4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

juxtaposition with one another. Cairns reasons that each row is used primarily as a linear segment with the resulting harmonies incidental to the horizontal movement.<sup>27</sup> Beyond this, two important characteristics of Volkonsky's technique emerge. The first represents an important distinction among the multiple rows: Cairns labels the first row to appear as the "primary" row, valuing it above the others, presumably due to its higher level of melodic independence.<sup>28</sup> This distinction will be important later as Shostakovich often opens a twelve-tone work with a "primary" row that becomes the basis for further transformation.

The second characteristic feature of Volkonsky's approach lies in his exploitation of the textural and rhythmic properties of the rows. It is not insignificant that the composer holds his linear and rhythmic aspects consistent throughout *Musica Stricta*; we will see a similar phenomenon in the works of Shostakovich. Although Cairns notes that serial procedures account for virtually the entire second movement, the change in consistency of serial application argues for a more flexible approach than its ubiquity may seem to imply.<sup>29</sup> Instead of utilizing the four rows of the previous movements, Volkonsky bases the contrasting third movement on two distinct rows. Cairns describes the transformations the rows undergo as they slowly allow the new material to take precedence. He writes:

Over the course of this movement, what began as clearly present horizontal twelve-tone row is gradually "hidden" beneath the musical surface. At certain points during the movement... the row is so completely hidden that it no longer appears to exert any control over the pitch organization. *The row has been transformed into a series and the series has been dissolved into freely atonal material.*<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Cairns, "Multiple-row Serialism," 48.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 55 (emphasis mine).

Cairns accounts for this disintegration as a result of Volkonsky's manipulation of the pitch order within the series. As the two rows begin to lose their original twelve-tone row resemblance, subsets of the new material increasingly serve to relate the rows to each other.<sup>31</sup>

The fourth and final movement returns to the fugal procedure of the second movement while adopting a ternary form comparable to that of the first movement. Two new rows nonetheless provide the serial material for the finale. Volkonsky's distinct use of octave doublings and triads finally make an appearance in this movement, although the row does not account for their presence. Such flexible applications of Western serial theory became the norm for Russian works within this idiolect. As we will see below, Soviet composers tried to view serial technique as a series of gradations rather than through the lens of any orthodox Western concepts. In fact, a number of additional observations on this topic might be usefully introduced at this point.

### **Russian Descriptions of Serialism**

In examining Russian serialism, Cairns notes that many Russian authors dealt with the topic of serialism, but few wrote descriptive treatises exclusively devoted to the subject.<sup>32</sup> Most early descriptions of serialism took pains to begin with a staunch disapproval of the entire concept. After such obligatory pejoratives, authors would typically turn to a detailed description of the technique itself.<sup>33</sup> These writings often served more as explicit rationalizations than denunciations; that is, composers would often refer to these tracts as how-to guides for serial

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<sup>31</sup> Cairns, "Multiple-row Serialism," 58.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>33</sup> Schmelz, "Listening, Memory, and the Thaw," 301.



technique.<sup>34</sup> Such writings, of course, counted as much for propaganda as anything.

Independently of generative theories compiled by composers, serious contributions to Russian serial theory emerged in the works of the musicologist Yuri Kholopov and his student Svetlana Kurbatskaya. Cairns describes Kholopov as one of only a handful of authors who discussed the technique in depth albeit as a portion of a larger text.<sup>35</sup> Kurbatskaya's commentary from 1994, is in fact the first extended Russian-language description of serial technique. The need to examine the work of both Kholopov and Kurbatskaya is evident as they provide insight into the specific phenomenon of "twelve-toneness" in Russian conceptions of serialism.<sup>36</sup>

Describing Kurbatskaya's text, Cairns enumerates twelve primary categories as follows:

i) free atonality; ii) technique of tonal centers, in which referential centers are established through the use of functional dissonances; iii) technique of "synthetic chords," in which a "chord functions as the source of vertical and harmonic material;"<sup>37</sup> iv) technique of twelve-tone chords; v) technique of twelve-tone rows; vi) twelve-tone fields; vii) technique of tropes, dividing the chromatic into hexachords; viii) serial technique; ix) dodecaphony; x) microserialism; xi) total serialism; and xii) serialism.<sup>38</sup> To make things more confusing, Kurbatskaya seems to equate the terms twelve-toneness with dodecaphonism and defines both as a "system of thinking based on the autonomy of each of the twelve pitch classes."<sup>39</sup> Cairns suggests such a view allows some room for interpretation regarding a tonal arrangement of these classifications.<sup>40</sup>

The sheer number of categories makes them difficult to map. In order to do so, Schmelz compresses the categories into a progressive series of characterizations. In his attempts to

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<sup>34</sup> Cairns, "Multiple-row Serialism," 25.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

codify—or at least explain—these gradations of twelve-toneness, he likens them to a set of four concentric circles, with the innermost consisting of dodecaphonic serialism, then moving outward to serialism, twelve-tone music that utilizes both twelve-tone rows and non-row material, and finally free atonality.<sup>41</sup> Russian serial theorists might well describe twelve-toneness as “atonal music that sounds twelve-tone.”<sup>42</sup> Such music, of course, would belong in Schmelz’s outermost circle. The next circle, twelve-tone, or music containing rows that does not follow a strict serial grammar corresponds to Kurbatskaya’s “technique of twelve-tone rows.”<sup>43</sup> Though his subsequent demarcations are less flexible, it seems that serial music (music derived strictly from an ordered sequence of pitch classes) falls under Kurbatskaya’s category of “serial technique” and finally twelve-tone serialism (dodecaphonic serialism) would be described as Kurbatskaya’s “dodecaphony” (category ix).<sup>44</sup> Although this interpretation may partially explain the terms of classification with reference to Western serial theory, the overall picture is still rather complicated. Much of the confusion stems from the fact that the terms described here are often considered synonymous according to conventional Western serial theory.

### **Shostakovich and Serialism**

When describing Shostakovich’s use of twelve-tone techniques, Schmelz names a number of characteristics unique to the composer. In particular, he notes Shostakovich’s use of multiple rows, the melodic/motivic construction for the rows and the use of material which lies outside the row. Above all of these points, however, Schmelz stresses what he believes is the most salient harmonic characteristic: the use of twelve-tone rows as a catalyst of tonal

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<sup>41</sup> Schmelz, “Shostakovich’s ‘Twelve-Tone’ Compositions,” 326.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.

<sup>44</sup> Cairns, “Multiple-row Serialism,” 182.

instability.<sup>45</sup> In citing the *Alexander Blok* songs, for example, Schmelz argues that the opening row of “Mysterious Signs” projects F-sharp as a centric pitch within the work; the rest of the movement remains tonally equivocal.<sup>46</sup> In works such as the String Quartet No. 13, where twelve-tone elements color most of the material throughout the work, he notes that Shostakovich uses the rows repeatedly to “blur the line between tonality and atonality.”<sup>47</sup>

Within these descriptions Schmelz thus sets up a fundamental opposition between twelve-tone and tonal forces in Shostakovich’s music. According to him, these disparate harmonic techniques do not work in tandem but instead struggle in unresolved opposition. Still, while the placement of the total chromatic within any melodic framework may suggest an unstable tonal orientation, it does not follow that the juxtaposition of twelve-tone and tonal elements necessarily promotes a pervasive impression of conflict, even one of incoherence. Indeed, it is possible for some degree of harmonic overlap to project a convincing sense of pitch-based symbiosis. As previously intimated, Peter Child’s interpretation of the Symphony No. 15 argues strongly against the logic of isolating two harmonic grammars. Rather, he suggests, Shostakovich’s approach successfully reconciles serial and non-serial forces according to similar interval collections and synthetic voice-leading. Stephen Brown’s work with dual interval space may shed further light on this matter. The following chapters will use these parameters as a basis for analysis, with the operative harmonic framework allowing for a continued reconciliation between serial and nonserial elements.

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<sup>45</sup> Schmelz, “Shostakovich’s ‘Twelve-Tone’ Compositions,” 307.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

## CHAPTER THREE

CASE STUDY: *SEVEN ROMANCES ON POEMS BY ALEXANDER BLOK, OP. 127 (1967)*,

“MYSTERIOUS SIGNS”;

*SIX POEMS BY MARINA TSVETAYEVA, OP. 143 (1973)*, “MY POEMS”

### “Mysterious Signs”

While the *Marina Tsvetaeva* songs represent the penultimate the example of Shostakovich’s serial exploration, the *Alexander Blok* cycle is the first of his works to exhibit twelve-tone characteristics. Schmelz cites the *Blok* songs as a prime example of twelve-tone principles being employed for the purpose of tonal destabilization. To be sure, both cycles make use of a twelve-tone sequence, separated by tonally or harmonically ambiguous material not clearly related to the series proper. Instances of these rows also tend to be isolated texturally, occurring only at important points of formal articulation. Regardless of this relative textural isolation, harmonic congruities exist between serial and non-serial material. In many ways, the rows establish the predominant harmonic expectations for the work.

In the *Blok* cycle, Shostakovich restricts the use of twelve-tone techniques to a single movement—the sixth, appropriately titled “Mysterious Signs.” The work to date has received minimal scholarly attention. Tim and Jesse Langen, however, survey the piece’s text-music associations, asserting that the prevailing sense of instability comes from the juxtaposition of diatonic, octatonic and chromatic scales. More specifically, they add, “chromatic sets twice

interrupt an octatonic series and both instances are related to the chromatic runs in songs two and three.”<sup>1</sup> In particular, the mention of the octatonic here is interesting considering the role the collection will play in later works such as the String Quartet No. 13 and the Symphony No. 15.

In “Mysterious Signs,” the first appearance of twelve-tone material occurs at the very outset. Beginning with a D2, held *attacca* from the previous song, the solo cello proceeds to run through the total chromatic over the first three measures while at the same time highlighting an important F-sharp–B relationship within the final trichord. Following this sequence, the cello then continues to emphasize F-sharp and B in the course of unfolding its unaccompanied cantilena. Twelve-tone material subsequently reappears at the end of the first stanza, this time within the violin line. In fact, the content of the first seven measures is all but repeated by the violin, with only small changes appearing in the melodic contour. The final statements of the row arrive in two-part canon at the end of the movement. Like before, the row returns as part of a larger melodic unit, often beginning as the other voices are fading out. A second twelve-note sequence occurs in the song at m. 47, where it is shared between cello and voice. Similar to Shostakovich’s use of multiple twelve-tone components in other works, this sequence is not related to the primary row by any orthodox transpositional, inversionsal or retrograde operation.

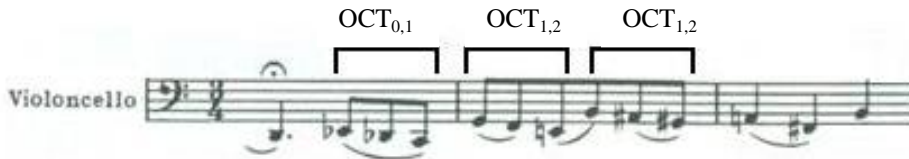
As Tim and Jesse Langen suggest, the movement overall, like the row itself, can be understood to possess octatonic characteristics. As stated previously, the movement opens on a sustained D in the cello. This solo line then proceeds to unfold a series of descending trichords within an overall registral ascent (Example 3.1). The first trichord of this succession, sc(013),

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<sup>1</sup>Tim and Jesse Langen, “Music and Poetry: The Case of Shostakovich and Blok,” in *Intersections and Transpositions: Russian Music, Literature, and Society*, ed. Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Studies in Russian Literature and Theory* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 157.

belongs to  $OCT_{0,1}$ ,<sup>2</sup> whereas, the second and third trichords belong to  $OCT_{1,2}$ . Pitch classes A and F-sharp then complete the row (D, E-Flat, D-flat, C, G, F, E, B, A-sharp, A, F-sharp) with strong implications of a referential center of B minor at the end of the third measure.

Example 3.1, Shostakovich, “Mysterious Signs,” *Alexander Blok*, Op. 127, mm. 1-3



**SEVEN ROMANCES ON POEMS OF ALEXANDER BLOK OP 127**

By Dmitri Shostakovich

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An initial glance at the trichordal content of the work nonetheless indicates that a thoroughgoing mapping based on ic1 and ic5 space may prove problematic. In fact, any reading of the octatonic across Stephen Brown’s ic1/ic5 model requires some explanation. The problematic interval, ic2, is understood as a component of the linear aspect; literal mapping of the first trichord thus leads to an asymmetrical patterning with a noticeable “hole” where pitch class D belongs (Figure 3.1). In this specific instance, symmetry is restored when the trichord is expanded to include the initial D. In fact, the temptation here might be to view the first measure as two pairs of half steps moving in opposite directions and inverted across the y axis ( $I_x$ , as defined in chapter 1, page 9, Figure 1.2a). Although potentially plausible, the sequence nevertheless breaks down in the following measure. A closer examination of the octatonic, then, is necessary. Although its subsets may not map well as an exclusively linear collection, a

<sup>2</sup> I have chosen to label octatonic collections according to the lowest-integer half-step within the collection. For example, the pitch classes [4578] belong to the collection in which pc 1,2 are the lowest integer half-steps. See Joseph Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2004, 144–147.

treatment of the octatonic across a two-dimensional melodic/harmonic context seems more promising. A rearrangement of  $OCT_{0,1}$  according to its  $i1$  and  $i7$  components indeed yields noteworthy results, particularly with respect to the principle Brown terms “inversion ( $I_{xy}$ )” (Figure 3.3). More importantly, this mapping suggests a convincing reading of the octatonic across an  $ic1/ic5$  framework. As Brown points out, Shostakovich tended to utilize  $ic5$  (usually as an  $i7$ ) within a harmonic setting.<sup>3</sup> Such settings often translate into harmonic motion of fifths sequenced by half step. In the opening row, we have the converse: melodic motion built of half and whole steps, sequenced by upward fifth motion. Although this trajectory may not map smoothly due to the stubborn trichordal whole step, the overall octatonic succession that dominates the twelve-note sequence can be accounted for in a conceivable  $ic1/ic5$  context.

Fig. 3.1:  $ic1/ic5$  mapping of  $sc(013)$

1	2	3	4	5	6
6	7	8	9	T	E
E	0	1	2	3	4
4	5	6	7	8	9
9	T	E	0	1	2

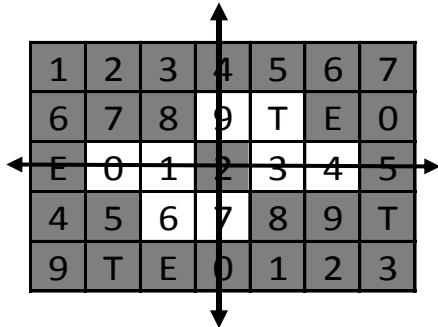
Fig. 3.2: Half-step pairs in m. 1 of Shostakovich, “Mysterious Signs,” *Alexander Blok*, Op. 127

6	7	8	9	T	E
E	0	1	2	3	4
4	5	6	7	8	9

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<sup>3</sup> Brown, “Dual Interval Space,” 92.

Fig 3.3: Reconfiguration of the OCT<sub>0,1</sub> as I<sub>xy</sub> across ic1/ic5 space



As Brown has pointed out, few works of Shostakovich can truly be described as tonal; that is, defined by functional harmonic progressions articulated by orthodox voice-leading motion.<sup>4</sup> Rather, his use of tonality can be better described as utilizing a referential pitch center. Brown writes that this referential pitch is often strengthened by an upper perfect fifth acting as a vestigial dominant analogue. Indeed, in “Mysterious Signs,” we see this i7 relationship as situated between pitch classes B and F-sharp, with F-sharp gaining greater emphasis through repetition and agogic accent when the cello lands on a pedal F-sharp in m. 7 following its opening melody (Example 3.2).

<sup>4</sup> Detailed discussion of tonic function and progression are largely outside the scope of the present study. For more information, see: Brown, “Dual Interval Space,” 89–93, and David Ralph Castro, “Sonata Form in the Music of Dmitri Shostakovich” (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2005), 19–22.



Example 3.2 Shostakovich, “Mysterious Signs,” *Alexander Blok*, Op. 127, mm. 1-13

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The predominance of F-sharp and B continues throughout the song, even when the row is not present. For instance, the second and final stanzas begin with an intonation supported by a single pitch class F-sharp across the first two lines, while the setting itself ends on octave F-sharps in the strings (Example 3.3a and b). As in the row, pitch class B remains an important terminal feature, but does not receive the same degree of emphasis that is granted to F-sharp. Along with F-sharp, another note rises to centric prominence in the song, particularly at the close of each stanza, namely G-sharp. Initially established in the voice and cello at the end of the first stanza (Example 3.4), G-sharp continues while the violin repeats the second statement of the row. Most emphatically, it returns at the climax of the song in m. 60. The introduction of a second referential pitch class seems curious given G-sharp’s unusual role in the statement of the

opening twelve-note material. Indeed, G-sharp's relationship to the initial B and F-sharp center sets up a curious sc(025) relationship that does not correspond with the sc(013) trichords from the opening row. To be sure, this sc(025) does correspond to an octatonic collection ( $OCT_{2,3}$ ), but not one previously identified. This trichord does, however, appear after the conclusion of the opening row. Here, the final two notes of the row, A and F-sharp are followed by B. Although not actually a member of the row, the B in m. 4 belongs as much to the row which precedes it as to the material which follows. In fact, Schmelz would likely argue a case for the F-sharp and A "resolving" into the B, given the previously discussed dominant function of F-sharp.<sup>5</sup> All the same, these three pitch classes, in fact, form a sc(025) related by  $T_5I$  to the sc(025) of the referential pitch material discussed above.

---

<sup>5</sup> Schmelz, "Shostakovich's 'Twelve-Tone' Compositions," 309.

Example 3.3a: Shostakovich, "Mysterious Signs," Alexander Blok, Op. 127, mm. 28-41

28 (♩ = ♩) (♩ = ♩) **pp**  
 У - кры - ва - юсь в ноч - ны - е пе -  
 Ich ver - berg mich in fin - ste - rer

35  
 ще - ры и не по - мню су - ро - вых чу - дес. На за - ре го - лу -  
 Höh - le, will ver - ges - sen den Spuk, der mich narrt, doch um - sonst: Ü - ber

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Example 3.3b: Shostakovich, "Mysterious Signs," Alexander Blok, Op. 127, mm. 60-71

60 **ff** rit. molto **mf** **dim.**  
 са. На - до мной не - бо -  
 Zopf... Ü - ber mir droht der

66 **p** **pp**  
 свод у - же ни - зок, чёр - ный сон тя - го - те - ет в гру - ди.  
 Him - mel zu sin - ken, schwar - zer Schlaf hüllt die Sin - ne mir ein...

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Example 3.4: Shostakovich, “Mysterious Signs,” *Alexander Blok*, Op. 127, mm. 23-24

**sc (013)**

МНОЙ \_\_\_\_\_ ТЯ - ГО - ТЕ - ЮТ ВО \_\_\_\_\_ СМЕ. \_\_\_\_\_  
*fort-* \_\_\_\_\_ *bö - ser* *Spuk ei - nes* \_\_\_\_\_ *Traums.* \_\_\_\_\_

con sord.  
*p* *pp*

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Considering the ubiquity of sc (013) in the opening row, it is little surprise that the collection makes a strong appearance within the non-serial pitch material as well. For instance, it is employed on several occasions as a terminal cue, such as at the conclusion of the first and second stanzas (Example 3.4). This trichord, however, is commonplace in a number of collections and cannot reasonably signal a definitive octatonic set. In fact, a closer look at the entire pitch collection of the first stanza suggests that it can just as easily be described as diatonic (Example 3.5). Given the centrality of F-sharp, a case can be made for a B Major collection. The primary harmonic base, then, must lie with the diatonic; any octatonic subsets—no matter how convincing—remain a passing implication rather than a foundational element. This new harmonic emphasis suggests a possible reinterpretation of the opening itself. In other words, since sc(013) can exist within both an octatonic and a diatonic framework, might the opening be better viewed as octatonic with ascending fifth motion or as a diatonic subset sequenced up by major third? Certainly neither collection is exclusively stated. Such ambiguity, perhaps, explains why Schmelz categorizes these works as a disruption of tonal stability.



Example 3.5, Shostakovich, “Mysterious Signs,” *Alexander Blok*, Op. 127, mm. 7-27

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Much like the first row, the second contains a number of octatonic subsets. More accurately the second row—though chromatic—partially rotates through all three octatonic sets (Example 3.6). In the pickup to m. 48 the voice and cello begin on OCT<sub>2,3</sub> in the first measure, rotate to OCT<sub>1,2</sub> and finish with OCT<sub>0,1</sub> in m. 50. Similar to the appearance of the first row, melodic non-serial material immediately follows the second row statement. In this case, a

descending line takes over, at first purely chromatic before developing any sense of serial identity. Though the two rows share some characteristics, perceptible differences emerge. Most notably, the second row (F-sharp, G-sharp, A, B, C, B-flat, G, D, C-sharp, D-sharp, E, F) occurs in a much denser texture, with two voices completing the serial sequence against a third accompanimental voice. This twelve-tone statement also engenders a rather different sense of harmonic progression. Whereas the first row traced pitch centricities of B and F-sharp, the later sequence stubbornly seems to avoid any referential pitch. What is more, dissonances between the voices accumulate until they reach a climax on the phrase “the golden braid” in mm. 59-60 (Example 3.7).

Example 3.6, Shostakovich, “Mysterious Signs,” *Alexander Blok*, Op. 127, mm. 42-53

42  
 бы - е хи - ме - - ры смо - тят в зер - ка - ле яр - ких не - бее. У - бе -  
 mir, in der Hö - - he blaut sein Ab - bild, das kalt auf mich starrt. Ich will

48  
 га - ю в про - шед - ши - е ми - ги, за - кры - ва - ю от стра - ха гла - за, на лис -  
 fliehn in ver - gan - ge - ne Zei - ten, ich ver - grab in den Hän - den den Kopf... Ich er -

OCT<sub>2,3</sub> OCT<sub>1,2</sub> OCT<sub>0,1</sub>

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Example 3.7, Shostakovich, “Mysterious Signs,” *Alexander Blok*, Op. 127, mm. 54-65

54

тах хо-ло-де-ющей кни-ги- зо-ло-та-я де-вичь-я ко-  
 blick ei-nes Buchs lo-se Sei-ten, und dar-auf liegt ein gol-de-ner

60 *ff* *rit. molto* *a tempo* *mf* *dim.*  
 са. На-до мной не-бо-  
 Zopf... Ü-ber mir droht der

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In this respect, the differing treatment of the second movement is now perhaps most obviously linked to the substance of the text in “Mysterious Signs.” In their analysis, Tim and Jesse Langen describe Marina Tsvetaeva’s poem as “overtly symbolist.”<sup>6</sup> Its subject matter traces the transformation of the heroine as she uncovers the meaning of supernatural signs around her. By the end of the song cycle, then, the meaning of these signs is all too clear: death surrounds the poet as she seeks escape from its clutches. Such a symbol resonates well with scholars who link the composer’s use of twelve-tone material to a preoccupation with mortality. Although occurrences of the first row are isolated from the text, the second row debuts in the

<sup>6</sup> Langen, “Music and Poetry,” 156.

lines: “I flee to past moments; I close my eyes from fear.”<sup>7</sup> Shostakovich highlights this fear through a progressive accumulation of dissonance that eventually comes to dominate the texture.

### “My Poems”

*Marina Tsvetaeva* represents a slightly less timid approach to twelve-tone technique. Specifically, dyadic semitone motion overrides any sense of octatonic pitch source material. As with “Mysterious Signs,” however, the row (E-flat, C-flat, B-flat, A, D, G-flat, F, E, D-flat, C, A-flat, G) appears unaccompanied at the opening, this time in the right hand of the piano. After the first instrumental statement, the row then moves into the vocal part, terminating before sounding the final A-flat. In fact, as the row makes its way through the piece, Shostakovich regularly omits its final two pitches. Presumably the appearance of the first ten pitch classes within the appropriate motivic context signals an appearance of the row that renders the need for the final two unnecessary to complete the total chromatic.

As mentioned above, ic1 dominates the row. Specifically, the row is constructed of descending semitone pairs and trichords separated by upward leaps (Example 3.8). The descending trichords appear first, and then fragment into semitone pairs. The row itself begins on an E-flat<sup>4</sup> in the right hand of the piano and with each successive upward leap lands an ic1 lower. To be sure, the final D-flat is transposed up an octave in an upward gesture; the descent, however, is still clear.

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



Example 3.8, Shostakovich, “My Poems,” *Marina Tsvetaeva*, Op. 143, mm. 1-5

**Row**

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Semitone motion—especially semitone descent—is also a component of non-serial material in “My Poems.” Here, Stephen Brown’s dual interval space is particularly applicable. The final melodic ascent at the end of the first stanza, for example, occurs across *ic1/ic5* space as the fourth from G to C opens onto the E-natural. Directed intervals *i7* and *i11* each carry over into the next stanza. At this point the melody continues a semitone descent down a major third from C to A-flat, with leaps adding the fifth below the first and final pitch classes (Example 3.9). *ic1/ic5* motion can also be found in the accompanimental figures.

Example 3.9 Shostakovich, “My Poems,” *Marina Tsvetaeva*, Op. 143, mm. 18-21

The image displays a musical score for Example 3.9, featuring a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (mm. 18-21) shows a vocal line starting at measure 22 with a dynamic marking of *f*. The lyrics are: "во - рван - шим - ся, как / wie klei - ne Teu - fel". A box highlights the interval between the notes 'и' and 'м' in the vocal line. The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings of *dim.*, *mf*, and *p*. The second system (mm. 25-28) shows a vocal line starting at measure 25 with a dynamic marking of *mp*. The lyrics are: "ма - лень - ки - е чер - ти, в свя - ти - ли - ще, где сон и фи - ми - / in die Tem - pel - räu - me, wo Weih - rauch - duft und Stil - le noch das". Two boxes highlight intervals: one between 'и' and 'м' in the first measure, and another between 'и' and 'м' in the second measure. The piano accompaniment includes a *cresc.* marking.

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As seen in the examples below, rocking eighth notes are guided by  $ic1/ic5$  motion in two ways. First, eighth-notes related by  $T_7$  sequence down a semitone in the second stanza. At the end of the same stanza, a semitone unfolds above the  $T_7$  interval in an expansion of its overall range (Example 3.10a and b), Figures 3.4a and b illustrate this expansion in  $ic1/ic5$  space.

Example 3.10a Shostakovich, “My Poems,” *Marina Tsvetaeva*, Op. 143, (mm. 30-31)

5

30 *p*

смер - ти, - не - чи - тан - ным сти -  
 - triu - me - die - kei - ner je - tals

**T7 unfolding**

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Example 3.10b Shostakovich, “My Poems,” *Marina Tsvetaeva*, Op. 143, mm. 33-36

33

- хит -  
 - las! -

*espr.*  
 8...

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Fig. 3.4a ic1/ic5 motion in “My Poems,” mm. 32

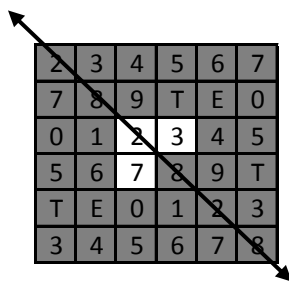
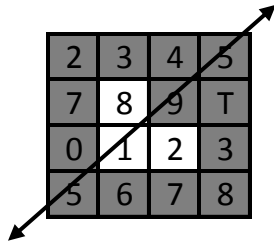


Fig. 3.4b ic1/ic5 motion in “My Poems,” mm. 33-36



Beyond its intervallic properties, the row establishes a unique motivic gesture. As argued previously, Shostakovich conceived of twelve-tone rows as melodic events and rarely chose to transform or transpose them. This is plainly the case here that with each iteration, the rhythmic identity of the row as well as its pitch profile remains intact. Even the final statement of the row, reinforced by octave doublings, retains its rhythmic shape. The emphasis on rhythm is noteworthy as “My Poems” seems to incorporate two important rhythmic components: rocking eighth note accompaniments like those in mm. 30-36, and a dotted-quarter, eighth-note melodic figure like that in mm. 37-39. The harmonic relationship between the rocking eighths in the row has already been established. Given the relationship of the rhythmic element to non-serial melodic material in the song, it seems that the dotted-quarter and eighth-note motive originates with the row as well. In fact, motives directly drawn from the row appear in the middle of the first stanza as the left hand attempts in vain to assert its own statement of the twelve-tone row (Example 3.11).

Example 3.11, Shostakovich, “My Poems,” *Marina Tsvetaeva*, Op. 143, mm. 10–17

The image shows a musical score for the song "My Poems" by Dmitri Shostakovich. It consists of two systems of music. The first system starts at measure 10 and ends at measure 13. The second system starts at measure 14 and ends at measure 17. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staves. The lyrics are in Russian and German. The tempo and dynamics are marked as *p legato* and *p*.

10  
зна - ла я, что я - по - эт,  
nicht be-wusst, Po - et zu sein,  
*p legato*

14  
со - рвав - шим-ся, как Оры - зги из фон -  
die írech wie Sprit - zer der Fon - tí - ne  
*p*  
*legato*

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Further comparison of the two songs discussed above could yield many useful observations; unfortunately most are beyond the scope of this analysis. Still, it is helpful to acknowledge that in “My Poems,” twelve-tone material plays a slightly more active role. That is, the series itself is closely connected to the text with respect to its melodic and harmonic setting. However, both settings present their twelve-note content in isolated fashion whereby the total chromatic is surrounded by non-serial material. Though a second row appears in “Mysterious Signs,” it does so just once, and in a relatively subservient role. In other works, Shostakovich stages a more active correlation between his serial and non-serial pitch material. One such example—from the first movement of his Violin Sonata, Op. 134—will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CASE STUDY: VIOLIN SONATA, OP. 134 (1968)

Twelve-tone material in the first movement of Shostakovich's Violin Sonata, op. 134 assumes a more integrated role than in the song cycles discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, row material recurs more often and interacts more thoroughly with non-serial material. To be sure, non-serial material orders much of the movement. Even so, material associated specifically with the four separate rows exerts a distinctive influence on the composer's harmonic grammar.

Although formal classification of the first movement of the sonata is problematic at best, it is roughly divided into three large sections. The movement opens with a twelve-tone row (G, C, F-sharp, B-flat, E, F, B, A, E-flat, C-sharp, A-flat, D) in octaves in the piano followed immediately by its  $I_7$  inverse.<sup>2</sup> These two rows act in conjunction with each other and serve as an ostinato bass line at the outset of the movement (Example 4.1). The violin enters in the ninth measure on an ornamented DSCH motive.<sup>3</sup> The ostinato rows finally break down only after the

---

<sup>1</sup> The Violin Sonata was written in 1968 and dedicated to preeminent Soviet violinist David Oistrakh, also the dedicatee of the composer's two violin concerti. In her biography of Shostakovich, Fay relates that "Shostakovich had started composing the Violin Sonata in August at Repino. He hoped to finish it in time to present, tied up with ribbon, to David Oistrakh on his sixtieth birthday, but was late. Not surprisingly, Oistrakh had been fantasizing about a sonata by Shostakovich for some time, but he was not expecting the gift. He figured that after the sixtieth birthday miscue of the previous year, the composer had wanted to make good on his mistake. The Violin Sonata was completed on 23 October 1968." Fay, "Shostakovich," 258.

<sup>2</sup> I will consider the row and its  $I_7$  inversion as members of the same row. Given that the two rows are related by the canonic operation of inversion, they are not distinct rows according to Cairns' definition of multiple row serialism and will not be treated as such. See Cairns, "Multiple-row Serialism," 65.

<sup>3</sup> The DSCH motive (D-E<sup>b</sup>-C-B) is a hallmark of Shostakovich's late style. The motive's first appears in his 10<sup>th</sup> Symphony. Scholars have cited appearances of the motive as carrying biographical connotations. See Peter J.

third full statement. At this point, the series returns several times in the piano and violin up through rehearsal 10. A new formal section begins when the texture thins out and a different twelve-tone row enters in the right hand as a *secco*, sprightly melody (Example 4.2).

Example 4.1, Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 1-12

Фортепиано

Andante ♩ = 100

*p legato*

Row 1

Скрипка

1

*p espress.*

Row 1 (I<sub>7</sub>)

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Example 4.2, Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 71-78

10

Row 2

71

75

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This new row (B, C-sharp, D, E, F-sharp, G, G-sharp, A, E, C, B-flat, E-flat) is handed off to the violin, but only after a third row is sounded in the piano. The mood changes once again at rehearsal 12 with the entrance of a fourth row, this time in the violin. The DSCH motive and original row material return two more times before their final appearance at rehearsal 18, mm. 140–144. Another change in mood then allows the violin to work out several measures of spinning sixteenths over a pedal in the piano. In the final section of the movement, motives and melodic/rhythmic passages from earlier in the movement return; instances of each previous row (save for the initial series) also return at least once. These recurrences seem almost episodic given their short length and rapid transitions. The movement ends as pedal motion centers around G; fragmentation and motivic liquidation finally move to an E minor sonority.



As stated earlier, multiple rows appear throughout the movement. Only the first two, however, carry distinctive melodic and rhythmic profiles. The first is significant not only for its prominent formal positioning, but also for its four-octave range and octave doublings in the piano. In addition, two specific rhythmic features are worthy of note: first, the eighth-note turn motive that recurs regularly throughout the first half of the movement; second, the number of subsequent appearances of the complete row which occur in rhythmic augmentation and imitation (Examples 4.3a and b). The prevailing emphasis on rhythmic malleability may explain Shostakovich's refusal to transpose this particular row. Another explanation might involve the regular appearance of this row in inversion; perhaps the fixed intervallic correspondence of the two related rows serves a similar referential function.

Example 4.3a Augmentation in Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 23-32

The image shows a musical score for the first movement of Shostakovich's Violin Sonata, Op. 134. It consists of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 23 to 32. The piano part is in the lower register, with a boxed-in section from measure 25 to 32. The violin part has a boxed-in section from measure 25 to 32. The second system covers measures 28 to 32. The piano part is in the lower register, with a boxed-in section from measure 28 to 32. The violin part is in the upper register, with a boxed-in section from measure 28 to 32. The boxed-in sections highlight specific rhythmic and melodic patterns in the piano accompaniment.

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Example 4.3b Imitation in Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 117-121

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Despite its exhaustion of the total chromatic within the span of just three measures, the initial row also manages to establish pitch classes G and D as central to the overall harmonic motion of the movement. Between each row statement and its inversion, the piano rotates around G and D before the initiation of the next row. As will be discussed below, G acts as a prominent pitch class in the violin part at the end of the movement. Referential pitches in the movement typically relate to G according to ic1/ic5 motion.

The second row carries a distinctive rhythmic profile. What is more, the second row is also responsible for launching a new section. Prior to its appearance, the texture thins considerably; the piano then articulates the row in the right hand against staccato double stops in the violin (Example 4.4). With this, the new row initiates a *secco*, march-like passage repeated in full several measures later, this time sandwiched between motives derived from its opening. Unlike the first row, the second row does not undergo rhythmic transformations. Instead, its rhythmic profile sets off immediate fragmentation, both after its initial appearance, and on each

of its subsequent recurrences, before eventually fragmenting into the short, short, long, long (eighth, eighth, eighth/quarter, eighth/quarter) rhythm that ends the movement (Example 4.5).

Example 4.4 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 67-78

The image displays a musical score for the first movement of Shostakovich's Violin Sonata, Op. 134, measures 67-78. The score is written for violin and piano. The first system (measures 67-70) features a violin line with a long note in measure 67, followed by a melodic line in measures 68-70. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand and a more active line in the right hand. Dynamics include *cresc.*, *mf espress.*, and *p*. The second system (measures 71-74) continues the piano accompaniment. A specific violin passage in measure 73 is highlighted with a black box and labeled "Row 2" and "10" above it. This passage consists of a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The dynamic is *p*. The third system (measures 75-78) shows the continuation of the violin and piano parts. A violin passage in measure 75 is also highlighted with a black box, showing notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The piano accompaniment continues with its characteristic rhythmic patterns.

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Example 4.5 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 206-213

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In addition to its rhythmic motives, Shostakovich also brings back the pitch sequence from the second row near the end of the movement. Regarding pitch orientation, the return of the row begins with a  $T_1$  relationship to the original. Subsequent occurrences of the material display a similar propensity for transposition. It should be noted, however, that this row does not represent an exact transposition of the original row.<sup>4</sup> Still, continuity within the melodic, motivic and rhythmic domains argues for a clear relationship between the two (Examples 4.6a and b). Here and in subsequent occurrences of the series the melody begins with the same  $sc(013)$  stepwise ascent before deviating into the “row” proper; throughout the series, the contour and

<sup>4</sup> The first recurrence of this row is not actually a true twelve-tone row, as will be discussed later. Here, the pitch class G-flat occurs instead of moving another half step to G. The second occurrence of this row is a twelve-tone row; to be sure, as it exhausts the chromatic but it is not a true transposition as the intervallic order is changed.

general shape remains invariant. As discussed in more detail later, such a shift in transposition could suggest a shift in referential pitch class centricity. Specifically, the ic5 relationship between C and G seems to reassert a referential pitch center of G.

Example 4.6a Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 169-176

The image shows two systems of musical notation for Shostakovich's Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 169-176. The first system (mm. 169-172) features a violin part with a pizzicato section (pizz.) marked 'f' (forte) and includes trills (tr) and a dynamic change to 'dim.' (diminuendo). The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with a 'p' (piano) dynamic. A box highlights a specific interval in the piano part at the end of the first system, and another box highlights a similar interval in the violin part at the end of the second system.

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Example 4.6b Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 185-188

The image shows a musical score for the first movement of Shostakovich's Violin Sonata, Op. 134, measures 185-188. The score is in 4/4 time and features a violin and piano. The violin part is marked "modo ordinario" and "con sord." (with mutes). A box highlights measures 185-188. The piano part includes trills (tr) and a fortissimo (pp) marking. The measure number 185 is written below the piano staff.

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Unlike the first two rows, the final two lack a distinct melodic or rhythmic profile. In fact, the appearance of the third row (A, B-flat, G, E-flat, B, F-sharp, E, D, G-sharp, C, F, C-sharp) seems almost like an afterthought (Example 4.7), at most forming something like an oblique answer to the second row. As mentioned previously, the second row begins as a new melodic unit that soon disintegrates into fragmentation. The third row consequently sounds in the midst of these fragments just as melodic interest in the violin picks up. As with its predecessor, reappearances of this row do not constitute an exact pitch class restatement; again, repetitions of G-flat seem to be responsible for a progressive sense of disintegration (Example 4.8).



Example 4.7 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm.75-81

end of Row 2

Row 3

Row 3

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Example 4.8 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 177-179

Row 3

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The fourth row (G, F-sharp, E, A, G-sharp, E, B-flat, E-flat, C-sharp, D, C, B) is first articulated as two chromatic hexachords, appearing at rehearsal 12 with the change from the sprightly march associated with the second and third rows (Example 4.9). Introduced once again

as a formal marker, this row returns later in the movement again transposed, in this case by  $T_{10}$  and then  $T_5$ . In fact the fourth row returns more often than the other transposed rows.<sup>5</sup> In one appearance, the row acts as accompaniment against double stops in the violin. This occurs at rehearsal 20, with the series acting as the first to recur in the final section of the piece.<sup>6</sup>

Transposed at  $T_{10}$ , the row sounds against pedal E's in the violin.

Example 4.9 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 90-92

**Row 4**

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The final two occurrences of the fourth row appear at the culmination of the movement and represent the final instances of twelve-tone material in an otherwise monophonic texture (see Example 4.10). The row begins in the right hand of the piano at  $T_7$ ; after a two-measure interlude, the violin begins the row again, now at  $T_5$  (Example 4.11a and b). The transpositions here can be seen as a symmetrical mapping of  $ic1/ic5$  space since the middle two appearances of the row, in the right hand of the piano, constitute an  $ic5$  relationship (Figure 4.1).<sup>7</sup> Around these two appearances, the first and final appearances of the row in the violin balance the relationship

<sup>5</sup> The exception here is row 1, which is not found in transposition, only inversion

<sup>6</sup> For the sake of clarity, I have divided the form into three parts. The first, from rehearsals 1-10, contains the rhythmic ostinato of the first row and ends with its subsequent fragmentation and disintegration. The second section, from rehearsals 10-19, covers the march-like section and infusion of multiple rows into what was a single-row movement. The final section, from rehearsal 19 to the end, contains episodic fragmentation and a mixture of motives from the previous two sections.

<sup>7</sup> Only the first pitches of the row will be illustrated for the sake of clarity.



by virtue of their  $T_2/T_{10}$  identities (Figure 4.2). It is important to note here that each occurrence represents an exact transposition, without any adjustments or shifts in note order.

Example 4.10 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 160-1

160

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Example 4.11a Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 218-219

218

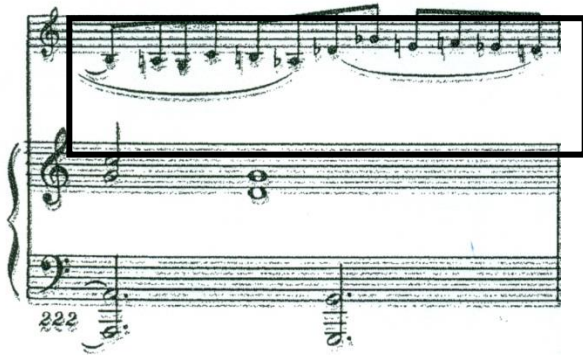
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Example 4.11b Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 222



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Fig 4.1 ic 5 relationship between the middle occurrences of fourth row

5	6	7	8	9
T	E	0	1	2
3	4	5	6	7
8	9	T	E	0

Fig. 4.2 ic5 relationship across the four instances of Row 3

0	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9
T	E	0	1	2
3	4	5	6	7
8	9	T	E	0
1	2	3	4	5

A few additional instances of twelve-tone deployment in this movement deserve comment. The first occurs at rehearsal 20 with the new material given to the violin (Example 4.12). This sequence can be separated into four octatonic trichords marked by eighth-note rests; a

further rest at the conclusion of the sequence then initiates an appearance of the third row as discussed above. Yet another rest punctuates an accumulation of the total chromatic. This sequence is reminiscent of material from the first row, yet although similar, this material is derived most explicitly from the passage at rehearsal 9 (Example 4.13), as the opening row and material from the first section begins to fragment (Examples 4.14). In fact, the row in m. 162 is more than a mere derivation of this early material; it constitutes a near restatement. More specifically, the material at rehearsal 9 is almost a complete twelve-tone sequence but for the repeated D that occurs in m. 166. This reworking of chromatic material into a twelve-tone row reverses the compositional technique described earlier in which Shostakovich introduces repeating pitches into what were integral twelve-tone rows.

Example 4.12 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 157-159

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Example 4.13 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 160-168

similar to  
Row 1

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Example 4.14 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 63-66

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Although a subtle shift, the row accumulation here represents a unique instance of Shostakovich's synthetic approach to the combination of serial and non-serial material. In the

most literal sense, the composer has transformed looser non-serial complexes into a definable chromatic aggregate (as opposed to the characteristic technique whereby a twelve-tone row accumulates pitch repetition and loses its specific serial characteristics). Beyond this Shostakovich also models phrases of formal fragmentation based on melodic and motivic material deriving from the first and second rows. For instance, liquidation occurs in mm. 59-73 as the original row material segments into shorter and shorter groupings which prepare the new material introduced at rehearsal 10 (Example 4.15).<sup>8</sup> A similar disintegration also occurs within the original row material in mm. 59-62. Here, the overall melodic shape (and that of its  $I_7$  partner) remains intact while the pitches move quickly away from their original order within the row. These new pitches (repetitions, to be precise) remain subordinate to the confirmation of C and G as referential centers.

---

<sup>8</sup> In fact, the material at rehearsal 10 undergoes further liquidation near the end of the movement.



Example 4.15 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 58-74

Musical score for measures 58-62. The score is in 3/4 time. The upper staff (violin) begins with a melodic line marked *dim.* and *p*. The lower staff (piano) features a rhythmic accompaniment with a *dim.* marking and a *p* dynamic. Measure numbers 58, 59, 60, 61, and 62 are indicated at the bottom of the staves.

Musical score for measures 63-66. The score is in 3/4 time. The upper staff (violin) has a melodic line with a *pp sub.* marking. The lower staff (piano) has a rhythmic accompaniment with a *pp* marking. A box containing the number '9' is placed above the first measure. Measure numbers 63, 64, 65, and 66 are indicated at the bottom of the staves.

Musical score for measures 67-70. The score is in 5/4 time. The upper staff (violin) has a melodic line with a *cresc.* marking, followed by *mf espress.* and *p*. The lower staff (piano) has a rhythmic accompaniment with a *cresc.* marking, followed by *mf espress.* and *p*. Measure numbers 67, 68, 69, and 70 are indicated at the bottom of the staves.

Musical score for measures 71-74. The score is in 5/4 time. The upper staff (violin) has a melodic line with a *p* marking. The lower staff (piano) has a rhythmic accompaniment with a *p* marking. A box containing the number '10' is placed above the first measure. Measure numbers 71, 72, 73, and 74 are indicated at the bottom of the staves.

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As noted above, row material in this movement seems to aid in the demarcation of formal boundaries. Although these delineations may not always be clear-cut, the introduction of row material most typically coincides with a change in mood, texture and accompaniment. The introduction of the second row at rehearsal 10, for instance, accompanies liquidation along with a decrease in dynamics and surface rhythm even as the violin begins to hint at the material to come. The next large section begins at rehearsal 19 with the introduction of new, non-serial material in the violin. Even so, a return of opening row material occurs prominently in the piano's left hand—its original textural voice (Example 4.16). Any overriding formal markers within the final section would be difficult to identify. Still, appearances of the second row tend to accompany motivic development and changes in texture similar to those encountered earlier in the movement. In particular, the presentation of the second row precedes a brief interlude in the violin's fantasia-like theme, which seems to grant it additional formal weight.

Example 4.16 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 139-148

18

139

**Row 1**

*f* *f press.* *mf* *p*

a tempo Tranquillo

19 rit. *pp*

145 *pp* *pp*

147 *pp*

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Like the setting of “Mysterious Signs” from the *Alexander Blok* suite, octatonicism is also present in this movement, if sporadic. Although trichordal segmentation of the first row does reveal apparent octatonic components, such a reading is not particularly convincing because of its inconsistent segmentation. By comparison, the articulation of the third row at rehearsal 20 is more obviously octatonic in form, with each trichord combining to produce an end-weighted OCT<sub>0,1</sub> collection (Example 4.17). Perhaps fittingly, octatonic collections make more of an appearance in this section as a whole, with a near complete OCT<sub>2,3</sub> present in the row appearing at rehearsal 22 (Example 4.18).

Example 4.17, Octatonic collections in Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 157-159

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Example 4.18 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 169-176

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More salient by far are the correspondences established by ic1/ic5 relations. For instance, the first row—which displays few of these interval classes in succession—outlines the referential tonics of G and D. Furthermore, as the movement draws to a close, the referential tonic of G begins to rise in prominence by virtue of sheer recurrence. This rise allows G to regain its priority status over the obfuscating effect of the intervening row material. That is, in sections where the second, third, and fourth rows occur, a sense of referential tonic is regularly obscured through pedal tones and melodic “conclusions” on pitches other than G or D. To be sure, ic1/ic5 motion recurs regularly. Pedal motion in the movement, however, does not always move away from G as an important key center. Indeed, the fantasia-like violin melody at rehearsal 19 and

after rehearsal 25 secures the prominence of pitch class G over a sustained pedal with D and C-sharp framing G in the left hand (Example 4.19 and Figure 4.3). Finally, as the movement draws to a close, G becomes the primary pedal point, first in the violin octaves at rehearsal 25, then moving to the left hand by rehearsal 26. The movement ends, not on a G sonority, but on an E minor triad with a G in the bass (Example 4.20). The pitches in the final eight measures belongs to  $OCT_{1,2}$  and can be observed across  $ic1/ic5$  space (Figure 4.4).

Example 4.19 Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, mm. 145-150

47

a tempo Tranquillo

19 rit. *pp*

145 *pp* *pp*

147 *pp*

149 *pp*

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Example 4.20, Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i, mm. 225-230

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Figure 4.3 Interval exchange in Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, rehearsal 19

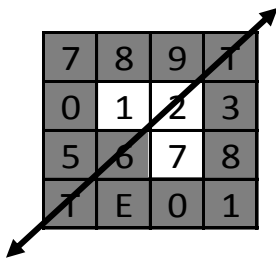
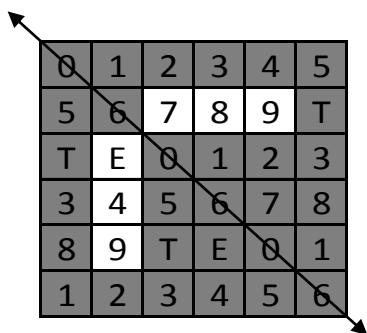


Figure 4.4 ic1/ic5 relationship in the final measures of Shostakovich, Violin Sonata, Op. 134, i



Although the twelve-tone material in this movement plays a more active role than in the two songs discussed in the previous chapter, Shostakovich continues to treat his twelve-tone rows in much the same way. Rows are exploited as melodic units and connected with non-serial material, or in this case, another iteration of the row. They are marked by sparser textures and rarely subjected to transformation. Beyond these surface treatments, the twelve-tone material also shapes and influences harmonic and melodic material within the movement. Specifically, rhythmic motives and harmonic collections from the row are prominently displayed. One primary feature of Shostakovich's twelve-tone technique nonetheless stands out: the inclusion of several distinct twelve-tone rows within a composition. These multiple rows are even more evident in his String Quartet No. 13, op. 13 where, as will be seen in the following chapter, Shostakovich exploits multiple rows as an increasingly motivic phenomenon.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CASE STUDY: STRING QUARTET NO. 13, OP. 138 (1970)

So far this study has developed a theory of Shostakovich's serial grammar against a range of stylistic criteria. Among these, the composer's focus on melodic articulation remains the single most determining factor of his twelve-tone idiom. In addition, he utilizes a number of characteristic harmonic principles, including a focus on ic1/ic5 space and the tendency to alternate readily between diatonic and octatonic pitch collections. To be sure, many of these features are evident in a notable late work, the String Quartet No. 13, op. 138 (1970). However, one attribute emerges in a higher concentration in this composition than in the works examined thus far, namely multiple-row serialism. Admittedly, Shostakovich employs multiple rows in both the Violin Sonata and the setting of "Mysterious Signs" from the *Alexander Blok* suite. However, the multiplicity of rows in these pieces cannot compare to the sheer number of serial formations present in the Thirteenth Quartet. More than sixteen rows appear in this work as full statements of the total chromatic without internal repetition.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will explore Shostakovich's use of multiple-row serialism as it qualifies and extends the twelve-tone characteristics previously discussed.

---

<sup>1</sup> If the definition of a twelve-tone row was expanded to allow even one pitch repetition before the total chromatic had been fully exhausted, the number of distinct twelve-tone rows would expand considerably. Although instances of pitch class repetition with a twelve-tone framework were considered relevant in the previous chapter, the high incidence of total chromatic exhaustion seems to preclude the need to account for any instance of near exhaustion. In the first movement of the Violin Sonata, twelve-tone rows and near-twelve-tone rows displayed structural influence in a few instances. In Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 13, however, few twelve-tone (and no near-twelve-tone) rows recur. There is little need, then, to account for near-twelve-tone material as an agent of melodic or thematic coherence.

Nearly all of Shostakovich's fifteen string quartets were written in the second half of his life. The Thirteenth Quartet was composed in 1970 after a recuperative retreat to central Russia following a period of ill health. The Quartet was completed by the end of the year, and premiered shortly thereafter. The String Quartet No. 13 is one of four dedicated to members of the Beethoven quartet who gave the first performances of all but two of his compositions for the medium.<sup>2</sup> Samuel Hogarth describes the work as one of many of Shostakovich's dealing with an obsession with death.<sup>3</sup> In fact, many commentators have concentrated on statements of the twelve pitches of the chromatic scale as a distinct symbol of mortality.

Overall, the piece lies in a five-part arch form (ABCBA), utilizing the key centers—or at least key signatures—of B-flat minor (five flats) and E major (four sharps). The work opens with a twelve-tone row (B-flat, D-flat, G-flat, F, A, C, E, E-flat, D A-flat, G, B) played by the viola. The remaining strings soon join with a quotation from the incidental music for *King Lear*, composed earlier that same year.<sup>4</sup> Two new rows appear subsequently in the first section, both in the first violin part; in each instance, the rest of the ensemble drops out in order to highlight the presence of the row. A new formal section appears at rehearsal 10 accompanied by a change in key signature (Example 5.1). At this point, a further twelve-tone sequence appears to emerge in the first violin articulated by a short rhythmic motive over a sustained pedal in the lower strings. It should be noted, however, that this instance of chromaticism does not form a full row; instead, the A-flat/G-sharp pitch class is missing. This omission corrects itself after rehearsal 12, with a full row unfolding in the same voice and with the earlier rhythmic profile preserved. Two more

---

<sup>2</sup> Shostakovich's final four string quartets (nos. 12-15) were dedicated to members of this quartet. Of these quartets, only one, the Fourteenth, shows none of the twelve-tone properties discussed previously and is not considered a part of Shostakovich's twelve-tone repertoire. Each dedicated quartet, including the Fourteenth, prominently displays the instrumental voice for which the quartet was dedicated. The opening row in the Twelfth Quartet, for instance, dedicated to the cellist Dmitry Tsyganov, opens with the work's primary row in that voice.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Hogarth, "Writing about Shostakovich: Form, Motive and Musical Process in Shostakovich's Thirteenth Quartet," *DSCH Journal* 31(July 2009): 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



series appear in the viola in this section followed by an isolated instance of retrograde presentation. Curiously, Shostakovich realizes his statement in pointillist style across the full ensemble (Example 5.2). Given the rarity of this technique within his music, it seems likely that the composer intended a note of rhetorical ambiguity rather than a deliberate gesture in the direction of conventional twelve-tone practice.

Example 5.1 Shostakovich, String Quartet No. 13, op. 138, mm. 85–94



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Example 5.2 Shostakovich, String Quartet No. 13, op. 138, mm. 168–170



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The next formal section begins shortly after this outburst with a return of the five-flat key signature. A new row emerges at rehearsal 21 set against a stylized counter-melody in the second violin. This section, considerably faster than the opening, has been compared to a macabre

*Totentanz*.<sup>5</sup> Samuel Hogarth also notes the jazz inspiration, from the “swing”-style eighths in the melody to the “walking bass” row in the cello.<sup>6</sup> The cello completes the mood with a rhythmic bow-tapping against the body of the viola. (Interestingly, Shostakovich only utilized this performance technique in the Thirteenth Quartet.) A variant of this row then occurs at rehearsal 30 (B-flat, D-flat, E-flat, G-flat, A, B, C, D, G, A-flat, B-flat, F) as the instruments prepare a transition to a new section which commences at rehearsal 31.

The previous section, however, deserves a little more attention since it exclusively employs the two twelve-tone rows thus far described. Both rows occur as a “walking” bass line in the cello and are closely related not only to each other, but also to the opening row. All three twelve-tone sequences share the same opening five pitch classes, with many contour similarities also in evidence. A change in key signature after rehearsal 31 signals the return of previous material, but the motivic-melodic substance at this point is still audibly influenced by the macabre dance. The first two twelve-tone rows that appear after this change in key signature, in fact, act as variants of the dancing bass line. Indeed, material from the original B section does not appear until after rehearsal 45, and even then it is highly altered. Thus far, the return of melodic and thematic material mirrors the exposition. When the A section returns at rehearsal 52, however, it reverses the previously mirrored form with a statement of the opening row. Three more statements of the row return in the viola and first violin before the piece ends with an eerie  $i6$  jump from E6 to B-flat6 at the upper limit of the viola’s tessitura.

In order to gain further insight into the profusion of twelve-tone material in this movement, it will first be helpful to take a closer look at the opening row. In outline, it is made up of three tetrachords, each consisting of a triad plus one additional pitch class (Example 5.3).

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<sup>5</sup> Hogarth, “Writing about Shostakovich,” 13.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

The first includes a B-flat minor triad plus G-flat; the second points to an A diminished triad with an added E; and the series ends on a G major triad, punctuated by an isolated A-flat.

Interestingly, the second row begins by attempting to invert this harmonic structure, but moves away quickly, perhaps seeking to avoid any impression of symbolic closure in the motivic-thematic sense.

Example 5.3: Shostakovich, String Quartet No. 13, op. 138, mm. 1–7

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The music is in 4/4 time. The first measure contains a half note G-flat, followed by a quarter note F, a quarter note E-flat, and a quarter note D. Above this first measure is a handwritten label '(x)' and a box containing 'b<sup>b</sup>'. The second measure contains a half note C, followed by a quarter note B-flat, a quarter note A-flat, and a quarter note G. Above this second measure is a handwritten label '(y)' and a box containing 'a<sup>o</sup>'. The third measure contains a half note F, followed by a quarter note E-flat, a quarter note D, and a quarter note C. Above this third measure is a handwritten label '(z)' and a box containing 'G'. The staff includes dynamic markings 'p' and 'espr.' at the beginning, and phrasing slurs and accents throughout.

The first row is also the only row of the work that appears multiply in various contexts and in various voices. In fact, many of the attendant twelve-tone rows and sequences might best be viewed as variations of this original form. Indeed, the earliest twelve-tone sequences in the work are clearly related in this way. Row 2, for example, preserves two of the tetrachords of the first row (Example 5.4). Here, the final tetrachord of row 1 appears at the beginning. In fact, it is not just the final tetrachord of row 1; it is the final tetrachord plus an additional B-flat. After the B-flat, the second tetrachord is stated, in full, at T<sub>0</sub> of row 1. Finally, row 2 ends with the D-flat—F—G-flat motive from the first tetrachord in row 1. Like row 1, also, the last three pitches lead to a reordering on A-flat—the first pitch class of row 2. In this way, the composer effectively permutes the tetrachords of the initial row. Another clear example occurs in the middle section of the movement with the introduction of row 10. Here, the row, acting as a bass

line, once again emerges through a focus on the horizontal, not vertical, components (Example 5.5).

Example 5.4, Tetrachordal relation of Row 1 and Row 2

Row 1

Musical notation for Row 1, written in bass clef with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature. The melody consists of a sequence of notes: G2, A2, B-flat2, C3, D3, E-flat3, F3, G3, A3, B-flat3, C4, D4, E-flat4, F4, G4, A4, B-flat4, C5. The notes are grouped into three tetrachords labeled X, Y, and Z(+B-flat). Tetrachord X covers G2-A2-B-flat2-C3, Y covers D3-E-flat3-F3-G3, and Z(+B-flat) covers A3-B-flat3-C4-D4. The notation includes slurs, accents, and dynamic markings such as *p espr.* and *mf*.

Row 2

Musical notation for Row 2, written in treble clef with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature. The melody consists of a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B-flat4, C5, D5, E-flat5, F5, G5, A5, B-flat5, C6, D6, E-flat6, F6, G6, A6, B-flat6, C7. The notes are grouped into two tetrachords labeled Z and Y. Tetrachord Z covers G4-A4-B-flat4-C5, and Y covers D5-E-flat5-F5-G5. The notation includes slurs, accents, and dynamic markings such as *mf*.

Example 5.5, Shostakovich, String Quartet No. 13, op. 138, mm. 180-189

13

Row 10

Ударять деревяшкой смычки по деке<sup>a)</sup>

22

23

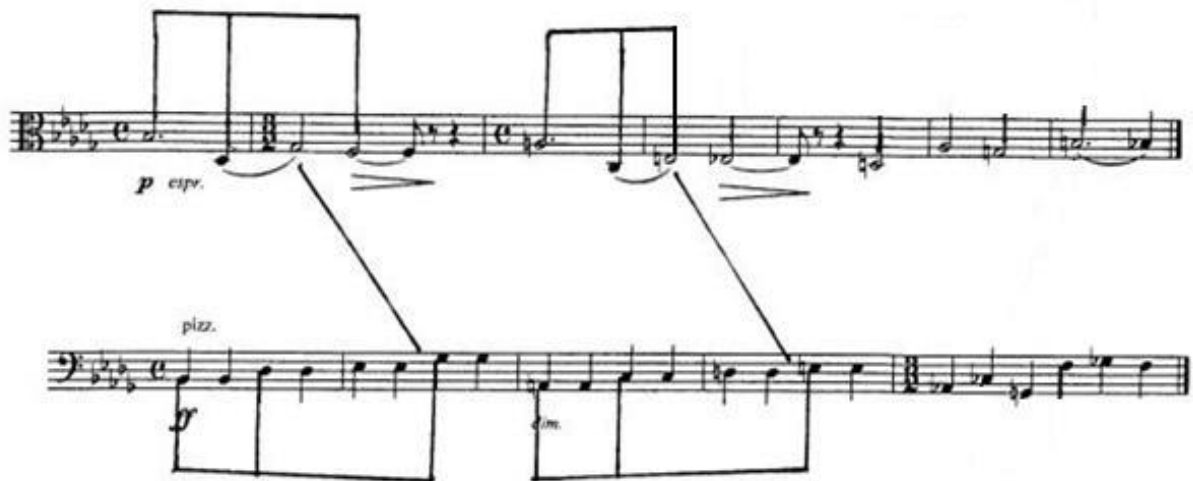
<sup>a)</sup> Play on the bellu with the stick of the bow

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At this juncture, it would be helpful to discuss the similarities between rows 1 and 10, the series used for the majority of the passacaglia material which begins at rehearsal 22 (Example 5.6). Not only do both sequences point to G-flat minor as a referential pitch center, but they also

exhibit similar tetrachordal characteristics. The first tetrachord of row 10, for instance, clearly refers to G-flat minor, although not so literally its predecessor. In addition, the second tetrachords permute the pitch-class content of an A minor triad despite the presence of a single alien pitch class.

Example 5.6, Tetrachordal similarity between Row 1 and Row 10



I have argued previously that Shostakovich conceived of the row primarily as a melodic segment. In many ways, Shostakovich also perceived harmonic motion within a linear plane, rather than a vertical one. This can be seen easily enough through his use of bare textures, his tendency to isolate row segments, and his application of unisons in more heavily orchestrated sections. Such a progression from melodic to linear focus is convincing. As a composer somewhat fixated on melodic motion, it only makes sense that Shostakovich strings out his harmonic progressions in a linear fashion. Indeed, even verticalities are presented first in a linear context; the piece concludes, for example, with a twelve-tone row similar to row 2 from the first half of the work. This row begins with an articulation of an E-flat minor triad, unlike the diminished triad from the opening. In both cases, Shostakovich presents the harmony as a linear phenomenon.

Still, Shostakovich does not always isolate his rows as complete melodies capable of transformation. Instead he often constructs them as composites of motivic (or intervallic) units in such a way as to fully exploit their melodic potential within the compact structure of a row. I have already demonstrated instances in which Shostakovich pulls tetrachords from row 1 and reorders them in row 2 (Example 5.4). In this case, however, the tetrachord itself can be seen as a motivic unit which Shostakovich subsequently reshuffles across row 2. Another clear reshuffling occurs across the passacaglia section of the piece. Here, Shostakovich presents two distinct, but related, rows. A statement of row 10 returns in truncated form, without its F-G-flat-F embellishment, before row 11 (B-flat, D-flat, E-flat, G-flat, A, C, D, E, A-flat, C-flat, G, F) ushers in a new melodic “walking” bass line in the cello (Example 5.7).<sup>7</sup> In this case, the two sequences contain the same initial tetrachord. In addition, the second tetrachord in this sequence also begins on A. From this point, the rows begin to differ, with passing embellishments inserted into the second row.

Example 5.7, Reshuffling in Row 10 and Row 11

The image shows two staves of musical notation in bass clef. The top staff is labeled 'Row 10' and contains a sequence of notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The bottom staff is labeled 'Row 11' and contains a sequence of notes: Bb2, Db2, Eb2, Fb2, A2, C3, D3, E3, Ab3, Cb3, G3, F3. Vertical lines connect the notes between the two staves, highlighting the shared initial tetrachord (G, A, B, C) and the second tetrachord (A, C, D, E). The notation includes dynamic markings like 'pizz.' and 'ff', and a rehearsal mark 'Reh 30'.

In addition to complete statements of the row, Shostakovich often states partial rows, fragments of an expected series that either turn into unrelated melodic material or trail off

<sup>7</sup> As with row 1, I have chosen to include the 13th pitch class to highlight its relationship to row 10; the final pitch is clearly related to the row that comes before it.

completely. Shostakovich develops this technique in a surprising way. From the beginning of the movement, he introduces the row as a melodic phenomenon in which the texture either drops out or submits to a highly chromatic solo voice in which all twelve notes are present. In fact, every time such a texture occurs in the piece, a new twelve-tone row or highly chromatic melody appears in which no pitch is repeated until the texture breaks down or is interrupted.<sup>8</sup> One example of this kind of fragment occurs shortly after row 2 (Example 5.8). In this case, the cello holds a pedal D-flat for several measures before the rest of the voices in the ensemble die away. At this point, the cello embarks on a highly chromatic melodic line, embracing falling i2 motion from G to F-sharp. After two iterations of a twelve-tone row set up in a similar fashion and texture, Shostakovich's treatment signals a return of row 1.

Example 5.8, Shostakovich, String Quartet, op. 138, mm. 40–53

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<sup>8</sup> This phenomenon is also present in Violin Sonata, although not nearly as prominently. In that work, chromaticism within the harmony and melody increasingly builds up, sometimes forming a new twelve-tone row. More often than not, pitch class repetition interrupts the sense of chromatic completion. Here, it is inextricably linked as a melodic/motivic and textural phenomenon.



In fact, Shostakovich returns to this texture so often throughout the quartet that textural thinning, in many ways, becomes a signal for a new twelve-tone row. Still, the full iteration of the new row is subverted in a number of ways. As indicated in Example 5.8 above, the full statement of the row is interrupted by a more salient statement in the first violin. That is, the first violin barges in on a restatement of row 1 before the cello has a chance to finish its new row. At other times, these rows break down to tonicize local key relationships. Indeed, the fragments are usually transitional in nature.

Although such literal rearrangement does occur, Shostakovich more commonly utilizes smaller motivic gestures. The first gesture, and perhaps the most noticeable, is the falling i9 that opens the movement. This motive is highly prevalent throughout the movement, although it expands to an i11 throughout much of the middle section. One notable case occurs at rehearsal 9 at the end of a repeated semitone gesture in the cello. Here, the cello and viola in octaves fall from B-D, before rising up to F (Example 5.9a). Shostakovich employs the low point of this turn as a pickup to the next measure in a way that is highly reminiscent of the motive in the first row. Six measures later, the voices repeat the motive one semitone lower, still resolving to F. Shostakovich uses this sequence as he “modulates” to some form of A minor with the dominant pitch class in the bass. In a similar fashion, the motive recurs at rehearsal 55 (Example 5.9b). At this point, all four instruments coalesce on B-D-G stated in octaves. The G, in fact, resolves to an F-sharp, a  $T_{-1}$  transposition of the first tetrachord from row 1.<sup>9</sup> The motive four measures later is also transposed down by  $T_{11}$ . Returning to the original row, it seems that Shostakovich has used this descending i9 motive as the basis for imitation in the first two tetrachords of row 1. As these

---

<sup>9</sup> This resonates with McCreless’s work on semitonal transpositions in Shostakovich. See Patrick McCreless, “An Evolutionary Perspective on Nineteenth-Century Semitonal Relations,” in *The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality*, ed. William Kindermann and Harald Krebs (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press): 87–113.

two examples illustrate, Shostakovich employs the descending leap across the span of the entire work. Such a ubiquitous presence cements the motive as an important linear feature.

Example 5.9: Falling major-sixth motion

a) Shostakovich, String Quartet, op. 138, mm. 75–84

The image shows a musical score for a string quartet, specifically measures 75 through 84 of Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 13, Op. 138. The score is written for four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). A large, hand-drawn bracket spans across the bottom of the score, indicating a descending major-sixth motion. Below the bracket is a handwritten symbol consisting of a vertical line with a horizontal bar at the bottom, resembling a stylized 'T' or a specific musical notation. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'pp'.

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b) Shostakovich, String Quartet, op. 138, mm. 403–408

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The most common gesture throughout the work, without question, is the falling semitone motive. In his description of the piece, Michael Mishra notes the high volume of descending semitone motion within the first row itself.<sup>10</sup> In fact, there are four occurrences of this interval in the initial exposition of the row. As seen in Example 5.10, these motions are indicated between adjacent notes. Even more, the second tetrachord is a near  $T_{-1}$  transposition of the first tetrachord.<sup>11</sup> Such motion is so prevalent throughout the work that citing every instance would likely exhaust the reader's patience.

Example 5.10, Falling semitone motion in Row 1.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Mishra, “‘I Lived On...in the Hearts of My True Friends’ (1966-1975),” In *A Shostakovich Companion*, edited by Michael Mishra (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), 287.  
<sup>11</sup> Joseph Straus, in his 2003 article, details near or “fuzzy” transpositions, allowing for non-exact transpositions of set class and pitch material. See Joseph Straus. “Uniformity, Smoothness, and Balance in Atonal Voice-Leading,” *Music Theory Spectrum*, 25/2 (Autumn 2003): 305–352.

This falling semitone motion occurs regularly within new rows, and sometimes even defines the identity of the row. Row 4 (B-flat, A, E, E-flat, C, C-sharp, B, G, A-flat, G-flat, F, D), for example, appears to be structured solely by descending motion (See Example 5.11). Save for an occasional rising semitone, every interval descends across the row. Indeed, the row itself begins as falling motion from B-flat to A. Following the A, Shostakovich inserts an E to E-flat descent. At this point the row appears set to surrender its ic1 descents when ascending half-steps begin to appear. Not so. Indeed, these ascents can be seen as inversions of the descending semitone. What is more, they seem to be progressions from a descending two-note motive. Specifically, Shostakovich bisects ic1 with a chromatic upper neighbor, allowing for increased semitone motion. This upper neighbor is repeated leading to a final ic1 descent before the end of the row. A summary of this process is illustrated in Example 5.11.

Example 5.11, Shostakovich, String Quartet, op. 138, mm. 61–62

**Row 4**

Even more, the falling semitone permeates musical material outside the strictly twelve-tone sections. In this respect, Shostakovich is able to link these two textural and harmonic sections motivically. The first example of this occurs immediately after the statement of row 1. At this juncture the composer resolves the diminished triad discussed earlier with descending semitone motion from G-flat to F. This also occurs later at rehearsal 9 as discussed above (Example 5.9a). Another statement of descending semitone motion outside of an explicit row

statement occurs at rehearsal 6 (Example 5.12). Here, Shostakovich introduces a repeated B-flat motive that rocks back and forth from B-flat to C-flat. This particular gesture appears several times in the movement. Above the cello's repeated quarter notes, the violins also rock back and forth in ic1 motion.

Example 5.12: Shostakovich, String Quartet, op. 138, mm. 54-56

The image shows a musical score for a string quartet, specifically measures 54-56. It consists of four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The key signature is B-flat minor (three flats). The time signature is 3/4. Rehearsal mark 6 is indicated at the beginning of the second measure. The first violin part starts with a *cresc.* marking and features a melodic line with a B-flat motive. The second violin part has a *f* dynamic and features a similar melodic line. The viola part has a *f* dynamic and features a melodic line. The cello part has a *ff espr.* marking and features a repeated quarter-note bass line. There are several accents and slurs throughout the score, and a '-1' marking above the first violin staff in the second measure.

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A final example of this motion occurs in the material which follows. On this occasion ic1 motion is moved to the first violin, which uses it as an embellishment (Example 5.13). Following the neighbor motion C-D-flat-C, the gesture is repeated up one half-step. From here the violin line explores the descending half-step pairs while ascending in register. It is this line, in fact, that leads directly into the descending semitone row discussed above. Shostakovich's use of semitones overcomes the work's propensity for linearity when the semitones are verticalized in all three voices at rehearsal 18 (Example 5.14). Beginning in the cello, each voice enters on double-stops across ic1. From low to high, the compound distribution of the interval works well to create a dissonance without an overwhelming sense of random tone clustering. What is more,

Shostakovich tightens the registration of the passage by allowing each instrument to enter one half-step *above* the top note of the previous instrument.

Example 5.13, Shostakovich, String Quartet, op. 138, mm. 57–59

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Example 5.14, Shostakovich, String Quartet, op. 138, mm. 153–157

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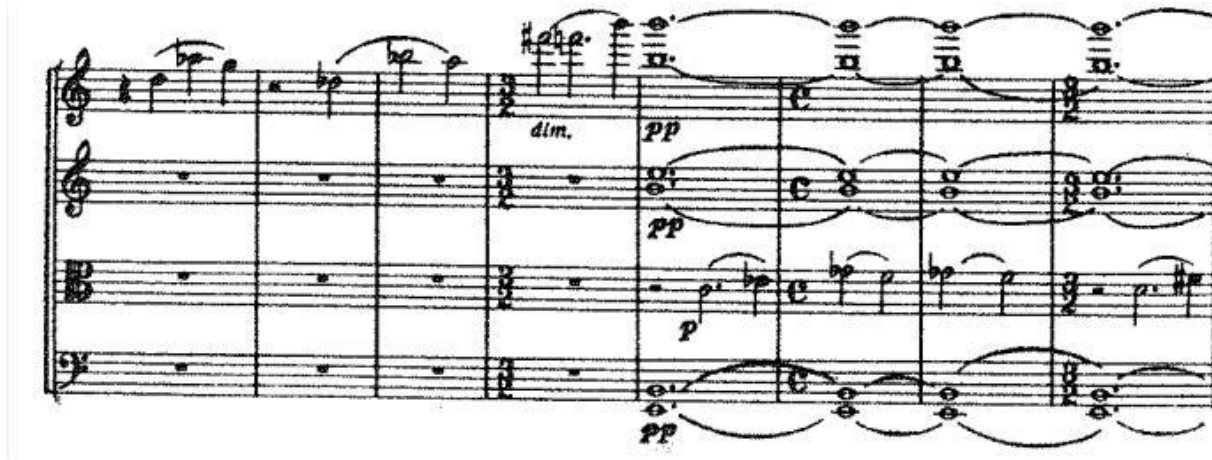
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A final motive found in this quartet does not stem from the original row. Instead, Shostakovich derives the motive from material directly following the initial row. Here, he horizontalizes a diminished triad in unison across the texture. Although not as common as the previously mentioned figure, this sonority does recur throughout the piece. The first example stems from rehearsal 9. While the bass voices fall according to the motive discussed above, the violin plays the harmony in an ascending fashion. (In this way the descending i9 motive changes from the head motive of row 1 to a more transitional motive introduced later within the texture.) Perhaps more noteworthy is Shostakovich's effective method of combining the two motives throughout this passage. Still ostensibly in octaves, the voices articulate two separate motivic units. Upon reexamination, perhaps, this secondary motive is related to the original row after all. To be sure, a diminished sonority does occur in the second tetrachord of row 1. Only later does Shostakovich reorder the pitches in the harmony. Another instance of a diminished triad occurs near the end of the work at rehearsal 56. Here, the melodic material is more closely reminiscent of the beginning section that introduces the motives (Example 5.15). In this case, only the viola articulates the motive over E-B pedals in the other voices. That Shostakovich chose to use a somewhat normative harmonic simultaneity indicates his interest in conventional modes of harmonic ordering.

Example 5.15, Shostakovich, String Quartet, op. 138, mm. 409–416



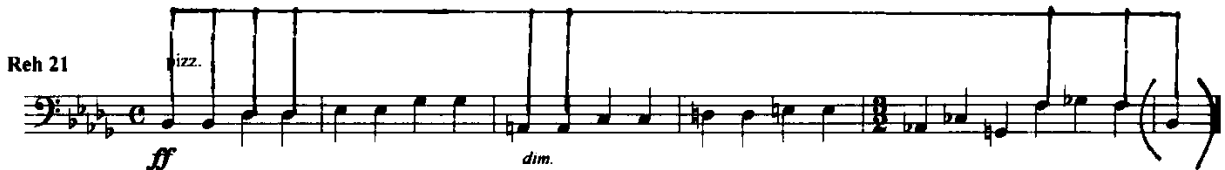
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Indeed on a deeper level, the quartet possesses definite tonal implications. The first tone row opens in a tetrachord which points to B-flat minor (Example 5.16). Furthermore, the entire row points to this harmony. The row begins and ends on B-flat, with the final B-flat extending past the length of any other pitch in the row; in and of itself, this is unusual for a serial work, considering the sense of return and closure this effect achieves. Also, the final pitch, being the thirteenth, actually lies outside the row. Thus, this B-flat acts as an ending and a new beginning. To call the second B-flat a resolution may be too bold an assertion, but the pitch class is clearly related to the B before it. Besides the opening tetrachord, another prominent row within the piece points strongly to the key of B-flat minor. That row, row 9, acts as a kind of passacaglia that begins at rehearsal 21 (Example 5.17). The first two notes of this row, B-flat and D-flat, point to a B-flat tonality. Indeed the final three pitches, F and its half-step upper neighbor, G-flat, also take on a dominant function falling to a B-flat, which initiates the following repetition of row 9. Example 5.16, Row 1 and its B-flat minor implications.





Example 5.17, Row 9 and its B-flat minor implications.



In the statement of the final harmony, however, the sense of centricity begins to break down. Here, the upper strings sound a unison B-flat (Example 5.18). Such a statement of the so-called “tonic” ought to indicate a closed system in which the return of an opening referential pitch signals closure of the work as a whole. In this case, though, Shostakovich avoids any impending expectation of a concluding B-flat. Indeed, the work ends as row 18 (E, C, D, E-flat, G, F, E, B, B-flat, C-sharp, F-sharp, G, D) in the viola disintegrates across a bare texture. The trichord <A, D, E> sounds, leaving E to B-flat as the final voice-leading motion. Such an ic6 leap obscures any sense of referential expectation.

Example 5.18, Shostakovich, String Quartet, op. 138, mm. 473–484

Row 18

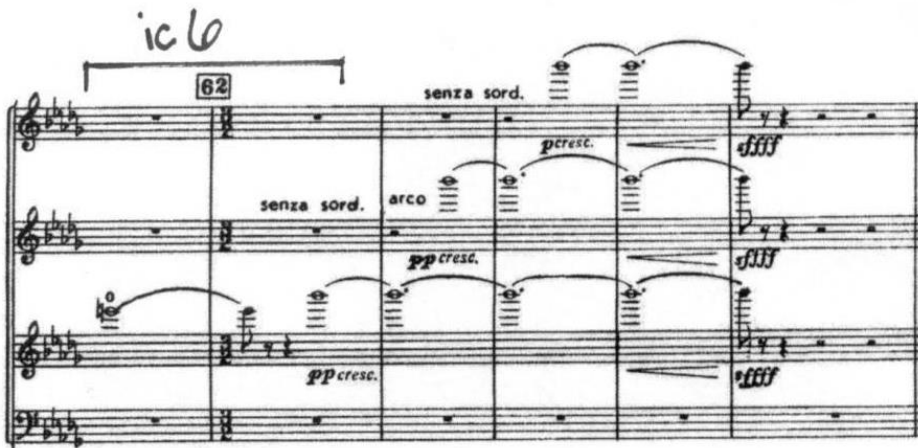
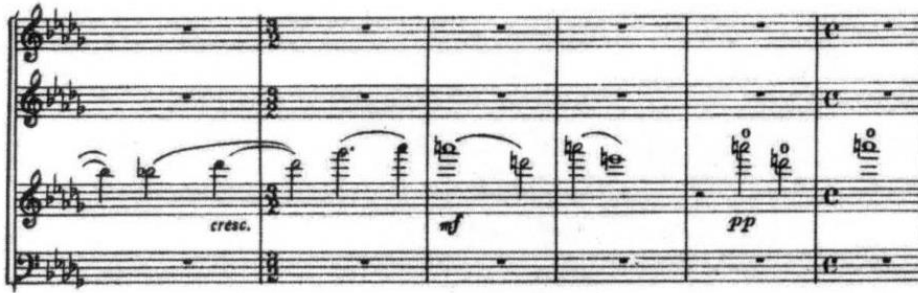
The first system of the musical score consists of four staves. The third staff from the top is enclosed in a black rectangular box, highlighting a specific musical passage. The notation includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

The second system of the musical score consists of four staves. The third staff from the top is enclosed in a black rectangular box, highlighting a specific musical passage. The notation includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

The third system of the musical score consists of four staves. The notation includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Performance instructions such as "senza sord." and "arco" are present. A measure number "62" is indicated in a box at the beginning of the system.

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Example 5.19, Shostakovich, String Quartet, op. 138, end of mvt



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Shostakovich’s use of ic6 at the end of the work requires further explanation. In his analysis, Hogarth notes the repeated appearance of the tritone as an important harmonic interval.<sup>12</sup> To be sure, the tritone not only ends the movement, but its pitch classes, E and B-flat, also account for the most substantial referential pitch centers. Such a polarity seems at odds with Stephen Brown’s notions of ic1/ic5 space. Perhaps, but this is not necessarily the case. First, a mapping of E and B-flat onto ic1/ic5 space renders an interval exchange between the two pitch classes (Figure 5.1). Closer examination of the quartet additionally reveals the importance of pitch class A, which further links E and B-flat (Figure 5.2). Indeed, the connection between the tritone and ic1/ic5 space is actually quite strong. The axis for interval exchange (used frequently

<sup>12</sup> Hogarth, “Writing about Shostakovich,” 15.

in this study) utilizes the tritone as its inversional center (Figure 5.3). The opposing axis moves across ic 4, another interval class present in octatonic collections.

Figure 5.1, Application of ic6 in ic1/ic5 space

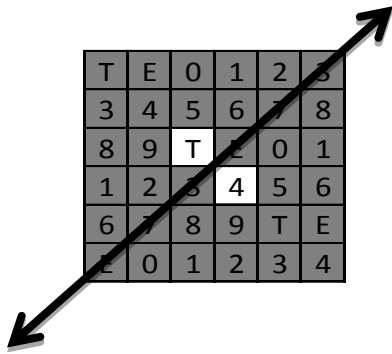


Figure 5.2, Referential centers in the quartet

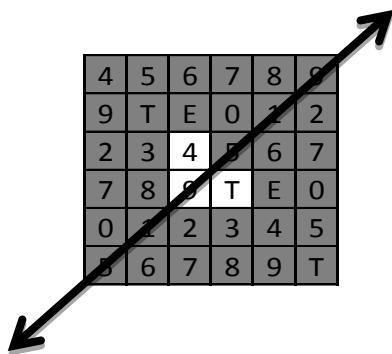
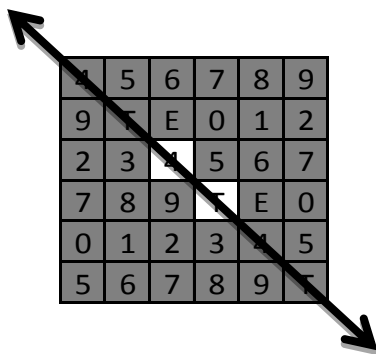


Figure 5.3, ic6 as the axis of interval exchange



It should be no surprise, then, that Shostakovich allows for pitch source material derived from ic1/ic5 and octatonic pitch-class space. Such a commingling, in fact, occurs within the first row itself. Considering its tetrachordal makeup, the row's harmonic profile is best segmented in the following fashion. The first two pitch classes position themselves on opposite corners which the final two pitches fill in (Figure 5.4). The second and third tetrachord in the row both belong to sc(0147). Given that, both tetrachords map onto ic1/ic5 space in a similar fashion (Figure 5.5). As before both pitches map onto each other through intervallic inversion. With this identification of interval inversion within octatonic space, it is possible that the tetrachord might belong to one or more octatonic collections.<sup>13</sup> In this case, the second and third tetrachords belong to OCT<sub>0,1</sub> and OCT<sub>1,2</sub>, respectively.

Figure 5.4, First tetrachord in Row 1

0	1	2	3	4	5
5	6	7	8	9	T
T	E	0	1	2	3
3	4	5	6	7	8
8	9	T	E	0	1
1	2	3	4	5	6
6	7	8	9	T	E

<sup>13</sup> Note that the operation of interval exchange does not guarantee membership in an octatonic collection. The set [7801], or sc(0156), for example, maps as interval exchange against either axis, but the four pitch classes do not belong to a single octatonic collection.

Figure 5.5

Tetrachord 2 in Row 1

T	E	0	1	2	3	4
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8	9	T	E	0	1	2
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	7	8	9	T	E	0
E	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	5	6	7	8	9	T

Tetrachord 3 in Row 1

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	7	8	9	T	E	0
E	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	5	6	7	8	9	T
9	T	E	0	1	2	3
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7	8	9	T	E	0	1

So far a number of different harmonic syntaxes have been explored. Shostakovich's use of multiple rows has not diminished their impact on the rest of the piece. If anything, the work is even more saturated with harmonic and melodic influences from the rows, particularly the first row. Within the work the linear attributes of twelve-tone material seem to predominate. Still, the non-serial material remains inextricably linked to the serial material. The rows themselves also exert considerable influence on each other.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CASE STUDY: SYMPHONY NO. 15, OP. 141 (1971)

Shostakovich's 15<sup>th</sup> Symphony has perhaps drawn the most critical comment due to its high incidence of explicit quotation. Intertextual references abound, from the galloping motive from Rossini's *William Tell Overture* that intercedes repeatedly in the first movement, to the "Fate" leitmotif from Wagner's *Ring* cycle and the "Grief" motive from *Tristan and Isolde* that both appear in the finale. So far this study has sought to address aspects of harmonic grammar and melodic syntax according to ostensible serial elements in an attempt to synthesize a range of generic categories. With regard to the last symphony, Peter Child's analysis—now nearly two decades old—remains an important study of the interaction between organizational principles. An exploration of Child's reading together with a further application of Stephen Brown's theoretical formulations on interval space will in turn enable a clearer systematic insight into the structural procedures at work in the opening movement.

Child begins his article with a brief analysis of Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 8, Op. 110 (1960). Commenting specifically on the use of the D-S-C-H motive, Child concludes that "the close relationship between the principal melodic motive of the work and the voice-leading of some prominent harmonic figures" contributes to the coherence and unity of Shostakovich's late works.<sup>1</sup> He then moves on to an examination of what he calls "twelve-note themes," themes

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<sup>1</sup> Child, "Voice-Leading Patterns," 72-3.

in which “no pitch is repeated until all twelve member of the total chromatic have been stated.”<sup>2</sup> Child notes that “even when Shostakovich is restating a twelve-note structure he does not feel bound to adhere strictly to its original order. Nor is he bound to maintain chromatic completion.”<sup>3</sup> Instead, twelve-tone themes are often found within non-serial contexts. Twelve-tone themes are also further divided into two distinct roles: “harmonic or linear.”<sup>4</sup> Harmonic themes are structured primarily through arpeggiation while linear passages involve a higher degree of conjunct motion. Child’s interpretation of the symphony begins with the opening of the second movement. Here, a brass chorale gives way to a twelve-note row in the solo cello, where the chromaticism of the serial material “dissolves the sense of tonality.”<sup>5</sup> Still motivically derived, the initial tetrachord of the row becomes transformed as the movement progresses; consistency of contour as well as interval-class content nonetheless remain important within the row as a means of consolidating identity throughout the course of its subsequent development.

Most strikingly, Child argues for a degree of consistency between the serial and non-serial aspects of harmony in the work. To advance this thesis, he first examines the twelve-tone row (B, C-sharp, C, D, C-flat, E-flat, B-flat, A, A-flat, F-sharp, G, F, E) from the second theme of the first movement. Here tetrachordal relationships are taken to exist between the melodic twelve-tone row and the chordal accompaniment by virtue of overlapping sc(0156) components. The placement of this tetrachord is necessarily important as tetrachords sc(0156) and sc(0167) soon emerge in the voice-leading. In fact, these collections act as structural harmonies within serial and non-serial material throughout the symphony. In describing these tetrachords and their common subset sc(015), Child notes a peculiarity regarding Shostakovich’s specific registration

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<sup>2</sup> This definition stands in direct conjunction with my definition of a twelve-tone row. Child’s “themes” may be ones that contain repeated pitches. See Child, “Voice-Leading Patterns,” 74.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



of the set; specifically, he states that “this 4-note figure corresponds to a specific partitioning of the 4-8 tetrachords ... one that emphasizes its component semitone-related perfect fourths.”<sup>6</sup>

Subsequently referred to as a “P4 partitioning,” this phenomenon in fact resonates closely with Brown’s ic1/ic5 interval space. Indeed, Brown notes that Child’s analysis implicitly acknowledges the phenomenon of ic1/ic5 motion in the course of his own analysis of the symphony. To demonstrate, he returns to Child’s analysis of the second theme of the first movement (Example 6.1). Borrowing Child’s specific partitioning of sc(0167), Brown illustrates how the chord literally maps onto his graph. Such a mapping is not surprising, of course, considering the components of the tetrachord. As seen in the graph below, the tetrachord contains two instances of ic1 and two of ic5; sc(016), conversely, contains one of each (Figure 6.1).

Example 6.1 Shostakovich Symphony No. 15, I, mm. 83-88



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Fig. 6.1: ic1/ic5 partitioning of sc(0167)

T	E	0	1	2	3	4
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8	9	T	E	0	1	2
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	7	8	9	T	E	0
E	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	5	6	7	8	9	T

<sup>6</sup> Child, “Voice-Leading Patterns,” 81.

The referential centers are also related to ic1/ic5 motion and invite further analysis. To be sure, the first movement's rotation between the referential poles of A and E is hardly unusual within sonata form. However, the ic5 polarity of keys is not nearly so simple in this instance. Although both the A pedal in the first nineteen measures and the key signature of three sharps points unequivocally to A as the first referential center (Example 6.2), the associated melodic motion is not equally transparent. Hence as Child points out, the first theme begins with a feint toward the referential center of A-flat before settling on A.<sup>7</sup> Still, A-flat returns regularly in the first theme, seeking to establish a chromatic relationship between the two centers. This relationship, termed a "conflict of dominants,"<sup>8</sup> by Child can in fact be viewed as transposition in ic1/ic5 space (Figure 6.2). This configuration, realized at the very beginning of the movement, explains similar harmonic motion at the outset of the second theme.

Example 6.2, Shostakovich, Symphony No. 15, I, mm. 1-23



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<sup>7</sup> Child, "Voice-Leading Patterns," 82.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

Figure 6.2 ic1/ic partitioning of referential centers

3	4	5	6	7	8
8	9	T	E	0	1
1	2	3	4	5	6
6	7	8	9	T	E
E	0	1	2	3	4
4	5	6	7	8	9

The conflict of dominants does not end here, however. For instance, the transitional passage between the first and second subjects points to an expectation of E-flat as the referential center of the second theme.<sup>9</sup> The “correct” center of E nonetheless reasserts itself with the entrance of the theme proper; and as a result the principal tonal centers of A, A-flat, and E are tied directly into the same sc(015) trichord that Child names as a referential interval collection for the movement. In fact, a graph of the tetrachord (Figures 6.2, 6.3) recalls various centric complexes at work in other compositions previously explored in this study. For instance, sc(016) represented by the centers E–B-flat–A remains operative throughout the String Quartet No. 13, while a D-G-A-flat complex similarly dictates harmonic relations in the first movement of the Violin Sonata. In each case, ic1/ic5 motion aligns with the overall harmonic matrix.<sup>10</sup> In the Violin Sonata, the referential tonic and referential dominant together complete ic5 motion. In the String Quartet No. 13, however, ic6 becomes a more important harmonic force as ic5 motion can only be achieved through semitone motion across ic6.

<sup>9</sup> Although, not formally labeled as such in Child’s analysis, the so-called “bridge passage” (83) displays a number of transitional qualities including increased rhythmic and harmonic activity, along with an implication of dominant harmony. For the sake of consistency, therefore, I have chosen to label the section as a transition.

<sup>10</sup> In other words, the pitch class that serves as the initial and final referential pitch center of the movement. In most cases, this pitch class also serves as a common point of harmonic departure.

Figure 6.3a: ic1/ic5 partitioning of referential centers in Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 13

4	5	6	7	8	9
9	T	E	0	1	2
2	3	4	5	6	7
7	8	9	T	E	0
0	1	2	3	4	5
5	6	7	8	9	T

Figure 6.3b: ic1/ic5 partitioning of referential centers in Shostakovich's Violin Sonata

2	3	4	5	6	7
7	8	9	T	E	0
0	1	2	3	4	5
5	6	7	8	9	T
T	E	0	1	2	3
3	4	5	6	7	8

In the first movement of the Fifteenth Symphony, the twelve-tone row is made to function as the second theme within a sonata form. Stated by the trumpet over staccato eighths in the lower strings, it is notable that the accompanimental ic5 pair E–B moves to F–B-flat against the second hexachord of the melody (Example 6.3). The accompaniment itself displays ic1/ic5 motion through contraction from i7 to i5 (Figure 6.4). Here Child draws out the pitch classes E-flat and B-flat and A and E as the structural outline of the trumpet part.<sup>11</sup> The component tetrachord and the accompaniment both belong to sc(0167), one of Child's unifying interval collections. The repeated pitches in this graph constitute the tritone E-B-flat, a polarity that occurs with some prominence in the passage.

<sup>11</sup> See his analysis in "Voice-Leading Patterns," 79.

Example 6.3, Shostakovich, Symphony No. 15, I, mm. 83–89



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Figure 6.4: ic1/ic5 partitioning in the accompaniment

T	E	0	1	2	3	4
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8	9	T	E	0	1	2
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	7	8	9	T	E	0
E	0	1	2	3	4	5

One aspect of Shostakovich’s twelve-tone writing within the first movement is not mentioned by either Child or Brown: namely, the inclusion of a second twelve-tone row within the second theme. Like many of the works in this study the first twelve-tone row is immediately followed by a second row. After the first row sounds in the trumpet, the upper winds answer with an eighth-note dominated row (Example 6.5). This second row (G, E, C-sharp, B, A, G-sharp, F-sharp, E-sharp, D-sharp, D, E, C), in fact, returns immediately to an iteration of the hexachord from the first row. The trumpet then reenters with a full statement of the row. At this point, the winds answer with what appears to be a row similar to the second, starting a fifth higher. This

answer, however, soon breaks down as Shostakovich begins to develop the distinctive motives introduced in this section.

Example 6.5 Shostakovich, Symphony No. 15, I, mm. 89-104

The image displays a page of a musical score for Shostakovich's Symphony No. 15, I, measures 89-104. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The instruments listed on the left are Piccolo, Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Trumpet (Tr-be), Trombone (Tr-nl), Tuba, Violin I (V-nl I), Violin II (V-nl II), Viola (V-le), Bassoon (Fag.), Cor Anglais (Cor.), and Archi (Archi). The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 89-94, and the second system covers measures 95-100. Two sections of the score are highlighted with black boxes. The first box highlights measures 89-94, which are played by the Piccolo, Flute, and Clarinet. The second box highlights measures 95-100, which are played by the Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. The score includes various performance markings, including dynamics (p), articulation (pizz.), and phrasing (détaché). The key signature is B major (two sharps), and the time signature is 4/4. The page number 100 is visible at the bottom left of the score.

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Frankly, the rows at first glance do not display the kind of octatonic or ic1/ic5 properties previously discussed. Instead, the rows seem to wander in and out of ic1 motion. The second hexachord of the second row, for instance, is nearly scalar in its chromatic descent. Such a rendering of the total chromatic makes segmentation along the lines of the octatonic or ic1 and ic5 difficult. Child is able to reconcile such a problem, however, by performing a voice-leading analysis on the first row and isolating E-flat, B-flat, A, and E as the primary structural pitches. Not only do these pitches map well onto ic1/ic5 space, but they also belong to the OCT<sub>0,1</sub> collection (Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7: Primary structural pitches of the first row

4	5	6	7	8	9
9	T	E	0	1	2
2	3	4	5	6	7
7	8	9	T	E	0
0	1	2	3	4	5
5	6	7	8	9	T

The treatment of the two rows in the second half of the movement is particularly noteworthy. The second row occurs toward the end of the development at rehearsal 32. Here, the trombone sounds the row in its exact transposition. Brass fanfares lead to an extended retransition before the initial motive from the first theme appears in the first violin at rehearsal 36. The piccolo sounds two measures later. At this point, the first violin continues with a highly chromatic melody reminiscent of the first theme. The introduction of the total chromatic within a five-measure span, however, highly destabilizes any sense of pitch-centric stability (Example 6.6). The piccolo re-enters at this point, trying to reassert the opening theme. The violin answers

a step higher. The piccolo again is given a chance to respond and doggedly upholds the first theme. As soon as the piccolo is finished, however, the xylophone restates the second row significantly louder, as if to make sure this theme makes a stronger statement. Like the first statement of the second row, this statement is also followed by the first tetrachord of the first row, transposed by  $ic_3$  as well. The final statement of twelve-tone material occurs later in the recapitulation at rehearsal 42. Problematically here, the upper winds articulate the row beginning on the D-flat from the original statement, but continue to state the row in inversion. The last note is omitted (Example 6.7).

Example 6.6 Shostakovich, Symphony No. 15, I, mm. 338-364

The image shows a page of a musical score for Shostakovich's Symphony No. 15, I, measures 338-364. The score is written for a solo violin (V-no solo), a solo contrabass (C-b. solo), and a string section. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 3/4. The solo violin part features a complex melodic line with many accidentals. The solo contrabass part has a more rhythmic, bass-line-like character. The string section consists of five staves, all playing pizzicato (pizz.) or tutti pizzicato (tutti pizz.). A box highlights a specific phrase in the solo contrabass staff, which is a tetrachord. The rehearsal mark 338 is at the beginning of the page, and 364 is at the end of the first system.



37

Picc. *p*

T-tom

T-ro *p*

Sll.

V.no solo

V-ni I *altri* *p* (pizz.)

V-ni II *p* (pizz.)

V-le *p* (pizz.)

V.c. *p* (pizz.)

C.b. *p* (pizz.)

345

Picc.

T-tom

T-ro *p*

Sll. *mf*

C.b. *arco* *mp*

352

34

Picc. *ff sub.*

Fl. *ff sub.*

Ob. *ff sub.*

Cl. *ff sub.*

Tr-ni  
e  
Tuba *p*

Timp. *secco ff*

T-tom

T-ro

Sil.

38

V-ni I *tutti pizz. ff pizz.*

V-ni II *div. in 2 ff pizz.*

V-le *ff pizz.*

V-c. *ff pizz.*

C-b. *ff*

358

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Example 6.7 Shostakovich, Symphony No. 15, I, mm. 386-391

Row 2

The image shows a page of a musical score for String Quartet No. 13 in B-flat minor, Op. 138 by Dmitri Shostakovich. The score is for a string quartet and includes parts for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The music is in 4/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes. A boxed section highlights measures 42-45, where the primary twelve-tone row is stated. The score includes various performance markings such as 'pizz', 'arco', and 'pizz'.

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This double instance of the (second) theme raises a few questions. For instance, which statement of the primary twelve-tone row marks the return of the second theme area?

Considering how closely linked the two rows are, moreover, which twelve-tone collection

constitutes the second theme? Or do they both? What is the significance of Shostakovich's late placement of twelve-tone material in the movement? In some way, perhaps, the juxtaposition of the first and second theme in the recapitulation may act as a reconciliation of their two disparate harmonic grammars. Truly, this interpretation is a little premature, but Shostakovich's inclusion of this conventional form in one of his last serial works is telling. This movement is the first sonata-form design explored in this study; in fact it is the only sonata movement to appear within Shostakovich's serial works.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSIONS

#### **Richard Taruskin and the Case for Contextuality**

In a recent issue of *Music Theory Spectrum*, Richard Taruskin raises several issues of historical context of which music theorists have supposedly been negligent. Specifically, he argues that analysis must be grounded in historical reference and boldly accuses the theoretical majority of losing its contextual footing when confronted with the need for critical self-awareness. Taruskin uses the particular example of Rimsky-Korsakov to illustrate what he sees as the typical disregard of actual circumstances, which begins with an illustration of Rimsky-Korsakov's all too selective dissemination. As he argues, "In the part of the world we inhabit," his works "can be divided into two groups: the unknown and the overplayed," with "Flight of the Bumblebee" topping the list for the latter.<sup>1</sup> Taruskin insists that Rimsky-Korsakov is actually little understood outside of Russia, attributing this state of affairs to the composer's relationship with Stravinsky. As his stature rose, Stravinsky continued to distance himself from his teacher, minimizing both his influence and the importance of his compositional legacy. Much of Stravinsky's harmonic language—specifically his use of the octatonic scale—has its roots in Russian musical grammar, Taruskin continues, including that of the teacher from whom he was

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Taruskin, "Catching Up with Rimsky-Korsakov," *Music Theory Spectrum* 33/2 (Fall 2011): 169.

so quick to distance himself.<sup>2</sup> When landmark research in the late 1960s and 1970s found, however, that Stravinsky's music was linked through the *Petrushka* chord to the octatonic scale, little emphasis was placed on its roots in wider Russian musical practice. Taruskin, in turn, credits himself with announcing the connection between Stravinsky's octatonic grammar and that of his important predecessor.<sup>3</sup>

Even in Pieter van den Toorn's earliest monographs on the topic, there appeared to be a desire to distance Stravinsky from his musical inheritance.<sup>4</sup> Still, Taruskin proposes that Rimsky-Korsakov's sketches suggest a similar treatment of the octatonic collection to that found in *Petrushka*.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, theorists seem highly reluctant to allow for such defining influences. Instead, Rimsky-Korsakov's use of octatonic grammar is labeled as "tame" and taken to remain in a different league from that of his student.<sup>6</sup>

Such resistance, Taruskin notes, has spread more pervasively into a "determined resistance to Russia,"<sup>7</sup> and for their part theorists appear much more interested in following Stravinsky's assertion of a characteristic French influence. In her study of French music, in fact, Sylvia Kahan discovers the work of French aristocrat Prince Edmond de Polignac whose unpublished treatise from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century deals with an early version of the octatonic.<sup>8</sup> Taruskin even links a resistance to Russia with a resistance to the integrity of the octatonic as a whole.<sup>9</sup> For example, he cites Dmitri Tymoczko's recent assertions that subsets within Stravinsky's musical grammar may not belong to the octatonic collection alone. Instead, passages in the composer's music show the influence of other collections including the diatonic

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<sup>2</sup> Taruskin, "Rimsky-Korsakov," 171.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

scale, whole-tone scale and several minor scale variants. Taruskin summarily dismisses the prospect of serial “referability” requiring a “historical connection.”<sup>10</sup> In consequence he argues that there is a single defining characteristic separating theorists and musicologists—a rush to judgment and conclusion.<sup>11</sup> He ends by likening the debate to that between creationists and evolutionists, negatively comparing creationist theory to a historically-aware, evolutionary sense of musical scholarship.

## Responses

In separate responses to Taruskin, Kofi Agawu and Dmitri Tymoczko express concern over his persistent reliance on octatonic grammar in Stravinsky as the primary evidence for his argument. To start, Tymoczko takes aim at Taruskin’s specific criticisms.<sup>12</sup> He reasserts his claims for a “pluralistic” harmonic grammar and the superimposition of multiple collections as a more general stylistic feature, asserting that a separation between octatonic and diatonic collections is simply not a salient feature of Stravinsky’s music.<sup>13</sup> Turning to Taruskin’s desire for contextual emphasis, Tymoczko believes that such a direction is misplaced. He writes that “the issue is not *whether* Stravinsky had influences, but *which* influences are apparent in his music.”<sup>14</sup> Tymoczko notes that a purely contextual analysis denies the composer his sense of creativity and invention. In addition, he does not see historical context as a necessary requirement for the codification of harmonic grammar within a composer’s oeuvre. Rather, just as historical context can inform theoretical analysis, so can theoretical understanding inform historical discovery.

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<sup>10</sup> Taruskin, “Rimsky-Korsakov,” 179.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>12</sup> Dmitri Tymoczko “Round Three,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 33/2 (Fall 2011): 211–215.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

Kofi Agawu, on the other hand, concentrates on the general assumptions made in Taruskin's article. In particular, he finds that Taruskin has conflated "the important distinction between theory and analysis."<sup>15</sup> Taruskin's definition of theory, in fact, remains rather one-sided. Hence although Taruskin categorizes himself as both analyst and musicologist, he seems incapable of accommodating the need for a taxonomic approach to musical structure.<sup>16</sup> Like Tymoczko, Agawu finds little merit in assigning priority to origin over creativity. Besides, such discussion speaks little to the realities of comprehension and cognition at work within any listening experience.<sup>17</sup> Origins aside, the octatonic influence on Stravinsky's music may have little bearing on its sonic perception. As Agawu suggests, the composer's harmonic language remains irreducibly plural in a way that orthodox major-minor tonality does not. Hence for better or worse, let not all of us automatically "'think octatonic' when we hear the 'Petruška chord.'"<sup>18</sup>

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Given these arguments, the question remains as to whether theoretical study must be embedded in history or inferential analysis. In many ways, this project has attempted both. If the reader will recall, this study began with an exploration of the theoretical and analytical tools required for an understanding of the harmonic syntax in Shostakovich's serial works; descriptions of the composer's twelve-tone works remain problematic as they often combine serial and non-serial elements and do not conform to a Western understanding of serial technique. The first chapter recounted various characteristics of the composer's harmonic idiom

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<sup>15</sup> Agawu, "Taruskin's Problem(s)," 187.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.



including considerations of tonality, chromaticism and atonality. To be sure, David Headlam allows for a juxtaposition of such disparate grammars in the music of Alban Berg according to an understanding of musical coherence that supersedes any apparent contradictions. In addition, Zachary Cairns allows for the possibility of codifying multiple rows in his work on Andrey Denisov.

The methodological tool most useful in this study by far has been Stephen Brown's dual-interval space graph. The graph allows for a comparison of harmonic motion between two intervals within twentieth-century music. Brown asserts the common use of interval classes 1 and 5 within Shostakovich's music. Intervals  $i_7$  and  $i_1$  are a consistent characteristic of the composer's harmonic and melodic treatment, respectively. The  $ic_1/ic_5$  graph, then, was particularly helpful for this analytical study. The use of transposition, inversion, and interval exchange is a common feature of the illustrative graphs utilized here.

Still, an understanding of Shostakovich's serial grammar requires an understanding of Russian serial grammar as a whole; that is, serial music in the Soviet Union developed with a decidedly non-Western understanding of the technique. As Peter Schmelz relates, Soviet composers focused primarily on the aural perception of serialism rather than any strict adherence to a rigid theoretical methodology. In keeping with this approach, the Russian categorization of twelve-tone technique is a rather flexible (and inconsistent) one. Such flexibility not only allows for analysis of Shostakovich's twelve-tone works within a serial framework, but also provides an understanding the composer's unique application of an otherwise 'Western' idiom.

In his twelve-tone practices Shostakovich routinely isolated the twelve-tone row as an aural phenomenon, often in solo or reduced texture, thereby allowing the row to become the primary melodic voice. As a melodic unit, the row is rarely subjected to canonic serial

transformations. Even instances of transposition are rare, only occurring with regular frequency in the first movement of the Violin Sonata.<sup>19</sup> Along with this lack of canonic transformation, another important feature remains, the incidence of multiple rows. To be sure, Cairns described this phenomenon regarding the work of Andrey Denisov; still, the use of multiple rows is equally characteristic of Shostakovich's music, with each work studied here (excepting "My Poems") including more than one row. The Violin Sonata and String Quartet No. 13 both include more than two instances of unrelated twelve-tone rows.

Beyond such surface features, Shostakovich is careful to ensure a degree of musical coherence between serial and non-serial material. Much of the analysis in the previous chapters, in fact, has aimed at discovering and illuminating this strategy of integration. The primary methods for studying such coherence in this dissertation include an  $ic1/ic5$  connection along with similar use of octatonic subsets. In short, the harmonic grammar remains consistent within each work studied.

Within  $ic1/ic5$  space, connections have been made across local harmonic and more broadly referential harmonic subsets. Harmonic sets within the works are often transposed or inverted along at least one axis in  $ic1/ic5$  space. It has also been illustrated how the use of the octatonic allows for interval exchange within  $ic1/ic5$  space. The octatonic collection returns regularly throughout Shostakovich's serial works, as a component of both the twelve-tone rows and the non-serial material. Subsets of rows, as well as supporting local harmonic structures, often contain octatonic elements. As evidenced in the discussion of "My Poems," the use of the octatonic is not divorced from  $ic1/ic5$  space, but lies in a transformational relationship within the graph. Although the octatonic is most present in this song, its influence can be felt strongly in

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<sup>19</sup> In this case, inversion is also present in the repetition of the first row immediately followed by the  $T_7I$  form of the row. Still, this  $P_0I_7$  exists as a singular unit when it recurs later in the movement.

most of the movements discussed in the previous chapters. On a more global level, referential pitch centers are almost exclusively related in terms of ic1/ic5 motion. Often, Shostakovich aligns two pitch centers by i7 and relates a third by i7. On other occasions, as in the String Quartet No. 13, he sets up referential centers at i6, thereby allowing an additional pitch class to complete interval exchange within ic1/ic5 space.

Although this study has attempted a preliminary understanding of the harmonic framework within Shostakovich's serial works, the possibility remains open for continued investigation. A complete survey of his serial grammar has yet to be attempted, and much more can still be done regarding the relationship between form and serial structure. Shostakovich's disruption of conventional form in his last symphony, for example, is one topic deserving of more thorough exploration. Such a project will hopefully be capable of opening up a new discussion involving the intersection of serial and formal grammars.

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