Schnittke Studies

Edited by Gavin Dixon

First published 2017

ISBN: 978-1-472-47105-5 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-60770-2 (ebk)

Chapter 5

Schnittke's polystylistic schemata

Textural progression in the concerti grossi

Gordon E. Marsh

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Part II

Theoretical studies

5 Schnittke's polystylistic schemata

Textural progression in the concerti grossi

Gordon E. Marsh

> Today, one cannot compose something living in the musical language of the eighteenth century (without setting oneself some sort of specialised task); to try this would inevitably lead to dead stylization, a corpse galvanised into life. But one can compose in a contemporary language, imparting archaic attributes to contemporary intonations; or, conversely, one can compose in an "antiquated" language, but follow a contemporary developmental logic. The resulting musical logic will inevitably involve a sense of *paradox* because it no longer falls within the framework of a single style or a single era.
>
> – Alfred Schnittke, 'Paradox as a Feature of Stravinsky's Musical Logic'[1]

> Styles are made, modified, and developed by composers and performers, both as individuals and as groups. The tendency toward stylistic change results not only from the musician's conscious aesthetic intent but also from the fact that the composer and performer, by their very nature as creators and makers, regard the traditions and styles which they inherit from their predecessors as a challenge—as more or less fixed, recalcitrant material, whose resistance to change and modification the true artist delights in overcoming and conquering.
>
> – Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*[2]

> Complexity arises from the way different blueprints are combined rather than from the events themselves. A more authoritative concept of form should rather be generated from the figure, the texture, of the composition.
>
> – Theodor Adorno, 'Form in the New Music'[3]

In his short but seminal 1971 essay, 'Polystylistic Tendencies in Modern Music', Alfred Schnittke offers a commentary on what he calls the polystylistic method in composition. Schnittke makes it clear that his subject is not

1 Alfred Schnittke, *A Schnittke Reader,* ed. Alexander Ivashkin (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 154.
2 Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 69.
3 Theodor W. Adorno, 'Form in the New Music', trans. Rodney Livingstone, *Music Analysis* 27/ii–iii (2008), 212.

'the "collage wave" in contemporary music', but rather the 'more subtle ways of using another's style'.[4] He identifies two distinct principles, quotation and allusion. The principle of quotation is articulated in various techniques for quoting or adapting an 'alien style', where *adaptation* is understood as 'the retelling of an alien musical text in one's own musical language…or a free development of alien material in one's own style'.[5] Illustrating his discussion with a wide-ranging selection of twentieth-century composers and idioms, he paints a picture of stylistic quotation and allusion as a longstanding practice in Western music. For Schnittke, quotation and allusion provide a strategy for handling musical space:

> The breakthrough into the polystylistic method originated in the particular development in European music of *a tendency to widen musical space*. The tendency toward organic unity of form, which supplemented this dialectically, revealed laws by which one could conquer this new musical space. What is special about the present situation is the fact that *another dimension of music has been discovered*—but its laws are unknown (emphasis added).[6]

We might assume that the newly discovered dimension is style itself, but Schnittke remains cryptic in this regard. What is clear, however, is his goal of drawing attention to a tradition of treating style as a parameter, a tradition in which style is not so much the manner of composing as its very material. The musicology of 'classical style' has included style *per se* as a parameter, ever since Leonard G. Ratner introduced the notion of 'topics' into our understanding of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, an understanding that has both enriched and complicated not only how we view the relationship between these three composers but also how we view what some now consider to be a putative distinction between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century style periods.[7] Schnittke's notion of polystylism predates Ratner et al. by just a few years, but can be read as an extension of the recognition that style functions as a parameter in Western composition.

Schnittke's point is that contemporary composers should develop this tradition. To ignore it would be to abandon an essential feature of composition. Moreover,

4 Alfred Schnittke, 'Polystylistic Tendencies in Modern Music', *Music in the USSR,* April 1988; *Zeitschrift für Neue Musik,* Heft 30, July-August 1989. Translation by John Goodliffe published in Alfred Schnittke (2002) with additional comments from the composer. The version used here is that of Alfred Schnittke *A Schnittke Reader*. ed. Alexander Ivashkin, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), 2002.

5 Schnittke (2002), 87.

6 Schnittke (2002), 89.

7 See Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980); and the analysis of specific works by Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, in V. Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

we need to understand its laws – or, as Leonard Meyer would put it, the *choices made and strategies used within the rules and constraints* of a polystylistic practice.[8] Meyer's thesis is that meaning and significance in Western music proceed from composers overcoming the constraints which accepted stylistic practices place on musical parameters. Rules, conventions, and expectations intersect at the nexus between genre and style. This strategic field of interaction energises the compositional process. Music analysis must consider the features of a given composer's style, which result from choices made in the face of a hierarchy of constraints imposed by culture and tradition. In fact, Meyer argues that music becomes interesting exactly when a composer questions or complicates stylistic unity and coherence.[9] Schnittke's writing on music in the 1970s seems to rise from his desire to better understand the choices and strategies behind what works in the music of others, be they contemporaries or past masters, especially in terms of texture and space.

The publication of 'Polystylistic Tendencies in Modern Music' threw down a gauntlet for the contemporary composer, and, over the decade that followed the essay's publication, Schnittke developed one of the compelling voices of our age. Still, the techniques of quotation and allusion have not been above critical reproach, especially from critical theorists for whom the problem, as articulated by Theodor Adorno, is that quoting from the past panders to mass audiences and, ultimately, lacks authentic cultural fungibility.[10] While it is not necessary to revisit Adorno's argument here, a particularly vivid piece of prose, which appears

8 See Leonard Meyer, *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973); Leonard Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

9 See Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957). For a lively and provocative discussion of whether or not unity and coherence should be the measure of musical works, see the following series of three articles: Alan Street, 'Superior Myths, Dogmatic Allegories: The Resistance to Musical Unity', *Music Analysis* 8, no. 1/2 (1989), a speculative inquiry into questions raised by Paul de Man's deconstruction; Kevin Korsyn, 'Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence', *Music Analysis* 10, no. 1/2 (1991), a response to Street in which Harold Bloom's intertextuality is applied to the study of music; and the critique of Korsyn (and Street) in Martin Scherzinger, 'The "New Poetics" of Musical Influence: A Response to Kevin Korsyn', *Music Analysis* 13, no. 2/3 (1994).

10 Adorno claims that, with respect to Stravinsky's neoclassicism, 'the realism of the façade manifests itself musically as the overrated effort to orient oneself according to established media'. See 'Stravinsky and Restoration', in *Philosophy of Modern Music,* trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Continuum, 1994), 172. For Schoenberg's thoughts on musical borrowing, see 'New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea', *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg,* ed. Leonard Stein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); for insight into Schoenberg's borrowing, see Joseph Auner, 'Schoenberg's Handel Concerto and the Ruins of Tradition', *The Journal of the American Musicological Society* 49, no. 2 (1996). See also Peter J. Burkholder, 'The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing as a Field', *Notes* 50, no. 3 (1994). Burkholder lists 14 types of borrowing in the music of Charles Ives, and, in an appendix to the body of his chapter, posits a 'multi-dimensional system of categories delineated by questions about how existing work relates to the new work'.

in the penultimate chapter of Alastair Williams's *New Music and the Claims of Modernity,*[11] represents its application to Schnittke's First Concerto Grosso:

> Schnittke's Concerto Grosso No. 1 juxtaposes and distorts a variety of styles, ranging from music for prepared piano to Baroque techniques, in the manner of a confused image bank, blending irreverence and nostalgia as it rifles through music's warehouse. It is akin to a form of surrealism without the unconscious—to borrow Jameson's term—reducing historical depth structure to surface configurations of the present.[12]

For Williams, Schnittke's eclecticism lacks 'subjectivity'. This hermeneutical concept – developed by Adorno from German idealism's obsession with the problem of free will – holds that the composer who borrows from the past is a prisoner of the past, of its clichés, and formulas; borrowed music cannot produce meaning because subjectivity has been drained away from the quoted material; objectification renders the music dead, meaningless…etc. As Williams sees it, 'Unless some framing or distancing device is embedded, capable of inducing a tension between the material and its form, or unless diversity is experienced as an imminent idea, the composer who occupies assorted styles will simply produce an atrophied subjectivity'.[13]

We will counter Williams by arguing that Schnittke delivers a compelling answer to the problem of unity and coherence in music that borrows from outside the work. Schnittke addressed this problem at length in his 1973 publication, 'Paradox as a Feature of Stravinsky's Musical Logic'. This article explores Stravinsky's unique handling of serialism, his emphasis on using secondary parameters such as timbre and texture over pitch and harmony to determine form, and, in terms of polystylism, 'a tragic quality stemming from the impossibility in principle of repeating the classical models today without falling into absurdity'.[14] It sheds a

11 Williams's project is to defend Wolfgang Rihm's *Sub Kontur* and *Im Innersten* against Adorno's critique. Other models for explaining borrowing in Schnittke include Jean-Benoît Tremblay, 'Polystylism and Narrative Potential in the Music of Alfred Scnittke' (PhD Diss., University of British Columbia, 2007), a semiotic approach; and Gavin Thomas Dixon, 'Polystylism as Dialogue: A Bakhtinian Interpretation of Schnittke's Symphonies 3, 4, and his Concerto Grosso No. 4/Symphony No. 5' (PhD Diss., Goldsmiths, University of London, 2007), for a dialogical one.

12 Alastair Williams, *New Music and the Claims of Modernity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 128. For an assessment of the argument in Williams, see Henry Klumpenhouwer, 'Review of Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music', *Music Analysis* 20, no. 3 (2001). For an analytical discussion of the modern/postmodern dialectic in musical quotation, one that also uses Meyer's theories on style, see C. Catherine Losada, 'Between Modernism and Postmodernism: Strands of Continuity in Collage Compositions by Rochberg, Berio, and Zimmerman', in *Music Theory Spectrum* 31, no. 1 (2009).

13 Williams (1997), 132.

14 Schnittke (2002), 170. Works analysed by Schnittke include *Pulcinella, Apollo Musagates,* Symphony in C (discussed in the quote cited here), *Orpheus* and *Agon*. William's defence of Rihm's style relies on the parallel notion of *enigma,* and is worth quoting in full, since it echoes Schnittke's 'paradox': 'The enigma of Rihm's music is that it possesses immediacy but invokes *the idea of an organic wholeness that cannot be completely grasped*. Individual moments are

good deal of light on the compositional issues occupying Schnittke during the years leading up to its publication, and appears to document an apprenticeship in how to handle the parameter of style adaptation discussed below. In particular, one finds throughout the article both oblique and not-so-oblique references to Stravinsky's handling of not only 'the musical space of past and present from various directions', but also what we will refer to as *texture-space*.[15] Theorised by Wallace Berry in his *Structural Functions in Music,* texture-space refers to the specifically 'two-dimensional field' of the '"horizontal" and "vertical" boundaries' of musical landscape, the boundaries of spatial register and textural density.[16] Berry's analysis of texture-space draws attention to the phenomenon in music whereby texture offers a correlative to functional tonality. In particular, the notion of texture-space draws attention to those moments when musical structures experience 'compression at the final sonority'.[17] I want to draw attention to what I believe to be Schnittke's implicit conceptualisation of a way to create directed motion in the texture of shifting styles – essentially what Berry calls 'textural progression'.[18] Schnittke's handling of texture-space is multidimensional: The primary fields of texture and space acquire an expanded dimensionality from the additional parameter of what he referred to as *modulation* between stylistic adaptations.[19] When Schnittke deploys different styles as formal markers in the concerti grossi it is in reality the handling of texture-space that defines the fabric and environment – the soundscape – of the music's form and content. Furthermore, this deployment of style often operates within a repeatable pattern of types, which I consider to be an archetypal pattern, a tendency that can also be found in other works by the composer.[20]

---

released into a *logic* of expression but they suggest something larger: The *space* of simultaneous possibilities and contingencies is *infused with vitality instead of empty choice*' (Williams (1997), 145, emphasis added).

15 See Wallace Berry, *Structural Functions in Music* (New York: Dover Publications, 1987 [1976]), 248–254. Berry's theory of 'texture as space' is applied by Michael Klein in his 'Texture, Register, and Their Formal Roles in the Music of Witold Lutosławski', *Indiana Theory Review* 20, no. 1 (1999), in which he states that 'texture-space takes on a role of heightened importance in much avant-garde music after 1960, notably in the music of Lutosławski, Krzysztof Penderecki, and György Ligeti, among others' (page 37). Berry's own discussion includes an example from Handel's Third Harpsichord Suite, in which 'the shaping of texture-space is vivid indeed' (Berry, page 253). In 'Paradox as a Feature', Schnittke refers to the 'abstruse textural strategy' in Stravinsky's allusions to contrapuntal techniques of the past (Schnittke, (2002), 158).

16 Berry (1987), 249.

17 Berry (1987), 250. Berry's example is the first of Anton Webern's Four Pieces for Violin and Piano, op. 7, noting that the 'idea of "space" is an aspect of musical texture…especially relevant to the works of Webern'. Schnittke makes similar observations in 'Paradox as a Feature'.

18 Berry (1987), 186.

19 Schnittke attributes the notion of modulating between musical styles to a discussion of Stravinsky in Michel Butor, 'La Musique, Art Réaliste', *Répertoire II* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1964), in which Butor draws an analogy between the shift among 'geographical' and 'historical' *colourations* in Stravinsky to the changes in key found in a classical sonata.

20 Admittedly, one ought not paint with too broad a brush here, yet when one anonymous reviewer posited the Concerto No. 1 for Cello and Orchestra (1986) as counter example, I discovered that

Given the fact that the concerto grosso genre contains at its historical core an investigation into the structurally communicative effects of texture and space, Schnittke's appropriation of the genre was perhaps inevitable as a venue for his thinking about adapting alien styles. The pattern discussed below seems to have arisen naturally from the desire to reconcile, as he put it in regard to Stravinsky's *Agon,* 'two contrasting intonational spheres, the serial and the tonal'.[21] As he wrote admiringly of Stravinsky's *Orpheus,* there is an 'organic constitution' in Stravinsky's 'blend of what is paradoxical':

> Now we have a new style, which opens the music to a new formal logic, the logic of a consistent, artistically controlled a-logicality. An organic synthesis of opposing stylistic resources is achieved. Now the paradoxical quality is imperceptible: no point of logical contradiction can be detected. Stravinsky loves to balance precisely on this knife-edge between the logical and the absurd, between the 'old' and the 'new', between 'truth' and 'deception'.[22]

Schnittke's analysis of Stravinsky demonstrates his attention to how the Russian master shaped and linked 'objects and characters…events and actions' in a 'theater of *convention*'.[23] Moreover, his observations regarding Stravinsky's handling of the 'routines' of classical style – the 'gambits' through which he runs the musical 'imagery' and 'symbols' ('hieroglyphs') in his '*contrapuntal* spectacle' – illustrate his focus on communicative effects and the expectations of a potential audience: 'The listener', notes Schnittke, 'having been given a musical cue, senses in advance what is going to happen'. Our discussion below articulates one of the primary ways Schnittke works with listener expectations to produce 'emotional cogency of the work', a set chain of musical cues we will refer to as his 'polystylistic schema'.

The Polystylistic Schema

Though Schnittke's essay on the polystylistic method offers nothing about his own foray into polystylistic composition, which had begun a few years earlier, the writing does offer hints about the path his approach was following.[24] For instance,

---

its opening section (rehearsal numbers 1 through 4) clearly follows the proposed archetype. Nonetheless, establishing ubiquity of any rule or pattern in Schnittke is not my goal.

21 Schnittke used 'intonation' to indicate how the elements of a style are deployed in the act of communication. Intonation is one of two important Schnittke concepts credited by Gavin Dixon to musicologist Boris Asaf'ev, the other concept being 'symphonism': 'The concept of intonation… draws on the associations that the word has in linguistics in which it can be understood as the link between the desire to communicate, and the acoustic phenomena that result' (Dixon (2007), 34).

22 Schnittke (2002), 154–155.

23 Schnittke (2002), 153–154.

24 Using evidence gleaned from Alexander Ivashkin's 1996 biography of Schnittke, augmented by contemporary music reviews and recording liner notes documenting relevant works, Kirsten Peterson narrates a four-stage development to Schnittke's polystylism, comprised of the following

at one point he refers to '*polystylistic* hybrids', where more than two styles are found, involving multiple 'stylistic modulations and polyphony'; at another point, he remarks 'sometimes the interpenetration of elements from styles of an individual composer and an alien style may be so organic…that it crosses the boundary between quotation and allusion'.[25] Schnittke's first excursions into polystylism arose from the collage techniques he developed in his film music circa 1968, techniques he referred to as *stylistic modulation* and *stylistic polyphony.* This new 'cinematically inspired collage structure',[26] used in his score for Andrei Khrzhanovsky's animated film *Glass Harmonica,* is quoted in two concert works from that year, Violin Sonata No. 2 'Quasi una Sonata' and Serenade for chamber ensemble. In the next major work, his Symphony No. 1 (1969–1972), the composer used collage music composed for the documentary *The World Today.*[27] These film scores, and the concert works that incorporate their respective collage passages, constitute the wellspring from which Schnittke's polystylistic style arises. When he took up the concerto grosso less than five years later, it seems likely that the genre appealed to him as a way to cross the boundary separating quotation from allusion, and elevate the adaption of alien styles to the level an independent stylistic practice. Put in Schnittke's own terms, we might say that the genre of the concerto grosso (or 'group concerto') – and the historical, polystylistic allusions provoked by the genre – fired the 'intonation' and sharpened the 'a-logic' of his method. Furthermore, the genre seems to have exerted a salubrious effect on his ability to adapt rather than merely quote diverse alien styles.

Before turning our full attention to the schema, we will review the innovations in texture and space that mark the history of the concerto grosso. When seventeenth-century Italians applied the *concertato* technique of alternating small and large forces to the trio sonata, their innovation was as a formal punctuation within the music. As it developed, composers identified a formal property in the sonic contrasts afforded by concertato techniques: a small group of 'concerted' players[28] (later *concertino*) vs. the group of many players (*tutti* or *concerto grosso*). As the concerto grosso genre developed, the *concertino* displayed instrumental virtuosity from within the 'ripe with fullness' or 'stuffed' sound of the concerto grosso's *ripieno.* The alternation of *concertino* and *ripieno*

periods: 1968–1972, 1972–c. 1977, ca. 1977–1985, and 1985–1998. See Kirsten Peterson, 'Structural Threads in the Patchwork Quilt: Polystylistics and Motivic Unity in Selected Works by Alfred Schnittke', (PhD diss., University of Connecticut, 2000), 53–60.

25 Schnittke (2002), 88.

26 Dixon (2007), 26.

27 See 'Chronology' in Schnittke (2002), xxi, for a discussion of the early use of polystylism in the Symphony No. 1.

28 The etymology of the term 'concerto' has its roots in the Latin *conserto*, the past participle of *consero* (to join or bind together): 'The term concerto, as used in music, had at first (c. 1519) the Italian but late in the 16th century it acquired the additional Latin sense of "strive or contend with", and these two different connotations existed side by side in music from the end of the 16th to the middle of the 18th century'. See David D. Boyden, 'When Is a Concerto Not a Concerto?' in *The Musical Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1957): 221.

offered composers the opportunity to explore new instrumental effects for an age when the arts focused attention on all things dramatic, and thus provided an array of such effects, including striking dynamic contrasts between large and small groups, a variety of 'concerted' timbres within each group, and, in terms of large-scale shape, the regular shifts in textural density provided by ritornello form. Again, all of these features served the era's guiding mimetic principle of dramatic presentation. Even a cursory review of Schnittke's six concerti grossi – whether in terms of a fundamental relation between sound and form, or a focus on dramatic contrasts and instrumental effects – indicates how well within the genre's tradition they fall. This background gives a valuable perspective for understanding how Schnittke creates an archetypal textural progression out of his polystylistic discourse in his concerti grossi.

Schnittke's strategy is to arrange specific style archetypes into a particular order as a device for structuring musical form. The use of archetypes offers a *psychological schema,* what psychologists refer to as a *system of learned expectations.* Musical schemata created by composers are learned through listening. Every type of music requires that a listener's taste and understanding is developed and learned in the act of listening, since only through repeated listening can the mind grasp the underlying psychological schemata of a given style, especially if it is new or different. As with any effective schema, Schnittke's is both simple and direct. It is therefore immanently learnable. As Meyer and others have framed schemata in musical style, a particular style schema is understandable and learnable because of its being psychologically available to others, a process dependent on how the schema is repeatedly realised in actual music.[29] What Williams's critique, discussed above, fails to recognise is that Schnittke's handling of stylistic variability is organised into a psychologically viable, repeatable schema and is thus far from 'confused'. More to the point, Schnittke's listener (just as he himself pointed to Stravinsky's listener) grasps not merely references to diverse musical styles but learns cues to follow diversity's role in creating unity. As Meyer noted, novel strategies in the development of a style can challenge even for the most experienced listener:

> If evaluation depends on knowing what a composer might have chosen, as well as what he actually chose, then it is scarcely surprising that critics (including knowledgeable listeners) have occasionally misjudged works in an unfamiliar style. For until the rules and strategies of a style have been internalized as habits of perception and cognition—or, at a later stage, conceptualized—the alternatives actually chosen by a composer cannot be understood in relation to those available.[30]

29 Repetition is a key factor. In addition to Meyer's *Style and Idea* (ibid.), see also Robert O. Gjerdingen, *A Classic Turn of Phrase: Music and the Psychology of Convention* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); and David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

30 Leonard Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 34. In *Emotion and Meaning in Music,* Meyer's discussion of texture contains

In effect, contrary to the criticism levelled against the First Concerto Grosso by Alistair Williams, it is the viability of Schnittke's musical cues that assures the subjectivity of his musical forms.

Figure 5.1 offers a diagram of the three-style schemata used by Schnittke as three stages in a single schematic process. The diagram's left-hand box lists a dozen elements, a set of musical parameters and artistic dimensions, unpacked on the right according to the three stages of the unified process, which we will refer to as the polystylistic schema. Each stage bears a term that conveys its essential rhetoric. As a starting point, Schema 1 is labelled 'incunabular', in that the opening references a musical artefact from the past (e.g., baroque ritornello) or from outside the canon of art music (e.g., tango). Here we find the composition's texture-space in its infancy, so to speak, since the term has as one of its Latin roots the word 'cradle'. Schema 2 is labelled 'reticular', in that it complicates the music of Schema 1 with netlike intricacies, often arising from many-layered canons *in stretto,* and Schema 3 is 'terminal' in that it produces a limit or boundary to the processes occurring in Schema 2, one in which caesuras often occur as negations of textural processes, e.g., pulled plug, coagulated flow, or scattered detritus. The arrow connecting the two, and the box that encloses them, represents the formal linkage between the second and third schemata, an inextricable connection between development and closure.

The presence of these three schemata and the way they articulate a textural progression underlie many passages in Schnittke's polystylistic compositions. Their combination in a polystylistic schema follows the general plan of any closed temporal form – though 'closed' in Schnittke often involves the negation of closure – as the schema's beginning, middle, and end. Organised into a beginning, middle, and end, the succession can be framed in terms of *Hauptmotiv, Fortspinnung*,and *Epilog*, useful eighteenth-century concepts for analysing ritornello processes, especially when viewed from the perspective of texture-space.[31] While the identity of each texture is clearly stamped by a different style (tonal, atonal, sonoristic), less clear is the characteristic way in which each texture occupies registral space. For instance, along the dimension of the *lingua franca,* the opening stage's 'conventional archetype' will occupy the space of that genre, so to speak, as determined by its normative instrumental forces – such as the violin and accompanying instrument in a tango. The second stage's fragmented texture, when compared to the first stage's often iconic presentation, will drape and spread across the field via imitative counterpoint, occupying broad swathes of, or even filling up, registral space. The variously sized blocks of sound produced in the end by Schema 2 necessarily signal Schema 3, where a radical reduction in space ensues. Likewise, the textural progression from a coherent, normative

---

the following statement with respect to 'the practiced listener': 'The psychological effect of textural change depends not only upon the particular manner in which the changes take place… but also upon the stylistic experience of the listener' (Meyer (1989), 190).

31 See the discussion of *Fortspinnungstypus,* in Malcolm Boyd, *Bach: The Brandenburg Concertos* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 48ff.

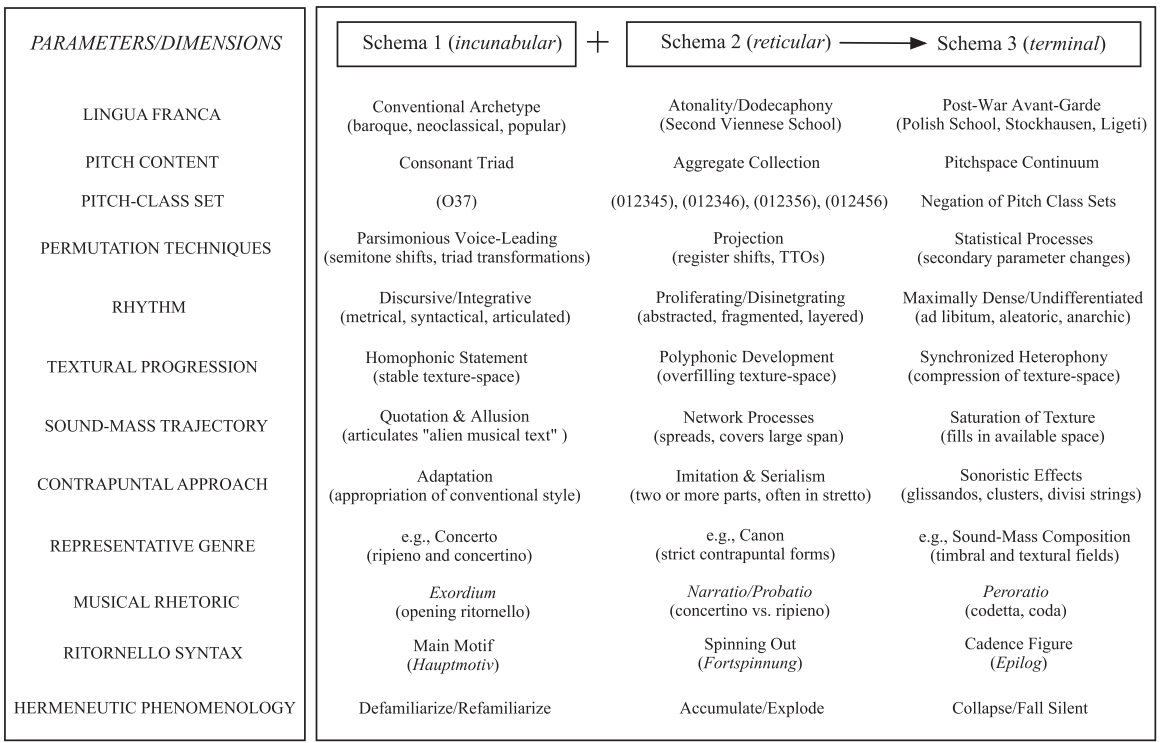


Figure 5.1 Schnittke's polystylistic schema and its salient features.

density in stage one, through its contrapuntal proliferation in stage two and the compressions or silences in stage three, works in tandem with register to create a tripartite schema that exists, to use the words of David Huron, 'to help us to deal with situations that are novel yet also broadly familiar'.[32]

In terms of pitch content – and, more to the point, pitch-class set – the conventional archetypes of Stage 1 belong to the world of the consonant triad (037). The triad is a privileged object in Schnittke's music. Often, the roots of triads articulate pitch-classes in a row or series; transformations include the shift between parallel minor and major, and the 'slide' discussed later in this chapter.[33] His use of the triad in the polystylistic schema seems akin to what he noted in Stravinsky's *Agon,* where 'the triad lays claim to the role of tonal center, but its tonal authority is fictitious'.[34] In Schema 2, the music shifts to its 12-tone stage, best characterised by the styles and practices of the Second Viennese School, where all 12 tones of the aggregate collection (the universal set) will be unfolded. Various atonal sets – i.e., sets containing several instances of the chromatic trichord (012) – are used. Most commonly, Schnittke uses sets from the family of gapped chromatic hexachords, collections whereby a single whole-tone gap appears somewhere in the set (012345): i.e., (012346), (012356), and (012456).[35] This second stage leads to the cadential stage of Schema 3, where sound loses its association with pitch-class and devolves into a form in texture-space involving a compression of the total pitch-space continuum. Schema 3 uses the sorts of techniques one normally associates with some aspects of the post-war avant-garde, especially the sonoristics of the Polish School and the sound-mass composition of composers like Karlheinz Stockhausen and György Ligeti. In summary, the shift from one archetype to another involves a handling of texture-space as much as it does a handling of pitch.[36]

Schnittke's insight into the laws of the polystylistic method – the compositional challenge posed in 'Polystylistic Tendencies' – is perhaps encapsulated in

32 Huron (2007), 225.

33 According to Richard Cohn, the consonant triad is an 'over-determined' object in the tonal system's transformational grammar of parsimonious step-wise voice leading. See his 'Neo-Riemannian Operations, Parsimonious Trichords, and Their "Tonnetz"', in *Journal of Music Theory,* Vol. 41, No. 1 (Spring, 1997), 5. See also Dmitri Tymoczko, *A Geometry of Music: Harmony and Counterpoint in the Extended Common Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 14.

34 Schnittke (2002), 184.

35 This chapter does not pursue this line of analysis in detail, but simply posits a few observations concerning Schnittke's handling of the aggregate (i.e., the total chromatic), since aggregate completion provides the pitch process for the schema's second stage. The seminal importance of 12-tone thinking in the music of Schnittke and other Soviet composers is explored in Peter J. Schmelz, 'Andrey Volkonsky and the Beginnings of Unofficial Music in the Soviet Union', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58, no. 1 (2005).

36 Following Berry, we might speak of stylistic *texture-motives,* since what most immediately characterises any given style is the sonic image at a glance, so to speak, of the all the parts. We learn to read these images (Schnittke's 'hieroglyphs') by hearing not just the genres and topics of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music, but also the gestures and feelings of contemporary music. See Berry (1987), 254.

the proposed schema's textural progression. In fact, the large-scale form in his concerti grossi can sometimes be heard to follow a similarly generalised pattern of thematic repetition, one involving familiar (canonical or popular) music as the 'main theme', passing through extended dodecaphonic development before finally reaching sonoristic closure. But the key to Schnittke's most significant insight may very well be in that type of closure. I suggest that the third schema's characteristic devolution in texture-space constitutes one of the hidden laws sought by Schnittke. There can be no question that sonorism provides the primary technique for closure not only in the concerti grossi, but also in other works by Schnittke.[37] As Meyer points out, a sense of completeness and closure is necessary for creating understandable (i.e., psychologically valid) musical statements.[38] Sonoristic moments and gestures provide more than just striking textural and timbral effects. They often articulate small- and large-scale forms in the concerti grossi. As diagrammed in Figure 5.1, what often begins as lingua franca soon proliferates and disintegrates during a process of aggregate completion in which ideas, lines, and voices become abstracted, fragmented, and layered. This developmental process is closed off in a compression of texture-space, here virtually always a downward motion suggesting some sort of collapse or abandonment of momentum. These caesuras frequently involve a cluster sonority, which serves as the entire schema's punctuation mark (the sonoristic collapse constitutes one of Schnittke's cadential thumbprints). Again, we are reminded of Schnittke's analysis of Stravinsky's *Apollo* ballet, where he remarks that, 'the discrediting of what was apparently planned as a logical process, the leading of a developmental process into confusion and absurdity, these are cultivated by Stravinsky quite consciously'.[39] Even Schnittke's examples from the ballet suggest in nascent form the schema developed in his concerti grossi.

Finally, the connection between the second and third stage might be clarified with a historical point made by Lidia Rappoport in her 1983 article on the development of sonorism in the Polish School, that almost from the first, young Polish composers of the 1950s explored 12-tone techniques as a form of sonoristic composition.[40] And, with respect to a hermeneutics of texture-space, it is worth

37 Tremblay's analysis of Schnittke's Symphony No. 1 (1969–1972), which proposes a narratological (semiotic) interpretation of quotation, comes close to my point concerning this formal archetype (schema) in his discussion of the third movement (Tremblay (2007), 62): 'If most stylistic excursions heard so far have been rejected by clusters, it seems logical that in order to reject dodecaphonism one must oppose it with elements of tonality. After the triad, the texture is slowly thinned out through a succession of clusters until it reaches a point of near silence, from which to build up again. In the build-up, intervals from the semitone to the perfect fifth will govern the inner structure of the sonic masses'.

38 See Meyer (1956), chapter 2, 'Completion and Closure'.

39 Schnittke (2002), 161.

40 Lidia Rappoport, 'Sonorism: Problems of Style and Form in Modern Polish Music', *Journal of Musicological Research,* vol. 4 (1983): 402. See also Maria Anna Harley, 'The Polish School of Sonorism and Its European Context', in *Crosscurrents and Counterpoints: Offerings in Honor of Bengt Hambruus at 70.* (University of Göteborg, 1998), 62–77. Rappoport remarks that

noting that a commitment to communicative effects is something the Polish sonorists shared with other Eastern Bloc composers. The post-war avant-garde had many camps, and between these there was a good deal of cross-fertilisation. Still, one division among many stands out here, the one that arose in Europe between West and East, where two musical worlds were produced by opposing social and political realities: On the one side, the West's liberal democracies afforded composers a hermetic individualism divorced from the bourgeois concert audience; while on the other, the East's totalitarian governments inspired a pronounced bonding between avant-garde composers and their festival or underground audiences. As Maria Anna Harley puts it, in addition to the well-known markers of sonorism (divisi strings, unusual sounds, clusters, glissandos, radical dissonance), a politically charged aspect of the Polish style was, as she puts it, its 'assault on the ears of the audience'.[41] In her discussion of the style, Harley notes that the popularity of the new music, among composers and audiences alike, had much to do with the progressive character of the music, which offered a state-sanctioned alternative to the oppressive guidelines of social realism endorsed by the Soviets. In other words, the music of the Polish avant-garde delighted audiences because it repudiated the stifling conservatism of official Soviet artistic policy. From these observations, we can say with confidence that the perspicuous nature of the polystylistic schema is multilevelled in structure *and* communicative effect.

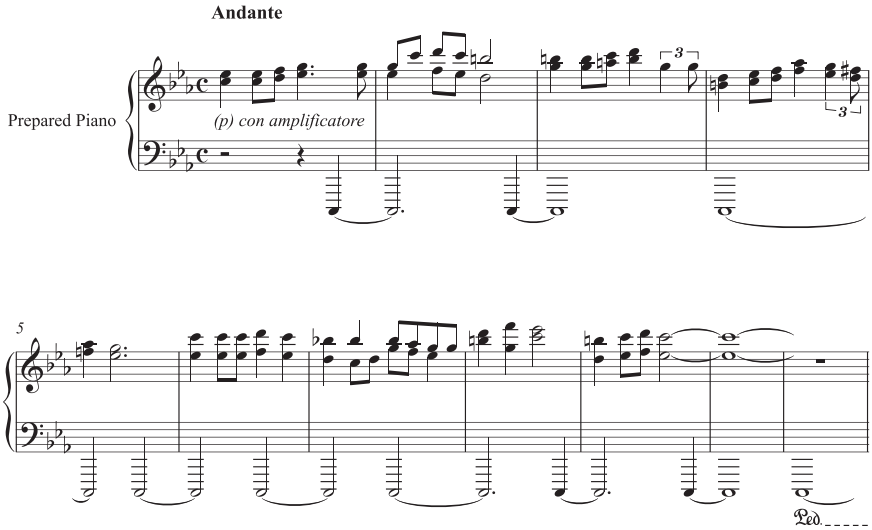
Examples of the schema in the first two concerti grossi

Let us begin at the beginning by looking at the first movement of the First Concerto Grosso, for two violins, harpsichord (also piano), and string orchestra (1976/1977). The movement divides into three parts: Its middle part starts at figure 4 and its closing part comprises figures 7 and 8. The first part (figures 1 to 3) offers one complete presentation of the polystylistic schema. Examples 5.1–5.3 present each stage of the schema. I have included Schnittke's instructions for how to prepare the piano with Example 5.1, because the timbre of the instrument is inextricably bound to its nature as incunabular music. Our use of 'incunabular' is here turned on its head by the music's hollowed-out tone, but what could be more evocative of reaching into the musical past than the dead (and seemingly out of tune) tone of this funereal dirge accompanied by the tolling of C1 on the modern (not prepared and in tune) piano? The homophonic simplicity brings to mind a material culture exhumed from an eighteenth-century tract on composition, coming to us via modern amplification and sounding as if the past were being broadcast from the underworld. The intrinsic commentary on *sound* could not be more obvious. In fact, the sense of

Penderecki's resolution of 'the problem of tonal center', involved a range of approaches, from using a concluding major triad in *Polymorphia,* to any of a variety of 'thematic or figurational complexes' functioning as tonics, which one finds at the conclusion of *Anaklasis, Threnody* and *Flourescences* (Rappoport 1983, 412–413).

41 Harley (1998), 68–69.

Stage 1 (global motto)



Schnittkes's Instructions for Preparing the Piano

How to use the piano

The piano must be prepared in such a way that it produces a dry, out-of-tune sound. Only the passages written in G clef are prepared.

There are two possible ways of preparing the piano:

1) By wedging two pieces of rubber between the three strings of each key.

2) By inserting a small thin coin [...] between the three strings of each key so that the coin rests on the two outer strings and presses the middle string upwards. [...] This causes the tuning to change; the prepared strings sound "in B flat", which has to be taken into accont when doing the preparing.

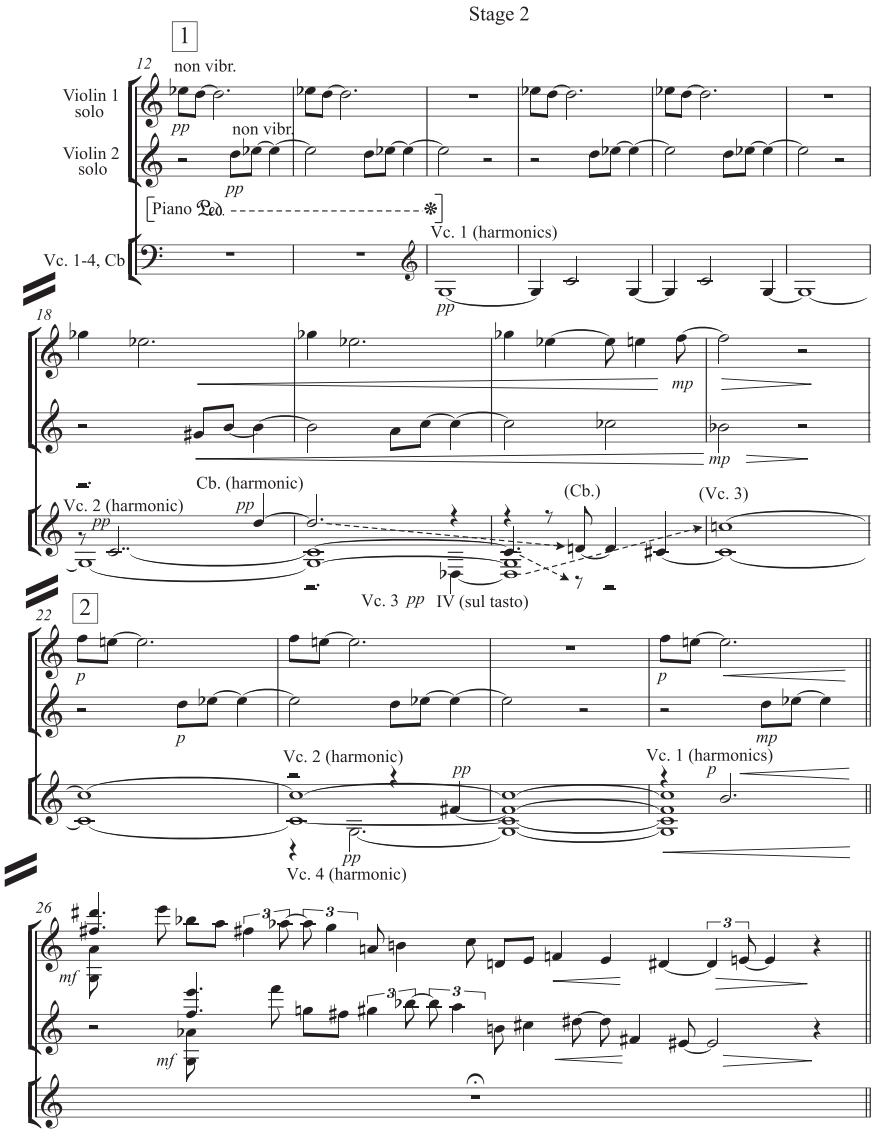
The piano must be very highly amplified [...] so that the sound appears to fill the hall.

Example 5.1 Concerto Grosso No. 1, first movement (bars 1–11).

a self-conscious borrowing from the past is reinforced by the unsophisticated way in which the dominant-seventh elaborations outline the C-Minor chord in the fourth and eighth bars. The half-hearted rhyme in these cadences conjures what Schnittke would call a ‘discredited’ tonality. Note the lack of tonal cohesion in the shift in register from the opening C5 to the closing C6, which attenuates the passage’s timbre. This wandering up an octave promotes a sense

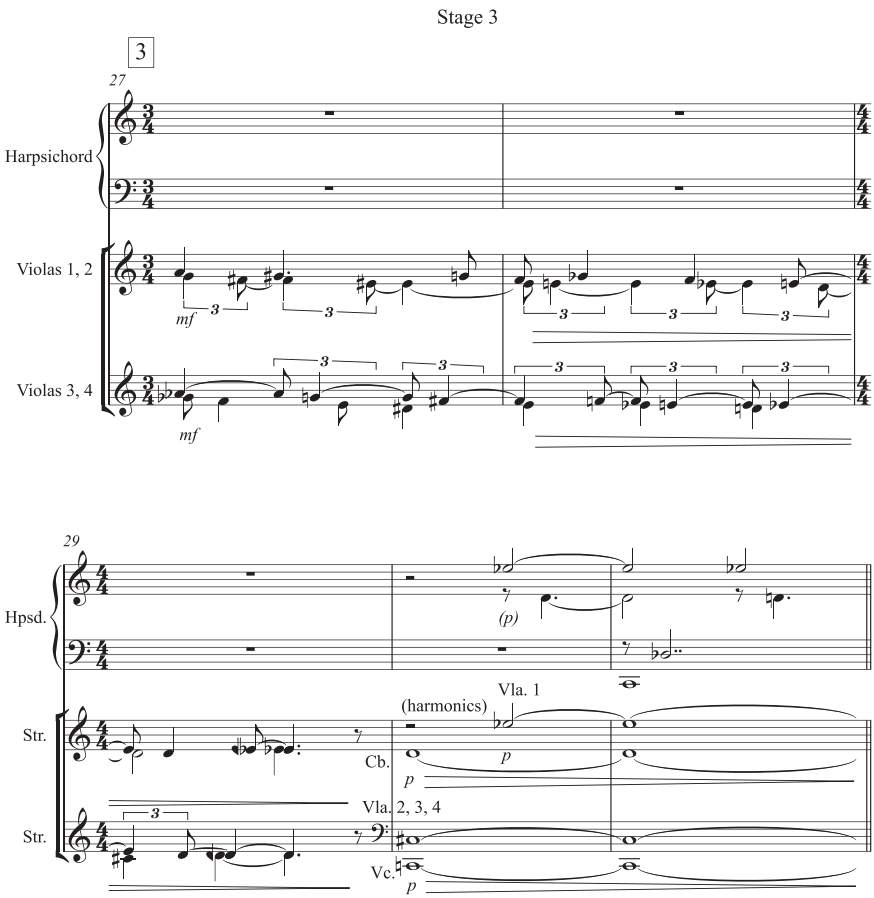
of brokenness, and marks the motto as an expression of disunity rather than unity. This sad, rickety piece of Italianate tune craft offers little solace from the putative comforts of its consonant minor triad.

Stage 2 (Example 5.2) contains the shift to an atonal texture at figure 1, where the total chromatic gradually unfolds from the space of the C-Minor tune. The beginning of the music at figure 1 emerges from that space as if infested with



Example 5.2 Concerto Grosso No. 1, first movement (bars 12–26).
Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

some agent of its destruction.[42] The lower half of the *tutti* body occupies a dissonant haze in harmonics, a sort of 'negative space' of the original C Minor (C♯, F♯, and B♮). The solo music is repeated at figure 2, a whole step up, but then is abbreviated at bar 26 by a dense imitative solo display for the two violins, pulling the music downward. This aborted display by the soloists foregrounds the expressionistic character of the schema's second stage. The imitation is free, and its downward twisting *stretto* communicates the fate of the texture, which



Example 5.3 Concerto Grosso No. 1, first movement (bars 27–31).
Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

42 The concept of 'agent' in concerto thinking should be underscored here. See Joseph Kerman, *Concerto Conversations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 21–22. Kerman reconfigures the notion of cooperation with that of 'reciprocity', and the notion of opposition (*concerto*) with that of 'polarity'. With respect to agent, Kerman asks the following question of any concerto (emphasis added): 'What is the intrinsic character, the particularity of each *soundbody,* or agent'?

is to be squashed and left exhausted amid what is left of the C-Minor opening. The space of the movement has now been pulled down to a dyad composed of E and E♯, a warped compression of the major third of middle C. The ensuing music can be heard as the *tutti* response to this action (Example 5.3). Positioned at the dominant above middle C, the music shifts into a fully developed sonoristic gesture: *Divisi* violas mimic the downward motion of the solos from bar 26, with the ensuing caesura marked by a rhythmically activated cluster (bars 30–31), a two-octave display of the cluster's 'tonic' harmony, C, D♭, D, and E♭ in the harpsichord and low strings, with a reinforcing C in the bass. This cluster-expanse, so to speak, occupies the *shadows* – an important concept in Schnittke's sound world – of this opening texture-space.[43]

The entire opening, figures 1 to 3, can be heard as being 'in' C, passing from the consonant C-Minor triad, through the chromatic filling in of its triadic space, to the sonoristic dissolution of pitch-space at the close. The otherworldly quality of the amplified prepared piano further enhances the alien nature of this objectified music. The motto's simple homophony, a naïf depiction of classical tonic-dominant motion, keeps to the thirds and sixths of the triad and its inversions. Viewed from the perspective of texture-space, the processes of density, timbre, and register take precedence over static melody and harmony. The starting point of the Preludio's piano motto establishes a skeletal outline of the multidimensional field to be manipulated. The passing from a C-Minor triad to the aggregate collection – from the echoes of a music-cultural *lingua franca* (a 10-bar tune) to its smearing and smudging in successive phrases – articulates the polystylistic schema's textural progression.

While there is not room in this chapter to look at the entire work, I would like to propose a very different instance of the schema. This particular instantiation of the progression from triadic *lingua franca* to atonal expressionism to sonoristic cadence is arguably the most striking of the entire multimovement work. I am referring to the second episode from the fifth movement, the tango episode.[44] As a conventional archetype, the familiar reality of this provocative Argentinean entertainment – and the allusion to its role in the 'cultural imaginary'[45] – arrives at figure 13. The dance evolves from triadic to dodecaphonic styling at figure 16. Borrowing what is alien to 1970s concert music, a tango, and then subjecting it to the atonal world of dodecaphony renders it strange (i.e., estranged, *defamiliarised*[46]). The music's atonal

43 See Ronald Weitzman, 'Schnittke and Shadow-Sounds', in *Seeking the Soul: The Music of Alfred Schnittke* (London: Guildhall School of Music and Drama, 2002).

44 Tremblay uses the Concerto Grossso No. 1 as an example of what he understands to be Schnittke's search for a musical utopia, where different styles live side-by-side in 'an inclusive musical reality' (Tremblay (2007), 5). He argues that Schnittke's use of the tango embodies this aesthetic vision and functions as a semiotic sign in the composer's body of work.

45 See Jean Baudrillard, 'The Precession of Simulacra', in *Simulations,* trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Phillip Beitchman (New York and Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1983).

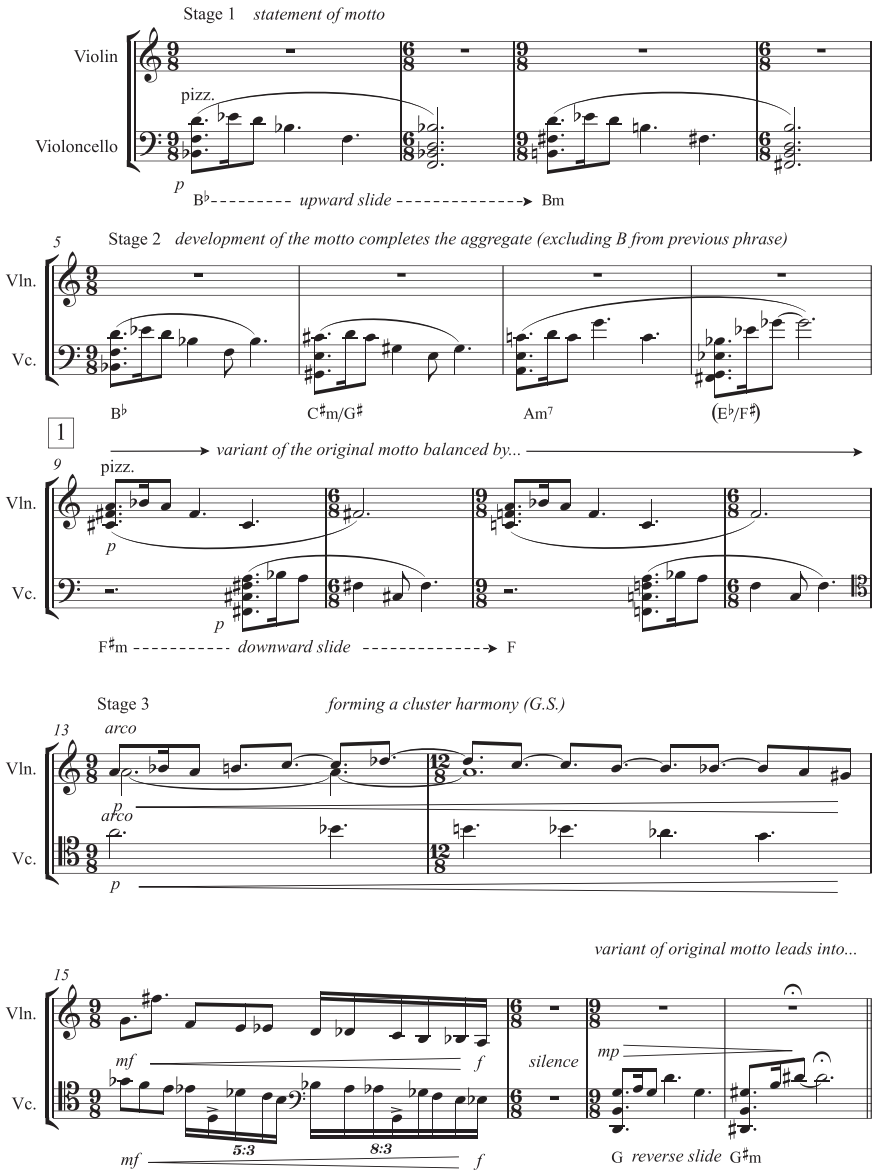
46 For a general discussion of the history of this concept, see 'Viktor Shklovsky and *Ostranenie*', R.H. Stacy, *Defamiliarization in Language and Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1977), 32–49.

expressionism – that quintessential style for depicting inner disturbances and disruptions of psychological health – culminates at figure 17 in the sort of complete negation of pitch that sonoristic effects produce. The entire passage is derived from the concerto grosso's opening motto. At 13 we hear a cadential rhyme between the tango theme and the Preludio theme in the harpsichord. The rondo motif from figure 14 is 'classicised' at 15, also alluding to the first movement's opening motto. Following the dodecaphonic transmogrification at 16, a codetta begins in 17 where the *soli* are pitted against *tutti* clusters, essentially comprised of three stacked fully-diminished seventh chords. The entire episode can be heard as the progression in texture-space framed by our proposed schema.

The First Concerto Grosso established the baroque concerto as a genre in Schnittke's output. When he returned to the form in 1982, he did so with the idea of transferring his concept from chamber orchestra to full orchestra. The decision to use a large orchestra would now afford him the opportunity for expanding the textural and spatial possibilities of the idea, while also enriching its timbral palette. Additionally, the new work offered Schnittke a large canvas for exploring a harmonic device not found in the First Concerto Grosso, but one that can be understood as paradigmatic in his mature style – indeed a thumbprint in many of his works. I am referring to the shift between major and minor triads accomplished by allowing one chord factor (the third) to remain stationary while the two remaining factors (the root and fifth) slip up or down a semitone, depending on the modal shift of the desired transformation. Schnittke's musical borrowings are filled with modal shifts produced by an invariant chordal third (e.g., C♯ Minor shifting to C Major). In music-theoretic terms, we will refer to this as a 'slide'.[47]

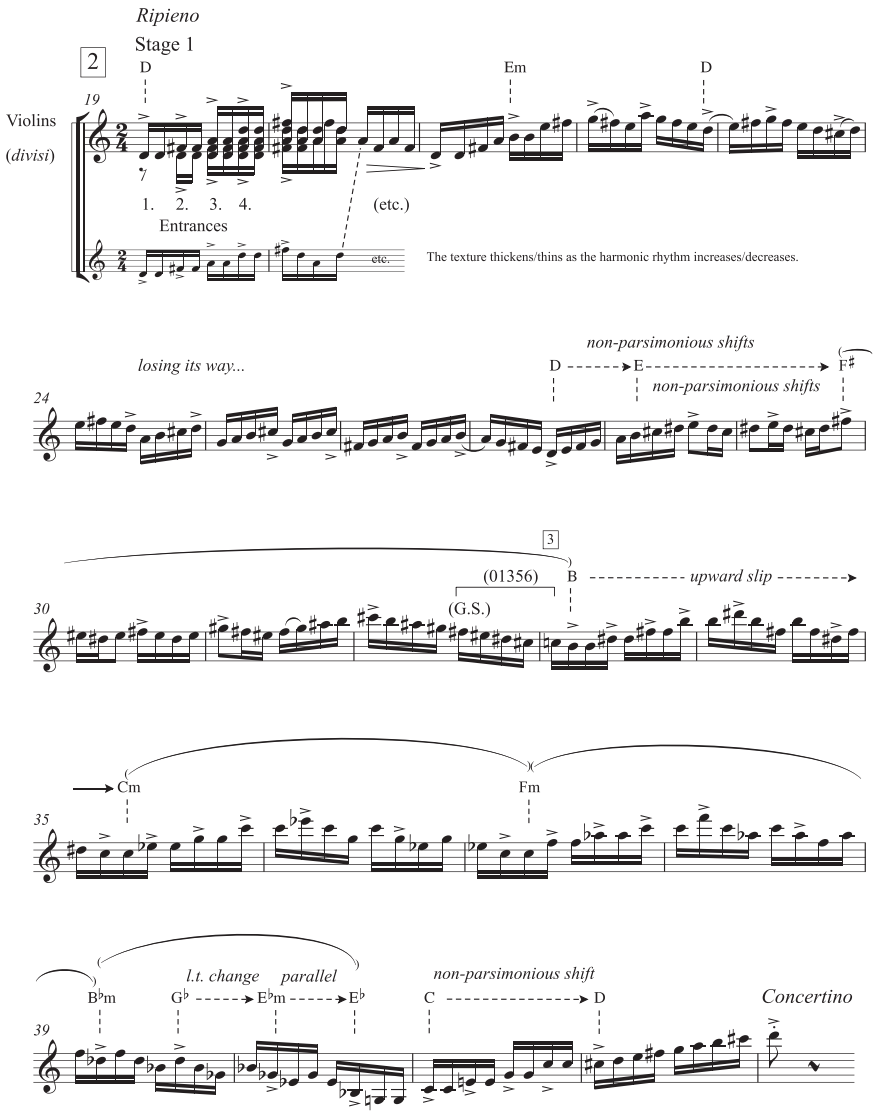
As with the First Concerto Grosso, the Second begins with a motto. Example 5.4 offers the entire passage, which is played by the two soloists. As notated on the example, the passage follows the schema, except here the third stage does not devolve to a cluster chord but rather to silence. The use of silence to conclude the schema is characteristic of the entire concerto. But what matters most to our observation here is how the triad rules the start of each passage. The trademark slides between major and minor triads will strike many listeners as nostalgic snapshots pasted onto the polystylistic canvas. Indeed, in the later concerti grossi, the opening music is perhaps not merely triadic but quasi-tonal, with its instrumental lines yielding dense layers that sound nonetheless in G Minor. The point here is that Schnittke's triads have an integral function within his chromatic language. The triad is not simply a product of developing a pleasing alternative to the potentially relentless dissonance of 12-tone and cluster sonorities, nor is it merely a token of conventional culture. Viewed from the perspective of a textural schema, the consonant triad constitutes a specific locus for accessing pitch-class space.

47 See David Lewin, *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 178.



Example 5.4 Concerto Grosso No. 2, opening (bars 1–18).
Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

Following the four bars that establish the triad as access point, an eight-bar phrase presents the schema's second stage. Here, the roots of the triads (given in the chord symbols below each system) continue from those of the opening motto to produce a meandering succession of nine pitch-classes: with pitch



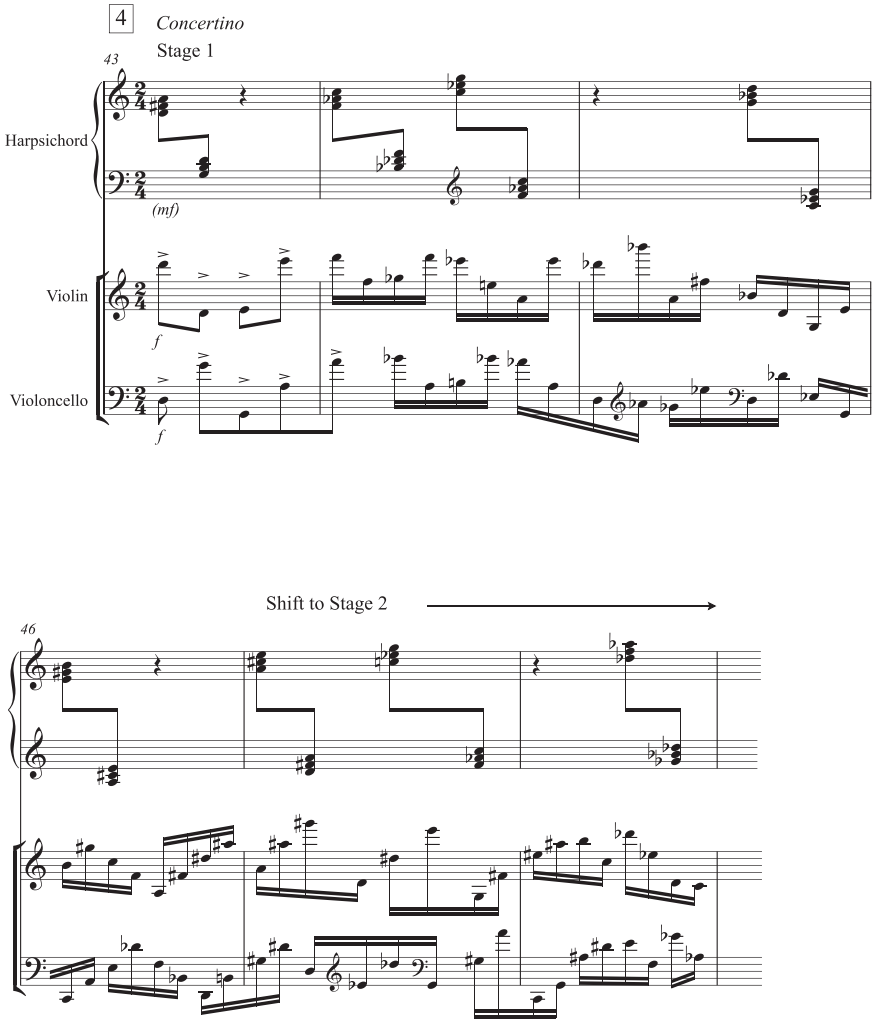
Example 5.5 Concerto Grosso No. 2, *ripieno* (bars 20–43).
Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

repetitions omitted, as well as any indication as to whether the triad is major or minor (or major-minor), the succession is B♭, B, C♯, A, E♭, F♯, F, G, G♯ (pitch classes 10, 11, 1, 9, 3, 6, 5, 7, 8). The remaining complement of three pitches comprises C, D, and E (0, 2, 4), the whole-tone trichord, which turns out to be a significant feature of pitch organisation in the work as a whole. Once the

final triad (G♯ Minor) of the nine pitch-classes is heard in the last measure of figure 1, the baroque ritornello begins in D, one of the three complement pitches (Example 5.5). The ritornello is stated in a 24-bar texture canon (at the unison), a typical 'discrediting' of the baroque trope in Schnittke. Example 5.5 presents the line used in the imitative texture: As the melody progresses, the departure from D invokes a variety of tone motions, first by step (D to E to F♯), then by fifth (first F♯ to B, then C Minor to F Minor to B♭ Minor), then by third (B♭ Minor to G♭ to E♭ to C), before wrapping up with a return to D (approached by C as in the work's motivic C–D–E motion). This passage marks Stage 1 of the first *ripieno* statement of the concerto ritornello (as opposed to the opening motto heard at the start of the movement). The entire passage occurs over a D pedal. The return of D marks the entrance of the concertino at figure 4 [ca. 2:12].[48] I suggest hearing the concertino as an embedded instance of the schema. Examples 5.6, 5.7, and 5.8 represent this. Across the three passages depicted in the examples, there is a gradual increase in texture and dissonance. In Stage 2 (Example 5.7), the triads in the harpsichord are plastered by harsh dissonances in the two solo strings; and then, in Stage 3 (Example 5.8), the harpsichord acquires similar harshness as the entire space is occupied by major sevenths and tritones. At figure 5 the D-Major ritornello resumes, now with the concertino punctuated by the ripieno. The triadic texture is hammered out by one and all as if to say, 'let's get back to things' – which is to say, back to figure 2.

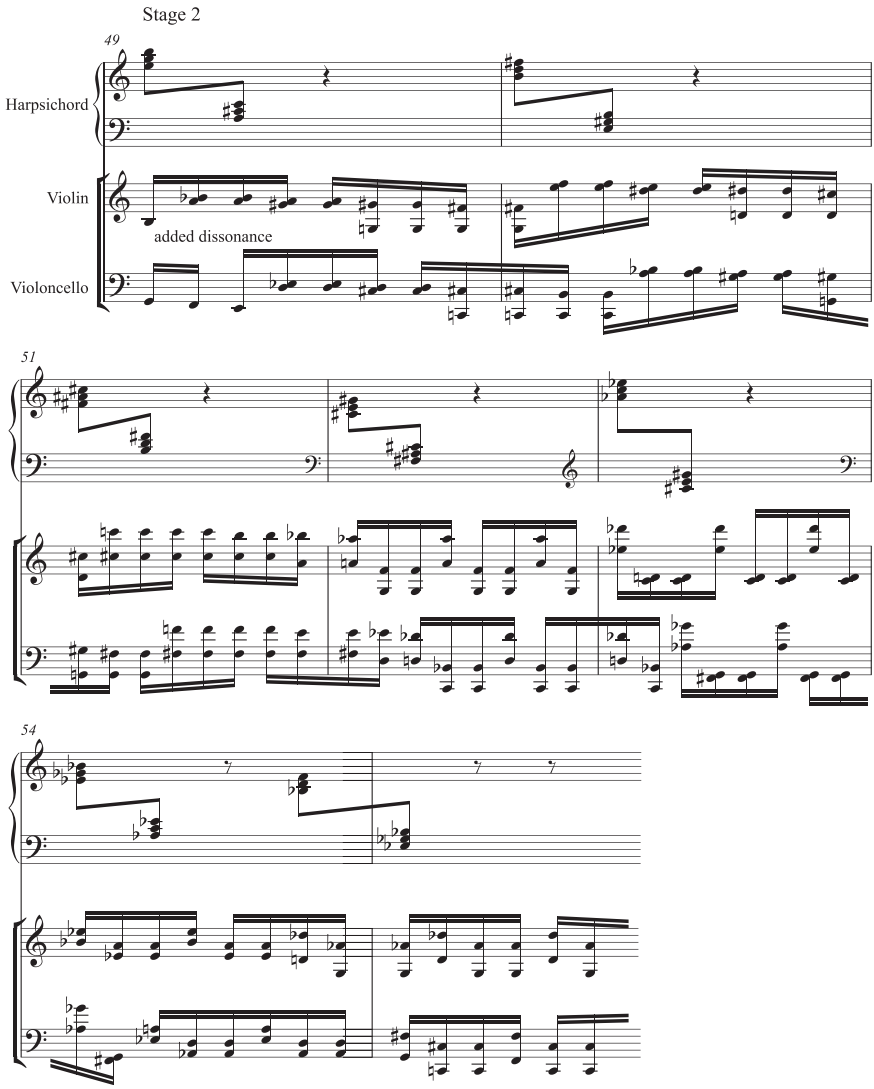
In the Concerto Grosso No. 2, D Major figures prominently throughout. Instances include not only the *ripieno* ritornellos at 2 and 5, but also 9. Additionally, one can point to two of the concertino's three bitonal episodes, namely the episodes of 6 and 10. The concertino's second bitonal episode at 10 begins on D [ca. 3:27] but shifts to E Major at 11. This shift to E, another pitch-class in the structural motive's trichordal complement, occurs before the concerto introduces its other main theme at 13 [ca. 4:04]. This new theme, which will figure prominently in the concerto, begins with G♯-Minor chords superimposed over G chords, alluding to the chord succession that concluded the opening motto (Example 5.4, bars 17–18). The bitonality of these episodes reinforces the essentially triadic nature of the movement, but also serves to discredit 'chord' by rendering it a mere object in texture-space. The concertino's third bitonal episode, at 14, which begins with the violin in F against the cello in B, offers a chromatic version of the ritornello theme: in fact, the solos of 15 are virtually dodecaphonic. To add to the expressionistic virtuosity at this point, Schnittke punctuates the texture with slaps on a bongo drum. With the oboe solo's entrance, and then the *tutti* winds, it becomes clear that the entire section has been a *fugato stretto* – an eight-and-a-half-bar subject in cello, answered by violin (6 1/2 bars) and then harpsichord (5 1/2), oboe (3 1/2), clarinet (2 3/4),

48 Timings in brackets are from Alfred Schnittke, *The Alfred Schnittke Edition 15: Cello Concerto no. 2; Concerto Grosso no. 2,* Lev Markiz, Malmö Symphony Orchestra, BIS compact disc 567.



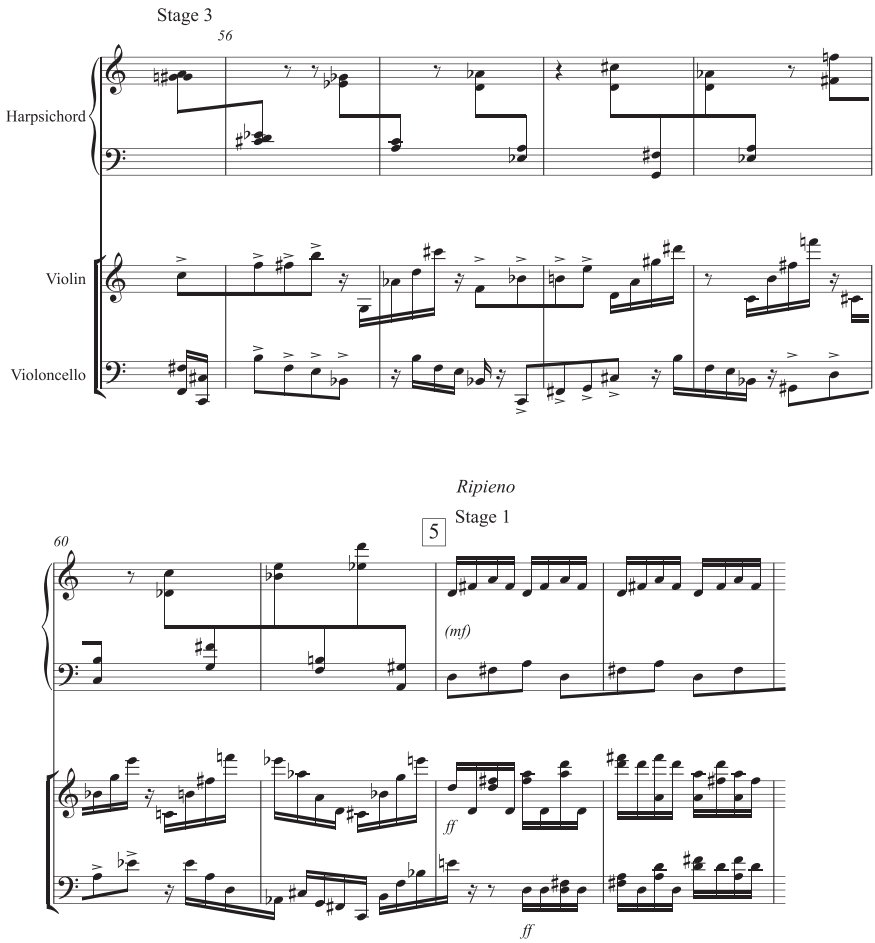
Example 5.6 Concerto Grosso No. 2, first movement (bars 43–48).
Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

bassoon (2 1/2), and trumpet (1); each entry has been articulated by the bongo drum – the entrances are free imitations, and, by the end of the passage, one is left with only a rhythmic fugato at best. Pitch has been drained from the music. Have we found ourselves at the end of the second stage of the schema writ large across the movement? It is indeed a tempting proposition. If this is indeed the case, it would be time to cue a sonoristic passage – and, indeed, such a passage looms on the horizon. At 18 [8:55], a massive texture canon based on a C-Minor



Example 5.7 Concerto Grosso No. 2, first movement (bars 49–55).
Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

triad occurs. The movement's large-scale motion has slipped from D to C of the structural trichord. This motion marks the goal of the movement. Three sections remain, each of which serves to bring the music closer to an end. At 19 there is a return of the concerto's second theme (soon to return as the second movement), transposed down a minor third from B to G♯, and rescored to include



Example 5.8 Concerto Grosso No. 2, first movement (bars 56–63).
Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

wind doublings and jazzy drum set percussion. At 20, a virtuosic concertino reminiscent of 4 occurs in reverse order to its original appearance. Finally, at 21, there is a grand D-Major ritornello finish. This *tutti* passage runs headlong into a Mahlerian chord of doom, scored for 12 brass instruments (F Minor with F♯3 in third trumpet).

Again, it is not within the scope of this chapter to look at the entire concerto. However, I would like to share some observations on the Second Concerto Grosso's second movement, since once again there appears a large-scale tendency towards the schema, one that also embraces numerous small-scale instances. This *pesante* movement can be divided into three parts. The first part functions

as a kind of annihilation or deconstruction of a baroque lament. The work opens with an eight-bar ground bass derived from an inversion of the first movement's 'subordinate theme' (located at 13, ca. 3:55). A cadence in the harpsichord refers to the basic idea of the work: D Minor-C♯/D♭. Five variations follow, in which the thematic music is gradually fragmented to the point of being entirely effaced. In the first three variations, Schnittke uses a subtle smearing of the texture to mark the end of each. At the fourth variation, he introduces a cadential device, where the violin and cello soloists abruptly break off the variation in expressionistic, virtuosic passagework (bars 7–8). This device effectively reverses the conventional *concertino-ripieno* pattern, in which the *tutti* punctuates the *concertino.* The fifth variation is cut down in length to six bars and rhymes with the last variation's conclusion. This concludes the movement's first part. The second part functions as a development. After an initial couplet (6–7), the music arrives at its first culminating moment, which quotes the Fifth Symphony of Shostakovich – virtually an elaboration of the variation theme embedded in a texture canon in the strings. Again, the variation cadences with a virtuosic solo passage. A second culmination occurs at 9 (ca. 4:52) with a *tutti* variation of the theme: Here the total chromatic is partitioned into the three fully-diminished seventh chords with each voice of each chord unfolding the theme staggered in *stretto* to produce a massive smear. A compression of the original thematic figure is heard when the original two-bar figure gets pressed into the last two pulses of each two-bar unit. There follows a reprise of the first movement's opening motto at 10, punctuated by *tutti* answers (repeating music from 9), all of which signals the closing off of any further development and signals a shift to the third part. At 11, the soloists engage in a dodecaphonic cadenza rounded off by a sonoristic cadence containing a compressed form of the chromatic trichord: G♯3 and A3 in the cello; A♭3 quarter-tone in the violin. The grand D Major of the first movement's *tutti* has now been reduced to a squeezed midpoint at the tritone. The second movement concludes with a final 'variation' at 12, a larger-than-life cluster produced by *divisi* brass and low winds against an aggregate cluster in the piano's bass register. The bass cluster sonority, which is produced by a texture canon, settles on C2 (ca. 7:03), and, from these depths, the solo cello rises in an unaccompanied atonal line taking us to 13 and the movement's final variation, a smeared E Minor (*pianissimo*) that prepares the third movement's E Major. This final variation acts as a coda-postlude to the movement. Its lingering quality is a device found in the First Concerto Grosso, too. To end in such a vein here is to perhaps evoke unattainable beauty and nostalgia for what has surfaced here and there as lyrical and tender. Moreover, the lingering in this final variation provides a kind of temporal prolongation of the third stage's resonating cluster.[49]

49 See Alexander Ivashkin, 'Shostakovich and Schnittke: The Erosion of Symphonic Syntax', in *Shostakovich Studies,* ed. David Fanning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 263, for a discussion of 'the idea of the extra-structural, open coda', in which *prolonged* time pushes the music to last longer than it might otherwise.

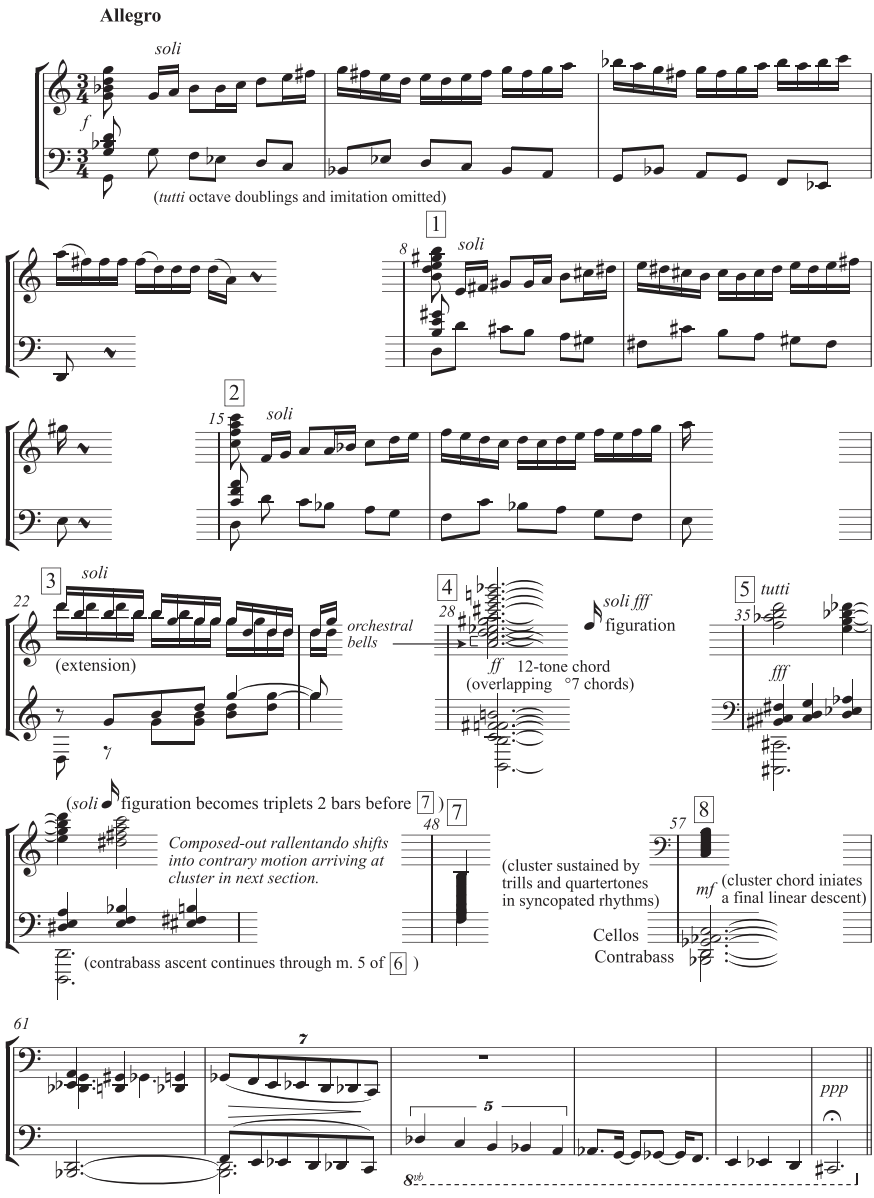
The Schema as global process in Concerto Grosso No. 3

At the risk of pressing my case further than is safe, I would like to propose a global application of the schema, one that spans the entire Concerto Grosso No. 3 for Two Violins and Chamber Orchestra (1985), with local articulations occurring in and across individual movements. My first example is relatively uncontroversial as it strikes me as the perfect instantiation of the polystylistic schema as global form: The first movement illustrates how Schnittke used the schema to organise a fully closed form. Example 5.9 offers a reduction (with ellipses) of the movement's score. The work is quite striking, given the obvious dramatic content of how the baroque ritornello collapses in an exhausted heap following its being struck on the head, so to speak, by the clap of a bell at the 12-note chord at 4.[50] But what has always struck me about this concerto is the fact that after the opening movement, the baroque reference virtually disappears from the movements that follow. It's as if Schnittke began a work in the mode of his first two concerti grossi (the Second having been an expansion of the project laid out by the First), and then, having 'destroyed' the baroque ritornello in the Third Concerto Grosso's opening movement, found nothing more to say in this mode.

However, in the remainder of the Third Concerto Grosso, Schnittke explores the textural ramifications of dodecaphonic row procedures. He is relentless in this – rigorous, as we say. Perhaps the middle movements (nos. 2–4) express the *midpoint* of the schema. Schnittke studied serial music during the years prior to his polystylistic works (works dating from the early 1970s), and serialist techniques can be found in his compositions, but he essentially abandoned serialism in his maturity. Still, a close study of the scores reveals not only a preference for 12-tone rows and imitations that unfold all 12 transpositions of a line, but he virtually always completes the aggregate in a musical passage. Often, the basic idea is only complete once the last element of the universal set (the total chromatic) has been introduced. Analysing Schnittke reveals the fact that dodecaphony, if not serialism proper, informs his craft at every level: It is fundamental to his thinking. Nowhere is this more apparent than in these movements. What is even more striking is that the work's fifth and final movement functions as the polyphonic expression of a multiregistral cluster. Thus it is possible to say that the second to fifth movements, with the opening movement providing a kind of synoptic prologue (*exordium*), constitutes a global expression of Schnittke's polystylistic schema.[51]

50 Tim Sullivan points out that the bell cluster is actually the monogram B–A–C–H. See his 'Structural Layers in Alfred Schnittke's Concerto Grosso No. 3', 48, no. 2, *Perspectives of New Music* (2010).

51 For a full discussion of Schnittke's 12-tone practice, especially the integration of the triad into 'monogram rows', see Sullivan (2010), 28–30. It is worth noting here that Schnittke's row practice followed Stravinsky in virtually ignoring inversion operations, thus focusing attention on a given row's pitch-class rather than intervallic properties, essential given his preference for monogram rows (e.g., B–A–C–H, etc.). See Christopher Segall, 'Klingende Buchstaben: Principles of Alfred Schnittke's Monogram Technique', in *The Journal of Musicology* 30, no. 2 (2013).



Example 5.9 Concerto Grosso No. 3, first movement (reduction).
Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

The following indented paragraphs present a thumbnail analysis of the concerto's overall form. The headings reflect a liberty taken in using programmatic formal titles for each movement, a practice which Schnittke abandoned after the

First Concerto Grosso – its six movements include Preludio, Toccata, Recitativo, Cadenza, Rondo, and Postludio, thus alluding to the baroque suite.

Overall Form of Concerto Grosso No. 3

1st movement: Baroque ritornello deconstructed. This movement provides a synoptic view of the schema and is the most closed of all the movements.

2nd movement: Chaconne (theme, six variations and coda). The movement's texture is entirely triadic. The chaconne progression comprises the following succession of triads: B Minor, C♯ Minor, A♭, C Minor, F♯ Minor, E♭, B♭ Minor, E, G Minor, F Minor, A, D.[52] The theme's chords are organised as three phrases (4 + 4 + 7), with each phrase articulated by silence: a bar of rest in bar 4 and bar 8; two bars of rest in bars 14–15; each cadence uses a syncopated figure. The theme's third and longest phrase rethinks the first two phrases – thus producing the bar form (aab) of German medieval music – by superimposing the triads leading to the syncopated cadence. Each variation marks the start of a new canon. The process of superimposing triads increases radically in the second variation with the entry of the piano, initiating a process of increasingly cacophonous canonic procedures, which gradually obliterates the harmonic clarity of the theme. The coda presents a compressed two-bar statement of the row followed by a two-bar retrograde inversion (unusual for Schnittke).

3rd movement: Intertextual slow movement. Opening measure presents the thematic exposition, a row statement beginning with the tetrachord, B♭, A, C, B, which is the well-known musical acronym, B–A–C–H. At 1, we hear the triadic row from the second movement. At 2, the soli combine the above forms, a process leading to the culmination that spans 10 and 11, during which canons build extreme textural density. To close, 12 presents the sonoristic cadence, a smeared D-Major chord (the dominant of G Minor, the 'key' of the first movement). Note also the allusion to the slow movement of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto, which carries with it a secondary allusion to the slow movement from Bartòk's Third Piano Concerto. (D4 is sustained through the *attacca*.)

4th movement: Dodecaphonic fantasia on B–A–C–H. The opening measure presents the thematic exposition, completing the aggregate at 1. From 1 onward, the music focuses on distortions of tonal progressions and cadences. At 10 and 11, there is a building up of the texture using canons, with a sonoristic cadence at 12 again smearing the D-Major triad. Note that proportions echo the previous movement.

5th movement: Texture-music finale. The entire movement functions as a cluster cadence using the gradual amassing of triadic objects arranged according to the second movement's row. At 6 a coda recalls the first movement,

52 See Sullivan (2010) and Segall (2013) for excellent analyses explaining Schnittke's practice here; my interest here is texture, whereas Sullivan and Segall stress pitch.

and the final sonority invokes a D-Minor ninth: A mid-register cluster spans F3–E4 (with a second cluster, A4–C5, in the harpsichord), which is placed over D2 in the contrabass, as the two solo violins repeat a semiquaver figure sustaining C8 and A7 – a pitch construction arising from the final note of the row.

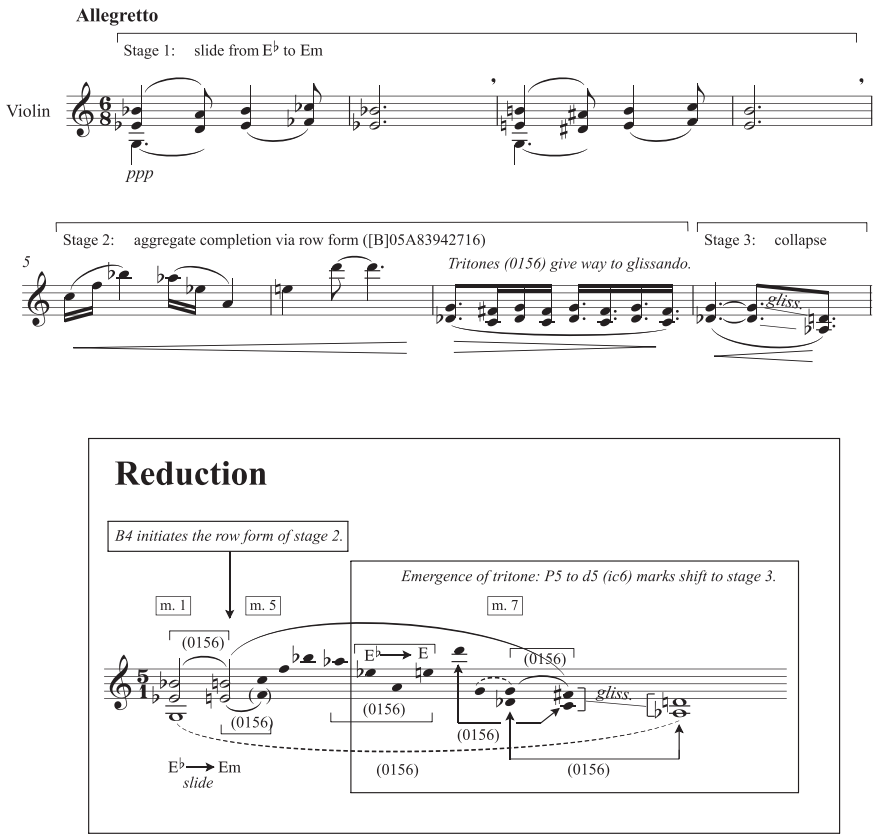
The schema's integration and disintegration in the 1990s

Some might say that, in light of the composer's turn away from polystylism in the 1990s, when his music entered a final period of austerity and abstraction, Schnittke's six concerti grossi are musically related in generic ways only. As just discussed, the Third Concerto Grosso explores a rigorous formalism, unlike anything heard in the First or Second concertos. Soon thereafter, in 1988, the composer used the concerto grosso genre for his Fifth Symphony, a magnum opus composed in two parts paying explicit tribute to Mahler (*à la mode de* Berio). This work has received important treatment elsewhere,[53] and it will not further our discussion here for me to trace instances of the schema in its pages. Schnittke's strategy of using the concerto grosso as basis for meeting a commission extends also to the violin concerto when, having composed four violin concertos, Schnittke produced a fifth violin concerto as his Concerto Grosso No. 5 (1991). Before we look at the final concerto grosso, it is worth taking a quick look at the opening of No. 5, which begins with a seven-bar passage shaped according to the composer's polystylistic schema. Example 5.10 presents this passage. The reduction given beneath the violin solo illustrates its focus on a single set (0156), while also noting motivic repetitions of the slide from E♭ to E (enharmonically F♭).

A progression in density is heard across the large-scale form of Concerto Grosso No. 5, since the ensuing second and third movements generally occupy an increasingly chromatic, dense texture-space, and the final movement adds further exploration in the realm of timbre with its orchestral backdrop of nearly white noise. In this final movement, the various elements from the concerto's primary music undergo a final processing, in which fragmentation and superimposition rule. While in the first three movements, peroration is eschewed in favour of a kind of retreading the way through familiar territory – a kind of developing variation of the first movement's basic shape, which in the final movement achieves celestial apotheosis, bathed here in several striking sonorities.[54] Throughout the Fifth Concerto Grosso, the soundscape obsessively explores ways to add density

53 See Dixon (2007) and Lisa Brooks Robinson, 'Melodic and Formal Defamiliarization in the Second Movement of Alfred Schnittke's Fourth Concerto grosso/Fifth Symphony', in 'Mahler and Postmodern Intertextuality', (PhD diss., Yale University, 1994).

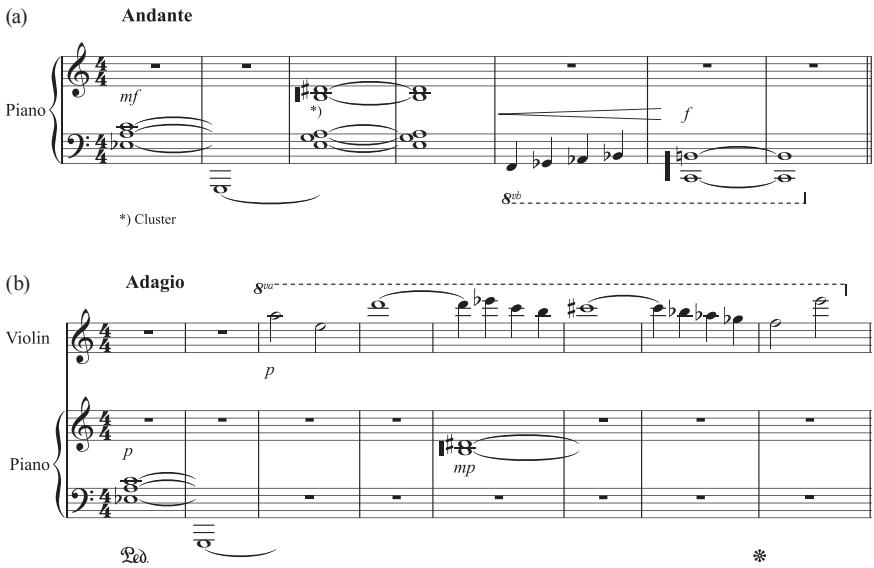
54 Developing variation is indeed an important compositional technique in Schnittke. See Hartmut Schick, 'Musikalische Konstruktion als musikhistorische Reflexion in der Postmodern: zum 3. Streichquartett von Alfred Schnittke', Archiv für Musikwissenschaft, Jahrgang 59, Heft 4 (2002).



Example 5.10 Concerto Grosso No. 5, opening (bars 1–7).
Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

until the total texture-space is filled in. The final movement clearly functions as a large-scale sonoristic coda to the concerto, with the final gossamer flight of the solo violin marking the last trace of the scene's upper reaches.

The 15-minute Concerto Grosso No. 6 for piano, violin, and strings (1993) was composed only two years on the heels of No. 5, but epitomises his late style in its sparse texture, austere colours, and concise expression. The distilled narrative of Concerto Grosso No. 6 is even more abbreviated than the Fifth Concerto Grosso. The Sixth is half the duration of the other five; and, even more consistently than No. 5, its movements use the same material throughout. Here, there are just three movements, and each movement's motto offers little more than a fragment of the stylistic tradition heard in the opening of the earlier concertos: Rather than a fully formed idea (Example 5.11a), the first element we hear is a diminished triad in first inversion on A, then a low G, followed



Example 5.11 (a) Concerto Grosso No. 6, first movement, opening motto (bars 1–7) and (b) Concerto Grosso No. 6, second movement, opening motto (bars 1–8).
Both Examples reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

by a cluster and an ascending diatonic tetrachord, closing with another cluster, the complete passage unfolding the aggregate as it goes.[55] It is as if Schnittke's schema has been reduced to shards by its execution in the earlier concertos. Still, in pressing my case for the schema, I would like the reader to note that the first sound heard is a triad, though now diminished and in first inversion. Within the schema, it is the triad as much as any particular music that has provided Schnittke with his 'music of the past' – the tonal referent *sine qua non,* though for all intents and purposes, the consonant triad (037) has initiated the schema's pitch process. Perhaps here Schnittke is deconstructing his own style. According to Meyer, this sort of self-deconstruction is necessary if a composer's style is to remain viable.

Despite its frayed nature, as the movement progresses, the schema appears to be indeed at work. After the fragments, a canon using the total chromatic is gradually overtaken by increasingly dense textures, culminating in the pianist's slamming away at clusters in both hands. As is typical of Schnittke's late style, the rhythm is generally dominated by quavers and crotchets. The power of the rhetoric arises from pitting brute force against Shostakovich-like riffs and tunes,

55 See Segall (2013) for elucidation of the monogram techniques used in this concerto grosso.

a situation narrated in pared-down rhythmic textures. The second movement's motto is constituted by a duo in which the piano soloist is joined by the violinist (Example 11b). A comparison of both parts of the example shows that the second movement rethinks the first, and, in fact, the third and final movement rethinks things yet again, only now with increased vigour and, not unexpectedly (given we are at the end), a denser texture-space.

The polystylistic processes and procedures heard in the last two concerti grossi thus represent the sort of late-style integration/disintegration typical of a composer's use of stylistic archetypes, Beethoven's output standing as the quintessential example of this tendency. The student of Schnittke might use the concerto genre in general as a way of mapping Schnittke's career; it certainly offers a rich example of the composer's search for ways of handling stylistic adaptation.[56] Following the theory of psychological schema introduced at the beginning of this chapter, it makes sense that a distillation of the schema occurs in the late works, as evidenced possibly in the final concerto grosso. Be that as it may, my discussion of Schnittke's polystylistic method, in general, and my proposal of a polystylistic schema, in particular, arises from a belief that Schnittke uses style as a function of textural progression. In all the concerti grossi, I consider textural progression to be *the* determinant of form. Even Schnittke's dodecaphony appears to generate textures rather than work out 12-tone operations. For instance, the majority of passages occupying the second stage of the schema involve a stacking of imitations in extremely close canon as determined by aggregate completion. Much of this imitation occurs at either the minor second or major seventh or minor ninth (i.e., interval-class 1). Significantly, a 12-part canonic passage often reaches its conclusion as a cluster or 12-tone chord, the product of a developing broadband of increasingly dense sound spanning the full range of pitch-space. In effect, 'development' in Schnittke's post-1970 oeuvre often involves a transmogrification of diatonic and/or chromatic textures best understood as a textural progression, his version of the 'discrediting' tendency he admired in Stravinsky. Invariably, once full density is reached – 'full density' being defined by the total aggregate or close-to-total aggregate – caesura follows. Speaking phenomenologically, triads yield to the aggregate amid a proliferating web of imitative lines, before devolving to undifferentiated density. The schematic starting point, a pseudo-conventional sound world of triadic harmonies, passes through a kind of 'anti-development', since the middle passage's textural progression almost always leads to a dead end at the caesura. This endpoint marks the moment at which Schnittke's textural handling of aggregate completion becomes manifest: The chromatic trichords and tetrachords, which characterise the schema's second

56 According to Schnittke's biographer, Alexander Ivashkin (*Alfred Schnittke* (London: Phaedon Press, 1996), 168), 'The concerto is Schnittke's favourite type of composition…because the musical language of all his concertos is indissolubly connected with the personalized and profoundly individual statement of the soloist, who stands in opposition to a featureless and satanic social situation'.

stage, function as articulations of positive space in a global tendency toward the negative space represented by the cluster and other sonoristic gestures, including silence.

In a polystylistic work, generally speaking, the ear is drawn to the surface of the music – to its style references – since being composed of different (and differing) styles draws attention to style itself. In effect, the music exaggerates its surface by quoting, or alluding to, stylistic types or tropes (i.e., topics). Schnittke gives stylistic surface a structural meaning. The apparently random juxtapositions on the surface occur at specific stages in the compositional logic, functioning as successive 'sound terms' within a solidly coherent musical language.[57] We might say that Schnittke's *strategic polystylism* intentionally promotes disunity and incoherence over unity and coherence. This risks subverting authenticity in the eyes and ears of a listener repelled by the apparent pastiche on the surface (*pace* Williams). However, authenticity is not found on the surface, but is located rather inside the structure. As Schnittke argued in his appreciation of Stravinsky, what we have here is the paradox of a musical discourse whose stylistic logic arises from opposing styles that follow one from another in a logical textural progression.

Within Schnittke's larger project of creating a stylistically coherent language out of many different styles, the concerti grossi provide insight into how Schnittke – to use the words of Leonard Meyer that appear in the epigraph of this chapter – fulfilled his role as a creator and maker facing the 'more or less fixed, recalcitrant material' inherited from his predecessors, material 'whose resistance to change and modification the true artist delights in overcoming and conquering'. Schnittke's decision to revive the concerto grosso permitted the development of a powerful strategy for creating novel textural forms, a strategy which, in giving birth to a polystylistic schema, offered a way to compose texture music of a psychologically compelling sort. In Schnittke, the bounce and shine of a baroque allegro, followed first by the expressionistic angularities of a 12-tone contrapuntal passage, and then the crisis and collapse of sonoristic effects, are what one 'understands' at first hearing.[58] Within this simple pattern, Schnittke's handling of large-scale pitch-class relationships informs the statistical gradations in textural density and spatial trajectory. Indeed, the role 12-tone thinking (e.g., aggregate completion) in Schnittke is clear across the schema's three stages; however, it is compositional thought expressed in texture-space. There

57 In *Emotion and Meaning in Music,* Meyer employed the locution 'sound term' to represent a sound or group of sounds (gesture) that lead a listener 'to expect a more or less probable consequence event', but abandoned the phrase in his subsequent writings, Meyer (1957), 45. See also Losada (2009), 62.

58 Of course, casual listening, while not without its pleasures and rewards, is similar to what Edward T. Cone called the 'first reading' of a detective story. Cone compared the analysis of music to a 'third reading' of a detective story, the reading when we begin to find patterns in form and meaning. See his 'Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story—Or a Brahms Intermezzo', in *Music: A View from Delft,* ed. Robert P. Morgan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

will be more to say about discrete pitch structures and tonal motion in Schnittke as analyses of his music continue to appear. My focus here has been to isolate and identify an archetypal pattern in his polystylism. In so doing, perhaps we have clarified what many of us hear in Schnittke: the coherent, unified style of a master deeply suspicious of unity and coherence.[59]

59 Research for this chapter received its initial support in 1999 from a Roanoke College Starter Grant ('The Concertos of Alfred Schnittke'). I would like to offer my tribute here to the memory of the late Alexander Ivashkin, who supported and encouraged this project from the time of our first meeting in May 2001. Thanks also to Dr. Joshua Mailman, for his important feedback on an early version of this chapter; to Ashgate's anonymous reviewers; and to Dr. Gavin Dixon for his editorial assistance and helpful feedback on the final versions.