

Theory of Intonation Rhythm: The Ways of Development

Two fundamental types of rhythmical systems in modern musicology and prosody are traditionally distinguished: quantitative (or metric) systems and qualitative systems. The qualitative systems are divided into tonic, syllabo-tonic and syllabic sub-systems. But not all musical material fits into the frames of these types of systems, so the notion “free rhythm” was formed in musicology.

For the most musicologists this category is connected with the name of Curt Sachs and his fundamental work “Rhythm and Tempo” (1953). Beginning from the first pages of this research, Sachs underlined that all rhythmic development has moved between two poles – freedom and strictness. Sachs saw a manifestations of free rhythm in the most archaic stage of the development of music; he described free rhythm as “a precious heirloom from our animal ancestry” (Sachs 1953: 21). This applies to the music of the Far and the Middle East and the music of the Romantic era too. Such an approach is typical not only of Sachs: we can see such treatment of the category “free rhythm” in the works of Willi Apel (1953: 268), Paul Cooper (1973: 30) and others. The name of category may be varied – Gary S. Karpinski uses “ametric rhythm” (2000: 19), Judit Frigyesi uses “flowing rhythm” (1982; 1993; 2002; 2008). But the sense as a whole remains the same: free rhythm supposes the freedom from rules and from any systemacy. The consequence of such an approach is, initially, the renunciation of searching of methodology for the analysis of such types of rhythm.

In 1996, Martin R. L. Clayton tried to summarize research devoted to the phenomenon of free rhythm in Western ethnomusicology during the second half of the twentieth century. Having analyzed forty three works (not counting his own articles), the researcher made a disappointing but fair conclusion of “the lack of suitable analytical techniques” (1996: 331). Clayton outlined three key reasons for such a state of affairs: “... he lack of adaptable methodologies in related academic fields such as Western musicology; the lack of (or perhaps our lack of awareness of) generally applicable ideas in other cultures; and the difficulties inherent in graphically representing free rhythm” (1996: 331). But we suppose that another reason is crucial. Clayton (following Sachs, Apel and many others) is not cognizant that he tries to explore not even the phenomenon with the heterogeneous probabilistic structure, but a set of phenomena (the archaic system of musical organization, qualitative and even quantitative rhythmic systems) with different basic principles.

An eclectic object of research forces musicologists to use an eclectic methodology.

Meanwhile, Russian musicology has proposed a promising methodology for the analysis of free rhythm – the theory of intonation rhythm. This theory is almost unknown outside of Russia. The aim of this paper is to show a way how this theory was formed, and to outline further ways of developing it.

1. The shaping of the theory of intonation rhythm

The origins of this theory are connected with name of Aleksey Lvov (1799–1870), a Russian violinist, conductor and composer. Working as the maestro of the Imperial Chapel in St Petersburg in 1837–1861, he was the first to pay attention to the specificity of Russian medieval chant. This feature was reflected in the title of his small – but very important for the future – paper “On the free or asymmetric rhythm” (Львов 1858). According to Lvov, there are only two types of rhythm in music: the “regular” and “free” or “...so-called ‘irregular’, which is not measured symmetrically” (1858: 3).

Petr Sokalsky (1832–1887) took the next step in his work “Russian folk music ... in its melodic and rhythmic structure, and it’s differences from bases of modern harmonic music” (Соколянский 1888). Sokalsky distinguished already three rhythmic epochs: the epoch of “...quantitative syllabic verse” (1), the age of metrical poetry of the ancient Greeks and Romans and their vocal music (2), and the epoch of “measured instrumental music” (3) (1888: 227–228).

Sokalsky identified the rhythm of Russian folk music as the rhythm of the first “syllabic” epoch. However, he actually changed the traditional understanding of the word *syllabic*: “Taking the ancient ‘syllabic’ verse as a basis for Russian song meter, ... we recall that this notion quite inaccurately represents the whole system or organization of song speech, in which not only the number of syllables plays a role, but also the grouping of them in accordance with a certain rhythmic plan” (1888: 245), which Sokalsky called “free meter”.

In this system of temporal organization “...there was the rhythm, but there was not meter in the strictest sense, or the monotonously repeating correct unit. Grouping of parts generated only the large departments –

the strophes, which were divided into two verses, each of which were divided into two hemistichs as well, and no more. So the hemistich was the limit – an already indivisible group that could play the role of a meter or measure only if it had monotonous internal organization. But this did not happen. Therefore, the more ancient chants or poems there are, the less they possess features of metric structure and the more they possess only general order: rhythmic grouping of large parts” (1888: 231). Sokalsky found manifestations of “free meter” not only in the Russian folk music system, but also in biblical meter (1888: 237), Germanic alliterative verse (1888: 254), and other archaic forms. Sokalsky was the first person who supposed the thesis of parallelism as a form of organization of musical and poetic process in archaic *melos*: “...we propose to place parallelism among the rhythmic forms of expression that have no strict metrical structure, but nevertheless play the role of a “wave meter”, or indivisible unit, underlying rhythmic groupings as a base” (1888: 238).

This set of important and still undervalued discoveries run through the fundamental work by Sokalsky. Although Elizabeth Tolbert did try to apply the term “free meter” in her paper, devoted to the Karelian lament tradition (1990), the methodology, proposed by Sokalsky, was not really understood and accepted by Western musicology.

The formation of the theory of intonation rhythm itself occurred in the second half of the twentieth century in the works of Miron Kharlap (1913–1994). The key work was his article “Russian folk music system and the problem of music’s genesis” (Харлап 1972). Kharlap studied first of all authentic Russian folklore and folklore of other peoples. He used two interconnected terms – the “system of intonation-rhythmical parallelism” and the “system of intonation rhythm”. In the first term, he relied not only on the Sokalsky’s conception, but also, and in the first instance, on research in the realm of the history of poetry, particularly research into the phenomenon of parallelism.¹ But the most important term has become “a system of intonation rhythm”, because it reflects the core, the backbone factor of this system – the category of *intonation*.²

An important feature of Kharlap’s approach is the analysis of pitch (modal) organization and temporal organization in music, not sequentially, and therefore separately, but holistically, in interdependence. Kharlap displayed, in the material of Russian *bylinas*, that metric principles in the system of intonation rhythm are determined by neither accentuation nor syllabic length of the line. The principle organizing temporal unrolling of forms, is phrase intonation, with a characteristic rising in the middle of the line and descent at the end of it. Such lines, with unregulated numbers of syllables and accents, but with orderly intonation contours, Kharlap calls “intonation feet”: “Every ‘foot’ in the folk verse ends with a fall, and measure is generated by the alternation of ascents and descents. Thus, in contrast to the literary systems of versification, folk measure regulates neither the stresses nor the duration of sounds, but their pitch” (1972: 233).

The second important point concerning the system of intonation rhythm (according to Kharlap) is its pre-modal character: “There are certain modal relationships in it, but there are no modes as crystallized formulas, and these relationships had not yet separated themselves from rhythmic ones” (1972: 259). Previously, Sergey Protopopov (Протопопов 1930: 162), developing ideas of Boleslav Yavorsky (Яворский 1908), noted that the stage of “modal fermentation”, conjugated with the process of articulation and elaboration of pitch continuum, was preceded by the stage of stabilization (more or less) of modes.

The most important thing in this system is the continuity and harmonious unity of “pre-modal” and “pre-metrical” organization of temporal flow. In light of contemporary research we may suppose that this reflected a holistic form of thinking, embodying both musical and cultural practices.

Kharlap concluded therefore that intonation rhythm was primordial: “We meet it in “primary”³ folklore, from the simplest forms (of such tribes as the Vedda, the Kubu and the Fuegians) to the most advanced, such as Russian lyrical song and early forms of church music, such as Gregorian chant and *Znamenny* chant” (Харлап 1982: 24). Thus, intonation rhythm was inscribed by Kharlap as the developmental stage in a historical system of rhythmic forms from the Archaic (at least before the era of tact meter) to our times. The system of intonation rhythm is treated by Kharlap as one of the earliest stages in the development of rhythmic feeling, which preceded the development of quantitative and qualitative systems. Subsequently, this theory has been used in

¹ Robert Lowth (1779) was the first to begin to study parallelism in ancient poetry, in the second half of eighteenth century. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this phenomenon was studied by many scientists and it was recognized as one of the most important systems of the organization of poetic speech. The analysis of history of researching of parallelism in poetry was made by Roman Jakobson in his paper “*Grammatical Parallelism and its Russian Facet*” (1966).

² The first stage of the forming of the theory of intonation was connected with the works of Boris Asafiev (Асафьев 1965/1925; 1971/1930: 195–208).

³ In Russian musicology there is accepted to divide folklore into primary folklore (associated with deeper and more archaic layers of culture) and secondary folklore (associated with the development of urban culture and its influence on the culture of the village).

dissertation “Conception of musical duration (on the example of instrumental works by Debussy)” (Чащина 2000), in which I show the presence of features of this system in Debussy’s works, connected with archaic thematics (*Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune*, *Syrinx* and *Six épigraphes antiques*); in Polina Pavlova’s dissertation on the chant of *Kazan* old-believers (Павлова 2009); and in an article by Elena Smirnova (Смирнова 2010). It was supported by a number of Russian scientists, in particular by ethnomusicologist Lidia Muharinskaya (Мухаринская 1989). However, the existence of this stage of development of rhythmic thinking was not mentioned in such fundamental works, devoted to rhythm, as books by Valentina Kholopova (Холопова 1980; 2002), Mikhail Kondratiev (Кондратьев 1990) and the brilliant research “Musical culture of Siberia” by Yury Sheikin (Шейкин 2002).⁴

What is the reason for such neglect? Is it only the conservatism of Russian musicology and the difficult fate of Kharlap as scientist? Today, I consider that the main reason is the necessity to expand and develop the fundamentals of the theory of intonation rhythm.

2. Ways of further developing the theory of intonation rhythm

I see at least two important interrelated directions for the further development of this theory. The first one is connected with the category of sound. It seems productive to begin the analysis of any rhythmic system with an analysis of the concept of sound and its parameters. Kharlap and musicology as a whole have traditionally dealt with musical traditions, cultivating sound as an “atom” (Чащина 2010). This model is well represented in the grapheme of note in writing, as a kind of “point”. The main acoustic feature of this model of sound is the certain pitch (or tendency towards it). Musical duration in this model is treated as a kind of length; and timbres tend to be considered as stable. So the “atomic” model of musical sound tends towards a certain homogeneity. But, both in the music of the twentieth century, and in deeply archaic musical cultures, an important role is played by the model of sound as process. In this model, all sound parameters are unstable: floating pitch; volume; spectral composition; timbre, and manner of articulation (both instrumental and, in particular, vocal). Therefore Kharlap’s model of a syncretic unity of rhythm and (pre-)modal organization should be extended to a “trinity”: unstable pitch, constantly changing timbre and unstable duration – a trinity comprising the complex phenomenon of intonation.

To discern a prevailing model of sound is not always easy, even with the assistance of computer-acoustic programs. A simpler approach is to analyze the concept of musical duration as it is used within particular cultures, because particularized conceptions of duration are the “raw materials” from which all rhythmic systems are built. Of course, the formative process of musical-temporal thinking was non-linear and extremely complex. However, a cross-cutting line of amplification processes of articulation is clearly visible in the evolution of ideas about the duration of the music. It can be presented roughly as follows: unconscious duration (1) proceeds to recognizable duration of a single sound (2), which in turn proceeds to division of this perceived duration into internal micro-processes (3) (Чащина 2000: 37–85; 2013).

Recognition of the duration of each sound, including pulsation, in particular regular pulsation, may apparently be regarded as a marker of the transition from a system of intonation rhythm to quantitative and qualitative types of rhythm. On the other hand, a clear predominance of irregular durations, demonstrating the impossibility of stacking them into certain temporal proportions, may be considered as a marker of intonation rhythm. Data of folklore studies confirm the existence of this type of “irrational” duration. For example, Igor Matsievsky noted, in analyzing his experience of field work in folk expeditions: “Metronoming ... is very difficult in pieces with so-called ‘free rhythm’ [in which] it is difficult to distinguish countable pulse ...”, as a result the most accurate form of rhythmic transcription of folksong is the “measurement of each rhythmic unit with a stopwatch or other measuring device” (Мациевский 1976: 27).⁵ Judit Frigyesi wrote later: “...our difficulty lies not only in the limitations of the underlying structure of our notation system but in the fact that we have little understanding of the underlying structure of free rhythm” (1989: 383). We suppose, that usage of the theory of intonation rhythm will help us to understand better this type of musical-temporal unfolding. But to transcribe these durations will be difficult in any case, because, from our point of view it is connected with the influence of bodily rhythms and with wider treatment of the category of “intonation”, which is the second direction in which this theory can be developed.

⁴ Kharlap’s conception is practically unknown abroad, which is why only Russian rhythmological research is mentioned here.

⁵ A survey of the different approaches in Western musicology and ethnomusicology to the issue of transcription and difficulties of this problem was made by Clayton in his paper (1996: 326–327).

We assume that “bodily intonation” played a major role in the system of intonation rhythm, especially in the archaic stage of its development. Every ethnomusicologist knows what an important role is played by context in the organization of a particular genre and, as a consequence, in the organization of musical regularity. The relationship between musical traditions and dance – bodily movements as a whole – has also long been known. Folklore ensembles seeking authenticity traditionally paid much attention to affixing appropriate movements to every type of musical performance. The exact bodily behavior of the artist, from our point of view, is another important source of musical-temporal unfolding in the system of intonation rhythm.

In the distant past, differentiation of dance and music into independent arts led to a long learning of music and dance practices separately. So it is a daunting task today to return to the research of bodily aspects of sound behaviour. However, we think it is absolutely necessary, if we want to investigate the phenomenon of rhythm in the fullness of causal factors, instead of accepting a reductive understanding of rhythm. The generating factor for rhythm in both dance and music is probably the biorhythms of the human body. Systems of rhythmic organization based on a more or less regular pulse demonstrate in their genesis a sufficiently close relationship to limb movements, as well as with the movement of the fingers. This is well illustrated by the development of instrumental music, in which the playing of drums and wind instruments involves primarily articulated finger movements. The system of intonation rhythm is focused on fundamentally more variable and complex internal rhythms – the rhythms of breathing⁶, but probably also on biorhythms of internal body systems. For example, in strong psycho-emotional states (such as crying, emotional narrative, prayer, etc.) we can see that not only breath and timbre of voice are changed, but also bodily activity too, and this activity (epiphora, shudder etc.) is connected with the internal biorhythms of the body. If we carefully trace the genesis of musical genres in which free rhythm is actively used, we will see that they are very often connected with special psychological states. We assume that free rhythm has the propensity for irregularity precisely because it reflects the hidden polyrhythm of bodily biorhythms, which causes both rhythmically irregular body movements and irregular musical rhythm.

In this regard, the term “intonation rhythm” seems to us to be very successful. The etymology of the word “intonation” encompasses both the memory of the phenomenon of sound behavior and actually the root phenomenon of tonus, i.e. muscular tension. That is why not only pitch fluctuations and timbral variations should be researched within the intonation rhythm framework, but also “bodily intonation” – the alternation of tension and relaxation processes in the body of performer(-s). In our opinion, the close relationship between musical rhythm and the biorhythms of the body was one of the key factors that influenced the formation of a resurgence in demand for a system of intonation rhythm in some musical trends of the second half of the twentieth century. In our opinion, the turn towards the system of intonation rhythm was supported by at least two important factors. On the one hand, an important role has been played by the development of psychology as a modern scientific discipline and especially the intensive development of a variety of psychological practices, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. On the other hand it was caused by the development of acoustic technologies during the twentieth century, that had a transformative impact on our conception of sound and the amplification of principles of micro-articulation within it.

Accordingly, when we talk about so-called “free” rhythm, we should recognize that this freedom is relative; it is rooted in listening to oneself – listening to the so-called “deep movements” of both the soul and body. That is why the first stage of development of the concept of duration (unconscious treatment of musical duration) may have something in common with the third stage – micro-articulation of sound process.

Another important trend is the investigation of continuity and discontinuity in the system of intonation rhythm. In researching this aspect, we should not only integrate the development of music into the development of culture, but also coordinate it with the achievements of the cognitive sciences.

In moving towards a global metatheory, we propose to place at its foundation neither category of rhythm as such, nor a temporal development, but the relationship between stages of the development of human thinking, which gradually intensified acts of distinction and more detailed articulation, on the one hand, and the development of sound culture, as a private manifestation of conscious (and unconscious) human activity, on the other.

Summarizing, we note that the system of intonation rhythm seems to be the most appropriate basis for developing a methodology for the analysis of many phenomena, both in archaic *melos* and in contemporary music practices. Under the proposed expansion of the conceptual framework, we can consider this system as

⁶ This connection was noted by many scientists. Kharlap, for example, wrote: “Intonation feet in duration corresponds approximately to the periods of normal breathing (about 3–4 sec.), but this value is not stable. Breathing differs from another physiological rhythm – pulse, not only by the bigger value of periods, but also by the lack of strict regularity. The respiratory groups can stretch and shrink in speech, and the trend to longer breathing during singing offers a reason for the appearance of periods from two or more intonation feet. The relationship between intonation articulation and breath can be quite diverse in advanced forms of intonation verse, which are characteristic of Russian folklore” (Харлап 1986: 55).

providing an infinite variety of possibilities for different musical practices, and at the same time implying a certain methodology for the analysis.

The theory of intonation rhythm needs further development, testing by different musical materials and interaction with other disciplines. Thus, it seems to us that a lot of interesting discoveries await. It should help us to better understand not only the organization of musical development, but also to get closer to a volumetric understanding of human nature and, as result, a better understanding of ourselves.

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Santrauka

Intonacinio ritmo teorija: plėtotės būdai

Esama gerai žinomų ir ištyrinėtų kiekybinių (adityvinių) ir kokybinių (dalomųjų) ritmo sistemų. Ankstyvieji ritmo vystymosi etapai paprastai apibūdinami kaip „ikimetriniai“. XX a. šeštojo–devintojo dešimtmečio Rusijoje buvo plėtojama intonacinio ritmo teorija, beveik nežinoma užsienyje. Straipsnio tikslas – apibūdinti pagrindinius šios sistemos bruožus, atskleisti jos kilmę ir galimus plėtotės būdus.

Šios sistemos formavimasis prasidėjo nuo kelių veikalų – A. Lvovo „Apie laisvą ir asimetrinį ritmą“ (1858) ir P. Sokalskio „Rusų liaudies muzikos melodinė ir ritminė sandara, jos skirtumai nuo šiuolaikinės harmoninės muzikos pagrindų“ (1888). Tačiau pagrindinis mokslininkas, suformulavęs šios teorijos pagrindą, buvo M. Charlapas. Savo darbe „Rusų liaudies muzikos sistema ir muzikos kilmės klausimas“ (1972) jis, tyrinėdamas rusų bylinas, pagrindė trečiosios, istoriškai ankstesnės ritmo plėtotės fazės – intonacinio ritmo – egzistavimą. Mokslininkės S. Čaškina, P. Pavlova, E. Smirnova siūlė taikyti šią teoriją plačiau, analizuojant Debussy kompozicijas (kūrinius, susijusius su archajine tematika), ženklinių sentikių giedojimą, senąją prozodiją.

Šią teoriją būtina toliau plėtoti. Visi žinomi ritmo tipai (kiekybinis, kokybinis, Charlapo intonacinio ritmo interpretacija) priklauso nuo muzikinės praktikos, kuri garsą apibrėžia kaip tam tikro aukščio ir trukmės toną. Charlapas intonacinio ritmo esmę išvelgia kaip „ikimodalinio“ ir „ikimetrinio“ (dar nereguliarus) organizavimo vienovę, kur svarbų vaidmenį atlieka bangos principas (kylant frazės vidury ir leidžiantis pabaigoje). Toks organizavimas yra artimai susijęs su kvėpavimu ir prozodijos intonavimu; daugelyje šalių šis reiškinys vadinamas prozodiniu ritmu.

Mūsų nuomone, intonacinio ritmo principas visų pirma (nors ne tik) būdingas toms kultūroms, kurios taiko garso kaip tembrinės „dėmės“ (ar „lauko“) koncepciją. Tokia muzikinė sistema apibūdina kitokią laiko plėtotės supratimą – ne tokį pavienį, bet labiau nuolatinį ir veikiau sudėtingesnį, negu muzikoje, kurioje tono trukmė skaičiuojama nuo aiškios pradžios (atakos) ir daugiau ar mažiau apibrėžtos garso pabaigos. Intonacinį ritmą labiau lemia fiziologiniai ir psichologiniai veiksniai negu porcijų pojūtis, sudėtinga kombinatorika ir t. t. Tai labiau susiję su vadinamuoju dešiniojo pusrutulio, negu su kairiojo (loginio), mąstymu. Straipsnyje daroma prielaida, kad toks intonacinio ritmo teorijos praplėtimas siejasi su garsų pasaulio artikuliacijos procesu ir žmogaus mąstymo vystymusi.

Tokio ritminio mąstymo pavyzdžių yra ne tik archajinėje muzikoje (pvz., J. Šeikino atlikti tyrinėjimai Sibire), bet ir įvairiose šiuolaikinės muzikos formose, ypač tose, kuriose esama improvizacijos: džiaze (ypač laisvajame), eksperimentinėje muzikoje (ir akademinėje, ir populiariame avangarde), atlikimo menuose ir t. t.