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Features of Utopia and Anti-Utopia in the Music of Alexander Mosolov of the 1920s and Early 1930s

Utopijos ir antiutopijos apraiškos Aleksandro Mosolovo 1920–1930 m. muzikoje

Abstract

The quest for utopia was an essential characteristic for the worldview of Russian intellectuals of the first third of the 20th century. The aspiration towards a world of justice and overall happiness in the pre- and post-revolutionary years permeated the artistic work of representatives of the most diverse artistic trends, regardless of their aesthetic positions and political sympathies. The musical legacy of Alexander Mosolov of the 1920s and early 1930s is extremely exemplary in regards to revealing the characteristic features of utopian notions generated by the epoch. Moreover, it also reveals the specific contradictions, which arise as a result of the discrepancy between the images of the ideal future and the non-ideal reality. As a result, these discrepancies lead to the formation of an anti-utopian perspective of a whole set of compositions by this outstanding composer.

Keywords: music of Alexander Mosolov in the 1920s and early 1930s, contradictions, future, non-ideal reality, utopia, anti-utopia.

Anotacija

Utopijos paieškos – taip galima apibūdinti Rusijos intelektualų pasaulėžiūrą XX a. pirmais trimis dešimtmečiais. Prieš revoliuciją ir po jos kūrusių menininkų darbuose, nesvarbu, kokios buvo meninės jų pozicijos ar politinės simpatijos, ryškiai atsispindėjo troškimas pasaulio, kuriame dominuotų teisingumas ir visuotinė laimė. 1920–1930 m. sukurta Aleksandro Mosolovo muzika yra itin ryškus pavyzdys, atspindintis tuometės epochos suformuotus utopinių pažiūrų bruožus. Be to, kompozitoriaus kūryba atskleidžia specifinius prieštaravimus, kuriuos sukelti tobulos ateities vizijų ir toli gražu netobulos tikrovės neatitikimas. Dėl to šis neatitikimas formuoja antiutopinę perspektyvą, kuri persmelkia visus išskirtinio kompozitoriaus darbus.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Aleksandro Mosolovo 1920–1930 m. muzika, prieštaravimai, ateitis, netobula tikrovė, utopija, antiutopija.

Introduction

The search for utopia presents an inherent feature in the world-perceptions of the Russian artistic intellectuals of the first three decades of the 20th century. The aspiration towards a world of justice and universal happiness permeated the artistic works of representatives of the most varied artistic trends in the pre- and post-revolutionary years, regardless of their aesthetic positions or political sympathies. Nonetheless, utopia as a philosophical construction could only be expressed in artistic works (with the exception of literature) indirectly. For example, in the sphere of music utopia revealed itself by means of intonational narration, a semantically ascertained definition of an *ideal*, and not in the least as a consistent *depiction* of an ideal world. However, any kind of intonational description of an ideal carries in itself an imprint of an integral utopian program. This can be demonstrated on the example of the musical legacy of one of the most brilliant representatives of the Russian avant-garde music of the 1920s, Alexander Vasilyevich Mosolov.

Mosolov's musical compositions from the 1920s and early 1930s are very indicative in terms of demonstration in them of characteristic features of various types of utopian

allusions with which it is possible to reconstruct the utopian projects generated by the great and tragic epoch. At that, they reveal both specific contradictions that emerged as the result of the huge inconsistency between the images of the ideal future, and the far from ideal reality. These contradictions lead, in the long run, to the formation of anti-utopian content of a whole set of works by this outstanding composer. Of all the diversity of utopian impulses and programs of the first three decades of the century, we must highlight those that have found their reflection in their compositions.

1. Futurological utopia

The first of these is the *futurological utopia* of modernist and the early avant-garde art, according to which a perfect world is being created following the laws of art and with the language of art. At the same time, this new world is conceived as a domain of spiritual and mystical transfiguration of the human being and humanity. In the sphere of music, this type of utopia was expressed with the most powerful artistic force by the music of Alexander Scriabin (*Divine Poem*, *Poem of Ecstasy*, *Prometheus*, *Prefatory Action*, etc.). Its reflection in the music of Mosolov is manifested by the intonation contours of a whole set

of musical themes. Among the latter is the theme of the primary theme group of the Fifth Piano Sonata, the theme of the second movement of the First Piano Concerto, the theme of the “dam” from the entr’acte in the First Act of the opera *The Dam*, the anthem-like theme in the horns in *The Iron Factory*, etc. All of these reflect in a concise way Scriabin’s willful impulse and simultaneously the symbolism of “self-assertion”.

2. Industrial, technological utopia

Another type of utopia is the *industrial, technological utopia*, according to which the ideal world of the future presents the highest step of scientific and technical progress. In the history of Soviet music, Mosolov in particular was destined to become the composer whose music personified the utopia of machines of the 1920s. On the one hand, this circumstance was stipulated by the characteristic production-related subject matter of a number of the composer’s works (ballet *Steel*, *The Iron Foundry*. *Music of Machines*, incidental music for the theatre *The Rails are Buzzing*, opera *The Dam*), and on the other hand – by the specific features of the musical themes, distinguished by their “oscillating” ostinato motor rhythms, seeming to imitate the work of mechanism of machines (the piano sonatas, the Piano Concerto, the String Quartet, etc.).

3. Revolutionary festive utopia

In the epoch examined by us, the *revolutionary festive utopia* becomes the most widespread. In its context the proletarian revolution is perceived as a step towards the future, whereas the sought for perfect world – as a communist heaven, bereft of social or political contradictions. The social and political angle of this utopia creates the preconditions for a broad application in artistic works of mythological constructions generated by the revolutionary propaganda and the communist ideology. In the music of the 1920s and early 1930s these constructions are represented through the vocal and choral works by the composers of the RAPM [Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians] (Alexander Davidenko, Boris Schechter, Marian Koval and others), mass songs (for example, those by the Pokrass brothers), along with large-scale orchestral canvases and compositions in the genres of cantata and oratorio (Shostakovich’s Symphonies No. 2 and No. 3, Joseph Schillinger’s symphonic poem *October*, Nikolai Roslavetz’s cantata *October*, etc.), as well as the first Soviet operas and ballets (Vladimir Deshevov’s *The Red Whirlwind* and *Ice and Steel*, Arseny Gladkovsky’s *The Front and the Rearward*, Sergei Protopopov’s *The First Cavalry Brigade*, etc.). The characteristic feature of the permeation of features of revolutionary utopia into music is the formation of a specific feature of dramaturgy based on the application of the *tri-temporal* and *bipolar* schemes.

The *tri-temporal dramaturgical scheme* (established by Kaminsky in relation to the visual arts of the revolutionary period) was displayed in the works of the avant-garde composers of the 1920s by means of a univocal semantic identification of subject matter manifesting the revolutionary mythology of the relation of *past-present-future*. In this mythological triad, as a rule, the *past* was interpreted from a negative perspective, the *present* was depicted through the prism of revolutionary heroism, while the *future* was seen as a projection of collision of the past with the present. The intonational depiction of the *past* frequently included in itself elements of the musical language of the preceding epoch (references to the intonational vocabulary of the modernist period). At the same time the past was often interpreted through the prism of grotesque and parody.

Mosolov’s music readily demonstrates both variants of the interpretation of the *past*. On the one hand, features of the intonational vocabulary of Scriabin and Mussorgsky are spread virtually in all of the composer’s works (the piano sonatas, the Piano Concerto, *Children’s Scenes*, etc.). On the other hand, the grotesque reinterpretation of the musical language of classical tradition becomes a foundation for many of his vocal and stage compositions (*Four Newspaper Advertisements*, operas *The Hero* and *The Dam*).

The present is disclosed in the music of Mosolov and many of his contemporaries by means of quotations from and stylizations of the revolutionary songs of the time. Mosolov turns to this genre category only in the opera *The Dam*, with the aim of a positive identification of an entire sphere of imagery (the heroes of the present times: the workers, engineers, communists, pioneers). The third temporal dimension, the future, as was emphasized before, was interpreted in the music of the 1920s and early 1930s as a peculiar projection of collision of the negative past with the positive present. This projection was manifested most successfully in the sphere of theatre, since the face of the future could be represented by heroes of the present day as the forerunners of the future. Following the ideological canons, those were personified by the revolutionary leaders and, of course, the members of the Communist Party (among the early Soviet operas, Vladimir Deshevov approaches this kind of interpretation mostly in his opera *Ice and Steel*). In Mosolov’s opera *The Dam* the characters who strongly represent the “future” are, first of all, the manager of the constructor Gard, as well as the head of the Labor Committee of the Communist Party and the engineers – the heads of the sectors. Moreover, the extraordinary aspect of the functions of these characters in the context of the tri-temporal scheme of the plot is emphasized by the composer in a rather atypical manner: their roles should be played by dramatic actors, rather than singers. In other words, they are deliberately highlighted by Mosolov into an independent sphere of imagery and semantics. Their language differs radically from

the language of “common mortals”. It must be reminded that likewise in Sergei Prokofiev’s *Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution* Lenin’s slogan of the revolution that has occurred is spoken, rather than sung.

Nonetheless, the image of the future appeared in Mosolov’s music regardless of the ideological myth, as well. The temporal triad was also demonstrated in the composer’s works by means of integrating the technological machine utopia into the revolutionary utopia. It is not perchance that the opera *The Dam*, in addition to introducing representatives of the future world (first of all, Gard), also contained its generalized metaphorical image. The “music of machines”, placed into the triadic construction of the libretto’s dramaturgy, was supposed to turn into a symbol of tomorrow in the full sense. In this context, the “music of machines”, undoubtedly, broadened its semantic boundaries, transforming itself from a social-aesthetical declaration into a functional element of a utopian conception.

The other side of the dramaturgy, reflecting revolutionary utopia – *bipolarity* – had fixated the aforementioned semantic fixedness of the interpretation of various times in the art of the 1920s: a negative attitude towards the past and a positive one towards the present and future.

In the history of the avant-garde the bipolar relations, as it is well-known, were expressed, firstly, by an overall aesthetic approach directed at the destruction and negation of the classical tradition. Secondly, the bipolarity was fixed on the level of ideologically topical subject matter. Thirdly, bipolarity was expressed by means of a declarative usage of new lingual norms or by means of juxtaposition in a single work of novel and dated vocabulary (for example, various contrasting types of pitch organization).

As a result, the idea of “bipolarity” became a powerful factor for dramaturgical delimitations for contraposition of the future (good) with the past (evil) in a no less visible way than the tri-temporal scheme. All the more it was so, because in reality the struggle against the past was carried out in the territory of the present, where the past generated its own “grimaces”.

All of these sides of “bipolarity” can easily be observed in Mosolov’s music. The composer conceived the art of music as a rebroadcasting transmitter of the most relevant social and aesthetical tendencies. These included the struggle against the reviving petty bourgeoisie (*Four Newspaper Advertisements*), struggle against religion (*Anti-religious Symphony*), the course set on industrialization and collectivization (*Steel, The Iron Foundry, The Dam*) and, finally, the course on the building of the communist utopia in one single country (there was a plan of composing a collective ballet *Four Moscows* for the Bolshoi Theater, in which Mosolov was supposed to present the image of the future in the spirit of “machine music”).

A definitive significance for Mosolov’s compositional method is also played by the contraposition of various types of pitch organization, indicating in a visible way the idea of bipolarity. Beginning with the Fifth Sonata for piano, in his compositions Mosolov uses in a rather consistent way two contrasting intonational complexes, one of which is based on modal centralization, while the other one is based, in contrast, on quasi-serialism (to use the term of Yuri Kholopov).

However, the history of utopian ideas testifies to the fact that utopias are usually accompanied by their faithful companions, dystopia and anti-utopia. At that, during the examined time period, the crisis of utopian world-perception stipulated the crisis of avant-garde art, which during the course of a lengthy period of time has retransmitted the image of utopia most successfully.

In music this crisis was indicated in a two-fold manner.

1. Firstly it was indicated as the result of popularization of satirical subject matter, which led to the emergence within the art of music of the negative social character, which represented not only the rudiment of the past, but also the creation of the present. This “double” of the positive protagonist of the epoch turned out to be a dangerous contestant, since he reflected as if in a mirror the inefficiency of the Soviet “heroic epos”. In Mosolov’s musical compositions the satirical imagery is represented by the grotesque characters of the vocal cycles *Four Newspaper Advertisements* and *Three Children’s Scenes*, as well as the opera *The Hero*. The latter composition is especially indicative in terms of the permeation into it of anti-utopian features. The plot, the essence of which consisted of an absurd succession of haphazard incidents, making in the eyes of observers a hero out of a small person, a coward and a nonentity, in itself presented a small anti-utopia. After all, the hero of Mosolov’s oeuvre, just like the Nose in Shostakovich’s ingenious opera, personified by itself the absurdity of any society in which the substitution or manipulation of ideals present a common phenomenon.

The other side of the crisis of utopias of the 1920s, which found its reflection in music, manifested itself in the reevaluation of the intonation vocabulary of the epoch, or, to be more precise, its semantics. In Mosolov’s music this kind of reevaluation is most conspicuously demonstrated by the opera *The Dam*. In other words, being essentially a reflection, as has been shown before, of the utopian doctrine of the times, at the same time the opera concentrates in itself a certain amount of contradictions, compelling us to interpret its content from a very ambiguous perspective. This occurs because in *The Dam*, just like in *The Hero*, two independent *semantic strata* are formed. One stratum is formed by the dramaturgy of the libretto, in which the images correspond strictly to the functions of the tri-temporal utopian scheme.

The negative past is presented by the wealthy peasant or “kulak” Pushchin, the monk Gavriil, the hysterical women Fefela and Nenela, the miller’s wife Sekleteya, her son Iva, the “brothers and sisters”, peasants and others. The heroic present is represented by the engineer Sharov, Ivan’s wife Polya, who is in love with Sharov, Bura the engine driver, Shchur the secretary of the District Committee of the Party, the workers, the pioneers, etc. The bright future is depicted by Gard, the Chairman of the Worker’s Committee of the Communist Party, engineers-directors of the tracts, as well as the musical depiction of the dam itself.

2. The second semantic stratum is formed strictly by the musical characteristics proper of the aforementioned spheres of imagery. Here, upon undergoing his search for expressive means, the composer was confronted with the problem of the impossibility of a univocal semantic labeling of these spheres. This occurred because the genre to which the plot of *The Dam* possessed distinct contours of a folk drama with the inclusion, as in Mussorgsky’s operas, of a whole set of plot features connected with the psychological depiction of the characters. The creation of these extensive psychological characteristic traits inevitably generated contradictions with the imposition of certain concrete functions to each character of the opera, following the tri-temporal scheme.

Thus, the images of “departing Rus” (as Alexeyenko defines them in his article) were concentrated around the images of Pushchina and Sekleteya, who were openly declaring their hostility towards the Soviet regime. What kind of means does Mosolov use to portray the image of the “class enemy”? From the perspective of the framework of the revolutionary worldview, they end up being quite unconvincing. It is by no means so, because he commiserates with his characters. They become unconvincing particularly because the musical language of the characters from the past provides a reference to the classics of Russian opera, causing us to discern in the image of Pushchin the proud, good natured and, at the same time, self-important miller from Alexander Dargomyzhsky’s opera *The Mermaid*, or the charismatic Ivan Khovansky, and in the image of Sekleteya – the self-sacrificing, unbent Marfa from *Khovanshchina*. It would seem that the archaic language, along with the “counterrevolutionary” activities of these protagonists (their active rejection of the new government), would necessarily create a negative image, in the full meaning. However, the achieved result was the contrary one.

The “Soviet Rus”, as portrayed in the opera, can hardly be characterized as possessing a unity of semantic interpretation, albeit, in a different sense. This sphere of imagery concentrates in itself possibly the most apparent stylistic contradictions. According to the templates of time,

the characters of modernity had to speak in a contemporary language. But this type of language, being allusive qualities and numerous quasi-quotations, referring to the mass song (including children’s songs), “chastooshka” street songs and dance genres of the 1920s, is expressed, primarily, by the workers. The chief representatives of this sphere of imagery, Sharov and Polya, bring a dysfunctional accent into it. This dysfunctional quality is expressed in the predominance of a melodramatic character in Sharov’s and Polya’s mutual relations, which sharply reduces the overall ideological centeredness of the narration. The melodramatic basis of this element is also highlighted by the prevailing *arioso and recitative* intonations, taking the place of song intonations in the vocal parts of these two protagonists. Both of the characters speak not in a street-song “newspeak”, but in a comparatively traditional musical language. Thus, the genre memory of Sharov’s vocal part carries in itself a number of remarkable analogies: one of them is the Prince from *The Mermaid*, while the other is Vsevolod from Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Tale of the Invisible City of Kitezh*. In its turn, the intonational makeup of Polya’s vocal part turns out to resemble closely that of Fevroniya in *Kitezh* (especially indicative in this regard is Polya’s *arioso* from Act 1, Scene 1 with the characteristic “lay narrative” movement in 6/8 and descending curves of the phrases in intervals of perfect fourths). Moreover, the very situation of Sharov’s and Polya’s meeting in the forest reminds of the first scene of Rimsky-Korsakov’s aforementioned opera (incidentally, it must be mentioned that the text of Polya’s *arioso*, preceding the scene with Sharov, presents a recognizable paraphrase of Fevroniya’s *arioso*: the text of Polya’s part is “Oh, forest, my forest. Dense, centuries-old forest”, while Fevroniya’s text is “Oh, forest, my forest, beautiful wilderness”). As a result, “Soviet Rus” presents itself in the opera in a rather strange way in relation to the traditional bipolar scheme.

The characteristic features of the world of the future have already been described. It must be emphasized that it is particularly this sphere that presents itself as the most vulnerable in regards to semantic coherence. First of all, the vocal part of Gard, lacking distinct intonational musical characteristic features, depicting a set of orders, reports, etc., is least of all fit to aid the perception of this protagonist as a positive one. Secondly, the sound-pictorial element of the image of the dam with its aggressive ostinato rhythms could hardly inspire the listener with positive emotions. The image of a machine-like construction resting on supportive props was not in the condition to fulfill its function (as the symbol of the future), since the theatre and theatrical qualities are incompatible with the schematic qualities and univocacy of the content. Hereby, another semantic substitution was carried out in the context of the opera’s content, possessing the decisive *anti-utopian* meaning.

However, we must comprehend the main reason for the “defeat” of the opera’s dramaturgy to be not only *the ambiguity of the interpretation of the tri-temporal scheme, but also the crisis of the bipolar revolutionary avant-garde concept*. The initial collocation of the images of evil and good turned out to be – in the traditions of the time – opposite to the classical operatic canons. The dramaturgical collision projected in *The Dam*, bearing resemblance to *Khovanshchina* and *The Tale of the Invisible City of Kitezh*, was built according to the principle of shifting the main semantic accents. Thus, in Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov’s operatic legacy the Russian past presented itself as a bearer of the impenetrable qualities of eternal truths and the atemporal power of spirituality and moral purity. The images of foreigners (the Tatars and Tsar Peter’s “comedians”) symbolized evil, aggression, infringement on the ontological foundations of the historical ways of life of the Russian civilization. This semantic perspective reflected the traits of the *classical Russian utopia*, which in the eyes of Mosolov’s generation was already incompatible with the new revolutionary utopia. For this reason, the allusions to the classics in the opera *The Dam* are far from being accidental. The librettist and composer consciously arrange a concept in which, on the contrary, people who have arrived are supposed to represent good, whereas the patriarchal mode of living represents evil. In other words, Mosolov attempted to create an “Anti-Khovanshchina” and an “Anti-Kitezh”, albeit with a drive towards a positive utopian conclusion in the final scene.

The layering of the utopian tri-temporal and bipolar schemes in the context of the dramaturgy of *The Dam* resulted in a total discredit of all utopian impulses. The sting of the anti-utopian reflection ended up being directed not only at the past, but also at the present.

A remarkable testimony to the fact that the opera’s dramaturgy unfolded from the initial foretaste of a utopian apotheosis to the direction of an anti-utopian collapse is presented by a miniscule description of the stage directions in the final scene of Act 5:

The building of the hydro-electric power station. The square. Through the large windows the distributing board can be seen. A rather uncoordinated orchestra. Shchur and the head of the Workers’ Committee are running around on stage. Puny posters. An inscription: *Electrification plus Soviet Power – this is Communism*. Everything is impoverished and sad.

Does this “impoverished and sad” not present the final outcome of Mosolov’s utopian illusions that foreshadowed this view of the world that was anti-utopian in the full meaning of the word, which was subsequently disclosed by Gavriil Popov and Dmitri Shostakovich? Was it not in this “impoverished and sad” that the composer foresaw a glimpse of the knowledge of his own fate, which brought

the composer into the confines of the GULAG? Did not these words signalize the collapse of the revolutionary expectations of a whole generation of Russian and, more extendedly, European artists, who made a step in the direction of the bright future, but were confronted, in the long run, with the tragic impossibility of building it?

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Santrauka

XX a. pirmame trečdalyje utopiniai idealai tapo neatskiriama Europos intelektualų požiūrio į pasaulį dalimi. Tuo laikotarpiu kūrusių menininkų darbuose, nesvarbu, kokios buvo estetinės jų pozicijos, politinės simpatijos ir prielankumas konkrečioms tendencijoms, vyravo svajonės apie teisingumą ir laime grindžiamą pasaulį. 1920–1930 m. sukurta Aleksandro Mosolovo muzika puikiai padeda, kai prireikia išskaidyti charakteringus įvairių utopinių percepcijų bruožus. Iš visų utopinių impulsų ir programų, atsispindinčių Mosolovo muzikoje, ryškiausias yra šios:

1. *Futurologinė modernizmo ir ankstyvojo avangardo utopija*. Pasak šio principo, tobulas ateities pasaulis yra sukuriamas laikantis meno nustatytų įstatymų ir pasitelkiant meno kalbą. Šis utopijos tipas atsispindi Aleksandro Skriabino kūryboje („Dieviškoji poema“, „Ekstazės poema“, „Prometėjas“, „Misterijos“ preliudas „Ižanginis veiksmas“). Muzikos įvaizdžio formavimo procese itin svarbią vietą užima programiškumo elementas bei intonacinės ir sintaksinės semantikos stabilumas. Mosolovo kompozicijose futurologinės utopijos atspindžiai pristatomi pasitelkiant intonacinį muzikinių temų rinkinio kontūravimą. Pastarasis aptinkamas pirminėje tematinėje Sonatos fortepijonui Nr. 5 grupėje, Koncerto fortepijonui antroje dalyje, „užtvankos“ temoje, pateikiamoje skambant operos „Užtvanka“ pirmojo veiksmo *intermezzo*, ir kitų kūrinių temose. Visi šie elementai atspindi Skriabino inicijuotą valingą „pirmyn ir aukštyn“ impulsą ir intonacinį „savivertės“ simbolizmą.

2. *Produkcijos ir motyvų utopija*. Pasak šio principo, tobulas ateities pasaulis pasireiškia per aukščiausios kategorijos mokslinę ir techninę pažangą. Naujojo pasaulio simboliu, estetiniu ir etiniu jo idealu tampa mašina, produkcija ir gamykla. Sovietų muzikos istorijos kontekste kaip tik Mosolovui buvo lemta tapti kompozitoriumi, kurio darbai įkūnijo šį utopijos principą. Pirmiausia tai parodo dalies kūrinių tematika (baletas „Plienai“, „Geležies liejykla“, „Mašinų muzika“, garso takelis, sukurtas spektakliui „Bėgiai užia“, opera „Užtvanka“), taip pat specifiniai tematiniai bruožai („miestietiški“ ostinato elementai).

3. *Revoliucinė, avangardinė utopija*. Pagal šį principą proletarinė revoliucija buvo suvokiama kaip žingsnis link „komunistinio rojaus“. Sociopolitinis šios utopijos

atspalvis sukūrė sąlygas naudoti revoliucinės propagandos ir komunistinės ideologijos sukurtas mitologines konstrukcijas įvairiuose meno kūriniuose. Dėl šios priežasties vienas būdingiausių revoliucinės utopijos išiskverbimo į muziką pavyzdžių yra populiarių to laikotarpio dainų citavimas ir stilizavimas. Šių elementų naudojimas tapo revoliucinio heroizmo idealizavimo įrankiu, taip pat ir herojinio entuziazmo projektavimu į „šviesią ateitį“. Mosolovas itin plačiai naudoja šį žanrinį sluoksnį, pirmiausia savo operoje „Užtvanka“: joje pozityviai nušviečiami ir išaukštinami modernizmo didvyriai – darbininkai, komunistai ir pionieriai.

1920–1930 m. išsivysčiusi avangardinių meno tendencijų krizė buvo gana smarkiai susijusi su utopinio pasaulio suvokimo krize, kilusia dėl sudėtingų prieštaravimų tarp idealų suvokimo ir netobulos tikrovės. Muzikoje ši krizė pasireiškė dvejopai: a) siužetiniu lygmeniu, kai buvo vaizduojami neigiami socialiniai tipažai (Mosolovo kūryboje neigiamiems įvaizdžiams atstovauja groteskiški veikėjai iš „Keturių laikraščių skelbimų“, „Trijų vaikiškų scenų“ ir operų „Didvyris“ bei „Užtvanka“); b) siužeto tematinės semantikos ir dramaturginių algoritmų pakeitimų lygmeniu. Pavyzdžiui, avangardui ir revoliuciniam menui būdinga trigubo laiko schema (groteskiška, negatyvi praeitis; herojiška, pozityvi dabartis; graži, miestietiška ateitis) buvo tiesiog suskaldyta. Mosolovo operoje „Užtvanka“ „senas, nebeaktualus pasaulis“ pirmą kartą ėmė „šauktis“ istorinės teisybės, „naujas, utopinis pasaulis“ neteko herojinio statuso, o didžiulis ateities įvaizdis („mašinų muzika“) atsiskleidė kaip antihumanizmo ir socialinės katastrofos simbolis.