

Transtextuality in Lithuanian and Serbian Postmodern Music

Abstract. The tendency of using ‘borrowed’ musical material has still been lasting since postmodernism, however, the most intensive period of intertextual ‘games’ was the last decades of the 20th century. In this paper, four compositions by composers from the Baltics and the Balkans are presented. Both the Lithuanian and Serbian authors did not ignore the postmodernism-linked trend to use the works by other composers in their own compositions, thus there are quite a lot of examples of transtextuality in the music from these two countries.

The conception of transtextuality by French literary theoretician Gérard Genette is noteworthy for its detail classification and is handy for dealing with various cases of transtextual relations. Genette widened Julia Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality by developing his own theory of transtextuality in which intertextuality is only one out of five types of transtextual relations.

Based on the theory by Genette, the four compositions – Onutė Narbutaitė’s *Mozartsommer 1991* (1991), Antanas Rekašius’s *Music for Strings No. 2* (1992), and Milan Mihajlović’s *Eine kleine Trauermusik* (1990) and *Silenzio* (1996) – are analyzed. Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is employed in two of them, while another two hold references to the Baroque epoch. The analysis reveals how different types of transtextuality function in their works.

Keywords: transtextuality, hypertextuality, architextuality, Onutė Narbutaitė, Antanas Rekašius, Milan Mihajlović.

1. Theory of transtextuality by Gérard Genette

1.1. The beginnings of transtextual studies

Even though we could follow the traces of intertextuality in music back to the Medieval Ages with the example of quodlibet, the explosion of intertextual relations burst out in the twentieth century. Such expressions as *polistylistics*, the technique of *collage* and usage of ‘borrowed’ musical material are often employed when defining musical postmodernism (Albright 2004: 14). Thus intertextuality is a frequently used term in analyses of postmodern compositions but the variety of intertextual relations in musical works requires more detailed classification. In the 1960’s, Julia Kristeva was a pioneer in the research of intertextuality and was the first who used the term for reference to any kind of relation between different texts. Soon afterwards, a French literary theorist Gérard Genette widened Kristeva’s theory by designing his own conception of transtextuality or textual transcendence where intertextuality is only one out of five types of transtextual relations. The variety was determined by broader and more systematic studies including structuralist, post-structuralist and semiotic theories. According to Genette, transtextuality is “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts” which it “covers all aspects of a particular text” (Genette 1997a: 5).

1.2. The classification of transtextual relations

Genette’s concept of transtextuality contains five types of transtextual relations: 1) intertextuality, 2) paratextuality, 3) metatextuality, 4) hypertextuality, and 5) architextuality. **Intertextuality** is defined as a relationship of copresence of one text within another; its manifestations are: quotation, allusion, plagiarism. **Paratextuality** marks the components at the threshold of the text in order to direct the acceptance of a text by the readers. Genette distinguishes two types of paratexts: a) *peritext* is the paratext contained within the book (covers, acknowledgements, epigraphs, prefaces, epilogues, headings, comments), and b) *epitext* is outside it (interviews, letters, diaries or public comments – by the author, publisher or other readers – on the particular text) (Genette 1997b: xviii). **Metatextuality** is explicit or implicit, critical *par excellence* commentary of one text on another text. **Hypertextuality** represents the relation between a text and a text or genre on which it is based but which it transforms, modifies, elaborates or extends. Genette distinguishes two types of hypertextuality, according to the relationship of the texts: a) *imitation* and b) *transformation*, which share the same categories of modality – ‘ludic’, ‘satirical’ and ‘serious’ – through different functional types: pastiche (imitative) and parody (transformative) are ludic, charge (imitative) and travesty (transformative) are satirical, and *forgerie* (imitative) and transposition (transformative) are serious types of hypertextuality. The different nature of imitation and transformation determines the double regime of this kind of relation – the imitation means that hypertext is assimilated by hypotext while transformation refers to the contrary process. Thus the epochal context either of hypertext (in the case of imitation) or of the hypotext (in the case of transformation; Stefanović 2015) is lost. **Architextuality**, according to Genette, is the most abstract and implicit category, the relationship of inclusion linking each text to the various kinds of discourse of which it is a representative (Genette 1997a: 4).

2. Representants of transtextuality in Lithuanian and Serbian music

Four compositions containing transtextual relations are chosen as objects of this paper: Onutė Narbutaitė's *Mozartsommer 1991* (1991), Antanas Rekašius's *Music for Strings* (1992), as well as *Eine kleine Trauermusik* (1990) and *Silenzio* (1996), both by Milan Mihajlović. Lithuanians Narbutaitė and Rekašius and Serbian Mihajlović are composers from two different regions of Europe – the Baltics and the Balkans – which wrote these works at about the same time (1990–1996). Two of the compositions are connected by using Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's compositions, while another two hold references to baroque music.

2.1. Mozart's music as a transtext

2.1.1. Narbutaitė's *Mozartsommer 1991* (1991)

Mozartsommer 1991 is one of interesting examples of using hypertextuality in the works of Narbutaitė. The composition obviously refers to Mozart's music as a hypotext: hypertext is made of a plenty of hypotexts, which are often unrecognizable due to several reasons. Firstly, it is the shortness of most of the excerpts of Mozart's compositions, i.e. they can consist only of a few notes. The second reason is the instrumentation – *Mozartsommer 1991* is composed for flute, violin, viola and cembalo (harpsicord), and this ensemble doubtlessly is not characteristic of Mozart's music, therefore the composer had to arrange the original bits for the indicated instrumentation. Employing the principle of the collage technique by joining different pieces of various texts together indicates the transformative case of hypertextuality.



Example 1. Narbutaitė, *Mozartsommer 1991* (1991), mm. 36–38

We could make an analogy between Narbutaitė's compositional method and Williams S. Burroughs' 'cut-up' method used in literature when a finished, fully linear text is cut in pieces with a few or single words in each piece, and these pieces are rearranged into a new text¹: the similarity lies in the usage of only borrowed material and getting a completely new text, which might not resemble the original one at all.

Considering the texture, the beginning of the piece is pointillist and resembles the *klangfarbenmelodie* technique². Actually, if we did not know in advance that the composition is compiled of Mozart's music only, we hardly could have perceived that hypotexts are used there in some measures.

To examine the conflict between hypotexts and hypertext we could distinguish a few main conflict spots, the first being the incompatibility of the original and new instrumentation, the second one is the texture which is not homophonic but rather a disjunctive polyphonic one, doubtlessly referring to the modernity, and the third point is the rhythmic. It is not a classicistic-like regularly pulsing: either pointillist-like, scrappy sounds or a bit longer motives, they always design a rhythm which is broken, discontinuous and made of various snippets combined into a collage, with a plenty of pauses and complicated rhythmic figures. Although the measure is 4/4, the listener cannot truly perceive it (except the middle part) because of a plenty of pauses, complicated rhythmic figures with off-beats, dotted rhythm, short rhythmic units and triplets thus the general impression of the score may evoke associations not only with pointillist style but also with new complexity.

¹ The cut-up technique (or *découpage* in French) is an aleatory literary technique in which a text is cut up and rearranged to create a new text. The concept can be traced to at least the Dadaists of the 1920s, but was popularized in the late 1950s and early 1960s by writer William S. Burroughs, and has since been used in a wide variety of contexts. Cut-up is performed by taking a finished and fully linear text and cutting it in pieces with a few or single words in each piece. The resulting pieces are then rearranged into a new text.

² The usage of pointillist principle might refer to Arnold Schönberg and Anton Webern tradition thus the New Viennese School, and we may consider it as one more reference – maybe a re-actualized one – to Mozart's music although highly indirect and based on etymological relation between the two groups of Viennese composers.

Actually, Narbutaitė’s music is often defined as very precise, e.g. “Narbutaitė’s intellectual opuses do not remind one of ‘machine production’ but ‘hand work’ carried out with great precision. The rationality of her composition reveals itself through meticulously detailed textures...” (Paulauskis 2006). Therefore, the hypotexts keep their melodic and harmonic uniqueness but lose against the composer’s creativity in creating a precise mosaic of tiny bits with their own logic: the hypertext is a winner with a modern, unique musical language.

Continuing with texture it seems that this element is crucial in the formal structure of Narbutaitė’s work. Different types of texture – combined in a certain sequence – determine the flow of intensity: 1) the first one is pointillist-like, the musical flow is constantly disrupted by pauses, the melodic line is broken and dispersed through different registers; 2) the second type of texture is generally based on the passages of short rhythmic units; these passages are successively joined by using counterpoint; 3) the third type is similar to the latter one yet it is based on little groups of *staccato* sounds of repetitive pitch. The last type of texture sounds the most intensively due to its sharpness and more dissonant harmony thus it appears in the climax point. In general, it is noticeable that the appearance of the textural types has its logic – to clarify, the sequence roughly would be as follows: 1-2-3-2-1-2-3/2-1. As can be seen, it is symmetrical and creates gradually waving intensity of musical flow with the climax in the penultimate segment. It is observable that the closest coherence between hypotexts and hypertext is when using the second and third types, due to longer motives, a more consistent musical flow and denser texture thus more intensive usage of harmony which has a significant role in perception there.



Figure 2. First type of texture. Narbutaitė, *Mozartsommer 1991* (1991), mm. 5–9



Figure 3. Second type of texture. Narbutaitė, *Mozartsommer 1991* (1991), mm. 81–82



Figure 4. Third type of texture. Narbutaitė, *Mozartsommer 1991* (1991), mm. 46–48

Narbutaitė's *Mozartsommer 1991*, therefore, is an example of hypertextuality where the authenticity of the hypotexts is almost totally destroyed by deconstructing them into miniature bits which are employed to make up a qualitatively new sounding and stylistics, when compared to the original. The network of hypotexts sounds full of the reminiscences of Mozart's music, however they make an impression of ornamental incrustations rather than totally Mozartian compilation.

2.1.2. Mihajlović's *Eine kleine Trauermusik* (1990)

Another type of transtextuality using Mozart's music lies in Milan Mihajlović's *Eine kleine Trauermusik* (1990). Written almost at the same time as Narbutaitė's work, the composition is handy to compare how similarly – or differently – transtextuality is used by two Serbian and Lithuanian composers.

Transtextuality in Mihajlović's composition begins with the title – as is in the case of Narbutaitė as well – by using paratextuality. The title of Mozart's iconic composition (*Eine kleine Nachtmusik*) is rephrased in such a way that the original context is changed into an opposite one and makes rather an ironic or even grotesque relation between the works. However, the main manifestation of transtextuality is the quotation from the second movement of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major. It appears in both forms of intertext and hypotext – in the latter case, the original excerpt is supplemented with Mihajlović's newly composed music; thus in the terms of hypertextuality it is a case of transformation.

The whole composition before the appearance of the intertext is based on Mihajlović's authentic musical language. The intertext comes straight after an aggressive climax, with a little opening of dispersed *staccato* sounds played by winds. In fact, the part of the composition with the intertext is totally contrasting with the previous part. Firstly, it has a prominent, very tuneful melody (while this element was not distinct before); secondly, the harmony is much more consonant – that is due to the presence of intertext. Thirdly, the sonority is much lighter because of the soft melody of Mozart's music and the piano ostinato, which is indicated to play *p–ppp*. However, the flow of music is not smooth albeit incorporating these characteristics. The main reason is that intertext also functions as hypotext because Mihajlović slightly supplemented Mozart's music; thus Mihajlović's work presents us hypertextuality there. The smoothness of Mozart's composition is disturbed by the winds *staccato* (which are constantly continued from the beginning of the segment) while the piano playing Mozart's theme, and, conversely, by arpeggiated piano ostinato while the winds are playing the theme.

Figure 5. An intertext. Mihajlović, *Eine kleine Trauermusik* (1990), mm. 173–179

Besides these disruptions going simultaneously with hypotext, there are interruptions between its fragments: a cluster played by piano and bassoon violates the flow of hypertext twice. The appearance of the cluster in rather calm yet melancholic music might signify an eruption out of suppression: the sudden change of musical character, from aggressive to fragile, seems too contrasting thus quite artificial, and the harsh cluster sounds like an attempt to disrupt the illusion. Michael Klein in his book *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* mentions the category of the uncanny, which was covered firstly in the field of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud. As Klein points out, Freud defined the uncanny as a class of the terrifying arising from “something repressed which *recurs*” and this definition holds promise for the hermeneutics of narrative in music (Klein 2005: 88). The interruption by using the cluster might be an example of such recurrence.

Figure 6. Mihajlović, *Eine kleine Trauermusik* (1990), mm. 159–164

The hypertextual transformation of Mozart's concerto is not a serious one but rather ludic due to several reasons. First, the contrast between the main musical body (without transtextuality) and the transtextual one is way too sharp to consider it as a part of the natural flow of the composition. The sense of artificial calmness is reinforced by interrupting clusters – the recurrence of the negativity, which is repressed in the second section but flourished previously – it seems quite illusory. Accordingly, the transformation of the hypotext is not strongly modified and not destroying the entity of the hypotext. Thus it looks like the main intention of the composer was to use the quotation as a means for achieving the ludic, illusory effect to express a fake emotion.

2.2. References of baroque music in postmodern compositions

2.2.1. Rekašius's *Music for Strings No. 2* (1992)

In order to have a wider representation of transtextuality in Lithuanian and Serbian music, we shall shortly examine a few more compositions. Another example of transtextuality in Lithuanian music could be Rekašius's *Music for Strings No. 2* for string orchestra. *Music for Strings No. 2* represents another kind of transtextuality, which might be unnoticeable at first glance. It does not contain any quotations or allusions, instead it refers to the genre of *concerto grosso*. This baroque genre can be seriously considered as an architext of the first part of *Music for Strings No. 2* due to several reasons. First, the composition contains the juxtaposition of two different musical materials – one is modal and equirhythmic (it is dominating), while another is made of cluster harmony and aleatoric rhythm (shortly interrupting). These materials confront each other and their separation is being reduced more and more towards the end. This principle reminds the confrontation in *concerto grosso* of different groups of instruments, although in Rekašius's piece there are juxtaposed different stylistics (baroque and modern) representing two opposite origins of order and chaos.

 Figure 7. Rekašius, *Music for Strings No. 2* (1992), mm. 13–24

Another reason why *Music for Strings No. 2* can be considered as having architextual relation with the baroque genre is its harmony based on modal sounding. In the first ('modal') type of musical material, two sequences of chords which contain triads only: 1) d-a-F-d-B-g-d-A-d-d; 2) D-A-F-d-B-g-d-A-d-d are used. It is noticeable that the dominating mode is D-minor and the sequence reminds baroque harmony in general. Therefore, *Music for Strings No. 2* holds a relation with the architext of *concerto grosso* mostly through the juxtaposition of two alternatively changed different stylistics. Actually, the huge contrast (baroque-modern) could be regarded as a feature of irony as it contains the stylistic juxtaposition with the dominating style and the first type of musical material sounds like an imitation (or parody) of baroque style thus the usage of polystylistics could be considered as a mean of expressing the comic element in this composition.

2.2.2. Mihajlović's *Silenzio* (1996)

Another example of Serbian transtextual music is Mihajlović's *Silenzio* for chamber orchestra and female choir. Like Rekašius's composition, *Silenzio* also holds a reference to baroque music: a short quotation from Claudio Monteverdi's madrigal *Chiome d'oro* is used there. The intertext is not just inserted but also developed polyphonically, thus the intertext also functions as hypotext, like in *Eine kleine Trauermusik*. But in this case, the way of transformation is a common feature in baroque music.

Considering the role of intertext, it is similar to the case of *Eine kleine Trauermusik*: it functions as intertext, which is totally contrasted to the surrounding musical context of the piece. The excerpt from the madrigal is in major and in a light, careless mood while the whole composition is grave and rather dark. Moreover, it comes straight after a dramatic climax and another culmination followings shortly after intertext. Intertext begins like a lucid dream but gets gloomy towards the end due to more dissonant sounding yet it is still very contrasting in general. It may have some connection with the text sung by the choir – for the lyrics, the poem *Tacciono i boschi e i fiumi* (Eng. The woods and rivers are silent) by Torquato Tasso is used. Intertext is placed after the words "e noi tegnamo ascose le dolcezze morose" (Eng. "and we keep unseen lovely sweetness"), thus an excerpt from Monteverdi's madrigal could emphasize the lyrics. However, quite confusing is the fact that the musical material of the choir is dramatic and little expected of Tasso's poem about a quiet night and tender love. In this case, intertext might be considered as compensating and bringing the atmosphere, which the text bears. Being dream-like, intertext is the only sign of tranquility and tenderness, which are coded in the text while the rest of the composition is rather gloomy, despite its name *Silenzio*.

Conclusion

Having examined a few compositions written at almost the same time (1990–1996), we can make some conclusions. The most frequent form of transtextuality is hypertextuality which is found in three examined compositions out of four. Narbutaitė's *Mozartsommer 1991* is an example of pure hypertextuality where the new sounding is formed from borrowed material only, while Mihajlović combined hypertextuality with intertextuality (the latter dominates because hypotexts are transformed very slightly). In this context, the composition by Rekašius is distinctive as embodying the architextuality. Paratextuality is seen in the titles of compositions by both Narbutaitė and Mihajlović.

Regarding the function of transtextuality in each work, two vectors can be distinguished: a) transtextual relations are the basis of a composition; b) transtextual relations supplement the work in a certain section, while the composition is based on the composer's authentic writing. The first type is represented by both Lithuanian composers: in transformatively hypertextual Narbutaitė's *Mozartsommer 1991*, qualitatively new sounding and stylistics are created by employing plenty of bits of Mozart music, while in *Music for Strings No. 2* by Rekašius it is the architextual relation, which determines the structure and idea of the composition, by juxtaposing two different poles (archaic vs modern / order vs chaos). The second tendency is represented by Serbian Mihajlović whose works *Eine kleine Trauermusik* and *Silenzio* are based on his own musical language, which does not have explicit relations with Mozart or baroque music and the intertextual/hypertextual relations function as a tool for emphasizing the stylistic opposites. In the case of *Eine kleine*, the juxtaposition could have been used to express the illusion or fake emotion, while the instrumental quotation of Monteverdi used in *Silenzio* illustrates the lyrics sung by choir and compensates the lack of emotions which were supposed to emerge, regarding the text.

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Transtekstualumas Lietuvos ir Serbijos postmoderniojoje muzikoje

Santrauka

Gérard'as Genette suformulavo transtekstualumo teoriją, praplėtusią anksčiau įsitvirtinusių intertekstualumo koncepciją pagal Juliją Kristevą. Genette transtekstualumo koncepcija apima penkis transtekstualių ryšių tipus: 1) intertekstualumą, 2) paratekstualumą (dar skirstomą į peritekstus ir epitekstus), 3) metatekstualumą, 4) hipertekstualumą (klasifikuojamą į imitaciją ir transformaciją) ir 5) architekstualumą.

Analizuojami kūriniai – Onutės Narbutaitės *Mozartsommer 1991* (1991), Antano Rekašiaus *Muzika styginiams Nr. 2* (1992), Milano Mihajlovičiaus *Eine kleine Trauermusik* (1990) bei *Silenzio* (1996) – yra siejami transtekstų iš Wolfgango Amadeus Mozarto muzikos (*Mozartsommer 1991* ir *Eine kleine Trauermusik*) arba turi sąsajų su baroko epocha (*Muzika styginiams Nr. 2* ir *Silenzio*). Analizė atskleidžia kūriniuose figūruojančias transtekstualumo rūšis ir transtekstualumo funkcionavimą. Narbutaitės *Mozartsommer 1991* yra hipertekstualumo pavyzdys; čia hipotekstų autentika yra beveik visiškai sunaikinama juos dekonstruojant į miniatiūrines šukes, kurios panaudojamos kokybiškai naujam skambesiui ir stilistikai formuoti. Mihajlovičiaus *Eine kleine Trauermusik* sujungiamas intertekstualumas ir hipertekstualumas; Mozarto Koncerto fortepijonui Nr. 23 A-dur II d. tema cituojama kompozicijos pabaigoje; kūrinio visumai ryškiai kontrastuojanti citata yra stilistinės priešpriešos priemonė, kurianti iliuzijos ir dirbtinės emocijos efektą. Rekašiaus *Muzikoje styginiams Nr. 2* nėra skolintos muzikos inkorporacijų, tačiau architekstinis ryšys (atrama į *concerto grosso* žanrą) iš esmės nulemia kompozicijos struktūrą ir idėją, priešpriešinant du skirtingus polius (barokas vs modernumas; tvarka vs chaosas), taip pat – harmoniją (modalumas). Mihajlovičiaus *Silenzio* – dar vienas intertekstualumo ir hipertekstualumo derinimo pavyzdys. Instrumentinė citata iš Claudio Monteverdi madrigalo stilistiškai kontrastuoja likusiai kūrinio visumai ir veikiausiai funkcionuoja kaip priemonė, iliustruojanti choro dainuojamus žodžius: netiesiogiai perteikia teksto nuotaiką ir taip kompensuoja ją išreiškiančių emocijų stoką.

Transtekstualumas šiuose kūriniuose veikia dvejopai: a) transtekstualiūs ryšiai yra kompozicijos pagrindas; b) konkrečiame epizode transtekstualiūs ryšiai papildo kūrinį, iš esmės grįstą kompozitoriaus autentišku braižu. Pirmajam tipui atstovauja abu lietuvių kompozitoriai: Narbutaitė originalų skambesį ir stilistiką suformavo kurdama mozaiką iš smulkių Mozarto muzikos gabalėlių; Rekašiaus kūrinyje būtent architekstualus ryšys sąlygoja kūrinio struktūrą ir idėją, priešpriešinant du polius. Antrąją tendenciją reprezentuoja serbas Mihajlovičius, kurio kūriniai *Eine kleine Trauermusik* ir *Silenzio* yra grįsti jo paties autentiška muzikine kalba, o intertekstualiūs ir hipertekstualiūs ryšiai funkcionuoja kaip įrankis, pabrėžiantis stilistines priešpriešas ir jų konotacijas.