

Some Types of Melodious Interpretation of the Monogram: A Case Study of the Monogram by Maija Einfelde (E-F-[E]-D-E)

Annotation

The use of monograms is frequently characterized by composers who tend to a dramatic and philosophical way of expression, subtexts that must be decoded. It is also significant that some outstanding users of musical monograms from different epochs have common stylistic features. Worth mentioning are the influences that the music of Johann Sebastian Bach exerted on Dmitry Shostakovich. Meanwhile the contemporary Latvian composer Maija Einfelde (b. 1939) recognizes that the music of Shostakovich has had a great impact on her early works. An important and frequently used sign in the music of Einfelde is her monogram E-F-[E]-D-E. This melodious formula itself does not have such individualised mood as B-A-C-H or D-Es-C-H, however in the works by Einfelde it sounds very expressive as it is used in various interesting melodious contexts.

The aim of this article is to study these contexts. The main attention will be paid to the following aspects and their role in the expressivity of the monogram:

- variety of registral dispositions;
- interaction with other melodious elements;
- textural context.

The research contributes to the understanding of the musical style of Einfelde, and aims to enrich insights of the general interpretation tendencies of monograms – melodious important signs in the music of various composers.

Keywords: monogram as a melodic sign, Maija Einfelde, registral disposition, interaction with another pitches, verticalisation.

1. Introduction

In various periods of music history, multiform arts of typified melodic patterns have been developed. These are inspired both by real environment and human activities (e.g., the so called fanfare intonation), and by different effects (e.g., several rhetorical figures – *passus duriusculus*, *pathopoiia*, etc.). The monogram could also be perceived as similar typified patterns. In contrast to many other melodic signs, the origin of the monogram is always to some extent accidental, namely, a composer obviously cannot choose the monogram only in accordance with his musical preferences, as he needs to take into account the letters of his name. This is probably the reason why many composers have never used monograms in their works. However, there are also well-known cases in music history where a monogram, despite its accidental origin, symbolizes not only the name or surname of its owner, but also the emotional mood of their music, the substance of their musical style. The motif B-A-C-H certainly belongs to the earliest cases of such symbolic correspondence. Its main substance is a succession of two minor seconds or so-called sigh motifs – sounds expressive and mostly dramatical due to its chromatic character. The visual similarity of the graphical representation of these four pitches to a cross is especially important for Bach's music that reflects the ideas of passion, crucifixion and resurrection. The works by Bach also show how different the interpretations of a monogram can be. They preserve the general tragic mood of this melodic sign and at the same time highlight a great variety of nuances.

For example, the air *Blute nur* from the St Matthew Passion (1727) can be mentioned, where the composer has used an inversed and also less chromatic version of the monogram which has slightly softer character than the original one. Another interesting example is the theme of the last fugue from the first volume of *Well-Tempered Clavier* (1722). It contains the succession of two descending minor seconds which is a characteristic feature of this monogram, however, the distance between these intervals is broader than in the original B-A-C-H; besides, this motif appears three times, and the upper second ascends progressively higher with each time. Musicologist Boleslaw Jaworski has expressed a hypothesis that this melody symbolizes "The Procession to Calvary" (quoted after Носина 1993: 37) – a hard climbing of Jesus to Golgotha when he carried his own cross. This, of course, is only an assumption without evidence, however, it does not contradict the character of this fugue. Frequently used is also a transposition of B-A-C-H. For instance, the ending of the Prelude D major from the second volume of *Well-Tempered Clavier* (1742) could be named: a succession F-E-G-Fis is hidden in some of the middle voices of the last chords. The musicologist Günther Hartmann describes it as a possible "BACH-Signatur" (Hartmann 1996: 920).

Another example of an excellent accordance of the monogram with the style of the composer is D-Es-C-H by Dmitri Shostakovich. It is symbolic that there is a melodic relationship between this sequence and B-A-C-H; and although this similarity has incurred accidentally it rightly reflects the Shostakovich's response to Bach.

Musicologist Olga Juferova, who has researched the use of monogram in music, distinguishes two models of its interpretation – the exoteric and the esoteric (Юферова 2013). Juferova also names the **exoteric** model as a logogram. A characteristic feature is an open, demonstrative use of a monogram – it is not hidden, but rather declared in the title of the work as, for example, the Variations on the name *Abbe* by Robert Schumann (1829/30), or is otherwise highlighted, as in the First Prelude by Shostakovich from his Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues (1950/51). The motif D-Es-C-H with an inverse succession of the first two pitches here concludes an eight-bar structure and, as Natalya Naiko notes, becomes the first derogation from the previous diatonic scale (Найко 2011: 85).

The **esoteric** model can be described as a cryptogram. It means that the monogram is partially hidden, it will be revealed only by the most erudite listeners, and in this case it often reflects a very personal message of the emotional experiences of the composer. Such cryptograms are sometimes used by Shostakovich. So notes the musicologist Judith Kuhn: “In the Tenth Symphony, the interaction [of D-Es-C-H – *B. J.*] is with a cryptogram for Elmira Nazirova, a composition student who functioned as his muse for this work” (Kuhn 2010: 188).

The aforementioned musical examples show that the content of a monogram is only to some extent independent from the will of the composer and it could be manifested in diverse individual ways. The aim of this article is to answer the question: how the music by Latvian composer Maija Einfeldē (b. 1939) looks in this context.

In her works, the monogram appears as E-F-D-E or E-F-E-D-E. These melodious formulas themselves do not have such individualised expression like B-A-C-H or D-Es-C-H. And exactly for this reason transformations of these melodic signs, as well as their context, which attaches the distinctiveness of the monogram, are very interesting. An interpreter of the music by Einfeldē, the violinist Jānis Bulavs notes:

“An improvisatoric character is strongly expressed in the music by Maija. In each composition she concentrates so much excellent musical material that any other composer would create four or five works on this basis” (Bulavs 2010: interview).

The richness of the imagination mentioned in this quote also results in highly varied interpretations of the monogram that will be discussed further in the article.

2. Monogram E-F-[E]-D-E in the context of the musical style of Maija Einfeldē

2.1. Various registral versions

The first feature which deserves attention is the variety of the registral content of the monogram – namely the pitches E, F and D can appear not just adjoining, but also scattered over different registers. An example is the cycle *The Sad Serenades* (*Skumjās serenādes*, 1988) for clarinet and string quartet. This work has the subtitle *Three Songs for the Dying Sea*, and it was inspired by the topic that was important in Latvia during the final decade of the Soviet occupation (until 1991) and in the following years – namely, the writers and composers of this period often turned to the theme of urbanization and its dangerous consequences for the homeland's nature¹. *The Sad Serenades* by Einfeldē are dedicated to the Baltic Sea and the instruments frequently imitate the lonely and plaintive voices of seabirds. The use of the monogram reflects the composer's highly personal attitude towards the sea (in the first half of the 1970s she sometimes spent her summers at the beach in Bērziems).

In Example 1 the pitches of the monogram are used in the part of the first violin and then in the part of the viola. Consequently the seconds E-F and E-D are transformed into ninths, which are mostly descending, sometimes also into sevenths. However, in this case the shrillness of these intervals is softened with the performance indication ‘dolce’.

Another example is the piano piece *Albumleaf* (*Albuma lapa*, 1988). Here the composer has given two versions of her monogram which could be characterized as a manifestation of her two egos – perhaps a certain analogy to Eusebius and Florestan by Robert Schumann. The first manifestation is found in the very beginning of this work (Ex. 2, mm. 1–3) where the pitches of the monogram are given in a little transformed succession, also not E-F-E-D-E, but rather E-F-E-D. The main intervals in this version are seconds, therefore it appears to be flowing and sounds melodious, like a melancholic cantilena, and reflects the lyrical, neoromantic aspect of Einfeldē's music. The impact of the waltz must also be mentioned. In this respect, it is significant that the

¹ Other examples are the Seventh Symphony by Ādolfs Skulte with the title *Preserve Nature!* (1981) and works by Pēteris Vasks with the imitation of the voices of birds (the piano fantasy *Landscapes of the Burnt-out Earth*, 1992, et al.)

Example 1. Maija Einfeldė, *The Sad Serenades*: see mm. 31–33 (violin 1) and 35–39 (viola)

Example 2. Maija Einfeldė, *Albumleaf*: the beginning

creator of many piano waltzes Fryderyk Chopin is one of Einfeldė’s favourite composers. This follows from her statement that also reflects the possible autobiographical background of the interaction between the elements of the waltz and the monogram:

“It is admirable how such a pedant like Chopin can be so poetic. Every note to him is important and has its own place, and it is unlike Liszt, from whose works we can take out entire texture layers, and it will sound good anyway. In my youth, I had a dream of becoming a pianist – interpreter of Chopin, unfortunately it was a post-war period and I did not have the privilege of systematic piano lessons” (Einfeldė 2012: Interview).

The second version of the monogram is found in measures 7–10 of Example 2. It reflects a drastically different aspect of the personality and also of music of Einfeldė. The melodic line is not flowing, but rather broken, and the waltz could be perceived as a desperate attempt to forget any painful memories which recall themselves all the time with the sharply dissonant stitches of the minor ninths and with sforzando accents. The recognition by Einfeldė could be mentioned here: good music is able to torment just like the novels by Fyodor Dostojevski (Einfeldė 2012: Interview).

2.2. Interaction of the monogram with another pitches

The monogram by Einfelds frequently appears in close interaction with other pitches. They may be different, however almost always an interval of the tritone can be heard. In many cases, it appears as a diminished fifth between the highest pitch of the monogram, namely, F, and the pitch H². An example is the third movement from the already mentioned cycle *The Sad Serenades*. A revolving figuration is based on the pitches of the monogram, E, F and D, which are given in a transformed succession, and also a pitch H is added. Later the same pitches are sharply and aggressively repeated fortissimo risoluto, and it seems that they rightly reflect an idea of a fatal inevitability that follows from the subtitle (*Three Songs for the Dying Sea*: see Ex. 3).

Example 3. Maija Einfelds, *The Sad Serenades*: movement 3, mm. 52–55

We can find a partially similar expression in the second movement from the Sonata-Meditation by Maija Einfelds (1982/83). The last (second) version of this work was dedicated to the memory of Jānis Ivanovs (1906–1983) – the former teacher of Einfelds at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian State Conservatory (nowadays the Music Academy). The work includes stylistic allusions to the music by Ivanovs: it begins with the quote from his piano piece *Andante Replicato* (1963). However, here some impact by Shostakovich can also be seen; Einfelds recognizes that she was influenced by both these great symphonists although they are very different (“in contrast to Shostakovich who prefers long polyphonic development, Ivanovs tends to the splitting and elaborating of brief motifs” – Einfelds 2012: Interview). In this case, the relationship to Shostakovich is manifested in the frequent use of the lowered mode that various researchers have mentioned as a characteristic feature of music by Shostakovich³, and also in the interpretation of the whole cycle because such a structure of sonata is never found in the works by Ivanovs, but it is characteristic for the final composition by Shostakovich: his Sonata for Viola and Piano (1975). Namely, there are three movements in the Sonata-Meditation by Einfelds, and the fast second movement is surrounded by two slow ones. The monogram E-F-E-D-E (with some added pitches) appears as a hidden melodic line in the piano figuration at the beginning of each triplet. Here we can see a reference to a tradition from the baroque age, when composers sometimes included their melodic material, also B-A-C-H, in the hidden polyphony. The combination of the monogram with the tritone is evident when we take into account another line of the texture. Namely, the pitch H is repeated in the piano left hand figuration, at the end of the each triplet, and it forms an augmented fourth against the pitch F that is the melodic pique of the monogram (Ex. 4).

The improvement of the monogram E-F-[E]-D-E with the tritone reflects a great importance of this interval in the melodics

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Example 4. Maija Einfelds, Sonata-Meditation: the beginning of the second movement

² Pitch H – here and further B natural according to the American Standard Pitch Notation.

³ See more about it in: Carpenter 1995: 93, 95–96, et al.

by Einfeldē. She admits that she discovered the possibilities of the tritone already at a young age, thanks to the War Requiem by Benjamin Britten (1961/62). During study years⁴ it was her favorite composition, and Einfeldē was especially fascinated by the varied interpretations of this interval in the melody and harmony of the Requiem. The use of the tritone in the combination with the monogram also changes character of the latter; it sounds shriller and in this respect is moving closer to the degree of expressiveness of B-A-C-H or D-Es-C-H rather than a simple E-F-[E]-D-E.

2.3. Verticalisation of the monogram

Another important group of changes in the monogram by Einfeldē is connected with its verticalisation. This trait particularly clearly reflects a close interaction and even convergence between harmony and melody which is a significant aspect of contemporary music. It may be noted that Shostakovich, whose style was an important source of inspiration for the early Einfeldē, used the monogram D-Es-C-H mostly horizontally, as a melody, although there are also exceptions, such as his String Quartet No. 6 (1956): each movement of this work is closed by a verticalised D-Es-C-H which appears in various harmonic contexts. In turn, for Maija Einfeldē the verticalisation of the melody is not an exception, but rather a characteristic feature and some typical models could be differentiated.

Firstly, a contrapuntal combination of almost the entire monogram in a certain instrumental or vocal part with monotonous repetitions of its microstructure could be mentioned here – the minor second E-F being in another one. Thereby Einfeldē highlights the funeral semantic that is historically connected with a descending intonation of a minor second and can very frequently be found in her works. An example is the lyrical and quiet final phase from the chamber oratory *At the Edge of the Earth...* (*Pie zemes tālās...*) for mixed choir (1996). The monogram E-F-E-D-E is performed by the first soprano, and the minor second F-E is repeated by the second alto. Other choral parts contain different material; therefore, the general mood of the music acquires a particular ambiguity (Ex. 5).

Example 5. Maija Einfeldē, *At the Edge of the Earth...*: movement 4, mm. 107–114 (see the pitches of the monogram in the parts of soprano 1 and alto 2)

⁴ Einfeldē has graduated from the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian State Conservatory (nowadays the Music Academy) 1966.

A partially similar verticalisation can be observed in the Third sonata for violin and piano (1990). The violin plays all pitches of the monogram, and the bass of the piano part includes an interval of sad character – a minor third D-F which is also derived from the monogram and is performed as a sustained ostinato. The funeral semantic that is so important for Einfelds is also strongly expressed here. The middle lines of the texture contain other pitches, as well.

In the Concerto for viola and chamber orchestra (2011) the monogram is used both at the beginning and end of the work, and it reminds of a certain art of a signature. A similarity to its interpretation in the previous examples can be observed in the conclusion of the Concerto. The pitches of the monogram are included in two tegral lines: namely, the double basses play only the minor third D-F, and the violas repeat the sad minor second E-F. The sustained pedal point E is also used in the parts of the first violins, and thereby the importance of this pitch as the basis of the monogram is highlighted (Ex. 6).

The image shows a musical score for the ending of the Concerto for viola and chamber orchestra. It features six staves: S. Vla. (Solo Viola), Vln. I (Violin I), Vln. II (Violin II), Vla. (Viola), Vo. (Voice), and Db. (Double Bass). The monogram pitches (E, F, D) are highlighted in the parts of violins 1, violas, and double basses.

Example 6. Maija Einfelds, Concerto for viola and chamber orchestra: the ending (see the pitches of the monogram in the parts of violins 1, violas and double basses)

Another model of verticalisation is the distribution of three pitches of the monogram – E, F and D – between three textural lines so that each of these pitches is monotonously repeated, and therefore obtains an expression that is similar to incantations. Such art of the monogram by Einfelds is found in compositions that have been inspired by folklore, for example, in her choral work *May Ballad* (*Maija balāde*, 1997) which is based on the poem by Aspazija; the topic is a witches' Sabbath. The mood of pagan mysticism is also achieved with a specific use of the monogram: in the measures 121–125 its pitches are monotonously repeated in the parts of the second soprano, the second alto, both tenor parts and the first basso (Ex. 7).

The image shows a musical score for the ending of the May Ballad. It features six staves: Soprano (Soprano), Alto (Alto), Tenor (Tenor), Bass (Bass), and two piano accompaniment staves. The monogram pitches (E, F, D) are highlighted in the vocal parts.

Example 7. Maija Einfelds, *May Ballad*: mm. 121–125

It may be noted that magical motifs have always attracted Einfelds both in archaic Latvian and oriental cultures. It follows from this quote:

“I test everything with my voice! I listened to the recordings of shamans. They were from Tuva and the Himalayas. The melodic material is very simple, but what’s odd is the creation of the sound as the howling of the wind or wolves. ... It is something unbelievably beautiful. ... And these old times – it is so fascinating!” (Aperāne 2000)

An archaic nuance of the monogram can also be observed in the organ piece *From Antiquity* (*Iz senseņiem laikiem*, 1992). The pitches of the monogram are repeated monotonously in different lines of the texture at the beginning of the work, and thereby introduce the listener to the tranquil mood of the composition. The very gradual increase and decrease of the number of pitches highlights a static character of the music (Ex. 8), and this feature is also characteristic for the archaic form-building.

Example 8. Maija Einfelds, *From Antiquity*: the beginning

3. Concluding remarks

Analysis of the use of the monogram in the music by Maija Einfelds suggests some significant conclusions:

- Although the monogram E-F-[E]-D-E itself does not have as dramatic expression as B-A-C-H or D-Es-C-H, this melodic sign is used by the composer only in works of serious and frequently also tragic content⁵. This feature corresponds to the general mood of her music that was rightly described by the philosopher Ilmārs Šlāpīns in his interview with Einfelds under the title *Sisyphus is starting from scratch* (*Sīzīfā sāk no nulles*: Einfelds 2003). The composer has achieved the dramatic character of her monogram in different ways, such as the registral dispersing of the pitches, the adding of the tritone intonation, etc.
- Out of the two aforementioned arts of monogram described by the musicologist Juferofa (2013) – the exoteric (open) and the esoteric (partially hidden) – more characteristic for Einfelds is the second model. The monogram by Einfelds frequently appears only as a fleeting vision and even if it is structurally enclosed from the previous musical material it soon freely and smoothly emerges with the following one, or vice versa. This esoteric interpretation reflects spontaneity as a characteristic feature of the musical form-building by Einfelds because the changes of the musical material in her works are frequently flowing.
- The arts of interpretation of a monogram in the music by Einfelds reflect both the succession to classical traditions and the contemporary approach. The relationship to classical traditions is expressed in the addition of other pitches to the monogram. The contemporary approach is particularly clearly seen in different arts of the verticalisation of the melody of monogram and also in the registral dispersions of the pitches (e.g., its use in two versions, with a cantilena of seconds and with shrill soundings of septims or ninths) so that it occasionally loses its melodic character⁶.

⁵ It is not found in her very few humorous works, such as *White Buck Swimming by the Sea* (*Balts buķelis peld pa jūru*, 2003) for a choral group, a.o.

⁶ As another outstanding example of this art of interpretation of monogram could be mentioned the Canon in Memory of Igor Stravinsky by Alfred Schnittke (1971). This work is created as variations for string quartet, and includes very different registral versions of the monogram by Stravinsky (the monogram was created from some letters in the name, patronym and family of the composer: IGor FEDorowitSCH StrAvin.Sky).

The study could be helpful for further comparative analysis of the monograms by Einfelds and other composers. This topic deserves research in depth because it would allow us to better understand both the history of musical monograms and some possibilities of melodic expression in contemporary music in general.

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Kai kurie monogramos melodinės interpretacijos tipai: Maijos Einfelds monogramos (E-F-[E]-D-E) atvejo analizė

Santrauka

Muzikinių monogramų pomėgis dažnai signalizuoja kompozitoriaus polinkį į dramatinę ir filosofinę raišką, subtekstus, kuriuos reikia iššifruoti. Pažymėtina, kad žymius skirtingų laikotarpių kompozitorius, pamėgusius monogramas, sieja tam tikri stilistiniai panašumai. Užtenka paminėti Johanno Sebastiano Bacho muzikos įtaką Dmitrijui Šostakovičiui. Tuo tarpu latvių šiuolaikinės muzikos kūrėjas Maija Einfelds (g. 1939) pripažįsta, kad D. Šostakovičiaus muzika padarė didelę įtaką jos ankstyviesiems kūriniams.

Monograma E-F-[E]-D-E M. Einfelds muzikoje yra dažnai naudojamas ir didelį prasminį krūvį turintis ženklas. Nors ši melodinė formulė neturi tokio individualizuoto skambesio kaip B-A-C-H ar D-Es-C-H, tačiau Einfelds kūrinuose ji labai išraiškinga, nes pasirodo įdomiuose melodiniuose kontekstuose.

Straipsnio tikslas – plačiau panagrinėti šiuos kontekstus, atkreipiant dėmesį į tokius monogramos išraiškumą sustiprinančius aspektus, kaip kad registrinio išdėstymo įvairovė, sąveika su kitais melodiniais elementais ir faktūrinis kontekstas.

Šiuo tyrimu siekiama giliau pažinti Maijos Einfelds muzikos stilių, taip pat pateikti naujų įžvalgų apie bendresnes monogramų – įvairių kompozitorių kūryboje naudojamų melodinių ženklų – interpretacijos tendencijas.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: monograma kaip melodinis ženklas, Maija Einfelds, registrinis išdėstymas, sąveika su kitais garsų aukščiais, vertikalizacija.