*Ketevan CHITADZE*

# Mikheil Shugliashvili –
# A Stranger from the Georgian Avant-Garde
*Micheilis Šugliašvilis – nepažįstamasis iš Sakartvelo avangardo*

Tbilisi State Conservatoire, 0108 Griboedov str. 8/10, Tbilisi, GEORGIA
ketevan.chitadze@tsc.edu.ge

**Abstract**

Mikheil Shugliashvili (1941–1996) is one of the founders of Georgian avant-garde music. In the 1960s and '70s, he wrote a series of works that were contemporary with global processes despite the informational vacuum or ideological pressure of that time. His work was in fact "repressed" during the Soviet period, and it has been gaining a new life in recent decades. Shugliashvili's orchestral and piano pieces are performed with great success both in Georgia and at prestigious European festivals, and both Georgian and foreign researchers show a growing interest in his work.

The perspective of studying Shugliashvili's music was different until now. The literature included encyclopedia-type articles of general content or concert/radio programs, or it was discussed in a general context with other artistic events. The perspective chosen in the present work differs from all others and focuses on specific theoretical (peculiarities of musical language, notation issues) problems in a historical context. Accordingly, using various methods of musicological research is used in the article.

**Keywords:** Mikheil Shugliashvili, graphic notation, Georgian avant-garde, serialism.

**Anotacija**

Micheilis Šugliašvilis (1941–1996) – vienas iš Sakartvelo avangardinės muzikos kūrėjų. XX a. septintajame ir aštuntajame dešimtmečiais jis parašė nemažai kūrinių, kurie, nepaisant tuomečio informacinio vakuumo ar ideologinio spaudimo, sutapo su pasaulinių procesų tendencijomis. Sovietmečiu jo kūryba iš tiesų buvo „represuota", o pastaraisiais dešimtmečiais ji atgyja naujam gyvenimui. Šugliašvilio kūriniai orkestrui ir fortepijonui su dideliu pasisekimu atliekami Sakartvele ir prestižiniuose Europos festivaliuose, jo kūryba vis labiau domisi Sakartvelo ir užsienio tyrėjai. Naudodamasis akustinių instrumentų ištekliais, kompozitorius kuria visiškai originalią muziką, labai dažnai panašią į elektroninę medžiagą, kurios kiekvienas elementas kvėpuoja savo erdvėje ir laike ir yra kuriamas, plėtojamas ir užbaigiamas klausytojo akivaizdoje. Ieškodamas naujų tembrų įvairiais instrumentais, jis taiko gana įdomias artikuliacijos ir instrumentų mainų technikas, kurios dažnai peržengia tradicinės notacijos ribas ir atsiskleidžia dėmesį prikaustančiu grafiniu vaizdu.

Straipsnyje įvairių kūrinių pavyzdžiu aptariami kai kurie Šugliašvilio muzikinės kalbos bruožai ir komponavimo metodai.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** Micheilis Šugliašvilis, grafinė notacija, Sakartvelo avangardas, serializmas.

## Introduction

Mikheil Shugliashvili (1941–1996) is a Georgian avant-garde composer. Interest in his body of work has been increasing in the republic of Georgia as well as outside its borders. Because of his use of mathematical reasoning in music, some researchers have referred to him as a Georgian Xenakis. However, in a way, he reminds us of Edgard Varèse as well. Using acoustic instruments, he creates entirely original music, very often similar to electronic material with every single element breathing within its space and time, and created, developed, and concluded in front of the listener. While looking for new timbres on various instruments, the composer applies interesting techniques of articulation and interchange between instruments, which often goes beyond traditional notation and is displayed in a compelling graphic picture. The composer also very interestingly constructs works whose structuring range

and gradation can be seen from serialism to minimalism. Time is of great importance in Shugliashvili's music: the structure is usually time accurate both in terms of the whole and its integral parts and is often symmetrical on both the micro- and macro-levels.

Before talking directly about his works and composition methods, I will briefly review Georgian music to present Shugliashvili's music in its historical context.

## Georgian music and Mikheil Shugliashvili

New Georgian professional music went through an intense evolution process in the twentieth century. Many composers developed various directions and different genres. As a matter of fact, during one century, Georgian music was in "accelerated mode" and went down a path that included the acquisition of classical traditions and

enrichment with national features, which later led to the establishment of new modern directions.

Because of historical fate or misfortune, the entry of European music into Georgia started with a considerable delay, from the second half of the nineteenth century, and this period is considered the beginning of new Georgian professional music (Old Georgian professional music includes hymns developed at a fairly high level in the Middle Ages). Until the second half of the twentieth century in Georgian opus-music, we mainly have organic and sometimes inorganic examples of the combination of folklore and European classicism or romanticism and as usual, mainly vocal genres prevail. This is the process of learning and mastering classical standards and at the same time, revealing national identity. However, it is necessary to note here that in terms of relevance, Georgian music of this period is significantly behind the European and American music of that period (unlike the tenth and eleventh century, when polyphonic chants were already developed in Georgia, as in Europe).

Throughout almost the whole twentieth century (except for the short period of independence in 1918–1921, when a prominent example of Georgian music was created, Zacharia Paliashvili's opera *Abesalom and Eteri*) European culture entered Georgia through Russia, and it was strictly controlled.

> Cultural policy of the Soviet Union played an essential role in the musical life of the Soviet Georgia; furthermore, politically driven culture often defined the degree of the interrelation with the "global" musical processes. (Sharikadze 2018: 17)

Social realism did not recognize the modern global processes outside it. Moreover, the system fought against anyone who was even slightly interested in this "forbidden fruit." Fortunately, the borders were partially opened from time to time, but for a long time Georgian culture was in a vacuum and the modern achievements of European music were, in fact, unknown to it.

In the development of new Georgian music and, in general, Georgian culture, the 1960s to the 1990s are of special importance. In this period the general evolutionary processes that took place in Georgian literature, theater, cinema, and music were caused by the new mood created by the social-political "warming." After the partial alleviation of isolation, Georgian artists showed great interest in new information, which was still limited. In addition to new information, artists were given more or less creative freedom, which was no less important. In the 1960s, a whole generation of innovative composers appeared. Naturally, they were kept in the shadow of the system, and their names were known only to a narrow circle for a long time, although they created (and some still create) real new Georgian music. Mikheil Shugliashvili, Natela Svanidze, Nodar Mamisashvili, and Teimuraz Bakuradze (and to a

certain extent, Sulkhan Nasidze) were composers who, even in the Soviet period, when everything "new" was associated with a certain risk, took bold steps towards novelty, thus creating Georgian avant-guard. Their new way of thinking was of great importance for the development of modern Georgian music. However, as I have already mentioned, they had no support from the system.

Since the 1960s, new processes were introduced in different ways. One of the important spaces in this regard was the Warsaw Autumn festival, where European, American and Soviet musicians met and exchanged information and experiences.

> [...] during the 1956–1991 years Warsaw Autumn Festival had been representing one of the most important zones of cross-border cultural contact during the Cold War, for its eclectic programming featured musical works and performers from both the Soviet and American zones of cultural, political, and economic influence. (Jakelski 2014: 189)

The "contact zone" of the Warsaw festival gave new inspiration to many composers, although there were those who had never been to such a festival due to being on the "black list" and in whose work modern global processes developed by themselves. The achievements of these composers were modern and appropriate to the global processes even in the conditions of information scarcity. Shugliashvili is one of them. In Nana Sharikadze's article, in which she refers to the music of Mikheil Shugliashvili and Natela Svanidze as "repressed," she writes:

> M. Shugliashvili represents unique example of the "impact" without contact due to the fact that he has never been allowed to be part of the so called "contact zone". (Sharikadze 2019: 24)

Mikheil Shugliashvili was undeniably distinguished among the composers of his generation by his unique talent, original musical language, and compositional methods. However, unfortunately, neither the system nor his contemporaries and colleagues properly understood him. The innovation and originality in his works, which were unacceptable to the Soviet system, were probably the reason why they were rarely performed or published for a long time.

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Mikheil Shugliashvili was born in 1941 in Tbilisi. In 1964, he graduated from the Faculty of Composition of the Tbilisi State Conservatory under the guidance of Andria Balanchivadze. From 1959, he taught music theory and solfeggio in Tbilisi music schools. He had his own original method of teaching, which was very popular among students as well as a circle of commendable colleagues.

Mikho's [friends and students used to call him – K. Ch.] this, it must be said, rather simple method involved adapting/bringing all musical disciplines (including theoretical subjects) to practical music making and was fun, effective, and thus attractive to people of all ages and backgrounds. Whether it was a talented child, whose musicality made his parents decide to "bring him to Mikho", or a "still in search", a semi-interested teenager, who had never been interested in music before, or at least – an adult who was introduced to music late, in the middle of his student life (no matter the field of study), if he suddenly decided to devote himself to music [...]. (Kiknadze 2019: 8)

In addition to his pedagogical activity, he was a member of the USSR Composer's Union (1967–1991), and a board member of the USSR Composer's Union (1992–1996). He was also a music editor for the Association of Animated Films at the Georgian Film Cinema-Studio (1975–1978) and an artistic director for the first computer-based music studio at the Kvali Cinema Company.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Shugliashvili created a number of instrumental works in which various compositional techniques are used – from serial counterpoint to meditative minimalism[1]; in addition, he composed music for feature and animation films. Unfortunately, from his already short list of works, a number of scores have been completely or partially lost.[2] Moreover, in the last 17 years of his life (1979–1996) Shugliashvili did not write any music. But in 1996, with the support of the Open Society Georgia Foundation, he founded the first computer music studio in Tbilisi, thus making his dream come true. He was planning to implement many original compositional ideas through the computer, but he died soon after.

## Shugliashvili's style and compositional methods

The musicological literature about Mikheil Shugliashvili is not very diverse. So far, there are only a few sources through which we can get an impression of his musical thinking. For example, in the article for the Oxford Dictionary by prominent Georgian musicologist Leah Dolidze, we read:

His musical thinking was influenced in part by scientific positivism, and also by information theory and structuralism. Much is determined by a cult of the objective, in which his conception of sound is arrived at constructively and logically by means of various number categories inherent in the music, a process to which he attached special importance. In his development of the concept of the transformation of nature in art, he investigated the exterior and interior qualities of structure, analysing its properties from the widest possible range of means. This method led to constant changes in the tension, solidity, rhythm, dynamics and timbre of the structure. In a manner related to some of Stockhausen's experiments,

he tried to unite these parameters into acoustic impulses and subjected the initial cell or group to spatial displacements. Later this method is enriched by the inclination, characteristic of minimalist music, towards the exposure of the semantic meaning of the structure. His music consists of the extended intonating of separate intervals and chords which themselves comprise a single row of overtones; he presupposes the listener's concentration on the micro-details of the sound process. (Dolidze 2001)

Georgian musicologist Marina Kavtaradze writes the following about his composition process:

In his compositional process he is characterized by analytical, structuralist, and rational reasoning. He imitates natural phenomena and provides algorithmic organization to mathematical models, sounds and rhythmic materials. Following a constructivist approach, he developed a new concept of sound in his music through various number of theories. The utilization of such methods brings his pieces, despite their sharp adherence to structures, to permanent variability in the tension, intensity of structure, rhythm, dynamics, and timbre. In Shugliashvili's works, these parameters are transformed into acoustic impulses in order to shed light unto the semantic meanings of the structure, and are enriched with the principles typical of minimalist music. His music is characterized by sustained sound of separate intervals and chords, which make palpable the overtones and urges the listeners to concentrate on the note. (Kavtaradze 2018: 5)

Finally, we can look at the description of Shugliashvili's compositional method by his favorite student, composer, performer, and teacher Rezo Kiknadze:

Mikho's music is based on the world of numbers, by which all parameters of music are described and organized, above all – time: structuring it, organizing the material in time so that it becomes a process – was one of the (main) focuses of Mikho's composition lessons, and it was the quintessence of the composition. Arithmetic sequences called "progressions" leading to large structural accelerandos and ritardandos, pulses of different lengths, superimposed and termed as "polychrony", – such systematic numerical manipulations are the basis of his compositions and pedagogical concepts. Not a single one of his works is created without a strictly thought-out organizational chart of all parameters, At the same time, the rhythm (sorted into micro-, medio- and macro-rhythms) becomes the main basis for determining the entire textural dramaturgy of the work, and it is equally well and interestingly matched with any sound, whether it is a simple chromatic scale or completely tonal bricks of some quote by Chopin (components, motifs). (Kiknadze 2019: 9)

While working on material about Mikheil Shugliashvili, it was very important for me to listen to the audio recording that he sent to his student Rezo Kiknadze from Tbilisi to Lübeck in the 1990's. In addition to some guidance in the recording, he describes his own composition method. In fact:

[...] you build the dramaturgy of the piece not as a pure harmonic dramaturgy, but as the dramaturgy of the mass of the sound. Like with Xenakis, (he has his own theory), here not a single sound matters by itself, neither does the harmony – simply said, it is the mass of sounds of certain timbres and registers. This way we get not only the timbral dramaturgy, but the dramaturgy of the sound mass. The principals of this dramaturgy can be applied in tonal music. Here, in fact, tonal music loses itself and becomes a framework. The same way cantus firmus was lost in real sound and it was only the fundament, old blueprint, on which a completely new category of music was created. (GPB, Cadenza)

Shugliashvili had a phenomenal perception of the integrity of the construction and time. This was also reflected in his teaching methodology. As Kiknadze writes:

I learned from Mikho that time and its structuring can be done on several levels and that the form of the work is subject to rhythmic contemplation (discussion, analysis) as well as its parts, and parts of the latter, and so on – down to micro rhythms. "Formopanoramas" were not the only method to practice the relationship between material and form during lessons with Mikho: one of the most fun and effective means was when he would play the tape with the piece about to be discussed two times faster on his tape recorder and record it like that. Then he would repeat the same, doubling the speed again and so on, until, for example, the whole sonata allegro form was presented into one short musical phrase, with its specific and meaningful rhythmic structure, which is almost impossible to perceive when listening at normal speed, but after accelerated observation, or rather, in the background of familiarity and knowledge of that harmonic and structural macro-rhythmic – even at normal speed it is extremely interesting and dramatically experienced. The inconvenience of the analog medium (recorder tape) at that time was that it raised the pitch by an octave while doubling the speed, and made our observations finite, and after about 8 times acceleration (up by 3 octaves), it already gave us a rather funny sound, but the harmonic rhythm and therefore the structure was still perceived perfectly and the clarity was not compromised. With digital technology, this aspect is even less of a problem: pitch and speed can be separated and controlled independently from each other, thereby speeding up virtually infinitely while maintaining the same octave location! This is how we deepened and mastered the form as a macro-rhythm, this is how we studied structuring and size-weight, such a noteworthy and cautionary aspect of composition. (Kiknadze 2019: 9)

The micro- and macro-rhythm of the form was the main thing for Mikheil Shugliashvili, and that is why he was known to draw the bar lines in advance and clearly defined the details of the construction from the beginning. He paid special attention to the time setting of the work both as a whole and at the level of its parts, and in many cases (for example, in *Gradations*, *Pastorale* and *Largo e Presto*) the time setting of the component parts of the work (sometimes even measures) were equal.

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Each of Shugliashvili's piece is distinguished by a sophisticated structure on both the micro- and macro-level. However, in my opinion, one of the last opuses by the composer, *Gradations* for orchestra written in 1979, is the peak of structuring, which can be considered from many angles.

Two compositional methods are simultaneously used in *Gradations*: minimalism and serialism. Minimalism is manifested in the scarcity of material and the extreme economy of its transformation, while serialism is the guiding principle of structuring the construction. The basis of the work is a series, the main element of which is the interval of the fifth. A series of *Gradations* is a sequence of fifths and fourths in which the first and eighth, second and seventh, and fourth and ninth intervals repeat each other (see Figure 1). In fact, this simple-at-first-glance sequence of intervals is the starting point of the concept of the entire work. And, what is most important, both the construction as a whole and its component parts, as well as the series, have a mirror-like (retroversive) look.

Two elements – the interval of the fifth and the chromatic scale – play an important role in the work as a whole and in the series: the series itself begins with the interval A–E and its movements often end on the same interval, while the ninth interval (F–C) is unstable – it acts as a kind of bridge in the series, when the clutch, ostinato repetition of the complete sequence of the series is repeated. If we look at this interval series horizontally, we will find that it consists of two sub-rows. On one hand, it is an ascending chromatic scale from A to F (Figure 2), and on the other hand, it is a combination of seconds and thirds, which, in transposed



**Figure 1.** Mikheil Shugliashvili, *Gradations* (1979), series of the composition: a sequence of fifths and fourths.
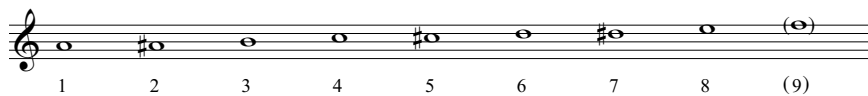
**Figure 2.** Mikheil Shugliashvili, *Gradations* (1979), ascending chromatic scale from A to F.



**Figure 3.** Mikheil Shugliashvili, *Gradations* (1979), a combination of seconds and thirds as the monogram BACH.

form, from different heights, repeats the monogram BACH (Figure 3), especially beloved and well-known to musicians (perhaps this connection is not at all accidental, because it is known that Bach was one of Mikheil Shugliashvili's favorite composers).

The abovementioned two elements of the series – the fifth and the chromatic scale – have a special semantic purpose: the interval of the fifth is the cornerstone of the system with tonality as a support, and the chromatic tone can be perceived as the antipode of tonality, a symbol of fluctuation. Thus, throughout the work, the composer shows the beauty of gradations of solidity and fluctuation.

The composer's work with the series is different both at the macro-level – in each section, and within the sections, in different instrumental parts. It is important to add here that the series is not transposed throughout the work. We only have examples of its various modifications (horizontal, vertical, and diagonal).

*Gradations* consist of three section-waves in equal proportion of time (5 + 5 + 5 = 15) and, as already mentioned, represent a mirror structure. It is the different methods of using the series, its modifications and permutations that allow us to precisely define the contours of this symmetrical construction.

In the beginning of *Gradations*, the elements of the series are gradually transposed with the following principle of adding numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 (9) (a similar principle of numerical increase is found in the *Grand Chromatic Fantasy* and the *Sextet*). Shugliashvili conducts the series with different rhythmic patterns in the parts of different instruments (eighths with flutes, fourths with clarinets, mixed with bassoons, sixteenths with the first piano, and half lengths dominate in the part of the second piano). Despite the rhythmic difference, every part follows the same principal of adding the numbers mentioned above. After completion of the series, its metric variations start. The most intense in this sense is the first piano part that carries the series with the sixteenth notes and accents different intervals metrically with each repetition. Kaleidoscopically, different images are carved from the same material before the listener. In this section the fluctuating, chromatic part of the series spent in the woodwind and piano part is provided by the string instruments as a solid and diatonic background – in their part, the first vertical of the series – the fifth (A–E) – sounds stable. This time, the retroverse modification of the series sounds different with varied string instruments, like the brass and pianos in the expository section. Now in the part of the first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double
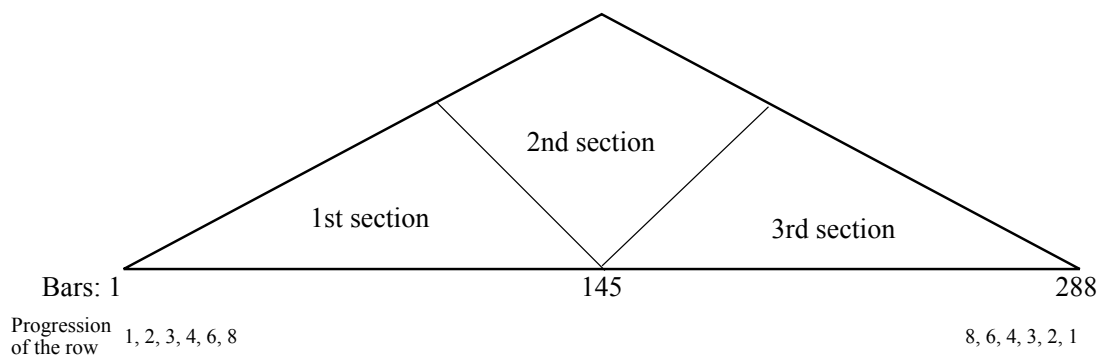


**Scheme 1.** Mikheil Shugliashvili, *Gradations* (1979), structure of the composition.

basses, we have a series with different lengths (half, quarter, mixed, eighth and sixteenth), although in contrast with the first interval section the chromatic horizontal of the series is already emphasized here. The intervals in the vertical of the first and second violoncello are soon "influenced" by the chromatic timbre of the violas, cellos, and double basses. In this section, the chromatic tone and the BACH motif are mixed and imitated. The intensity increases, and the fabric becomes rhythmically diverse. At a certain point, we also have elements of micropolyphony common in sonoristics. The decay of this first wave-section occurs according to the retroverse principle: the diatonic returns to the string part, the intensity decreases, and the series begins to disconnect according to the following principle of numerical decrease: 9, 8, 6, 4, 3, 2, 1.

The second section of *Gradations* includes the build-up, the immediate climax, and the descent. The climax is limited by diatonic sections. This is a kind of intermedia, the sound of which is relatively relaxed and does not contain chromaticisms. In them, the emphasis is still on the interval fifth and A tone. With the woodwinds, the chromaticism is replaced by a diatonic scale, which is built on the principle of gradual increase and decrease of sounds. This principle is identical with all the instruments (numerical increase and decrease are as follows: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2). In this section, there is a gradual movement from the low register to the high register – from the bass clarinet to the piccolo flute – and the mass of the sound increases, while the emphasis is still on the fifth interval with the strings. The gradual inclusion of chromatic elements of the series in the diatonic section indicates a new stage. We hear the descending chromatic scale with the diatonic sounds for every other note (among which A predominates), and the "chromatic-diatonic" order sounds in unison with the first piano and trumpet. The mass of the sound increases, other wind instruments and the second piano join in with the opposite chromatic movement. Through a gradual increase in dynamics and intensity, a climax is prepared, the beginning of which coincides exactly with the middle of the piece (the first wave of the climax begins at bar 145, and the entire piece is 288 bars). At the climax, the brass plays the intervallic series – against piano clusters, woodwind diatonic scales, and string fifths. Here the polar nature of diatonic and chromatic opposition can be felt the most. The principle of numerical decrease 8, 6, 4, 3, 2, 1 is present when taking the intervals of the series with the brass while descending from the climax. The decay of sound is followed by an intermediate section in which the intervals of the series are permuted.

The third section of *Gradations* is reprise-reversal. The principle used in the first section of the series of rhythmic and metrical ostinato variations gradually returns. Unlike the expository section, here both pianos retreat the chromatic part of the series and emphasize the note A. In this final section, the characteristic elements of all three sections come together. As for the extension of the series, together with the reverse, here the principle of numerical decrease 8, 6, 4, 3, 2, 1 is given. The texture becomes lighter, the sound mass gradually decreases and returns to the point from which it all started – the fifth – A and E.

Thus, *Gradations* is an explicit example of Shugliashvili's virtuoso mastery of modern compositional methods, creating a monolithic composition from the smallest material (Shugliashvili uses a similar principle in a number of works, which we will talk about below). It is a symmetrical construction on both the micro- and macro-levels. The example of this work clearly shows the depth of Shugliashvili's structural thinking and his talent – to create a work with a small amount of material and a total principle of organization, whose score breathes freely, is alive, and captures and fascinates the listener from the very first seconds.

### The mass of sound and its visual and acoustic features

The dramaturgy of sound mass, to which the composer attributed a great importance, can be often seen with one glance in Shugliashvili's scores, the way it is, for example, in his *Polychronia* (1978; Figure 4). However, the elements that often convey different, very interesting sounds contribute to the assembly of the sound mass. In this aspect, among the pieces published by the composer I would single out *Sextet for Two Pianos and String Quartet*, *Pastorale* and *Grand Chromatic Fantasy* (for three pianos).

*Sextet*, which was written between 1973 and 1976 stands out with distinctive and diverse graphic symbols. The composer creates unusually diverse palette of sound mass and interesting dramaturgy using string quartet and two pianos.

The composition is based on alternating sounds with various density and intensity. The constructive elements often unify the sections. In the outer sections, these are two intervals – a minor second and perfect fourth. In the middle sections – a tritone takes the same role. Character-wise there are two – meditative and toccata-based elements taking turns. In toccata-like sections the composer often uses different rhythmic and pitch progressions, while the meditative parts bring associations of the Second Viennese School, especially Webern's pointillism and symmetry.

The use of the timbres of the string quartet in the *Sextet* is very interesting. In addition to the traditional ways of performing we see the new techniques of the twentieth century, which are displayed through graphic symbols. Part of the symbols are the triangles note-head, those often used in Europe, especially by Penderecki, the

**Figure 4.** Mikheil Shugliashvili, *Polychronia* (1978), the dramaturgy of sound mass.

founder of sonorism, and signify the lowest and the highest notes in the range. There are some exceptions where Shugliashvili indicates certain pitches next to the triangles. The symbol for playing behind the bridge is also associated with the polish founder of sonorism (Figure 5). Next to the Penderecki symbols we see the one created by Shugliashvili, which is assumed to signify hitting the body of the instrument (Figure 6). While working on the paper, I talked with the members of the State String Quartet who worked on the piece with the composer in 1976 and had a very successful performance, however, they could not recall such details.

Following the string instruments, there is a lot of symbolic variety in piano parts as well. We have modified notation for clusters, determined by the intentions of the composer. There are rhombus-like note heads, which composer, supposedly, uses for overtones. Kurt Stone has defined these symbols as:

> [...] diamond note-heads for special playing modes or tone production such as half-valve (brass), tablature for string harmonics, falsetto voice, silent depression of keys (piano) etc. (Stone 1980: 31)

Shugliashvili uses combinations symbols for percussion and string instruments to produce different sounds through hitting or knocking the body of the piano. In the mid-parts of the *Sextet* are improvisational sections, where the composer indicates octaves and graphically hints the pitch, within which the pianist should improvise.

The pieces for three pianos written by the composer are interesting examples of using the timbral recourses of piano. It should be noted that three grand pianos are the composer's favorite combination. He has written three pieces for such collaboration, and two of these have attracted our attention because of the used symbols. These are *Pastorale* (1977), *Grand Chromatic Fantasy* (1974–1978), and *Largo e Presto* (1977).

About the *Pastorale*, the composer writes:

> [...] it has the form of triptych (4,5 + 4,5 + 4,5 = 13,5). Each part has one pastorale figure brought out, which is built on intonations of Ionian mode. Each piano part is the row of mechanical sequence, forming the distinctive sounds only through the ensemble polyphony. Three pastorale moods are conveyed, spread through time and acoustic space. (Kavtaradze 2018: 6)

The way the composer divides *Pastorale* into three parts can be seen visually as well. At the same time, on the micro-level, each has its own concept, and their interval principles remind us of the logic behind the overtones.

The first section is based on octave movements, creating the Ionian D-flat mode. By holding the fifth and the gran-pauses so common in his works, the composer prepares the second section, where two other intervals, the fifth

**Figure 5.** Mikheil Shugliashvili, *Sextet* (1973–1976), symbol for playing behind the bridge as the manifestation of sonorism.



**Figure 6.** Mikheil Shugliashvili, *Sextet* (1973–1976), Shugliashvili's symbols to signify hitting the body of the instrument.

and third, come in, which in a way imitates tonal chords. This section is the most intense with its sound mass. In the background we hear signs of tonal harmony, feeling the battle between the pull and the balance, created by the alternating tonic-dominant sound indications and long and short-length notes, conveyed accordingly with notation symbols. The middle part has lots of repetitions and its development reminds us of the principals of the repetitive minimalism – spiral, slow development.

In the third part the focus is on the next interval of the overtone series- the second. The composer uses the rhythmic

and pitch progressions based on the canon imitation principles. As a result, he creates unusual diversity of sound based on the same material.

Similar to the three pianos, although using varied methods, the composer creates different masses of sounds in *Grand Chromatic Fantasy*, which is Shugliashvili's most monumental and multifaceted work (inspired by Bach's chromatic fantasy in D minor). This piece was performed for the first time in 2013, in the Recitation Hall of the Tbilisi State Conservatoire, as a part of the Close Encounters musical festival; it was performed by Tamriko Kordzaia,

Tamar Chitadze, and Nino Kasradze. This premiere was soon followed by a concert in Zurich, where the piece and Shugliashvili's figure in general, received great interest and approval from professionals and amateurs.

The chroma – the smallest element of tempered tuning – is shown in various contexts and dimensions (horizontal, vertical, diagonal). The culmination itself is the combination of Shugliashvili's music with Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy*, first in a stylized form, and later in a quoted form.

> The piece actually has one goal: after 45 minutes, it goes to what we think of when we read the title: with Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy* (without fugue). Well-known passages run wildly, stop and resume past each other again, almost like an organ. Actually, we are in the "concert temple", in the space of sacred art. Powerfully deep and lingeringly fading keystrokes complete the nearly hour-long piece. (Meyer 2013)

In this hour-long piece, the dramaturgy, construction, and the logic of the sequence of the parts as well as the relation of the sound masses are separate topics, but I think it is important to briefly introduce them because these principles can be applicable to the dramaturgy of the other pieces.

The switch between the parts is often distinguished by silence. It is the sound masses of different intensity and silence, which also change, depending on the context. The sound masses follow the wave logic, and they gradually increase the intensity, reach the climax and then decrease. As for the micro-level, the composer mainly uses repetition and canon imitation methods.

Shugliashvili reaches unusual acoustic effects in Chromatic Fantasy using different methods. For example, in the first section, the canon imitation in prima creates the famous effect known in audio engineering as "chorus." In the same section, like *Pastorale,* he uses his own markings to indicate notes with different intensity and duration. It is interesting that only this notation symbol got the attention of Tamara Nagorskaya, who in 1992 published the book *Contemporary Music Notation*. Kurt Stone writes the following about such notation:

> A fair number of composers have been unwilling to forego white note-heads altogether, since the psychological effect of white (relatively long) versus black (shorter) and cue-size (very fast) is undeniable and can be very useful. (Stone 1980: 142)

We see the same markings in the chord vertical of *Grand Chromatic Fantasy*, where the silent cluster held by the assistant in the low register gives a whole different sound to the chords played in the upper register.

An interesting sonority is reached in the middle section when the musician knocks on the body of the piano, which is indicated by a different notation symbol and remark by the composer "quasi Batteria." A rhythmic progression

is used in the development of the section, written with numbers in the manuscript (1x1, 2x2, 3x3, 4x4 ... 12x12). X-shape notes are diverse in pitch. They were assigned different pitches by the trio (Kordzaia, Chitadze, and Kasradze) for a performance in Zurich in 2013. However, in general, symbols like this stand for pitches without certain frequency, Shugliashvili wrote them without any key, on different lines for different parts.

> [...] x-shaped note-heads for indeterminate pitches, noises, speaking voice and unvoiced sounds, release of certain held notes (organ) for sounds of air blown trough an instrument. (Stone 1980: 31).

Similar to *Grand Chromatic Fantasy*, *Largo e Presto* for three pianos stands out with acoustic effects and stereophonic sound. *Largo e Presto* uses two citations from the works of Chopin: one from Prelude No. 20 (*Largo*) and one from the finale (*Presto*) of Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor. As Shugliashvili has mentioned:

> Variations on them are based on the principles of applying register-based and canonical multiplicity and reprisal progressions to the originals, as a result of which a certain kind of sound is created based on acoustic and stereophonic effects. Form-wise, the piece is a triptych, the parts of which, in terms of temporality, have constant ratio with the whole $(4 + 4 + 4 = 12)$. The piece expresses epitaphic emotions, the "sinking" into the static of which leads to a dynamic mood. (Kavtaradze 2018: 5)

*Largo e Presto* was first performed in 1978, at concerts in the Recital Hall of the Tbilisi State Conservatoire (performed by Revaz Tavadze, Ethery Djakeli, and Irakli Avalishvili), and dedicated to the memory of the composer's recently deceased wife and the incredible composer, singer and writer, Inola Gurgulia. *Largo e Presto* was preceded by Inola's Georgian translation of the following words of John Donne:

> No man is an island entire of itself; every man
> is a piece of the continent, a part of the main;
> if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe
> is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as
> well as any manner of thy friends or of thine
> own were; any man's death diminishes me,
> because I am involved in mankind.
> And therefore, never send to know for whom
> the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.
> (*Meditation XVII* from John Donne's *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, 1624)

The first and second phrases/sentences of Chopin's Prelude are the basis of the first and second parts of Shugliashvili's triptych; the third part is based on the finale of Sonata No. 2. In *Largo e Presto*, the composer combined tonally these two works of Chopin – he transposed the Prelude to

the key of the Sonata – B-flat minor. Shugliashvili's choice was probably determined by the mournful character of Chopin's Prelude, which really suits the epitaphic mood, and the finale of the second sonata is its semantic continuation (perhaps it is no coincidence that the following part of Chopin's famous funeral march, which Anton Rubinstein remarked to be "wind howling around the gravestone" was chosen by Shugliashvili for the final section of the epitaphic triptych) and "immersion" in statics is to gradually introduce a dynamic mood.

Chopin's Prelude No. 20 has become a source of inspiration for many musicians throughout history (for example, Ferruccio Busoni composed the set of variations *Variationen und Fuge in freier Form über Fr. Chopin's C-moll Präludium*, and Sergei Rachmaninoff used Prelude No. 20 as his inspiration for *Variations on a Theme of Chopin*, a set of 22 variations in a wide range of keys, tempos, and lengths, Chopin's Prelude also inspired many jazz musicians) and unlike most of them, Shugliashvili's *Largo* is not just variations, but an original example of creating one's own text from someone else's text.

In contrast to *Grand Chromatic Fantasy*, Shugliashvili exposes the other text in *Largo e Presto* from the beginning, without any introduction, and from the very first chords, his attitude to Chopin's Prelude becomes clear. The composer creates his own work from the "bricks" of Chopin's music, in which first the prelude and then the finale of the second sonata is Shugliashvili's acoustic version with a stereophonic effect obtained through canonical imitation.

In the parts of the triptych, Shugliashvili uses different methods of canon multiplication. In the first section, the chords of Chopin's Prelude are immediately imitated: the impulse of the third piano is imitated by the second, and then the first with a delay of one chord/beat. At each repetition of the first movement of Chopin's Prelude (and there are twelve such turns), the composer gradually replaces the opening chords, first in the third, then in the second, and finally in the first piano part, with increasing silence. It is interesting that the logic of numerical increase of silence/ pauses is 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 16, which we find in many of Shugliashvili's works. Each new silence is broken differently. In the first section, each new sound of the first sentence of the prelude is perceived differently, despite the use of similar imitation techniques, because, in addition to silence, the context is changed by the opening chords: In the repetition, the second and first pianos dynamically begin the process of canon imitation of the third piano in the prima after sounding the final chords of the less accented previous sentence. This section is built on the principle of a gradual decrease in dynamics and sound mass from the *fff* of three grand pianos to the *piu ppp* of one grand piano.

Like the functional connection of the first and second sentences of Chopin's Prelude, the first section of Shugliashvili's *Largo e Presto* functionally and dynamically prepares the second, and each repetition of the first sentence ends on the dominant sound of B flat minor, on which in the second section ostinato, in different piano parts and registers, the bell-sounding octave B flat sounds like a logical answer. Throughout the entire second movement, stereophonically, these octave bell cries scattered throughout the entire range and seem to break the chromatic, monotonous, progression of chords from the second movement of Chopin's Prelude.

In the second part, the composer uses a different method of imitation from the first part. In terms of time, the proposta-risposta (leader-follower) is much further apart (6 bits) than the first one, and, when multiplying, the ratio between the three pianos decreases to the length of the triplet (which is even more noticeable in the last third). The pulsation of the imitation gradually accelerates. On one hand, the identical principle of material multiplication, and on the other hand, the metric difference creates the effect of statics and dynamics at the same time. Moving to a lower register, increasing sound intensity, dynamics, and the emphasis of the bass's chromatic moves prepares the third, final section of the triptych. The moment of transition directly to the finale is interesting, where the musical material of the second section of the triptych (the final chords of the first and second pianos) already sounds for some time in the background of the musical material of the third section (the finale of Chopin's Sonata) initiated by the third piano.

Perpetuum mobile and chromaticisms are two impulses dominating in the finale of Chopin's Sonata and preserved with Shugliashvili. At the beginning of this section, all three parts of the piano meticulously follow Chopin's text according to the principle of imitation, whose leader-follower this time is further (by 12 bars) apart from each other in terms of time compared to the first and second sections. After the canon inclusion of all three grand pianos, the free interpretation of Chopin's text begins, and the principle of primal imitation is broken during canon multiplication. The whole section from the low register to the high register tends to cover the entire range of the grand piano, with dynamic ups and downs. At the end of the passage, the metric sync of the three pianos is broken (the composer has indicated the remark "Non-Sync"), followed by the coda, where Chopin's text returns with minor changes. In the coda, there is a temporary pause (*Largo*) and the tonal consolidation of B-flat minor at the expense of repetition of the same phrase with an ending point – octaves from the second section (it has to be noted that in some versions of the author's manuscript of this piece, last nine bars are included without notational content. i.e., replaced with rests).

In this way, *Largo e Presto* is a very interesting example of the use of another text, where, unlike Busoni and Rachmaninoff's variations, we are dealing not with melodic or harmonic variants of the sound material, but with its acoustic transformation through canon multiplication. Through this last technique, Shugliashvili creates a completely new, modern, and original sound from old and well-known music.

## Conclusion

Mikheil Shugliashvili's music carries unusual magnetism. Everything is connected here – from the smallest element to the whole composition. As we have seen, Shugliashvili's musical language encompasses both common and individual symbols, which can be interpreted in many ways because of the absence of the composer's exact instructions. This can be a challenge for a performer in a way, but for the piece itself, it is certitude for its constant changeable "life." I think that as Shugliashvili's musical language, most of the used symbols were somehow a compromise, because the resources available to the composer – meaning the lack of computer (he worked on it intensively only for a few months in the end of his life) – did not give him opportunity to completely carry out his ideas. His own words confirm this:

> All of my pieces are constructed on original technological ideas, based on the numerical relation principles. I have been working in this system since 1973. Today I think that this technology with its nature relates to "computer music". Perhaps for this reason many of my pieces have not been performed and none has been published. In addition, since my student years I have been working on adequate graphic expression of musical form and other theoretical topics, that can only be solved and implemented through computer technology. (Quoted from Shugliashvili's manuscript.)

Nobody knows what Shugliashvili's music would have been if he had lived in Georgia now, when having a computer is no longer a problem.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, Shugliashvili was able, when despite the partial opening of the information vacuum, everything new and original was unacceptable and dangerous, to naturally reflect on the global processes and create real, modern, and time-appropriate Georgian avant-garde music. We can freely place him with the great innovator-composers of the twentieth century, such as Stockhausen, Boulez, and Xenakis in one concert program because the pieces created by Shugliashvili are undoubtedly of high value not only for both Georgian and world music.

## Endnotes

[1]   Shugliashvili's instrumental works: *Symphonieta* (1964), *Five scenes from the Knight in the Panther's Skin* for a chamber choir, harp, piano, 12 string instruments, and a kettle-drum (1965, in five parts), String Quartet (1966), *Three Sketches* for piano (1966), *Suite* for symphony orchestra (1967, in five parts), *Nine Sketches* for nonet (1966), *Album for Children* (1967, twelve piano pieces), *Exercise* for piano (1972), *Sonata Da capo* for piano (1979), *Inversia* for piano and tape-recorder (1974), *Sextet* for two pianos and string quartet (1972–1974), *Grand Chromatic Fantasy (Symphony)* for three pianos (1974–1978), *Largo e Presto (Epitaph)* (1977), *Pastoral* for three pianos (1977–1978), *Polichronia* for symphony orchestra (1978), *Gradations* for symphony orchestra (1979), and others.

[2]   A complete list of Shugliashvili's works can be found on the website www.shugliashvili.com.

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### Santrauka

Micheilis Šugliašvilis (1941–1996) – vienas iš Sakartvelo avangardinės muzikos kūrėjų. XX a. septintajame ir aštuntajame dešimtmečiais jis parašė nemažai kūrinių, kurie, nepaisant tuomečio informacinio vakuumo ar ideologinio spaudimo, sutapo su pasaulinių procesų tendencijomis. Sovietmečiu jo kūryba iš tiesų buvo „represuota", o pastaraisiais dešimtmečiais ji atgyja naujam gyvenimui. Neatsitiktinai būtent Šugliašvilis 1995 m. Tbilisyje įkūrė pirmąją elektroninės muzikos studiją. Pastaruoju metu Šugliašvilio kūriniai orkestrui ir fortepijonui su dideliu pasisekimu atliekami Sakartvele ir prestižiniuose Europos festivaliuose, jo kūryba vis labiau domisi Sakartvelo ir užsienio tyrėjai.

Šugliašvilis neretai vadinamas „kartvelų Xenakiu", tačiau jo kūriniuose galima įžvelgti akivaizdžių sąsajų ir su Edgaro Varèse'o muzika. Kaip ir Varèse'as, Šugliašvilis kūrė aštuntajame dešimtmetyje, neturėdamas kompiuterinių technologijų, tačiau pasitelkdamas gana elementarias priemones jis išgavo originalius akustinius efektus. Naudodamasis akustinių instrumentų ištekliais, kompozitorius eksperimentavo su sąskambiais, jo muzika labai dažnai panaši į elektroninę medžiagą, kurios kiekvienas elementas kvėpuoja savo erdvėje ir laike ir yra kuriamas, plėtojamas ir užbaigiamas klausytojo akivaizdoje. Ieškodamas naujų tembrų įvairiais instrumentais, jis taiko gana įdomias artikuliacijos ir instrumentų mainų technikas, kurios dažnai peržengia tradicinės notacijos ribas ir atsiskleidžia dėmesį prikaustančiu grafiniu vaizdu. Šugliašvilio kūryboje jungiami arba supriešinami minimalizmo, sonorizmo, serijų technikos elementai, originaliai manipuliuojama skaičiais ir matematiniais santykiais. Kai kurie Šugliašvilio muzikinės kalbos bruožai ir komponavimo metodai detaliau nagrinėjami jo kūrinių *Polychronia* (1978), *Sextet* (1973–1976), *Gradations* (1979) pavyzdžiu.