Symphony Features in *The Ukrainian Quintet* by Borys Liatoshynsky

Риси симфонізму в «Українському квінтеті» Бориса Лятошинського

**Abstract.** The paper analyses the features of a symphony style in *The Ukrainian Quintet* by Borys Liatoshynsky, finding that the most researchers consider this work to be a symphony written for string quartet and piano. The grounds for this statement lie in the ideological depth of the dramatic concept of the tragic conflict in *The Quintet*, the scale of thematic transformations, the introduction of monothematism as the basic principle of composition, the use of semantic, genre, modal, melodic and intonation, as well as tonal and harmonic symbolism. The introduction of symphonism as the main method of building the concept led to a more ambitious interpretation of the chamber quintet genre. The author highlights the important role of polyphony in the creation of a multifaceted musical space at different levels of composition—from content, form creating, genre specificity to texture, rhythmic, melodic, and timbre development. Thus, the study dwells on the manifestations of symphonism in the musical drama of *The Ukrainian Quintet*.

**Keywords:** symphonism in the works of Borys Liatoshynsky, *The Ukrainian Quintet*, interpretation of the chamber genre, monothematism.

**Introduction.** Currently, amid the horrible realities of the heroic war of the Ukrainian nation for the right to exist, people all over the world understand the tragic pathos, raised to epic heights of generalization, of the works written under the impression of the events of the World War II by Borys Liatoshynsky, the great Ukrainian twentieth-century composer. The humanism of his creative personality full of dynamics and the will to live confronted the absolute evil of anti-human, destructive Nazi reality, thus giving the musical concepts of the Master a heightened conflict-dramatic perspective. Ideological and spiritual messages in most of his works of that time¹, most notably in the brilliant *Third Symphony* (1951, 1954) that summarizes the apocalyptic realities and consequences of war, convey a deep sense of unity of the personality of an artist and his people. The composer turns to the national existential archetypes through the reproduction and modeling of folklore structures. Defining features of Liatoshynsky’s musical texts of that time is their historical, cultural, and psychological passignificance.

¹ The works of this period include the Suite on Ukrainian Themes for String Quartet (1944), the Second Piano Trio (1942), the Fourth String Quartet (1943), adaptations of folk songs for choral and voice parts with piano, piano preludes.
and historical paradigm of the mid-20th century, deciphering the semantic signs of the time encoded in the polysemic musical space of The Quintet.

**Literature review.** The composer’s epistolary legacy compiled by Marianna Kopytsia (Kopytsia, 1999), the scientific studies of Iya Tsarevych (Tsarevych, 1995b) and Igor Savchuk (Savchuk, 2000, 2008) have become important sources for investigating the worldview fundamentals of the composer’s work and the ideological concept of The Ukrainian Quintet. The inquiries by Marianna Kopytsia (Kopytsia, 2002) and Viktor Samokhvalov (Samokhvalov, 1977) discuss the symphonic nature of the Master’s musical thinking. The stylistic aspect of Boris Liatoshinsky’s creative activities is presented in the works of Tetiana Homon (Homon, 2010), Aleksandra Maloziomova (Maloziomova, 1987), and Ihor Piaskovskiy (Piaskovskiy, 1991). The chamber and instrumental music in the context of the composer’s style and creative method is considered by Olha Zavialova (Zavialova, 2014), Orest Krysa (Krysa, 2006). The studies by Liudmyla Hrysenko (Hrysenko, 1963; Hrysenko, 1973), Boris Demenko (Demenko, 2012), Elena Kosenko (Kosenko, 2008), Orest Krysa (Krysa, 2006), and Olena Martsenikivska (Martsenikivska, 2010) cover the artist’s stylistic features. In the works by Oleksandr Kozarenko (Kozarenko, 2000) and Myroslava Novakovych (Novakovych, 2009, 2012), the composer’s musical heritage is considered as a hyper-text with a large number of semantic references and subtexts.

Still, the study of the typical features of Boris Liatoshinsky’s symphonic method and their individual embodiment in the concept of The Ukrainian Quintet requires a more thorough and detailed approach at the level of sense-making, style, and form making, genre and stylistic specificity.

The aim of the work, thus, is to define and specify the manifestations of symphonism in The Ukrainian Quintet by Boris Liatoshinsky.

**Results and Discussion.** The symphonism of the quintet concept unfolds in a four-part cycle with intense dramatic development and tragic worldview. The first part is an exposition of the main figurative cycle spheres, the formation of which takes place within the sonata form. The structure of the main part (g-moll) of the first movement has a three-part structure with a developing middle. The theme is played first in the viola part, against the background of an arpeggiated piano texture, after which the first violin plays a tonal response (similar to a classical fugue). From c. 1 begins the development of the main theme by the polyphonic intonations in parts of various instruments. The texture gradually thickens leading to a climax—the theme sounds in a chordal texture against the background of arpeggiated passages in the piano, picked up by the strings at its highest point. The gradual accumulation of sonority and textural fragmentation suddenly breaks off, and the connecting developing part continues the movement, which is open and is built on the piano and string calls (the basic grain of the main theme is drawn, a development of sorts). The next stage is a modulation to the key of es-moll, where the main theme sounds in the violin part and in the middle register of the piano in a dramatic presentation against the background of octave moves. The side part of Poco meno mosso is lyrical, performed by the cellos against the background of the piano’s soft triplet chord progressions. The intonation similarity of the main and side themes may be clearly traced, which is determined by their figurative kinship (in both constructions, there is a reliance on the main stages of the scale characteristic of Ukrainian songs). The side part is three-part, and in the middle, there is a development using polyphonic and sequential means. The gradual acceleration and thickening of texture lead to a climax in the side part (the theme sounds in unison by the first violin and cello, in the piano part—arpeggiated figurations). The climax conclusion is a major side theme on the dominant basis of Gdur. The final part is completely subordinated to the idea of monothematism. This is expressed through the repeated monotheme that creates a mood of slowing down and fading.

The development begins with a double basic grain of the main theme in the key of es-moll (resonates with the side part of the Third Symphony) that brings a dramatic tone to the unfolding of the musical texture. General pauses that separate these themes help to aggravate the tension. Further rhythmic fragmentation of the chant in sequential development leads to a change in tempo and character—Allegro risoluto.

The side theme in the development also acquires a dramatic character; it is performed in the key of d-moll by the strings. In c. 11, the intonation grain of the main part is developed, alternately with the element of the side part by the strings—juxtapositions add dynamism to the musical texture. The next turn of tension growth is the superimposition of intonation layers of the main and side themes (c. 12). Such concentration of musical material flows into the climax of Meno mosso ed appassionato assai, where a side theme, presented by octaves against the background of a harmonically modified laid out in chordal texture in the key of fis-moll, sounds with apothecosis. The dynamics rises as a result of harmonic means, the climax is interrupted by an unexpected dynamic contrast (p) with the introduction of the connecting part. This dramatic technique was also used in the main part of the exposition.

The rhythmic fragmentation of the connecting part element leads to a reprise (the main part sounds in the key of g-moll) that is a dramatic climax of the entire first part: the theme is played by the violins, in the alto part—ostinato chants, by the cello—chordal accompaniment, by the piano—a moving chordal texture. The material is developed polyphonically, with the method of stretto presentation by strings and in different registers of the piano. The exquisitely lyrical side part (h-moll, poco meno mosso) is performed alternately by viola, cello, second violin, and first violin. The author uses a polyphonic type of musical texture presentation: theme-contrast. The coda of Poco piu tranquillo is built on the material of the main theme creating the intonation arch of the first part and preparing a logical transition to the second part.
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In the dramaturgy of the second part, the ostinato forms, complex polyphonic layerings of various thematic lines in synthesizing climactic sections acquire special importance that is characteristic of Borys Liatoshynsky’s symphonism. The form of this part is complex three-part: A B A1 (outer sections—in simple two-part, middle—in simple three-part), b-minor tonality.

The ostinato chant by the strings at the beginning is intonationally related to the main theme of the first part. The main theme of the outer sections of the second part (sixteen bars) is a period of repeated structure, where the second period has variational changes. The theme is built on a quartato-fifth intonation, the rhythmic pattern shows analogies with the folk rhythms of the western Ukrainian lands. The theme sounds in the high register of the piano that conveys an abstract-meditative image. The second part of section A is characterized by a textural change in the main theme presentation: in the piano part, the initial chant sounds in a chain of clusters; the strings alternately play the theme—performed by the viola, second violin, cello, and first violin parts (the final part of the theme). Here the composer used techniques of imitative polyphony.

The middle section B, as already noted, has a simple three-part structure: a-c-a1. Section a is characterized by a triplet chant in the alto part. This chant is built on the rising intonation of a minor third followed by a chromatic filling creating an unsettling tense character. Such ostinato structure is also used in other works of Borys Liatoshynsky as an embodiment of the image of death (Maura’s cry from the opera The Golden Ring, chorus to the words of Taras Shevchenko The Sun Rises From Behind the Mountain, etc.).

The theme appears in the primary violin part (eight bars, g-minor). The initial intonation is a rising minor sixth with further reliance on plagal intonation that is characteristic of Ukrainian lyrical songs. The theme has a mournful character and personifies a tragic female image. The counterpoint appears in the second violin, and later in the cello, built on the intonation of the theme. In general, a transparent polyphonic texture is formed on the background of ostinato, where the voices are gradually excluded, with only the ostinato remaining, on the background of which a chant with a dotted rhythm appears introducing the character of a funeral procession. It is based on the rising intonation of a minor sixth.

The next turn in the dramaturgy of the section is the interchange of ostinato in the string parts and the above-mentioned chant by the piano Lento e lugubre. By harmonic transformations in the piano part, the character obtains more dynamics, the size changes, the theme sounds saturated in the strings like a funeral march, an ostinato of sorts with a shifted strong fate creating a character of impermanence and development. Similar melodic and harmonic structures may be seen in the Violin Sonata op. 19. Harmonic and rhythmic changes lead to a march configuration in the piano part. It interchanges with the minor-third ostinato chant by the strings, with which the section B began. Gradually, these intonations are enriched by the use of harmonic and polyphonic development techniques. Due to the musical thickening of a texture, a dramatic climax is achieved, where the texture of the piano part compresses and the strings present expressive shouts of march intonations.

In the reprise section a1, Posso più mosso ed affiutuo, the beginning of which falls on the climax top, intonation and metrical transformations take place: against the background of the ostinato motif, the opening theme of section B appears in the part of the first violin and cello. What adds dynamism to this part is the active subvocal development of the accompanying voices in the strings.

The reprise of the second part is synthesizing, as it overlaps the main themes. The theme from section A concerns the first violin; the ostinato and the main theme from section B concerns the part of the second violin and piano. The second part of the reprise begins with the piano cluster “chains,” after which the intonation of the funeral march appears, followed by the theme of part A in the viola part against the background of the ostinato triplet chant of the second violin. In this sequence, the material is repeated once again, gradually decreasing in sonority. The fifth intonation remains from the opening theme against the background of a chromatic ostinato in the volume of a minor third. The rhythmic pattern slows down.

The third part of The Quintet, an orchestral scherzo, has a three-part structure A-B-A1. In section A, the features of a simple three-part structure with a through character of development may be traced. In the middle section, there is a modified main theme of the first part in the first violins, with a contrasting of the chromatic syncopated movement of the entire string group.

Section B is a stylization of kolomyika (fis-minor key). The construction is based on a variational type of development. The introduction in the piano part resembles the bass sound of a folk chapel. The theme (8 bars) is written in Hutsul mode, it sounds alternately in all string instruments (in cello and viola—incomplete). The gradual dynamization and thickening of the texture leads to the appearance of a fortissimo piano presentation of the theme, accompanied by emphasized chromatic syncopated moves in the strings. The section climax is the string theme in augmentation, its background is a chromatic octave movement that uses rhythmic fragmentation.

Reprise A 1 is dynamic, expanded, and has features of a simple three-part form. In the middle section, where the main theme of the first part sounds, the presentation texture has been changed in the piano part. This and the final reprise sections have interesting features of development. They combine various harmonic and polyphonic methods of musical material development and juxtapose different movement forms that together with the gradual thickening of the texture lead to a climax at the end of the part. Dramaturgy, thus, is built upon the principle of a rising line.

The third part of The Quintet is the dynamic center of the entire four-part cycle. It does not have an individual thematic invention, since this part plays the role of development at the macroform level.
The fourth part is written in the form of a sonata Allegro. The final exposition has a thorough development that is a sign of symphonic thinking. The main theme (tutti) conveys a strong-willed and decisive image. The syncopated rhythm, intonationally combined with the main theme of the first part and the theme of the middle section of the second part (intonation of the sixth), introduces a developmental character (using polyphonic means) and three-part features.

The connecting part is built on the first element of the main theme, and has unique features of development. Gradually, the texture thickens, and a side part of a lyrical and expressive nature appears in the viola. The development and dynamization of the texture lead to a climax, where the chromatic movements in the piano and string parts are interchanged. Movement stops suddenly (interrupted climax). At the boundary between the exposition and development, the theme of the funeral march from the second part (Andante, bars 15–16, c. 7) starts.

The development (Allegro) begins with a grain of the funeral march theme against the background of octave movements in the low piano register, interchanging with a chant intonationally related to the main final theme. The theme is sporadically performed by string instruments. Gradually, the thematic grain in the piano part undergoes textural changes. Durations are fragmented, the texture of the string part thickens, while the musical texture is intensively developed: the side part intonations of the strings are interwoven (c. 9) leading to a climax at the boundary between development and reprise.

At the dynamic tension crest (Tempo iniziale), the main theme of the reprise appears. This is an apotheosis, where, first, the chordal piano texture interchanges with the theme element of the strings, and then the theme is presented tutti on fortissimo. Against the background of the arpeggiated texture (c. 11), a second theme (viola, second violin, first violin) sounds in the piano in a polyphonic presentation with contrasts. The textural richness of the strings precedes the appearance of the main theme (c. 12) in the viola part, and later—in the first violin and cello part. When this theme is performed by the piano (c. 13), the strings (first violin, viola) play the second final theme. The development of these thematic layers leads to a climax (dominant predicate built on textural elements of the first part).

The climax comes in a coda built on the main theme of the first part, thereby creating a dramatic and thematic arc for the entire Quintet. The coda is the climax of the work.

Thus, the tragic-dramatic quintet concept prompted the composer to transform and renew the sonata form. As in the symphonic works, there is much in common with the principles of theatrical drama development. This is smoothly facilitated by the sonata form reproducing the following stages: opening—development—climax, and respectively: exposition—development—reprise.

An important feature of Borys Liatoshynsky’s expositions of the sonata form is their extremely high dynamic activity. This quality is also inherent in the expositions (first and fourth parts) of The Quintet. The form has no long-term development in expositions, but it has the development itself as a type of exposure. The development character of Borys Liatoshynsky’s main parts is often largely determined by the dynamic and structural openness of the musical material. The contrast between the exposition themes is insignificant, but tension and thoroughness are achieved due to the fact that the connecting and side parts are perceived as successive stages of the development of the main one.

In the side parts, emotional tension is concentrated gradually. In this case, the lyrical theme in the development process is enriched with polyphonic means (the composer uses various polyphonic methods of voice development, and changes the rhythm and harmonic basis). Using the example of the first and fourth parts of The Quintet, the above-mentioned leads to the intensification of emotional tension and a change in the nature of the themes. An important role in the activation of this process is played by a broad melodic line of a developmental nature, which Viktor Samokhvalov calls a melodic development.

Emphasizing the boundary between exposition and development in The Ukrainian Quintet is typical for the composer’s symphonic works. One of his usual means is to speed up the tempo: Allegro risoluto in the first part, and Allegro in the finale. The beginning of the development is marked with important themes: in the first part—the main theme (c. 9), in the finale—the theme of the funeral march from the second part. In the last example, the characteristic juxtaposition of contrasting themes, exacerbating the conflict, is also noticeable.

The main feature of the first part development is the conflicting collision of different sound thematic layers with contrasting rhythmics. Although the dialogic type of interactions in the musical texture is more characteristic of the works of the chamber-instrumental genre, Borys Liatoshynsky consciously refuses it.

In the compositional parts (“waves”) of the development, there are practically no strongly pronounced melodic constructions, the intonation material of the layers is connected with various thematic formations. In addition, in the development of the first part and the finale, an extremely important role is given to polyphonic techniques as a means of development: in addition to contrasting polyphony that provides the musical texture potential energy, techniques of imitative polyphony, various transformations (stretti, subvocal techniques, cancrizans, etc.) are used. Thus, polyphonic methods of musical texture development occupy an equal place alongside textural and harmonic means.

A common feature of the reprises of the first part and the finale is the further active formation of the thematic and figurative composition of the musical texture. On the other hand, different creative objectives can induce different options for the compositional solution of reprises of the beginning and end of the work. Thus, the reprise of the first part of The Ukrainian Quintet, aimed at adding dynamism to the main theme (in the reprise, it sounds saturated, with apotheosis), is perceived as the top link of the construction. The composer solves the finale with the help of a synthesizing reprise.
combining two themes at the same time: the side theme of the finale and the main theme of the first part (the reprise is an integral dramaturgical link; along with the unifying, closing function, it determines the expediency of the next section—codas).

In the coda of the finale, Borys Liatoshynsky consolidates the achieved result and activates the language with the help of ostinato rhythms. Here, in order to achieve the emotional climax of the entire four-part cycle, the composer introduces the initial thematic grain of the work, combining the main thematic material of the four-part cycle into a single integral polyphonic complex.

**Conclusions.** The Ukrainian Quintet is a large-scale four-part cycle, where symphonism plays a leading role, being the main principle of artistic generalization of reality and the leading method of musical concept unfolding. In a similar way, Borys Liatoshynsky develops the Third Symphony, the only four-part symphony of five, where the tragic conflict-dramatic type of collision acquires an even greater scale and level of generalization. Turning to the four-part cycle in The Ukrainian Quintet is caused by the philosophical depth of the basic idea, the implementation of which required the expansion of structural and genre boundaries.

The form of the quintet goes beyond chamber-instrumental norms, first of all, as the result of the presence of a deep dramatic concept expressed by the architectonics of the entire cycle and each part in particular, as well as in thematic invention and ways of its unfolding. This is precisely why Borys Liatoshynsky's symphonism is perceived as a creative method, as a style of thinking, characteristic of almost all his works. That is why it is worth classifying The Ukrainian Quintet as a chamber symphony.

Thus, the unity of the thematic formations of the cycle may be clearly traced. This is another manifestation of the author's symphonic thinking, when the entire drama with a monothematic type of intonation development grows out of the theme, from its core.

It is important to note another regularity of the author's symphonic thinking, also characteristic of The Ukrainian Quintet. Its essence is that it is not the main and side themes of the exposition that contrast, but the entire exposition and development, separate parts of the cycle among themselves that is caused by the re-emphasis of the functions of the sonata cycle parts by Borys Liatoshynsky.

Thus, in the sonata cycle, Borys Liatoshynsky operates the powerful processes that encompass and unite seemingly completely separate cycle constructions. This phenomenon is vividly embodied in The Ukrainian Quintet. Due to dramaturgical features and intonation connections, the entire four-part cycle may be considered at the level of a macro-sonata form as an exposition (the first two parts, the first part is the main part, the second part is a side part), development (third part), and reprise (finale).

Having studied the composer's creative method on the example of the quintet, it should be emphasized that The Ukrainian Quintet, which became the highlight of his chamber-instrumental creativity, is, in fact, a chamber symphony. The quintet has all the features of the symphonic genre:

– four-part cyclic form with a through line of development and one-part signs,
– monothematism as the main principle of dramaturgy; method of the material development is a conflicting collision of themes,
– figurative transformation of thematic material,
– re-emphasis of the functions of cycle parts and ensemble instruments,
– complication of the presentation texture.

Borys Liatoshynsky's innovation in the interpretation of the chamber genre of the piano quintet, namely its symphonization, induces different approach to the use of the textural-timbre properties of the instruments and the role and functions of the ensemble members. The expansion of the chamber genre boundaries in the quintet caused the complication of the instrumental parts: the range of sound of the strings expands, while the technical difficulties of the piano part increase. The methods of interaction of layers in a symphony orchestra are transferred to the musical canvas of a quintet (each instrument of a quintet acts as an orchestral layer).

The work by Borys Liatoshynsky is characterized by the personification of the timbre features of instruments and the members of a chamber ensemble. This feature is characteristic of The Ukrainian Quintet. The composer almost always combines certain timbre with a stable rhythmic-structural formula: e.g., an ostinato chromatic chant in the volume of a minor third in alto (second part, middle episode) being a personification of the image of death. Liatoshynsky uses it in other works as well: at the beginning of the second part of the Violin Sonata op. 19 (1926), in the introduction to the symphonic ballade Grazhyna, in the second part of the Third Symphony.

In The Quintet, Borys Liatoshynsky innovatively employs the capabilities of the piano that is connected with the idea of a chamber symphony (semantic load of the piano consists of several symphonic layers, in their development and contrasting). Starting out from the romantic school of Franz Liszt and late-romantic Russian school, the composer creates his own type of phonic instrument sound.

The composer's timbre phonism is an integral part of the artistic content of the image, techniques of texture metrorhythmic, and melodic and harmonic variation. This is the main dramaturgical principle that allows to develop a variety of differentiated characters in their confrontation and interpenetration. Symphonization of the quintet greatly enriched and diversified the piano texture through an original combination of large and small techniques.

**Performance space for The Ukrainian Quintet.** The Ukrainian Quintet by Borys Liatoshynsky is one of the few chamber-instrumental works of a composer that has a successful performing history. This is probably facilitated by the extraordinary emotional and spiritual intensity of this music. The quintet attracts ensemble performers with its diverse intonation specificity, large-scale conception, and interesting solutions in the field of instrumental and piano musical techniques.
The performance stylistics of The Ukrainian Quintet refers the audience to the late romantic expressiveness interchanging with the piano works of Sergey Rachmaninov, Nikolai Medtner and other prominent figures of the turn of the 20th century. The work is enriched with wide phrasing, where the performers are able to present the entire scale of their mastery. These characteristics encourage the performers to create their own interpretations that, on the one hand, are linked to the hypothetical character of the composer’s idea, and, on the other hand, to the ability of the performers to create an integral concept of quintet interpretation in the time-space of the scenic interpretation.

In the current media environment, in particular on YouTube channels, one may find performances of varying degrees of influence. In general, the performers begin their work on The Ukrainian Quintet dwelling on the author’s idea about the symphonization of the chamber genre, expansion of the quintet’s sound boundaries, when it is interpreted as a chamber symphony. The work is also monumental in terms of duration. It is quite voluminous, with large-scale symphonic-type transformations. This is the most difficult part for performers—the ability to convey the idea of symphonic nature by the means of chamber-instrumental expressiveness.

Actually, this factor is a watershed characteristic. In some performances, the attention is directed to formal integrity, the idea of symphonic nature, when the whole work is perceived as one-part; in others, the focus on details prevails, when a changing image representing the emotional component of this music is created. However, if the performers manage to fulfill the ambition of the work, the music sounds integral and is easily perceived by the audience.

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Cavchuk I.

Риси симфонізму в «Українському квінтеті» Бориса Лятошинського

Анотація. Розглянуто риси симфонізму в «Українському квінтеті» Бориса Лятошинського. З'ясовано, що більшість дослідників розглядають цей твір як симфонію, написану для струнного квартету та фортепіано. Підстави для такого твердження знаходять в ідейній глибині трагічно-конфліктно-драматичної концепції квінтету, масштабності тематичних перетворень та розвиванні монотематизму як основного принципу становлення композиції, використанні жанрової, ладово-мело-інтонаційної, тонально-гармонічної, тембрової, смислової символіки. Виявлено, що застосування симфонізму як основного методу становлення концепції призвело до укрупненого, більш масштабного трактування камерного жанру квінтету. Відзначено важливу роль поліфонізу для створення багатосмислового музичного простору на різних рівнях композиції — від змісту, формотворення, жанрової специфіки до формату, ритмічного, мелодичного, тембрового розвитку. Проаналізовано прояви симфонізму у музичній драматургії «Українського квінтету».

Ключові слова: симфонізм у творчості Бориса Лятошинського, «Український квінтет», трактування камерного жанру, монотематизм.

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