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Piano Triptych “Shadows” by F. Schmitt as a Reflection of the French National Tradition

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Abstract

The author of the article examines the cultural processes in France, which resulted in the interpenetration of related spheres of creative activity. The role of salons has been noted in fruitful artistic ties to appear, particularly, the friendship of F. Schmitt and M. Ravel. Some parallels between their piano opuses “*Shadows*” and “*Gaspard of the Night*” have been found; one of the similarities is the use of poetic text in the form of an epigraph preceding the musical text. The author has made an analysis of the triptych “*Shadows*” by F. Schmitt in regards to the influence of the poetic images of Lautréamont and W. Whitman on the musical expression means chosen by the composer, and how deeply he materializes the poetic idea. The preceding dedication pieces are designated as a guideline in unraveling the composer’s creative intentions. The properties of the piano texture, melody, harmony, form, dynamics, metro rhythm, and technical equipment of the pieces of the cycle have been summarized. The study also reveals the individual features of the author's style of F. Schmitt, at the head of which lies a multifaceted polyphonized texture, where the vertical structures make one feel the movement of the multilayer whole, the horizontal structures are perceived as a part of harmonious development, and the continuity of their dialogue creates the process linearity and constructive integrity.

Keywords: French national tradition, piano cycle by F. Schmitt, epigraph, dedication, descriptiveness, subtext, texture.

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Introduction

The purpose of the article is to analyze the piano triptych "*Shadows*" by F. Schmitt in regards to the impact of the French national tradition on it, and to determine the main features of the composer's writing manner.

Florent Schmitt (1870–1958) is a composer who belonged to the French artistic elite as he witnessed and directly participated in the cultural processes that amaze the imagination, as a result of which the turning point of the 19th – 20th centuries was called *Belle Époque*. Creative France literally "exploded" with the original pictorial, literary, architectural, and musical discoveries. The result of the "big bang" was a kind of artistic diffusion, the interpenetration of related spheres of creative activity. E. Kokorina believes that the gravitation of the arts towards unification is quite natural precisely at transitional moments when the picture of the world changes significantly (Kokorina, 2014: 42). Considering the number of mental shocks experienced by the French – the birth of photography and cinema, the rapid development of mechanical engineering, aeronautics, the underground transport, the scientific and technical breakthrough associated with the names of P. Dubois, J. Peltier and others, – the gravitation towards synthetic mixing in art is perceived as the result of its self-development in the context of the changed artistic paradigm.

Results of the study

The turn of the 19th – 20th centuries became the golden age for the synthesis of arts largely due to the popularity of French salons, in which the national artistic beau monde had their time during the creative discussions. As a rule, the owners of the salons were women, among whom we will name Madame de Stael, Madame Recamier, Gertrude Stein, Misia Sert, and other "queens" of creative "hives". However, purely male societies, such as "Les Apaches", of which M. Ravel was the center, were no less visited. As V. Zharkova notes, "discussions that lasted all night, an atmosphere of shocking behavior and fun were the hallmarks of noisy meetings" (Zharkova, 2009: 102). The researcher writes that "the Apache's general hobby was the interest in <...> the works of P. Verlaine, S. Mallarmé, the young P. Valery, J.-F. Rameau, F. Chopin, C. Debussy, and Russian composers, (ibid.). The salon of the Godebski family was distinguished by a special atmosphere, where one could meet the poets such as J. Cocteau and P. Valery, composers I. Stravinsky, D. Millau, E. Satie, A. Roussel, and M. Ravel. In such an uplifted, creatively charged atmosphere of these communities, F. Schmitt was growing as a musician. Communication with progressive representatives of national culture determined the circle of his composing interests and contributed to the fateful artistic ties to appear. Among these, his friendship with M. Ravel stands out in a special way, which is indicated by the warm, confidential correspondence between the composers. In particular, in his letters to F. Schmitt, M. Ravel makes unexpected and frank confessions: "Buddy <...>. Yet another tide of tenderness to music was added to my morbid anguish. I am overwhelmed with inspiration and can explode from it <...>" ("Ravel in the mirror of his letters", 1998: 102), or: "What are my principles? There is nothing special about them: do whatever you want, depending on your mood" (ibid.: 136). The creative reminiscences that arise in this connection seem to be quite natural.

The piano triptych "*Shadows*" (1917) consists of three pieces: "*I hear in the distance*", "*Moorish*", and "*That shadow, my likeness*". For many musicians, this opus engenders associations with Ravel. L. Vagshal notes that "'Shadows' are often compared with Ravel's 'Gaspard of the night' <...> because of the enormous technical requirements" (Wagschal, 2014), and V. Larderet talks about a similar duration, form, orchestral manner of writing and reliance on a poetic source in both cases (Larderet, 2010). As you know, "*Gaspard of the night*" is a musical interpretation of three poems in prose by A. Bertrand, the full text of which is presented by the composer in the form of an expanded epigraph

before each piece. Researchers have reached similar opinions regarding the accuracy of translating poetic nuances. For example, A. Corteau writes that M. Ravel retains the main features of the poetic source “and an impressive beginning, which becomes the starting point for a new poem” (Corteau, 2005: 166). In turn, V. Zharkova considers A. Bertrand’s poems not only as a “figurative tuning”, but also as a “verbal description” of a piano opus (Zharkova, 2009: 315). Evaluating the opus from the point of view of the *mélodie* genre, the musicologist believes that the composer “creates a composition with an asynchronous presentation of material, first exposed in a ‘quiet’ (‘for the eyes’) verbal version, and then ‘reflected’ in musical sounds” (ibid.).

Inheriting the artistic techniques of his predecessor friend, F. Schmitt follows the path of engaging a poetic text presented in the form of an epigraph preceding the musical text in two triptych pieces. So, at the beginning of the first piece, there is an excerpt from the prose poem “*Songs of Maldoror*” by Lautréamont², the third piece opens with lines from Walt Whitman’s poem “*The Song of Himself*”. Even though famous writers belong to different poetic schools, attention is drawn to the proximity of their creative portraits. In particular, Lautréamont (1846–1870) is considered a reformer of French poetry, one of the revolutionaries in poetry in the second half of the 19th century, a man who showed the way to the “avant-garde” and “trans-avant-garde” of the 20th century. G. Kosikov sees the role of the poet as follows: “It is not for nothing that the surrealists swore by his name, and it is no coincidence that postmodernism counts him among its most glorious predecessors” (Kosikov, 1998). And F. Sollers, characterizing “*Songs of Maldoror*”, wittily remarks: “To think that this is an example of a “poetic experience” is the same as to take phrases for pictures when decoding a non-phonetic text” (Sollers, 1967). In turn, W. Whitman contributed to the progress of American poetry – researchers call him one of the founders of the free verse: “Whitman’s verse is extremely rhythmic and yet is not subject to a strict metric scheme, because Whitman initiated the American tradition of free verse, which, as a rule, avoids the meter and rhymes. A number of indisputable features are characteristic of his poetry: the organization of the text with the help of parallelisms, the urge to combine syntactic and rhythmic units, the autonomy of the poetic line” (Loginov, 2010: 881). Awareness of the ambiguity, provocativeness, internal intensity of the original prototypes explains the complexity of F. Schmitt’s musical language, the technical originality of the pieces, and provides a key to understanding the imagery concept.

“The meaning of creativity is in the subtext,” – these words of K. Stanislavsky emphasize the importance of the listener or interpreter seeking the messages encrypted by authors (Stanislavsky, 1951). From this point of view, the existence of the epigraph can be perceived as a kind of guideline that endows the work with a kind of program. Here the concept of N. Tovstopyat as a “scale of descriptiveness” or its “degree of descriptiveness” is applicable, which is interpreted by the author as a measure of how accurately the meaning of music it interpreted in its relationship with related arts (Tovstopyat, 2000: 178). Of course, an epigraph as such does not have sufficient power to establish a “pure” description, nevertheless, it impels one’s consciousness, creates a context, and finally acts as a kind of code that sets the “character for ‘interpreting’ the reality” (ibid.). This allows us to speak about the phenomenon of artistic “concretization”, in which, according to A. Mukha, the descriptive and the non-descriptive do not exist as two antipodes, but only alternately give way to each other depending on how deeply one materializes the poetic idea (Mukha, 1966: 16–18). Thus, without having sufficient grounds to call the “*Shadows*” triptych a descriptive work, we admit that the presence of a poetic prototype brings to life a certain figurative scenario, more or less obvious if we measure its obviousness in accordance with the mentioned “scale”.

² Lautréamont is the pseudonym of Isidore-Lucien Ducasse (1846-1870), a French poet and prose writer.

An additional guideline in unraveling the composer's creative intentions are the dedications of music pieces. It should be noted that this phenomenon has become popular at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries. V. Sumarokova sees the reason for this in the stylistic emancipation in the music of that period, which gives additional freedom to an author in expressing his subjective attitude (Sumarokova, 2003: 70). The study of the “dedication” phenomenon in the realm of Russian music is presented in the research by N. Rusanova, who regards it as a kind of signal about the existence of a special idea that conceals an encrypted dialogue with the addressee (Rusanova, 2017: 3). In this context, French music is particularly interesting since the addressing of works to famous persons, contemporary composers, performers, and simply close people was most characteristic of its representatives. Suffice it to recall the *Sonata for clarinet and piano* by F. Poulenc, dedicated to S. Prokofiev, and the opera *“Dialogues of the Carmelites”*, dedicated to such outstanding musicians as K. Debussy, C. Monteverdi, D. Verdi, M. Musorgsky; the suite for piano *“Children’s Corner”* by K. Debussy, dedicated to his daughter Chouchou, and the Third piece from the piano cycle *“In White and Black”* – to I. Stravinsky; Suite *“The Tomb of Couperin”*, written by M. Ravel in honor of friends who died in the war. This series is complemented by a set of multi-genre miniatures *“The Tomb of Claude Debussy”*, composed in memory of Claude of France, among which are E. Satie’s *mélodie* called *“Souvenir”*, a duet for piano and cello by M. Ravel, a piano piece *“Complaint of a faun in the distance”* by P. Duke. It is fair to note that the overwhelming majority of F. Schmitt’s piano pieces have dedication. So, for example, *“Tragic Trip”* from the diptych *“Mirages”* is dedicated to the pianist Alfred Corteau, and in the cycle, *“Twilight”* each of the four plays was addressed to one of the cultural beau monde of the first half of the 20th century: *“In an Old, Small Cemetery”* – to English composer Vaughn Williams, *“Snowfall”* – to Mademoiselle Marguerite Moulin, *“Sylphides”* – to a group of French writers under the pseudonym Pierre Lukas, *“Solitude”* – to Madame Louise Lyon. The figurative series of titles to the opuses is striking – *“Mirages”*, *“Twilight”*, *“Shadows”*. The illusive, intangible theme of the pieces seems to be born from non-objective vibrations, unique “glow” emanating from the “circle of ‘insiders’” (Sumarokova, 2003: 72). V. Sumarokova speaks about this kind of subjective emanations, considering this phenomenon from an esoteric, even parapsychological point of view. In particular, the musicologist uses the term “aura”, the vibrations of which “permeate all stages of creating a music piece” (ibid.: 68).

In the cycle *“Shadows”*, the first piece is addressed to Paul Loyonnet (1889–1988), the pianist, musicologist and teacher, Knight of the Legion of Honor, known for his publications in the magazines *Le Courier* and *La Revue musicale* and for the brilliant performance of music by French composers. The second and third pieces of the cycle are addressed to the ladies who are popular in artistic circles: Lynette Chalupt and Yvonne Muller. N. Rusanova sees this as a characteristic of the era and singles out in the general series “some special cases when dedications not only turn out to be a sign of expressing gratitude or gratitude to the addressee, but hide something more underneath. The music piece itself suggests that the addressee of the dedication present to him was not chosen by chance” (Rusanova, 2017: 2). These include the second piece of the triptych – *“Moorish”*, addressed to Mademoiselle Lynette Chalupt. She was known to be the sister René Chalupt, a music critic and a popular poet at that time, whose poems were set to music by G. Auric, D. Milhaud, G. Tailleferre, A. Roussel and others. Along the way, we note that E. Satie also dedicated waltzes to Lynette and René: *“His Monocle”* and *“His Legs”* (respectively) from the piano cycle *“Three Distinguished Waltzes of a Jaded Dandy”*. The tragic fate of the girl – she died at a young age from the Spanish flu – echoes in the melancholic, then in the detached, and sometimes dramatic sounds of the piece by F. Schmitt. The first and the last pieces, which do not have such obvious allusions, respond to a greater extent to the message of the corresponding epigraphs.

Returning to the issue of how important an epigraph is for understanding the idea of a literary work, let us recall what S. Sheyranyan has to say about it. The scholar recognizes that the epigraph, along with the title, occupies a strong position, helping to reveal the nuances of an artistic conception, to limit the freedom of its interpretation, to set the desired vector of perception, to recreate the general atmosphere of the composition (Sheyranyan, 2016: 91). E. Goryacheva adheres to a similar opinion. According to her statement, “the epigraph creates a certain precedent background, sometimes an integral perception context of a specific literary text, thanks to which such a text can be interpreted correctly” (Goryacheva, 2018: 36). By the way, it is fair to consider the epigraph as a kind of “signal beacon”, a guide to action, urging the future performer to spend additional time familiarizing himself with the full version of the above passage. Its comprehension can significantly enrich the creative imagination, making the way for highly artistic performing interpretation. It was already mentioned that, as an epigraph for the first piece of the triptych “*Shadows*” – “*I hear in the distance*”, F. Schmitt chose an excerpt from the eleventh verse of the *First song* from the collection of Lautréamont called “*Songs of Maldoror*”:

“I hear in the distance drawn-out cries of the most poignant grief.”

These lines seem to be a foreboding of something terrible, terrifying, inhuman pain and suffering. The poem, the main character of which, by the way, is a terrible demonic creature, is overflowing with chilling surreal collisions. See these lines from the poem: “*Forgive me, child, here before your clean sinless eyes stands the one who broke your bones and ripped off your skin – it still hangs on you in rags*”; or: “*It's scary to think: every time Maldoror touched the child's fresh cheeks with his lips, he felt the desire to slice them with a sharp razor*”. Given the context, the phrase chosen by F. Schmitt could be an epigraph to the entire poem, since all evil is concentrated in it. The plot of the poem, like that of all surrealist literature, does not have a linear plot: each verse appears as a new pattern of a metaphorical kaleidoscope, recalling a stream of manic thoughts and fantasies. The eleventh verse of the *First song* is one of the most meaningful in the entire poem: at first it is a scene of a family idyll – the father is reading a book, the mother is sewing, their son is sitting next to them, they are dreaming about the future, the atmosphere of the story is saturated with love and warmth. Suddenly, a malevolent cry is heard – the heroes know that this demon has lusted after human blood. The boy turns pale, gasps for air, a wild pain squeezes his temples: “*His heart is no longer beating ... Dead is the mother who carried him in the womb. Child ... his face is so distorted that I do not recognize him ... My wife! My son!.. Oh, where are the days when I was a husband and a father – they are long gone and are never to return*”.

The composer's remark is indicative: “*The author asks the performer to scrupulously follow the instructions of nuances and tempos*”. The detailed and maximally specific indication of the latter – “*broad and drawn-out, moderately, but not slowly*”, emphasizes the importance of observing a certain speed of movement. Here and further in the text, F. Schmitt denotes in detail the necessary dynamics, articulation, agogics, and other expressive effects, such as “*swiftly and tenaciously*”, “*like an echo*” or “*far away, as if in nothingness*”. This is due to the extreme eventfulness of music, surreal impulsiveness of emotional switching in the struggle between two figurative spheres – good and evil, light and darkness, life and death.

The first piece in the cycle, “*I hear in the distance*”, is perhaps the most associated with impressionist stylistics. Meanwhile, its thematic heterogeneity, the unfolding of the musical process, the wave principle of drama, emotional outbursts take it beyond the framework of pure contemplation and picturesqueness, inscribing it into the broader tradition of descriptive music. The composition of the piece is rather complicated due to the multi-element nature of its thematic formations. In fact,

only the quasi-single-voiced melody of the second lyric theme is distinguished by intonational unity. The initial thematic complex is multifaceted and becomes a source for the active development of the musical process in the future. At the macro level, a complex two-movement form with a frame is traced, and the conclusion is given in a variational mirror form.

In terms of the motif, the first theme is the most difficult, which is directly associated with the impressionist stylistics. It consists of several motif formations, each of which subsequently performs its functions, develops, and is often put forward as the leading thematic idea.

The first element is the swift arpeggiated ascent from a deep bass to the upper register, which is familiar from the Debussy's and Ravel's "watercolors", enhanced by a dynamic wave. The second element is a quivering chord martellato, which creates rough sonorities. The third one is an emphasized dotted rhythm formula with a soft descending of 32nds at the end. We should add to it a trill-like idiom, which can be considered as a variant of the chord martellato. Finally, we come to the syncopated decelerating octaves. It is natural that an important role in all this multicolor is played by interval-chord moves, thanks to which the texture is filled and various thematic elements played with using pedals are colored. Let us stipulate that, described in isolation, they only give an idea of the structural organization of the thematism, while in the real musical process they are linked together and subject to wave-like development in accordance with the expressive capabilities each of them has. From the standpoint of imagery, the initial thematic material is presented as an exposition of dark forces, otherworldly demonic principles.

The second theme is an artless melody, only occasionally enriched with harmonic lighting. It contrasts the excitement of the first theme with the flatness of the statement.

The first movement of the piece is built on the material of the first theme: it begins with the same initial idea (arpeggiated ascent, martellato, dotted pattern), closing with a similar quasi-cadence formula (syncopated octaves), although expanded due to the varied development of individual elements. Moving forward, the main thematic grain is the dotted rhythmic formula, decorated with arpeggios, chord progressions, expressive undertones, which leads to a saturation of texture and a bright culmination with the active participation of color elements – arpeggios across the entire keyboard, polyrhythmic movement of triplet groups, etc. It is interesting that in the culminating phase in the chord presentation, the main motive of the lyrical theme appears, due to which the texture acquires a more contrasting appearance (chord clusters, figurative movement), and on the thematic level, the conjugation of individualized and deindividualized thematism is emphasized.

The second movement has clearer structural outlines – it is written in a simple three-part form, since the middle is formed by a new melodic tune, placed in the middle textured voice. F. Schmitt demonstrates the mastery of variable transformation of the source material, while maintaining a clear recognizability of the themes. The second important point to which we should pay attention is the use of textured techniques inherent in the first part. In particular, the figurative movement (expressed by octave shifts), arpeggios, interval-chord accordions, etc. Even though the composer retains some of the coloristic techniques in the middle section, in particular the arpeggio, it stands out for the simplicity of the textural presentation associated with the "relief-background" formula.

The reprise section is dynamized. Here, to a greater extent, the author includes elements of the first theme, which ensures the brightness of the culminating flashes, the effect of playing with the register and timbre space and contributes to the richness of the sound. Thanks to this, the achievement of the figurative and emotional unity of the piece and the emergence of vivid auditory associations corresponding to the title seems to be important. The mirroring of the thematic material in the

conclusion creates a feeling musical process is complete and exhaustive, gradually reducing (despite the change in dynamics) rampant flashes and bright bursts to a distant echo of the melody, as if melting in the air.

The piece is distinguished by colossal technical complexity: multi-layered texture, written on three staves, sophisticated polyrhythms, wide tessituras, requiring “Rachmaninov’s” flexibility, and finally, such coordination tasks as the arranging the brilliant passages written on one staff with chord movement on the other two. This can explain the author’s dedication. As you know, Paul Loyonnet was a virtuoso pianist and a talented interpreter in music. He was awarded the Order of the Knight of the Legion of Honor and the Medal of the Canadian Council of Music.

As for the second piece of the triptych – “*Moorish*”, L. Wagschal speaks of it as “an entertaining interlude that has no literature background” (Wagschal, 2014). The validity of these words is indicated by the scale of the piece, which makes it possible to call it a miniature with a simple tonal plan (sustained *fis-moll*), technically uncomplicated, transparent texture set out on two staves. V. Larderet compares the impressions of the music of this piece with the feelings of a person on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea (Larderet, 2010). From this point of view, the name justifies only a “viscous” threatening introduction. The thematic *initio*, as in the first piece, begins with a deep bass sound, it begins to climb up the tessiture lazily, as if up the stairs – this auditory effect is facilitated by the return for a second after the ascending fourth jump. Then, gradually shrinking, from eighths to sixteenths quarters, and subsequently sextuplets, it rushes to the upper register. As a result, the opening episode gives rise to the association of climbing a spiral staircase soaring to heaven. This short rise gives way to a decline and leads to the exposition of the main material.

The first theme is lazy and unconstrained, according to L. Wagschal’s observations, and somewhat “careless” (Wagschal, 2014), according to V. Larderet; due to its three-beat nature it resembles a light, carefree waltz (Larderet, 2010). Such a mood is created due to the repeated repetition of the articulatory and rhythmically sophisticated one-bar chord motif in the right-hand part. Thus, the *staccato* at the beginning of the bar and the syncopation that follows it playfully shift the emphasis from the strong beat, a playful grace note is interspersed with the *non-legato* motif on the second metric unit as a “highlight”, and a couple of tied sounds at a weak time seem to be a flirtatious bow. The impression is reinforced by the wavelike “breath” of the accompaniment, the soft hidden sound of different gradations of *p*; this set of means is supported by the following author’s instruction: “carelessly”. The agitated opening episode, suddenly intruding into the idyllic picture, serves as a kind of watershed, indicating the transition to a new phase of the composition.

The theme of the middle section, a kind of a scherzo, is a three-bar construction, the development of which is based on variable repetition. The composer, as in the first piece of the cycle, chooses similar texture techniques in the thematic material, which deprives the piece of a sharp internal contrast. Here we can see a similar sixth- and six-four chord presentation, a syncopated rhythm, and the use of grace notes. The dotted rhythmic pattern in the triplet becomes a distinctive feature. When introduced for the first time, the theme sounds in the right-hand part against the background of monophonic syncopated accompaniment. Then it moves freely in the register space, and the accompaniment function, this time in octave doubling, is shared by both parts. In the third version, the theme is doubled, and the octave background grows into a sextuplet passage across the entire keyboard. Finally, the vertical “grows” to four-sound chord clusters, wedging virtuoso passages of different structures grow into extended chains, due to which a general culmination is achieved.

The reprise, despite the visual enrichment of the texture, has something in common with the first section. Passage layers of the sixteenths, which previously played a dynamizing role, give here

additional flightiness and soft airiness to the sound. In such a serene, waltz-elegy manner, the composer seems to convey an elegant “hello” to Lynette Chalupt, indicated in the dedication, and with her to the entire beautiful half of humanity.

The final piece of the triptych, *“That shadow, my likeness”*, was inspired by the poetic lines of W. Whitman:

“That shadow, my likeness, that goes to and fro.”

It is known that *“The Song of Himself”* is an autobiography, as the title of the poem eloquently testifies to. Here, the poet-philosopher identifies himself with nature, the universe as a whole, and, in particular, with each individual person. It is no coincidence that V. Larderet assesses the figurative structure of F. Schmitt’s piece as follows: “After the ‘Moorish’, an echo of the carefree experience of his youth travels, Schmitt proceeds to reflect on human destiny and the choices that affect him” (Larderet, 2010). According to the prototype, the final piece of the Shadows cycle has a contemplative and philosophical character, and poetry acts as an intermedia background for the music. In this case, the term “intermediality”, according to L. Prokhorova and E. Anikeeva, means “a special way of organizing a literature text, in which the languages of various arts interact with each other” (Prokhorova & Anikeeva, 2008: 171–172). Thus, the narrative of the movement, colorful impressionistic harmonies that paint pictures of the surrounding world, the breadth of the space covered immerse one in an atmosphere of deep meditation, and the richness of thematic reflects internal personal contradictions.

In *“That shadow, my likeness”*, F. Schmitt adheres to the principles outlined in the previous pieces: a three-part reprisal structure, variability in the development of material, an impressive tessitouristic scope, textured layering, rich timbre colorism, giving rise to vivid auditory representations. At the same time, the composer saturates and polyphonizes the fabric as much as possible, skillfully operates with “layers”, as a result of which the horizontal and vertical, taking over each other’s functions, form a living multilayer organism.

Like the first piece, this one begins with a very eventful introduction. Here we can also talk about a thematic complex in connection with the heterogeneity and brightness of intonation and texture rhythmic formations. This observation confirms the presence of arpeggiated splash chords, a melodious motive set forth in eighth notes with a descending triplet ending, relative to an expanded harmonic sequence with dotted figures of different sizes. The disjointedness of thematic elements, calm pace, textured contrast, quiet dynamics tune in to a contemplative mood. The introduction becomes the source for the theme of the entire piece. At the same time, one should consider the variable multiplicity of transformations, the large role of the texture harmonic and timbre register factor in creating a contrast. As in the first piece, the most recognizable elements of the intro appear in transitions, contributing to the unity of the whole and at the same time thematic renewal.

The texture of the first movement consists of several layers, each of which has a specific function, its own timbre color. As a result, it gives rise to associations with the sound of certain orchestral groups. It is noteworthy that the visual presentation on a three-line accolade, where imaginary groups of instruments “switch on” and “switch off” alternately, resembles the score of a symphony orchestra. Thus, the melodic element from the introduction comes to the fore, based on the “waving” idiom of thirds, enlivened by the enlarged pulsation. Here it is played in the middle register and resembles the drawn-out singing of an oboe. It is accompanied by figurations of thirds, which are close in tessitura, referring to the sound of the alto duet. The background is played by descending chord melodies in the upper register, causing parallels with the timbre of the string group.

Finally, the ostinato bass harmonies bring to life the vibrations of low horns and double bass. Set out in this way in the exposition phase, the thematic elements subsequently move along the “score”. They are transmitted to other voices, enriched with additional echoes, which to a large extent polyphonizes the texture.

The thematic core of the middle section synthesizes the main elements of the preamble. The progressive dotted complex dominates, which formed the basis of the first part theme, here one can hear the descending triplet “breath” familiar from the introduction. Set out in short durations at a moving pace, generously equipped with echoes, they resemble openwork arabesques, which makes a significant contrast, despite the preservation of the original textured relief. The movement in both hands parts acquires a horizontal, sometimes even parallel vector directed forward and upward. At the same time, the horizontal here is not perceived only as a melody – due to the layering, it performs the functions of polymelodic harmony (according to L. Dyachkova) (Dyachkova, 1994: 17). The flight filled with the air of musical lace makes you feel the breath of the wind, hear the rustle of the forest, imagine a maze of cobwebs shining in the sun, gives rise to the feelings of a person immersed in the bosom of nature, and makes you recall the characteristic ways of expressing the impressionist tradition.

The reprise is seen as the culmination of not only this piece, but the cycle as a whole, since the degree of textured and emotional dynamization reaches its maximum intensity here. Thematic material, which obviously stands out among other textures in the musical text, is practically not perceived by ear – it drowns in a powerful stream of “orchestral” *tutti*. The main sound mass is carried by parallel chord progressions, which, in fact, being a vertical, turn into a laminar harmonized horizontal due to the linearity of movement.

Conclusions

Despite the reverence of F. Schmitt to the great predecessors – M. Ravel and C. Debussy, as evidenced by the technical equipment of the pieces, timbre color, variable method of thematic development, symphonic manner of presentation, dominance of poetic images, the piano triptych “*Shadows*” reveals the individual features of the F. Schmitt’s original style. The bearer of the sound image is a polyphonized texture, where traditional chord progressions coexist with polymelodic harmony formed by layering horizontal voices. The vertical, transforming, gives rise to the feeling of a moving multilayer whole; in turn, the horizontal is perceived as part of harmonious development. At the same time, the continuity of the dialogue between horizontal and vertical in the conditions of polyphonization of texture creates a linearity of development and constructive integrity.

The proximity of the sound world and the writing technique of F. Schmitt to the generally recognized leading figures of French music of the 20th century gives rise to contradictory assessments of the triptych “*Shadows*”. For example, V. Larderet calls it a symphonic poem for piano in the spirit of M. Ravel (Larderet, 2010). L. Wagschal expresses a different point of view, in whose opinion the aspiration of F. Schmitt, inspired by literature, looks less straightforward: “While Ravel, with exceptional art, tried to establish subtle correspondences between the literary content and the formal structure of music, Schmitt is more subject to prescriptions of feelings and sensations” (Wagschal, 2014). The lack of unity in the views of the musicians intensifies the interest to the work of F. Schmitt and reinforces the need for its more detailed comprehension.

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