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**NEOKLASIČNA KONCEPCIJA TONALNOSTI IGORA STRAVINSKOG - RESEMANTIZACIJA
(THE NEOCLASSICAL CONCEPTION OF TONALITY
OF IGOR STRAVINSKY – RE-SEMANTIZATION)**

The works *Oedipus Rex* and *The Symphony of Psalms* were chosen as the subject of the master's thesis "*Neoklasična koncepcija tonalnosti Igora Stravinskog – resemantizacija*" (*The Neoclassical Conception of Tonality of Igor Stravinsky – Re-semantization*)¹ for several reasons. *The Symphony of Psalms* was composed in 1930, three years after *Oedipus Rex*. Although the proximity between the creation of these two works was not a key factor in choosing them, it is an important fact for determining the elements of a narrower stylistic unity within the period generally known as **neoclassicism**. The other point important for the selection of these two works was their representativeness, that is, the fact that they both belong to the composer's more successful works within the same compositional phase. And finally, they were both composed as monumental vocal-instrumental works, which is the third important fact.

In the first part of the master's thesis, the subject was the tonal language of the opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex*. A specific kind of expanded major-minor tonality of this work is presented, where the pivot of tonality (tonal centre) is determined by the inflow of horizontal lines. They are the basic precondition of a phenomenon called **re-semantization**², which refers to the re-evaluation of patterns of the past in a new system of interrelations. This "*officially recognized language*", as Stravinsky himself called it, represented one of the approaches to a new kind of tonality, whose principles are described in detail.

Given the fact that *Oedipus Rex* was conceived as a work with numbers of a stressed polystylistic nature, the author was justified in singling out certain characteristics of its tonal language, which are discussed in the following chapters: *Monotonicity*, *Polytonality*, *Types of Chords and Their Alteration*, *The Interrelation between Parts*, *Ostinato*, *Cadences* and *The Role of Certain Tonal Centres*. The active **re-evaluation** or **re-semantization** of existing stylistic models of the past is taken as the basic driving force of

¹ The work was defended at the Department of Music Theory of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, on June 19, 2004. It was done under the mentorship of retired Prof. Mirjana Živković. The committee members were: president Miloš Zatkalik, associate professor, academician Dejan Despić, retired professor, Svetislav Božić, full professor, and Slobodan Raicki, docent.

² The term *re-semantization* has been adopted from the Croatian theoretician of literature Aleksandar Flaker who, taking Brecht as an example, talks about the fact that "*the use of the old is more authentic than the professed discovery of the new*" – see: Aleksandar Flaker, *Poetika osporavanja*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1984, pp. 42-43.

not only the complete tonality of this work, but also all the segments of the music flow, without which Stravinsky's construction would be nothing but a stylistic exercise.

Unlike *Oedipus Rex*, *The Symphony of Psalms* represents a stylistically more homogeneous whole, which is why these two works have been considered separately. In it there is even greater limiting, and the emphasizing of only specific elements of tonal language, some of which were previously identified. The conception of an even narrower selection of possible means than had been the case with the previously analyzed work, also lead to the creation of a much more harmonized tonal language. So, the first movement is built on the basis of a diminished scale, the tonality of the second movement is determined by the meeting of polyphonic parts; the third movement is dominated by modality, whose basis is the combining of tonalities that are a third apart, in C and in E flat. Consequently, the re-evaluation of the stylistic models of the past is not represented in its explicit form.

The appearance of the vertical, which was the basic subject of research, is mainly the result of the ostinato movements of the parts, which is why the term **ostinatization** is often used as well. Employing this compositional method also narrows down the space for the re-evaluation of stylistic models, which is in accordance with the reduction to a minimum of all parameters of expression.

The notion of the gravitational centre assumes importance in this kind of language and the tonic becomes a strikingly attractive "body". In the general uniformity of sound as a postulate of the process of ostinatization, the harmonic turns are given as values emphasizing the greater or lesser dissonance of the vertical, while the strength of the tonic's attraction is reduced to its outstanding feature of a consonant value, whose degree of stability is raised above the stable or relatively stable movement of the ostinato blocks.

This is particularly striking in the first movement (chapter *Prelude – Diminished Scale, Polarity*), in which they are the chance products of contact between the ostinato parts which move within the diminished scale. It is clear that the traditional functionality of the chords is not possible in such a system of relations, and its somewhat clearer outlines are given in the second movement (chapter *The Fugue – Relationship of the Parts*), in which there is a greater approaching to the major-minor tonality which is realized through frequent bitonal, but also bimodal combinations. The appearance of the fugue gives a clear baroque quality to this movement and its re-evaluation is reflected in the subordination and adaptation of chordal structures and their functionality to the movement of the polyphonic parts. Although the fugue in itself negates the principle of ostinatization, it should be underlined that Stravinsky's compositional manner does not change in this movement either and that the ostinato parts are replaced by polyphonic ones. The bitonally conceived third movement of the composition (Chapter *Ostinato Variations (Chorale) – Modality*) leads to the stressing of tonalities that are a third apart with ample use of mainly tertian polychords. Their re-semanticized functionality is also adapted to the movement of the ostinato blocks.

The unifying chapter, *Epilogue*, denotes the conclusion of the master's thesis. What is singled out as the supreme reductive principle of the construction of a specific (anti)expression is the ostinato, which in Stravinsky **inevitably** implies inhumanity. According to him man suffered a catastrophe equivalent to a nuclear impact, a catastrophe in which the song of the ridiculed subject who extols his Psalms to the forgotten Lord stands out in its loneliness. The ostinato clock inside them keeps on ticking in circles, not finding a way out of the fetters of abstractly conceived time, and every sound value of such a system is doomed to "freeze" within that same time. For this reason Stravinsky's work represents just an imaginary spiritual game, doomed in advance never to be repeated again in its hopelessness. Within such an imagined system, repetition would be impossible, so Stravinsky would look for a "way out" in "polystylistic-ness". Essentially it is always the same game: ostinato produces reduction, reduction implies inhumanity. That is why the girl was sacrificed, that is why Petrushka and Oedipus were ridiculed. That is why with Stravinsky tonality is reduced to the level of a necessary sample, it is just one of the predetermined frameworks. The attitude of inaction and repetition has a specific feature of expression and represents a reflection of the futile **cry of the individual**, a cry lost in a world made godless. If Oedipus and the other heroes of Ancient Greek drama should have been **ridiculed** by grotesque ostinatos and by caricaturing the bel canto style, contemporary man neglects in the same way the spiritual dimension of the ancient texts of David the psalmist. Stravinsky keeps the Old Testament praises of the Lord, as after all he does the forgotten world of the antique myth, confined within his own idea of controlling all parameters of expression. This mask represents the intuitive "*discerning of the deterritorialized subject on the horizon of the capitalist spiritual matrix*", of Deleuze's "*desiring machine*"³.

The reduced, re-semanticized tonality of the fixed tonal models of the past, frozen within the merciless ostinato machine, is the main characteristic of Stravinsky's tonality in both analyzed works. Such a technique of active re-evaluation is in its essence expressionistic, and when viewed from that angle, Theodore Adorno's comment in *The Philosophy of New Music* about the schizophrenic nature of his music, of movement always within the same predetermined circle, seems completely justified. Therefore, epithets such as "inhuman" are completely justified, and in that light the cynical attitude towards the tragic character of Oedipus or towards the Old Testament praising of the Lord is given its true dimension.

Translated by Jelena Nikezić

³ This is a paraphrase of a quotation from Svetislav Jovanov's book *Rečnik postmoderne sa uputstvima za radoznale čitaoce* (Geopoetika, Belgrade, 1999, pp. 37-38), which refers to the explanation of the metaphor the "*desiring machine*", which was formulated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in the book *Anti-Edip, Kapitalizam i shizofrenija* (*Anti-Oedipus – Capitalism and Schizophrenia*) (Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, Sremski Karlovci, 1990).