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BERISLAV POPOVIĆ: A BALLAD ABOUT LOST TONALITY

Abstract: The composition greatly 'defies' the usual formal, syntactic or harmonic analysis, but the logic of the musical development is best analysed by looking at the interaction of several music parameters. Although this logic is first and foremost a musical one, certain narrative strategies can be seen to have parallels in the poetic genre of the ballad.

Key words: ballad, narrativity, quest, parameter polyassociation, tonality.

With all due respect to the required objective approach, this paper will begin on a more personal note. Commenting on his own compositional output, Popović once (roughly) said that 'what little he wrote was aimed at verifying certain theoretical postulates…' Modesty? An *ad hoc* remark, occasioned by the moment's need? Composers are not always to be trusted when making such statements, even when they are well known for being true to their word. However, since Berislav Popović is noted for being an excellent pedagogue and theoretician, perhaps it would be neither inappropriate nor unjustified to adopt such a stance as one's starting point. What was it that Popović the composer wrote in his *Balada* (Ballad) for string ensemble that provided Popović the theoretician with material for theoretical generalisations that were to be passed on to others by Popović the professor?

Looked at from such a perspective, this stance inevitably entails the questions that were the main focus of the composer's examinations – the questions of form. In the many decades Popović taught the subject *musical forms*, he warned us to not get too attached to formal patterns, especially if those patterns were defined as set, pre-established models (moulds, templates). Indeed, determining where precisely *Ballad* belongs on the formal-typological map is not only a complicated task, but one that, by all indications, does not make much sense. We are even reluctant to speak of a mixture of different patterns: it seems that the form of this composition should best be regarded as the result of the interaction between different structural principles and tendencies and, bearing in mind Popović's favourite field of interest, also different types of symmetry. This, of course, does not mean that we should avoid using the 'textbook' formal nomenclature as a sufficiently widespread terminological system; however, we are sufficiently aware of its limitations to prevent any misunderstandings.

Using such terminology, in this composition – which, seems mosaic-like on the surface – we could look for contours of a tripartite type A B A (the final stage of the composition, particularly the section from the letter **J** onward, could be assigned certain attributes of the general reprise), as well as

those of a sonata form (there being contrasting materials that are juxtaposed, developed and conflicted, and the possibility of at least a conditional differentiation between the exposition and development stages). At certain points the composition reminds the listener of a rondo (returning to the original material), and variation procedures should also be taken into account. One might say that this mixture, in and of itself, compromises the very idea of a formal pattern. Still, in order to grasp the logic of the music's development, we will first consider the kind of material the composer works with. The composition is not conceived thematically as it is not based on broader, rounded out units that could be regarded as *themes* in a general sense. Materials of a thematic character do exist, however, as shown by music examples 1-9.

Bearing in mind that the composition runs to a little over six and a half minutes, one feels that what we have here is a specific 'dissipative' attitude toward thematicism (this paper does not even attempt to present all the materials). Hence a certain kaleidoscopic effect, the aforementioned mosaic quality of form, is discernible. On one level, it proves analytically appropriate to view these materials as being truly distinct. Still, according to what is probably one of the universal postulates of structuring a musical form (we are familiar with the extent of Popović's dedication to finding the universal principles by which music functions), it rarely happens that mere sequencing of different segments or, in Popović's terms, the predominant application of contiguously unequivalent relations, is the dominant structural technique in a successful composition. How exactly does the composer treat the thematic material here?

Generally speaking, the existing motive configurations, that is, the form in which they appear, are the result of the interaction between certain music parameters, some of which, logically, assume greater 'responsibility' in creating the identity of a given motive. In the course of the composition, the activities of these parameters change due to different transformational processes, the identity of the motive being maintained to a lesser or greater extent. These motives can, therefore, be treated as specific subjects whose 'biography' (to use Schenkerian terminology) is supposed to be presented by the composition. With the perceived motivic diversification, it is easy to see that the *Ballad* too follows the same path to a certain extent. The thematic materials are repeated, more often at intervals than in close proximity to each other; they are hardly ever repeated literally, more often in a modified form. One can easily confirm this by having a cursory listen to the recording, or by looking at the score.[1]

It seems, however, that there is another strategy at work with the material here. The thematic elements are not strongly individualised subjects – their identity is easily blurred or almost cancelled – but rather a specific 'stock' of parameter characteristics. The motivic mass is broken down not only to molecules, but also atoms, with even the atomic nucleus further splitting (scientific metaphors are Professor Popović's favourite means of illustration). If a given motive is primarily defined by, say, two

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[1] The score used in this paper is the author's autograph from 1983. The only available recording was made by the chamber ensemble 'Dušan Skovran' under the direction of Aleksandar Pavlović. I wish to thank my colleague Tijana Popović Mlađenović who kindly lent me the recording and score of the composition.

parameters, these become dissociated, only for each of them to associate with another completely different parameter: a procedure that could be termed *parameter polyassociation*. In this game of dissociations and new associations, the identity of the parameters themselves remains recognisable, the continuity and logic of the music thus being maintained.

This intricate and abstract explanation becomes quite clear when its actual execution in the composition is shown. Let us look at example 1 (page 1 of the score). Let us assume that the content of its verse line can be defined by the following parameters: a) cluster-type vertical, b) 'scanning' on one tome, that is, deactivated melody.[2] This material is repeated throughout the composition in a practically identical form, and also with certain modifications that do not affect its recognisability (for example, the letter D [example 3]; and the very end [example 9]). As long as they are treated in this manner, we remain in the sphere of typical procedures of thematic work.

There is, as we have suggested, another strategy, a specific manipulation of parameters. For the sake of illustration, we will focus our attention on the first 9 bars, up to the letter A (example 1, the last bar missing). The initial cluster itself can be further defined by its two essential characteristics, two subparameters: a') simultaneity of adjunct tones and a'') inclusion of the chromatic total (aggregate), that is, of all twelve chromatic tones. Through its former characteristic, the cluster is associated with the melodic line, the result in the analysed segment being two melodic layers moving in parallel clusters, which in this case are reduced to three tones each. The latter characteristic implies that its cluster quality can also be attributed to situations in which all (or most) pitch levels appear not strictly speaking simultaneously, but within a short and/or shorter, albeit rounded out segment. (A certain dose of arbitrariness cannot be avoided here, particularly regarding the segment length; as for the 'most' part, we will go by Allan Fort's 10 or 11 tones). The effect of this subparameter is manifested on the one hand in the segment's pronounced chromatic density, in that almost all chromatic tones appear in each of the bars 5-7 only for their number to be reduced to 'only' nine in bar 8. On the other hand, if we follow the line of, say, the highest voice (the first group of first violins), we will see that it represents some kind of horizontal projection of the cluster as it contains ten chromatic tones, without repetition. These laws define a very important line of development in the further course of the composition. Since we were unable to conduct a more detailed analysis, we will confine ourselves to a few illustrative examples:

- dense chromatics in a confined space: C; quintuplet figures in J (example 8);
- horizontal arrangement of the aggregate; A, K (examples 1 and 8);
- cluster tones in an 'open position'; D (example 3), G (example 7)

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[2] This time we will not deal with Popović's stylistic constants and their transformations. For the purposes of illustration, the repetition of a tone or chord, such as can often be heard as an accompanying element in the *String Quartet* or as an effective transition in *Medium Tempus*, is one of the main materials in this composition. Juxtaposing the melodically static vertical with the markedly discontinuous melodic motion is a key moment in

There are also numerous and quite clear examples of explicit cluster chords of wide or narrow ambit. Perhaps this is the right moment to point out the following situation: the density of the chromatics is at its highest level at the beginning, up to the letter D. A specific 'diatonicisation', accompanied by a dilution of the texture, is particularly pronounced in the segment E – J, after which the density returns to levels similar to (albeit not the same as) the ones at the outset. This observation supports the possible tripartite form of this piece.

Parameter b) is the basis for another important line of development. The suspension of one tone/chord, deactivation of melody, and persistent repetition of the same tone/chord clearly take on a thematic meaning. At the same time, they display a great degree of versatility since they function as both accompaniment - pizzicato of second violins and viola starting from bar 3 in B (example 2) - and transition - the longest of all suspensions in the melody appears in H (example 7) - which further justifies the argument that the subsequent letter J should be regarded as a general reprise. Polyassociation applies here, too: if an inactive melody is associated with a twelve-tone aggregate at the very beginning, and such a connection is then repeated, in many other cases this freezing of the melodic motion will also become associated with non-cluster chords or isolated tones (Cf. examples 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8).

Another two parameters project their activities globally or within larger segments. Parameter c) falls into the sphere of texture and the relationships between voices, and could be termed heterophony or variant duplication; these are the situations where a similar melodic line develops in several voices at the same time. This parameter too is 'inaugurated' on the first page of the score (example 1), that is, through the motion of two lines in sixteenth-note time values. A similar situation exists between cluster parallelisms: the relationship between the two aforementioned layers is that of approximate canonic imitation, in which situation there is neither a rhythmic nor melodic correspondence or proportion between them, or, for that matter, any kind of algorithm by which to derive one layer from the other.

Finally, the only parameter that has been inactive since the beginning is parameter d). It also stands out because it can be regarded as the sole exponent of the melodic principle, as shown in example 2. During its very first appearance it interacts with parameter c) because, as can easily be seen, all of the first violin and cello parts, as well as the double bass parts, simultaneously develop a similar melody. This melody can, in turn, trigger folkloric, Gregorian, Byzantine, or similar associations. However, the point is not to attribute a certain historical or regional character to it, but to experience it as something primeval, archetypal, with its ambit of fourths (the ambit of normal speech) and diatonicism that resists the occasional attempts at 'contamination' by chromatics. From that idea comes the line of second violins and pizzicato violas in D-E (example 3) and at the same place in F, the line of first violins, - interacting with

a) - cellos, and basses - including the activity of parameter c), (example 6).[3] Interestingly, the first group of first violins in E brings a hidden two-part writing that can be reduced to a mixture of parameters d) and b) - deactivated melody (example 4). Even without a more detailed analysis – which is beyond the scope of this paper – one can see that the music develops mostly through different combinations of these parameters or through their activation toward modelling certain situations of local significance.

We must also call attention to another level of organisation, which is related to previous analyses but maintains a certain degree of autonomy. It is a question of the systemic organisation of pitch levels, something that could be regarded in wider terms as a key scheme. We have already touched on that issue while discussing the dense chromatics, cluster chords, and the gradually emerging diatonicisation followed by the renewed heightening of chromatics. In addition to this observation, the organisation of pitch levels reveals a great degree of surface heterogeneity that is similar to that perceived in the thematic material. The tone rows such as those appearing in the second line of example 1 or in the first three bars of A can lead one to think of series, but the truth is that there is none to speak of.

When a segment of the music contains 10 or 11 different tones – a case we have already registered – we are more likely to suspect the completion of an aggregate, as often happens in non-serial atonality. But that is not the case here either; the missing tones are placed in an entirely inconspicuous way (in the first group of first violins, tones E-flat and A are missing from bars 5 to 9; they appear in b. 10 and b. 11 respectively, which carries no structural weight and attracts no attention as a gesture). The first violins in A1 (b. 11) commence a whole-tone row that quickly becomes chromaticised and, as a result, the whole-tone character plays a minor part in the subsequent course of the composition. As for the activities of parameter d), the composer 'made sure' he was not consistent there either (although admittedly the range of the [pure] fourth is typical, which makes this an intonational coordinate system of sorts): various tonal combinations, embodied in the clusters [0,2,3,5], [0,1,3,5], [0,1,2,4,5] and [0,2,5], appear within the mentioned range.

One might say that we keep running into hints or 'red herrings' in the key scheme. The 'promises' that a tonal centre will be established in this atonal composition are particularly significant. The first such hint we encounter in A1 (b. 7) where the briefly octavised tone A acoustically dominates the chord. The aforementioned dilution of chromatics in E and particularly in F stops just a step away from the consonant purification (example 5). What follows is an extremely striking gesture in the form of a solitary A flat that runs to almost half a minute, during which the moment of the golden mean arrives, i.e., 4' 07'' in a total running time of 6' 40'' (example 7); through the first 6 bars of K, again for acoustic reasons, the consonances briefly 'shimmer' through the complex dissonant tissue (example 8). Finally, the last sound of the composition is the tone D.

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[3] Especially at this point, parameter c) could be redefined as free permutation of a group of tones – a cluster [0,2,5] in this case of several simultaneous voices.

We may well claim that there are momentary indications of certain intonations being centred or focalised, but the truth is that none of them shows the ability to project their influence onto longer segments; much less can we claim that the entire described flow in any way ensures a coherent deep structure like, for example, the Schenkerian *Hintergrund*. Sure enough, if the starting point is a chromatic total and the typical procedure its colouring, that is, the emphasizing of certain segments, both the consonances and the unisons can be 'legitimized' in the long run and then impose themselves, by the nature of things, as potential intonational foundations. At a later point, I will, however, propose a different interpretation of these events.

The analysis so far should in no respect imply that this work amounts to some catalogue of procedures or to a mere demonstration of the possibilities of the compositional technique. Apart from 'toying' with various music parameters, the composer also applies global strategies that ensure long-term logic and coherence. We have already pointed out that this musical development, discontinuous and fragmentary as it may be, fits to some extent into the tripartite form, although the boundary between the first and the second section cannot be defined unambiguously. Possible suggestions are as follows: the fourth bar in B, C or perhaps D.

We have also mentioned the reprise: It would be more precise to say it is a hint of the reprise, as it is barely registered aurally. There is, however, a place where the original activities of the parameters appear in a more readily recognisable form, which is located at J. The tripartite form, even when it is not manifested as solid and well-laid-out architectonics, always has the potential to stabilise even the flows that outwardly seem heterogeneous.

The logic of a long-term structure is also achieved by a strategy through which the composer resorts, rather traditionally, to literal repetition in the initial stage, up to the third bar of the letter B: before being subjected to far-reaching transformations, the material is imprinted upon the listener's consciousness, which certainly represents a significant contribution to communication. Finally, besides the fact that the already outlined manipulation provides the parameters with some level of coherence, there also exist certain subtle procedures that bring the required minimum of continuity from one segment to another ('contiguous relations'!). The intonations set by the cluster in B represent 'springboards', places from which melody departs - parameter d), (example 2) - while the condensed texture is maintained; the repeated tones are pushed back into the accompanying layers, only to be transformed in C into a long sustained tone signalling the ending which retains in D (example 3) the former register, but returns to its original form of repeated tones; at the same time, repeated tones also appear in the cello/double bass layer, after which both layers are melodically activated in the segment VnII/1 in a manner that was 'inherited' from B, and largely present in D from the outset.

Describing music in this way, we could no doubt fill dozens of pages, but this illustration will probably suffice to demonstrate the logic of the events. Each following segment introduces, at times abruptly, a new, different situation, but retains at least some recognisable element or type of activity from

the previous one. The upshot is that we are left with the impression of a sequencing of disparate fragments, along with the accompanying insight into the laws of that sequencing. It seems that the very striking (and intriguing) A-flat from the letter H (example 7) appeared precisely in order to put an end to the increasingly incoherent alternation of various contents, as a warning that 'the thing had gone too far'.

Examining the technical aspects of the compositions, at times even in some detail, we should not lose sight of the fact that apart from 19 pages of sheet music, it also has a title. A ballad – before we point out some of its other properties – first and foremost tells a story. What kind of story does Berislav Popović's *Ballad* tell? Of course, in order to address this question, we must first parenthesise another important issue – whether narrativity at all falls within the domain of music, with familiar arguments supporting the response in the negative.[4] However, given that there also exists an opposing school of thought and that the composer himself believed his work required precisely that kind of title, then this becomes a task an analyst cannot eschew.[5] He should, however, at all times bear two things in mind. First, many observations demonstrating the narrative character of this work could also be regarded as attributes of the dramatic. The line of demarcation between *mimesis* and *diegesis* in music is a highly debatable one and it would be pointless to take up the matter in this paper. Second, the *Ballad* is in no respect a ballad; i.e., the analysed composition is exactly that – a music work – not some translation of literature into music. One would not expect otherwise from a composer who devoted his entire life to the quest for immanent laws of musical development. This places certain *a priori* restrictions on the following interpretations.

As always when the narrative aspect of music is included in analytical procedure, there are several possible scenarios. The two that I am proposing refer to different levels of the composition and are not mutually exclusive. Both owe much to the theory of archetypes of Canadian literary critic Northrope Frye[5] and especially the manner in which his postulates are used by Byron Almen[6] in analysing musical narrations. There are four archetypal narrative categories – *mythoi* – 'four basic strategies that narrative imagination uses to play up the tension between the forces of hierarchy that impose an order and the forces that disrupt that order'.[7] If the emphasis is laid on victory, we have a *mythos* of romance (victory of the order over the 'transgression') and comedy (vice versa). Conversely, the emphasis on defeat yields a tragic *mythos* (victory of the order) and a *mythos* of irony/satire.

According to the first scenario, the order is first and foremost defined by the cluster - which, if we think back, involves parameters a) with its subparameters and parameter b). This is the only element that

[4] B. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, 'Can One Speak of Narrativity in Music?', *Royal Musical Association Journal*, 115:2, 1990.

[5] Byron Almen, 'Narrative Archetypes: A Critique, Theory and Method of Narrative Analysis', *Journal of Music Theory*, No. 47/1, 2003, pp. 1-39. In this article, the author attempts to disprove, one by one, all of Nattiez's arguments. We should also mention the detailed narrative analyses like the one in: Eero Tarasti, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indinapolis, 1994.

[5] Northrope Frye, 'Arhetipska kritika: Teorija mitova', in: *Anatomija kritike*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1979, pp. 151-172.

[6] Byron Almen, op. cit.

is literally repeated and is an element whose parameters are associated with practically all the events in the composition and which underneath its contrastive surface still manages to ensure a certain continuity of the parameters' activity. The actual 'transgression' is made in the letter B (example 2) by activating parameter d). The fact that this type of melody can evoke ancient ballads (dare we mention Brahms?) is of secondary importance. The point here is that diatonicism, melodiousness and lyricism are activated, along with the invocation of a music language that is quite different to both elements forming the initial contrast. Up to the letter H, parameter d) shows a tendency to dominate, to take control of the events, both by its horizontal dimension, by imposing its melody, and by its vertical nature, 'forcing' the chords to become more transparent, verging on consonance. It is as if the lyrical principle begins to prevail, which explains the paradox that the escalation of the conflict runs parallel with the definitive abnegation of the original dramaticism.

The sustained A-flat at letter H is the ultimate crossroads or turning point. It is at this point that the tendencies toward melodic stasis (parameter b) and the reduction of the vertical, to 'clarification', converge. It is the point where we briefly lose the notion of what an order, and what its transgression, is, and where the music could easily have gone either way; in other words, it is a *peripeteia*. After that point we become fully aware that the establishment of an order and the defeat of the forces that disrupted this order are inevitable. Assuming the listener's attention was focused on the forces negating the order, we would get Frye's exact description of the tragic *mythos*. Represented in this way, the scenario would correspond more to drama than narration, but keeping in mind the aforementioned restrictions with regard to the distinction of these categories in music, it is enough that ballad, with its invariably tragic outcome, irrevocably belongs in the tragic *mythos*.

The second scenario follows a similar path, albeit in the domain of systemic organisation of pitch levels. At this point it seems only appropriate to analyse the developments from the perspective of the motive of the quest, the pursuit, the favourite motive in chivalric romances, but also ballads, which in most cases were popular reinterpretations of medieval romances. The 'Holy Grail' here is, naturally, tonality, the tonal centre. The set order is an undifferentiated, maximally entropic chromatic total that is disrupted by the aforementioned attempts at focusing on certain intonations. Once again, the A-flat is the point that offers hope of the order being overturned. This tone imposes itself as a tonal pivot not only by its isolation and duration. It is also prepared with the dominant E-flat - B chord (G, cellos and basses [example 7]), as a bizarre cadencing process of sorts. That very bizarreness, however, signals the tonality's predestined lack of power (fatalism is rather typical of ballads) to disrupt the old order.[8] In none

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[7] Ibid, p. 18.

[8] Cf. the following quote: 'The world in ballads is represented as unchangeable … the results of the [protagonists'] actions are predetermined … The ability of the characters to act ensures the unfolding of the story as a series of events, but all these events serve as a lead-up to their demise and … *their punishment for rebelling against 'the nature of things'* (NB., italicized by M. Z.)'. Dorota Zakrzewska, 'Alienation and Powerlessness: Adam Mickiewicz's 'Ballady' and Chopin's Ballades', *Polish Music Journal*, Vol. 2, Nos. 1-2, 1999, ISSN 1521 – 6039; http://www.usc.edu/dept/polish_music/PMJ/issue/2.1.99/zakrzewks.html

of the scenarios is the order restored in the same way – that would be in contravention of the narrative logic – but the attempt at transgression remains forestalled nonetheless.[10] Once again we are looking at a tragic *mythos*. In such a spirit I will interpret the final tone D. Locally, it may be prepared, rather feebly, with multiple duplication and a bass in the last cluster; globally, it is completely out of context, not once do we see it projecting itself as a global goal. It simply has no attributes of a tonal centre. In view of its dynamics, register, and pizzicato sound, and in the context of all the events herein described, the presence of the tone D can only be explained as a mild deviation toward irony.[9]

Even if our analysis of these two scenarios has demonstrated the possible narrative features of the composition and confirmed that for the most part they do not contradict the character of the ballad, it still remains unclear why this is a ballad in the first place, and not a tragedy, drama or short story. Where is that *differentia specifica* of the ballad genre?[10] I shall stress the point once more: a 'one on one' relationship would not be appropriate. It would be pointless to look for the regular meter of the ballad, the refrain, or the stereotypical formulae (although the absence of a fixed and clear meter does contribute to the narrative character of the composition). If the ballad focuses on a single, central event, and the attention is rarely drawn to more than two main characters, how can we recognize that event and these characters in the work before us? It turns out that there are several balladic features the composition ignores.

There are also, however, characteristics that establish a very noticeable correspondence between the literary genre and this music piece. By focusing on what is relevant, on the train of events itself, the ballad is deprived of any kind of description, commentary or digression. The reader is immediately and directly pushed into the centre of developments of whose origin and causes he is uninformed. The story tends to unfold precipitately, by flitting (and not always explaining why) from one situation to another, rarely stopping at the finer points, and without looking back or returning in order to develop a parallel plot. The characters are mere sketches and the motivation behind their actions is left to the reader. Berislav Popović's *Ballad* in many ways fits this description. The forcefulness of its opening immediately pushes the listener into a whirlpool of events. The surface articulation of the composition is sectional, with abrupt changes of contrasting situations. Compressed into some 400 seconds, it represents the very concentrate of action, where each situation runs to a little under 20 seconds (the longest-running being precisely that sustained A-flat tone!). There are no conditions for linking events, for developing the material, for returning to the former, or for giving details. The precipitancy leaves behind gaps filled by the listener.

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[10] The outcome in a ballad can be tragic for both parties in the conflict; all the participants in the battle are killed (*Hunting of the Cheviot*; *The Douglas Tragedy*); Edward's patricide has far-reaching implications for all in his surroundings. In keeping with that idea, the cluster does not escape 'unscathed' from the conflict.
[9] This disturbs the balladic concept to a certain extent; irony is practically unfamiliar in ballads.
[10] Of the numerous meanings of the word *ballad*, the only relevant here is the one referring to folk epic-lyric songs, particularly of Scottish, English or Scandinavian origin (although they can be found in other countries, too, including Serbia) or art ballads written in the spirit of the traditional ones, such as Bürger's *Lenore*.

If we allow for an analogy between the musical theme and the literary hero, the interpretation of the kinship with the ballad genre ends up in an ambiguous position. In a ballad, characters are defined from the very outset and our opinion of them is mostly confirmed by the end. This feature is contrary to the protean character of Popović's motives. On the other hand, their blurred identities could be linked to the typically spare characterisation of ballad protagonists.

What is missing in the ballad is the context, the setting for the action, or its precise location in time and space. We could also draw an analogy with the composition's specific texture, which is reduced to what is essential, admitting only a minimum of accompanying elements; rare are the situations where certain layers function so as to provide the setting, an environment in which the material will develop. Almost everything seems to have thematic significance.

Elements of the supernatural are also part of the standard ballad repertoire. Although mentioning these elements inevitably raises the question of how exactly this supernatural element can be represented in music and, by extension, the even more universal question of referential meaning, orchestral situations like the specific combination of *sul ponticello* and *flautando* sounds (example 1) could be viewed as a topical (in semiotic terms) representation of the surreal, supernatural world.

Let us think back to the second scenario according to which the focus is on the motive of the quest, while the subject of the quest is a point of stability, a tonal centre. After all, the first scenario could be interpreted by the same token as a quest for the archaic, archetypal innocence, for an aspect of music which belongs to times past and which we have lost (for good?). Could it be a whisper of nostalgia, another common feature of ballads, that we recognize in this?

In the end, let us dwell once more on the characteristic absence of a clear thematic identity and a stable formal architectonics. It is as though by stating this, Professor Popović offers us a stark image of the workings of music and sheds light, so to speak, on the forces shaping music by minimising their surface manifestation. Isn't he making us connect that way with the primary, the primeval, with the active, with that which sparks music from deep down? And doesn't that bear some connection to that characteristic quality of the ballad to make contact, as Deiches would say, with some deep layers of human fear?[11]

Translated by Dušan Zabrdac

Summary

Ballad for Strings by Serbian composer Berislav Popović is an elusive piece for an analyst in several respects: formally, as it cannot be subsumed under any standard formal type; syntactically; and with respect to pitch organization which is heteronomous including clusters, diatonic segments, and even hints of tonality. The analytically most fruitful approach would not look for an underlying pitch structure, nor follow the thematic development, but examine the activities of musical parameters which are capable of dissociating from the material in which they initially play a part and associating anew with other parameters, while retaining a certain level of recognizability. Another aspect of the composition that the paper tries to illuminate refers to its title. Granted that the music follows its own logic, it none the less employs certain narrative strategies that approach the literary genre of the ballad. Starting from the system of narrative *mythoi* as propounded by Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye, we can conclude that both Popović's composition and the literary ballad manifest ample characteristics of Frye's tragic *mythos*. Inasmuch as the ballad often makes use of the motive of quest, the object of that quest in the composition might be tonality.

Example 1
tt 1-8

[11] David Daiches, *A Critical History of English Literature*, Seeker & Warburg, London, 1969, p. 88.

Example 2
B tt 3-6

Example 3
D tt 3-6
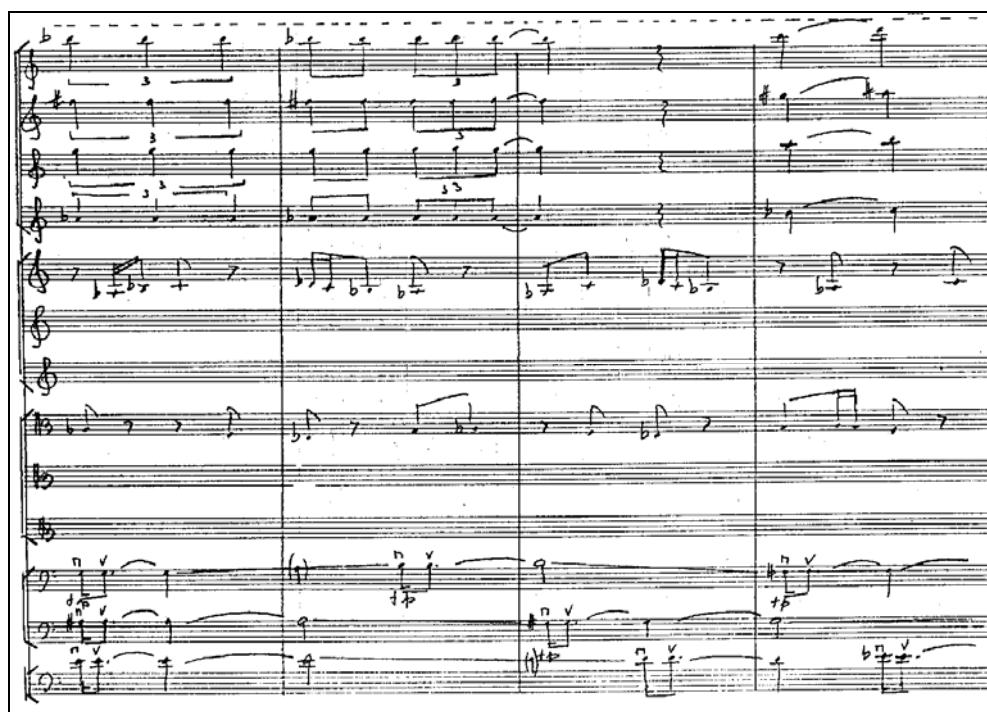
Example 4
E tt 3-6
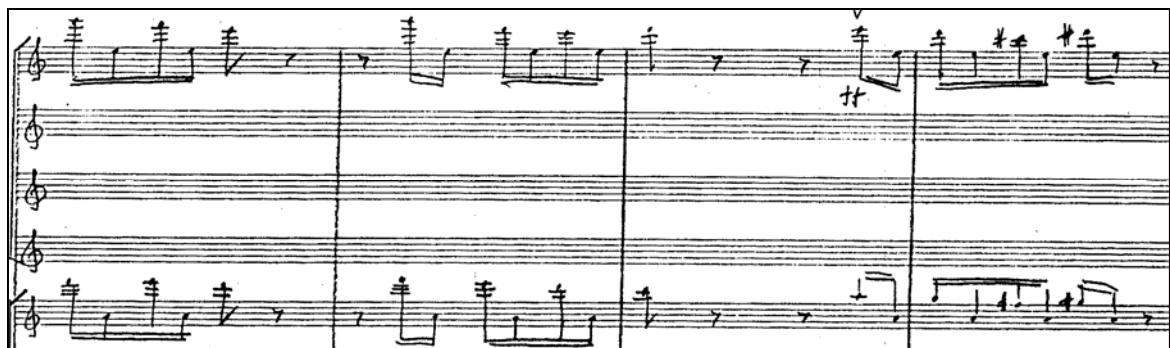
Example 5
3 t pre **F**
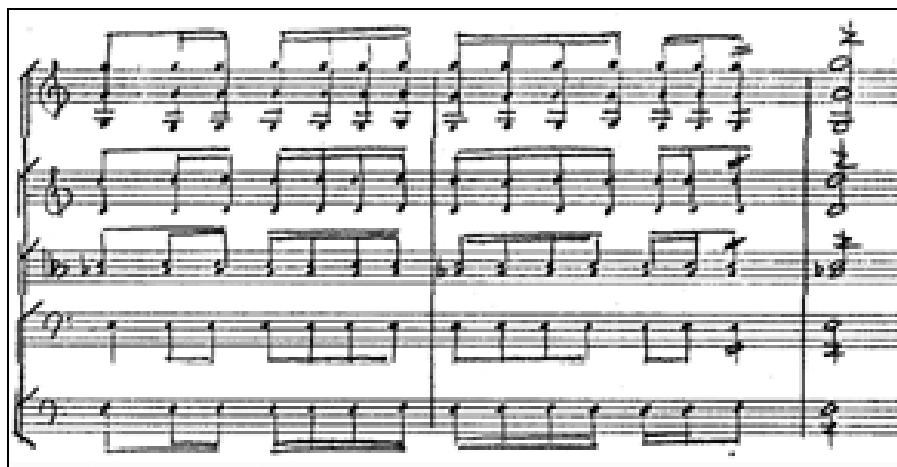
Example 6
F tt2-3
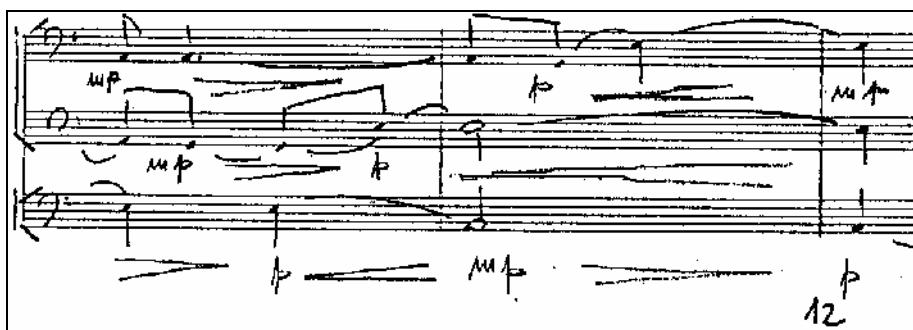
Example 7
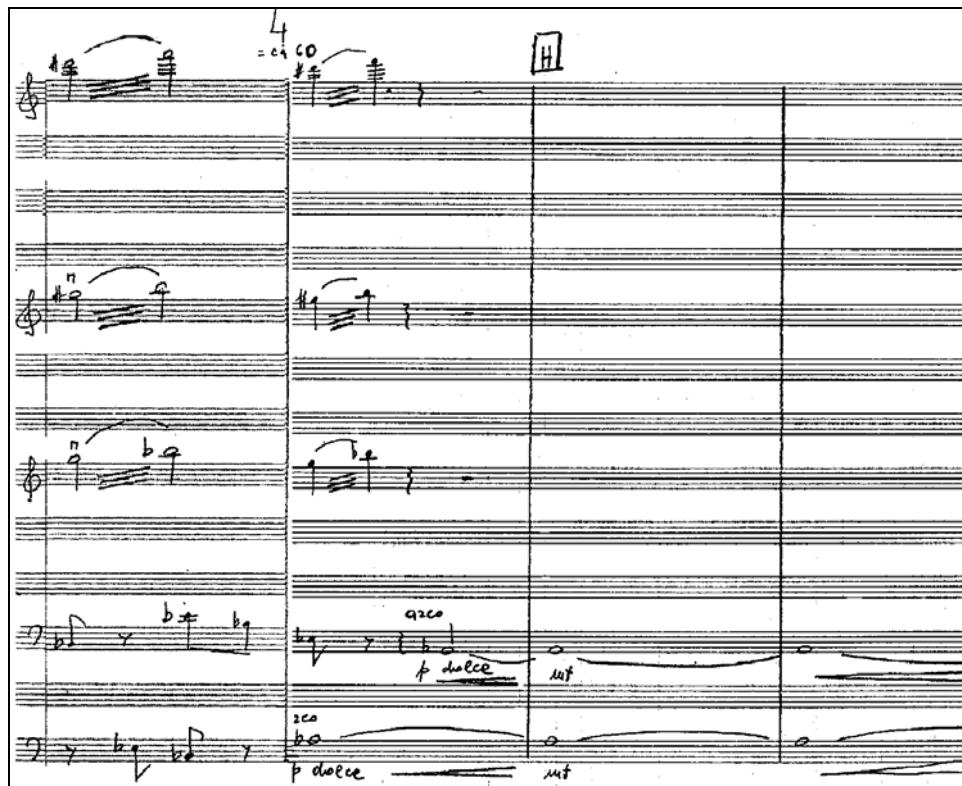
Example 8

Example 9
The end of piece