

The significant dimension of the sequence *Dies irae* in the 20th century music

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This article deals with the issue of the sequence *Dies irae* in the music of the 20th century. By analysing musical compositions of the 20th century the following pyramid of the significant layers of the sequence *Dies irae* is established: a) composers manipulate the whole sequence's structure in newly composed works; b) they eliminate a particular – melodic or verbal – segment of the *Dies irae* sequence; c) for centuries, the semantic meaning of the *Dies irae* sequence has rooted and became a peculiar “metaphor”, the *motto* of the whole (or one part of) composition.

Key words: sequence *Dies irae*, sign, symbol, icon, *Requiem*

Full of striking discoveries, the music world of the 20th century becomes a field of penetrative influences and interactions. Its scenery may be painted in contrastive colours highlighting the radical innovations in the absorbed technologies, while the obstinate dotted lines of tradition may be delineated in softer dabs. As we emphasize the thread of tradition and the continual character of musical culture in the 20th century, we should prove, in a materiality way, the representative musical signs in different epochs. The research object is one of the potential meta-cultural signs of intersection – the so-called medieval sequence *Dies irae*, which existed for more than seven centuries in the sense of musical culture. This masterpiece of music and poetry in the 13th century and its behaviour in the context of musical culture of the 18th–20th centuries may be equated to a particular semantic-technological dotted line that related the musical compositions in various eras.

At first it emerged as a sequence (attributed to the pen by Thomas of Celano who died in 1255), then later *Dies irae* functioned as an ordinary part of Requiem Mass. The epoch of Romanticism consolidated the medieval monody as one of the most popular and marked compositional quotations with macabre content. In this epoch, the melody of the *Dies irae* sequence overgrew with connotations of semantic multi-significance. The initial melodic motive of the sequence *Dies irae* became one of the most important signs of semantic structure in various musical compositions (e.g., H. Berlioz “Fantastic Symphony”, 1830; F. Liszt “Dance macabre”, 1849, C. Saint-Saëns “Dance macabre”, 1874). This sign gave a sense to the creative expression of the infernal sphere in Romantic art and emphasized the

beginning of death philosophy's era which raised direct associations with the devil, witches, skeletons and the Great Account.

It was noticed that the general attitude of the public in the 20th century to death is described as an extrusion of the death phenomenon itself and its conscious negation. Then, according to P. Dinzelsbacher¹, many people consciously touched upon this theme but only in the case of health insurance or purchasing a burial ground. However, a research of the death phenomenon, sublimated by A. Schopenhauer, is continued in the artistic plane in numerous Requiem and secular compositions in the music of the 20th century. The latter compositions implicate both components of the sequence *Dies irae*. First, the intonation structure of melodies (A) and, second, the verbal text (B) irradiated the semantic meanings entirely. Analysing the musical compositions of the 20th century, a pyramid of compositional types that may integrate the sequence *Dies irae* with its components A and B or just its marked aspect is established. Hence *Dies irae* functions as:

- a phenomenon of “music in music” (the term by M. Tomaszewski);
- part of composition in Requiem genre;
- an independent composition or its part.

Initially, the elementary monody of the 13th century will assume an infinite and miscellaneous spectrum of realization in the music of the 20th century. Therefore the following questions are raised in the paper:

- First, by what technologies and in what semantic situation are the melodic formations of the Gregorian sequence implicated into secular music pieces?

4. Devil-music [Solo. Cadenza accompagnata] 7 and 13

The image displays a complex musical score for a piece titled "4. Devil-music [Solo. Cadenza accompagnata] 7 and 13". The score is written for multiple instruments: Electric Violin I, Electric Violin II, Electric Viola, and (Vcl.) Tam-tam. It includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *ff* (fortissimo) and *fff* (fortississimo). The score is divided into sections labeled "Dies irae I a", "Dies irae I b", and "Dies irae I c". The "Dies irae I a" section is at the top right, "Dies irae I b" is at the bottom left, and "Dies irae I c" is at the bottom right. The score also includes performance instructions such as "In romantic-phantastic style! arco sul pont.", "pedal tones!", "stake center with a very hard beater", and "lowered harmonic: a Eb bar on rim".

1. G. Crumb. "Black Angels"

• Second, how do the composers solve the creation of the Great Account's image of the *Dies irae* verbal text?

• Third, why and on what account are the instrumental or vocal-instrumental compositions of the 20th century entitled as "Dies irae" by composers despite their being managed without a verbal text of sequence or obvious musical quotations?

• And fourth, how does the sign-nomination of the sequence *Dies irae* influence the contemporary music composition which seems to have nothing in common with medieval monody?

I will attempt to give a study and comment to these questions with reference to the ideas of the significant triad by Ch. Pierce, which have become conventional.

The research of the *Dies irae* phenomenon of "music in music" clarifies the problem of symbol structure and function. Many researchers define the symbol as:

• a historically consolidated stereotype (E. Schering)²;

• conscious implantation and formation of frequent and systematic operations with it (E. A. Lipman)³;

• symbols are arbitrary and exist merely by convention (Ch. Pierce)⁴.

Infrequently, an idea of sign-symbol in music is significant exclusively through the implication of cer-

tain melodic-rhythmic formulas that are historically settled and institutionalised. Obviously since the 19th century the quotation of the sequence *Dies irae*, an equivalent of death and the Great Account, becomes a sign-symbol. There is no lack of such symbols in music of the 20th century. A representative example of *Dies irae* sign-symbol implication may be the composition by G. Crumb "Black Angels – thirteen images from the dark land" (1970). The main idea of the composition is related to quasi-programme allusions and an opposition of God *versus* Devil, created with the help of musical symbols. In the parts of the demonic sphere (4th part "Devil music" and 5th part "Danse Macabre"), G. Crumb displays the signs that accentuate the "devilness", not only the most intensive dynamically musical interval of tritone, but also a "devil trill" created by Paganini and soundly fixed later as an emblematic motive of the sequence *Dies irae*.

It is obvious that G. Crumb consciously operates the musical image of *Danse Macabre*, which was consolidated by F. Liszt, C. Saint-Saëns, M. Musorgsky and other Romantic composers. The composer creates this musical image using the intonation atmosphere of *Dies irae*. In both parts of "Black Angels" the *Dies irae* quotation-illustration functions as a segmented *cantus firmus*. The parts of the second violin and viola duplicate the sequence mono-rhythmically by interval of the fourth that awakes an ephemeral remi-

④ Allegro moderato $\text{♩} = 80-84$

espress. molto

Str. tutti

Trp.

Di - es - rae,

Schlagz.

2. B. A. Zimmermann. Concert for Violin

niscence of parallel organum in the fourth section of “Devil music”. Seeking an expression of the Great Account symbol in a maximally dramatic and tenebrous character, the composer placed the parts of the second violin and viola into a notably deep and obscured register atypical of these instruments. In this way the dramatic melodic implications of “the day of reckoning” break in the violin’s demonic monolog which is filled with bravura and its basis made of a macabre tritone consonance. Also, the latter consonance dominates harmonically in grotesque duets of the fifth section. Hereby G. Crumb composes the parts “Devil music” and “Danse Macabre” on the ground of demon harmonic consonance and the sequence *Dies irae*.

In addition, *Dies irae* is illustrated as a sign-symbol by many other music compositions of the 20th century. For example, the Russian composer A. Vustin’s “Music for ten” (1991) is a dodecaphonic piece. The portentous initial motive of *Dies irae* is implicated in the composition’s culmination where the conductor pronounces perdition by Jak Cazzotte that presages the circumstances of every participant’s death. And the composer himself marks this motive in the score.

The sign-symbol of *Dies irae* occupies an exclusive position in the oeuvre by German composer B.

A. Zimmermann. *Dies irae* sounds like a leitmotiv in such compositions as “1900 Jahre Köln”, opera “Die Soldaten”, “Ubu-Musik”, Concerto for Violin. The sequence originally constructed a stylistically varicoloured catalogue of works by B. A. Zimmermann. The sequence *Dies irae* embraces the semantic part and plays a structural role in the works by B. A. Zimmermann, similarly to other quotations that are integrated into the musical material. After the composer, the notional field in Concert for Violin (1950) discovers the tempers “during the war and post-war time”⁵. Also these tempers are coloured by infernal songs that traditionally dominate during the sounding of the sequence *Dies irae* in the culmination zone of the second part.

The dramaturgical centre of these compositions coincides with the sounding forms of the sequence *Dies irae* in the second part of the cycle. It is in Concert for Violin by B. A. Zimmermann and likewise in the “La danse des morts” (1938) by A. Honegger or L. Dallapiccola’s “Canti di prigionia” (1938–1941). It is noticeable that B. A. Zimmermann (L. Dallapiccola too) followed the tradition of A. Berg’s “swansong” Concert for Violin (1935) because of the inscribing words sequenced into the score. There might be a two-fold stimulus – respect for A. Berg’s creation and uncertainty about the

suggestibility of quotable material. So the verbal text integrated into the supplementary symbolic-semantic strain will adequately influence the aware listener.

The dissimilated quotation of the sequence *Dies irae*, equivalent to the *cantus planus* form, sounds in this part of the composition three times as an essential sign-symbol. Such specific harmonization of a separate sound of a sequence and the discernment of its timbre, rhythm and dynamics from the general music context show the extraordinary importance of the sequence *Dies irae* for this composition. A detailed analysis showed that B. A. Zimmermann inserted the motives of the Gregorian monody into the first and third parts of the composition as well. However, these *Dies irae* motives were interweaved in the musical texture in a simulation way (after L. B. Meyer⁶), which means that the organic integration into the intonation of the composition is indistinguishable.

Therefore *Dies irae* will lose its symbolic aspect and obtain the character of the index-linked sign's manifestation. Theory by Ch. Pierce and N. Cumming remarks upon the index as a sign that is truly influenced by the object. So the motive of the sequence *Dies irae*, which is implicated, represents a sign-index term by Ch. Pierce in the programme compositions of the 20th century (e.g., in the "Death Island" (1909), "Symphonic Dances" (1940) by S. Rachmaninoff or "Sacred Printemps" (1913) by I. Stravinski). Here the medieval monody doesn't sound easily audibly identifiable as characterized by facture, rhythm and timbre. It already sounds like an integral element integrated into the musical texture created by the composer.

The marked dimensions in the sequence *Dies irae* are represented by the verbal structure of monody. An exceptional feature of the *Dies irae* verbal text in Requiem compositions is personalized by its character, because the idea is defined by a singular first conjugation. A man who is obsessed over the horror of the Great Account settles it. So this text is illustratively conveyed to the congregation and the listeners of Requiem music also with the help of subject details.

Analysis of a series of Requiem compositions showed that the relationship of various composers of the 20th century to the Gregorian prototype of *Dies irae* is distinguished by a non-descript variety. Some composers such as I. Stravinski, G. Ligeti, O. Balakauskas, V. Martynov and V. Bartulis (as well as others) consciously avoid any melodic allusions to the sequence *Dies irae*, while in Requiem compositions by others such as E. Erkkilä, I. Pizzetti, G. Burgon, S. Salonen, J. Linjama, J. N. David a very strong semantic charge of verbal and musical text is suggested. While reflecting on the varicoloured retrospective musical styles in the 20th century,

the above-mentioned composers' Requiem represented a double re-interpretation manner of the *Dies irae* compositional tradition:

- E. Erkkilä and J. Linjama archaize the facture, melodic and even the technological musical structure in "Mass for Dead". They invoke suggestive intonations of the sequence *Dies irae* as well as the medieval principles of composition;

- S. Salonen and G. Burgon interpret the Latin verbal text of the sequence *Dies irae* as they invoke more various and even illustrative approaches of musical language.

There is an intensive interpretative aspect of music in other Requiem compositions of the 20th century that are based on a liturgical text. This predicts that expressive, even more rhetorical musical implements accentuate certain liturgical words that mean the creation of iconic signs. For example, the verbal text of the sequence "quantus tremor est futurus" in the *Dies irae* parts of Requiem by W. A. Mozart and A. Schnittke is illustrated by trill intonations. It is noticeable that as often as not in the *Dies irae* part of Requiem the tones *d*, *dis* (*es*) and *e* are exposed. For example, the *Dies irae* parts of Requiem by W. A. Mozart, A. Bruckner, A. Schnittke, S. Salonen and others begin with the tone *d*. G. Ligeti begins the part *Dies irae* in a total unison *dis*. It is believable that it may be interpreted as a sign-icon – an original part of the Latin anagram *dies*.

Quite often in *Dies irae* parts of the 20th century Requiem composition the theatrical feature which serves a more vivid display of the sequence *Dies irae* images is observed. For example, in G. Ligeti's *Dies irae* part (after H.-G. Bauer⁷) a correlation between the individual (solo) and the public (chorus) is crystallized. Here the verbal text of the sequence laminates according to the principle of montage which means simultaneous or amalgamic segmentation into various registers of timbre.

Theatricality is a striking feature of the *Dies irae* part in Requiem by V. Bartulis. In the structure of this part, four massive episodes heighten the emphasis. The soloists' trio, which is full of energy and developed alternately in contrastive polyphony and homophony, connects all of them. Only with the strophe of *Confutatis* (*Confutatis maledictis, / Flammis acribus addicitis: / Voca me cum benedictis* [As you condemn the anathema, which are directed to eternal flame, lead me to the favoured]) the mixed chorus and tonal (B flat Major) and homophonic development of music are introduced. In this way a contrast to contrapuntal and tonally unspecified soloists' trio is made. A two-ply vocal part in the score furthers the growing tendency of the general intension. The tonal chorus (*Confutatis*) prepares for the fourth episode, *Lacrimosa*, which is the apogee of all the composition's tension.

The image displays a musical score. The upper portion consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melodic line with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The bass staff contains a more complex accompaniment. Two large grey arrows point downwards from the bass staff to a lower staff. This lower staff is a single treble clef staff containing a melodic line. This line is divided into two segments: the first segment is labeled 'Ia' and the second segment is labeled 'Ib'. The text 'The inversion of sequence Dies irae' is written to the left of the arrows.

3. G. Ustvolskaja. The Second Composition “Dies irae”

When analysing the compositions where the sequence *Dies irae* becomes an *idée fixe* of the secular music genre, the creative background of every composer interpreting the medieval sequence in the context of the 20th century music is revealed. For example, the Second Composition “*Dies irae*” (1972–3) by G. Ustvolskaja is a laconic and condensed instrumental piece for eight double-basses and piano. Contrary to many bygone composers such as H. Berlioz, S. Rachmaninoff, O. Respighi, who implemented in their music works the first intonation segments of the sequence *Dies irae*, G. Ustvolskaja consciously avoids their direct implementation in her composition. There is no evident, audibly and infallibly identified melodic fragment that may associate with intonation formations of the sequence. Analysis shows that G. Ustvolskaja inserts into the compositional texture and transforms concentrated selective *Dies irae* motives of 3–4 tones chosen from various episodes of the script. So the accepted melodic formations of familiar monody are not only disguised and masked thoroughly, but also interflow into a new musical context.

The motive in the piano section, which is most explicated in the entire composition’s space, begins with *Dies irae* by G. Ustvolskaja. A detailed reductional analysis of intonations in the *Dies irae* composition leads to a premise that in the beginning of the musical work G. Ustvolskaja uses the emblematic initial *Dies irae* motive of four tones, which was widely exploited by composers in the 19th century. This may be proven by the inversion of the above-mentioned theme. The first notes may be considered to be an equivalent of the initial *Dies irae* motive, while the succession of the third segment synchronizes the further micro-motives.

So here the medieval sequence *Dies irae* becomes a musical object transformed through the prism of personal perception in the 20th century. According to Ch. Pierce, the significant triad terms of this phenomenon may be interpreted as an icon. According to N. Cumming, “Ch. Pierce denied the need for an actual object (to which an icon is similar). An icon can denote something in its own possible character and does so irrespective of the actual existence of anything to which it corresponds [...]. It can have a character of a sign by being the stipulated likeness of a non-existent entity. Although (Ch.

Pierce equivocates) it does not really “act as a sign” in that case”⁷⁸. In this instance, the composition in the 20th century is a modern interpretation of *Dies irae* “likeness”, where it is possible to envisage the meanings of a semantic medieval sequence.

The latter unfolds much more evidently in the vocal-instrumental *Dies irae* compositions or their parts of the 20th century. For example, K. Penderecki’s “*Dies irae*” (1967), A. Sallinen’s “*Dies irae*” op. 47 (1978) are the compositions where we should not search for any audibly identified intonations of the sequence *Dies irae* or formations of a verbal prototype. However, in the compositions of the 20th century that are connected to the sequence *Dies irae* by iconic ties, there is an evident significant objectivism of the Gregorian sequence, which represents the interpretations of the theme of death. In other words, the title “*Dies irae*” in a 20th century composition forecasts individual perceptions of the Great Account by composers, determined by the traditional sequence *Dies irae* as a symbol of death in the epoch of Romanticism.

Various tendencies have crystallised to give sense to the medieval monody on the ground of compositions analysed by aspects of the sequence *Dies irae* realisation in music of the 20th century:

I. *Dies irae* – an aspect of “borrowed” material’s adaptation will function as:

a) a symbol – an integral element clearly perceivable by the listener and representing a macabre sphere (G. Crumb, “Black angels”; A. Vustin, “Music for ten”; S. Rachmaninoff, “Rhapsody on a theme by Paganini”; A. Schnittke, finale of the First Symphony, etc.);

b) an index – a non-contrasting but already identified audibly melodic formation influencing the lexis of the intonation vocabulary (S. Rachmaninoff,

“Death Island”, “Symphonic Dances”; I. Strawinski, “Sacred Printemps”)

II. *Dies irae* – an aspect of signifying the verbal text is realised as:

a) an icon – a particular encoding of the first word “Dies” anagram (G. Ligeti’s, A. Schnittke’s Requiem compositions);

b) a semantic fixation of a particular poetic text of the sequence (for example, in V. Bartulis’ Requiem the “Dies irae” part plays a special role and is distinguished by the text *Confutatis*, in the composition by V. Martynov – by the *Lacrimosa* text, and so on. In this way a composer’s subjectivity interpreting the semantics in the text of the sequence *Dies irae* is displayed)

III. *Dies irae* – an inspiration of a new compositional text is realised as:

a) instrumental compositions where the melodic formulas of the Gregorian monody are thoroughly hidden (G. Ustvolskaja’s “Dies irae”, A. Pärt’s “Miserere”);

b) vocal-instrumental compositions where the verbal text is an interpretation of death perception by today’s poets (for example, E. Carter’s “Dies irae” from “In sleep, in thunder” (words by R. Lowell), A. Sallinen’s “Dies irae” (words by A. Turtiainen)) or a simultaneous representation of biblical fragments and today’s poets (for example, K. Penderecki’s “Dies irae” text, prepared by the composer, juxtaposes a selection of extracts from original ancient and biblical texts – Aeschylus’ Eumenides, Psalms, Revelation, the Epistles) and extracts from contemporary poems on death camps (by Broniewski, Rózewicz and Aragon).

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Notes

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ŽENKLIŠKASIS *DIES IRAE* SEKVENCIJOS MATMUO XX A. MUZIKOJE

SANTRAUKA

Straipsnio tyrinėjimo objektas – vienas potencialių meta-kultūrinių sankirtos ženklų, jau daugiau kaip septynis šimtmečius muzikos kultūros sąmonėje funkcionuojanti viduramžių sekvencija *Dies irae*. Būtent pastarąjį XIII a. poezijos ir muzikos šedevrą ir jo funkcionavimą XIII–XX a. muzikos kultūros erdvėje galima prilyginti konkrečiam semantiniam-technologiniam punktyriui, kuris susiejo įvairių epochų muzikos opusus. Kilusi kaip sekvencija (priskiriama Thomo iš Celano, mirusio 1255 m., plunksnai), vėliau *Dies irae* funkcionavo kaip ordinarinė *Requiem* mišią dalis. Ro-

mantizmo era viduramžių monodiją įtvirtino kaip vieną populiariausių bei ženkliausių makabrinio turinio kompozicinių citatų. Būtent šioje epochoje *Dies irae* melodija apaugo semantinio įvairiaprasmiskumo konotacijomis, įprasmino kūrybišką infernalinės sferos išraišką, paryškino mirties filosofijos eros pradžią, kai keliamos tiesioginės asociacijos su velniu, raganomis, griaučiais, su Paskutiniu oju teismu.

XX a. muzikoje gausu *Requiem*, pasaulietinių kompozicijų, implikuojančių *Dies irae* sekvencijos abu komponentus – melodikos intonacinę struktūrą (A) bei žodinių tekstą (B), spinduliuojančius visumines semantines prasmes. Taigi analizuojant XX a. muzikos kompozicijas, susidaro tokia *Dies irae* sekvencija su A ir B komponentais ar tik jos ženkliskąjį aspektą integravusių kompozicijų tipų piramidė. *Dies irae* funkcionuoja kaip:

- „muzikos muzikoje“ (M. Tomaszewskio sąvoka) fenomenas;
- kaip *Requiem* žanro kompozicijos dalis;
- kaip savarankiška kompozicija ar jos dalis.

Dies irae kaip „muzika muzikoje“ fenomeno tyrinėjimas aktualizuoja simbolio struktūros ir funkcionavimo problemą. Neatsitiktinai muzikoje ženkl-simbolio idėja įprasminama išskirtinai tik tam tikrų nusistovėjusių, istorijos tėkmėje įsitvirtinusių melodinių-ritminių formulių implikavimo dėka. Aki vaizdu, jog ženklu-simboliu nuo XIX a. tampa ir *Dies irae* sekvencijos citata – mirties, Paskutiniojo teismo ekvivalentas. Tokių simbolių gausu XX a. muzikoje. Reprerentatyvūs *Dies irae* implikacijų ženkl-simbolio pavyzdžiai būtų G. Crumbo „Juodieji angelai. Trylika tamsiosios žemės paveikslų“, A. Vustino „Muzika dešimčiai“, B. A. Zimmermanno Koncertas smuikui ir pan. Šiose kompozicijose disimiliuota *Dies irae* sekvencijos citata it esminis ženklas-simbolis skamba tolygaus *cantus planus* pavidalu.

Programinėse XX a. kompozicijose, pvz., S. Rachmaninovo „Mirusiųjų saloje“, taip pat Simfoniniuose šokiuose, I. Stravinskio „Šventojo pavasario“ simuliacijos būdu implikuojamas *Dies irae* sekvencijos motyvas reprezentuotų Ch. Pierce'o ženklo-indekso terminą. Mat čia viduramžių monodija jau neskamba kaip klausa lengvai identifikuojama, faktūriškai, ritmiškai, tembriškai išskiriama citata, o kaip organiškai įsiliejantis integralusis elementas kompozitoriaus kuriamame muzikos audinyje.

Žodinė *Dies irae* sekvencijos struktūra *Requiem* kompozicijose ženklavimo aspektu realizuojama kaip: a) ikona – savotiškas pirmojo „Dies“ žodžio anagramų užkodavimas (G. Ligeti, A. Schnittkes *Requiem*); b) semantinis tam tikro poetinio sekvencijos teksto įtvirtinimas (pvz., V. Bartulio *Requiem*, „Dies irae“ dalyje ypatingą vaidmenį skiriant *confutantis* tekstui, V. Martynovo *Requiem* kompozicijoje – *Lacrimosa* tekstui ir pan., tokiu būdu atskleidžiant subjektyvų kompozitorių *Dies irae* sekvencijos teksto semantinę interpretavimą).

Analizuojant kompozicijas, kuriose *Dies irae* tampa pasaulietinio žanro *idée fixe*, matyti, kaip kūrybingai kiekvienas kompozitorius interpretuoja viduramžišką sekvenciją XX a. muzikos kontekste. Čia *Dies irae* monodija tampa naujo kompozicinio teksto inspiracija, subjektyvizuojama instrumentinių kompozicijų pavidalu, kruopščiai slepiant grigališkosios monodijos meloformules (pvz., G. Ustvolskajos „Dies irae“, A. Pärto „Miserere“), ar vokalinėmis-instrumentinėmis kompozicijomis, kai žodinis tekstas – nūdienos poetų mirties suvokimo interpretacija (pvz., E. Carter „Dies irae“ iš *In sleep, in thunder* (R. Lowell žodžiai), A. Sallinen „Dies irae“ (A. Turtaineno žodžiai)), arba šiuolaikinių poetų bei bibliinių ištraukų vienalaikiu reprezentavimu (pvz., K. Pendereckio „Dies irae“).