

Verbal and Musical Reflections on the Eternal in "Wozzeck" ("Woyzeck") by G. Buechner – A. Berg



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The paper aims to explore how Alban Berg's music reflects the thoughts of eternity, both intrinsic to Georg Büchner's drama and introduced by the composer's interpretation of the plot. Büchner's drama presents negative images of the eternity, first, as "mill wheels", i.e., cyclic rotations and "evil infinity" (Captain) and, second, as the illusory "immortality" of an inventor (Doctor). Contrary to Büchner's drama, there is in Berg's opera the concept of eternal as unconditionally valuable, as an ideal, which will be considered in the paper as well.

On the basis of comprehensive analysis of 1) forms in Berg's opera and 2) the composer's observations about these forms, we conclude about the "struggle" between closeness and openness of the composition of the entire opera as well as each of its three acts. The image of cyclic rotation is projected onto the form of the opera, endowing it with the traits of "open form" (as perceived by Heinrich Wölfflin). To make such effect, Berg has significantly rethought the traditional genres and forms applied by him (fugue, passacaglia, movements of baroque suite, symphony, invention) and actually creates uncommon correlations between "firm" and "loose" - "Fest" and "Locker" (according to Schoenberg).

As a conclusion we show how the composer, which used traditional forms in the conditions of post-Wagnerian narrative, worked with technics of periodicity, cyclic recapitulations, and "stop" of time, and created the images of the eternal.

Biography:

Konstantin Zenkin, born 1958, Moscow, Doctor of Art Research (1996), Professor of the Tchaikovsky Moscow Conservatory, since 2009 – also Vice Rector for research activities. Author of the books: «Chopin's Piano Miniature» (1995), «Piano Miniature and Ways of Musical Romanticism» (1997; 2nd ed. - 2019), «Music – Eidos – Time. A.F. Losev and scope of contemporary discipline of music» (2015, in English transl. - 2018), and articles; read lectures as invited professor in the universities of Philadelphia, Hong Kong, Leuven, Belgrade etc. Chief-editor of the musicological magazines «Nauchny Vestnik Moskovskoy Konservatorii» (since 2010), "Music of Eurasia. Traditions and the Present" (since 2020).