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INTONATION AS A PROBLEM

In our days some experts in musical science¹ in the socialist countries are greatly taken up with the so-called intonation theory. These musicologists see in it the starting point of the Marxist conception of musical science and its methodology.

On the other hand, different standpoints are expressed as well, denoting this theory rather emphatically as disputable, while we can neither ignore the fact that the development of this theory has been affected by derogatory vulgarizing influences and surrounded with an air of obscurity. It is all the more regrettable because the intonation theory deals with general questions pertaining to aesthetics and musicological method. The present study attempts a critical interpretation of the foundations of the intonation theory. Naturally, the task is too complicated and this article can only outline a solution of the problems involved. A more definite treatment of some of the problems arising from these analyses (particularly the problem of overcoming the dualism of content and form) we intend to discuss in another study.

¹ We find theoretical extension of Asafjev's ideas in Antonín Sychra: *Estetika Dvořákovy symfonické tvorby*, SNKLHU, Prague 1959, further in articles by Václav Kučera, *Vývoj a obsah intonační teorie* (Development and content of intonation theory), *Hudební věda* 1961, IV, p. 7, and in the studies by E. M. Orlovová, *Issledovanija Asafjeva Muzykal'naja forma kak process*, published as introduction to Asafjev's book *Muzykal'naja forma kak process*, Kniga pervaja i vtoraja, Moscow 1963. Much more frequently, however, is the intonation theory dealt with — mostly only its fragmentary aspects — in numerous articles of musical scientists, Czech, Soviet, Polish, East German, and others.

Jaroslav Jiránek attempted in his study "*K otázce tak zvaných muzikologických koncepcí poriemannovských*" (On the question of the so-called musicological post-Riemann conceptions), *Hudební věda*, Academia 1967, pp. 71–105, to elucidate connections and differences concerning the musicological conceptions of the following literature: studies by Boleslav Leopoldovič Javorský, Ernst Kurth, and Asafjev's theory of intonation. Jiránek's study is so far the most elaborated historical-comparative study and brings a number of suggestions with the aim of clarifying the genesis of Asafjev's intonation theory. A drawback however, is the fact that Jiránek sees in this connection only the imme-

It is generally known that the basic work concerning the so-called intonation is Asafjev's book "Muzykalnaja forma kak process" (Musical form as a process),² particularly its second part, which was originating while its author was completely isolated during the Leningrad blockade, could become the target of malicious, detailed criticism. Now and then objections may be raised against the author's wording and he may be convicted of contradictions, as his formulations are often hasty and onesided, and in places it is actually rather hard to make out what he wanted to say. Partly it is due to the complexity of the subject chosen by Asafjev, but primarily to the fact that a precise and sufficiently lucid system of concepts has not yet been elaborated to match the problems involved.

In the present stage of scientific development we find it imperative to subject Asafjev's method to a thorough analysis. It is necessary to clarify the fundamental ideas contained in the book on intonation.³ This work is noted for its considerable stylistic freedom and for permitting manifold interpretation of concepts.

It should be pointed out in advance that a certain multiplicity of the thematic concept "intonation" is characteristic of the idea which the author followed.

Asafjev's book on intonation communicates meditations of an emotional and educated musician on music, its material, development, social function and the like. It would, however, be wrong to argue that the dominant feature of Asafjev's conception of musical form is the fact that he ignores the abstract

diate musicological stimuli, so that he is e. g. incapable of perceiving in Asafjev undeniable influences of straying abstract imagination whose evident traces in Asafjev he inappropriately and wrongly mistakes for Hegelianism, probably due to the fact that some Hegelian elements have been absorbed and deformed in a few influential conceptions, particularly in that of Dilthey. Jiránek, in his obvious effort to prove the most profound Marxist character of Asafjev's conception, makes reference to a conjectural Hegel, reconstructed in some handbooks on Marxism, who can be attributed anything that proclaims evolution, state of being socially conditioned or contrariness. It is just the influence of diluted romanticism, abstract science, and Lebensphilosophie on aesthetic conceptions claiming adherence to Marxism (Asafjev's is one of them; also the work of Nejedlý belongs to them in other respects) that keeps so far escaping critical analysis. As far as the inner mater-of-fact aspect of the intonation theory itself is concerned, Jiránek's study does not cast any new light on it, although it is doubtlessly deeper and more thorough than proclamative articles written by the same author in the last fifteen years.

² B. A s a f j e v : *Muzykalnaja forma kak process*, Kniga pervaja i vtoraja, Moscow 1963. In the present study I have drawn chiefly upon the second part of this work, entitled Intonacija. In it the intonation theory has been given the most extensive formulation. Quotations were taken from the first edition (Moscow 1947). Asafjev's ideas on intonation permeate practically his whole work, and represent a stage of development which has not been dealt with here. As to this question, cf. the above-quoted study by Orlovová.

³ Cf. Note 2.

construction of the compositions and perceives them just as non-static music, throbbing with life.⁴ Such a standpoint underestimates the general, theoretical appeal of his book. Far more important appears to be the necessity of answering the question what this "vitality" of musical expression consists in. Two aspects of the thing, namely "the motivity of the sound forms" and "the element of the spiritual content" come to the forefront also in Asafjev as the natural problem of dualism of content and form.^{4a} This duality is to be bridged by the concept of "intonation", which essentially functions as a kind of short link between the two components, giving at the same time rise to the "vitality" of a musical work (Otakar Hostinský would probably say in this connection that "the spiritual element of the content" endows with life "the heart of the content"). To be able to understand music we must possess the ability of perceiving the meaning of music through its intonation as in living speech.⁵ Thus we can see just in the typically musical approach to matter the subjective starting point of Asafjev's theoretical reasoning.

Some interesting connections including the foregoing development of views may perhaps best be detected by analyzing relations between speech and music, or maybe also between the sound of the spoken word and the musical expression. These considerations can be found also in the opening paragraphs of the first chapter of Asafjev's book "Intonacija"⁶ and represent a signpost to his own progress towards his original conception of intonation and towards his theory of intonation.⁷

The primary form of Asafjev's originating doctrine about intonation along with its argumentation sprang from his research into Musorgski's melodic realism.⁸ The practical creative effort of the latter half of the 19th cent., which, together with the neoromantic trend to stress ideas in music,⁹ induced numerous composers and theoreticians to deal with the questions of the interrelation between music and speech, represents therefore one of the vital roots of the whole doctrine. It was here that the tendency to endow music with content found a practical and creative application, and here also we can find the springs of the principles of psychological realism, tributary, no doubt, to a time nearly infested with the demand to look for the psychological aspects

⁴ This aspect is stressed by Orlovová in the quoted work.

^{4a} The concepts "the mobile sound form" and "the element of the spiritual content" were already used by the prominent Czech aesthetician Otakar Hostinský (1847 and 1910), an adherent of the so-called concrete formalism. Cf. particularly Zdeněk Nejedlý's work *The Aesthetics of Otakar Hostinský*, Prague 1921.

⁵ B. Asafjev: *Muzykaľnaja forma kak process*, kniga vtoraja — Intonacija, Moscow 1947 (further only: As. I), pp. 27–28: "... the unfolding of the intonation-semantic aspect of music...".

⁶ As. I.

⁷ The designation "intonation theory" has been adopted, and that is why I have employed it also here, although Asafjev himself did not compile a systematic theory of his views of intonation.

⁸ Cf. E. M. Orlovová, *Issledovanije B. V. Asafjeva, Intonacija*, published in: Asafjev, *Izbrannye trudy*, tom. V, p. 153.

⁹ For typical example may be taken the Wagnerian musical drama.

in art and science. At the same time these efforts were bound to run against the wall of the hitherto prevailing musical thinking, whether in respect to the imminent musical development (the turning point represented by Wagner and Schönberg), or to the "content aspect", which ultimately landed itself in shallow waters degenerating into barren mannerism indulging in fashionable motifs and bringing the Wagnerian musical drama to a profound decline.

Arguments in favour of the expressiveness of music based on the sound aspect of speech present Asafjev as closely affiliated with the aesthetic aspect of the content, and particularly with its expressive tendency represented in a typical way by Friedrich Hausegger.¹¹ Asafjev writes that "we perceive as endowed with a certain natural expressiveness and mental warmth. And by realizing this we also begin to appreciate intonation, even if this appreciation is only intuitive, nearly unconscious".¹² It is from this source that melodiousness and vocality penetrate instrumentalism, making it thus more human and endowing it with "mental warmth". "In music, although it concerns tones, intonation is in its right place¹³ — the law of intonation is a means of expressing thought and feeling in speech and music alike." It means that this quality of music is not incidental and it makes of music an art of human intercourse.¹⁴ And this attitude becomes very clear directly in the light of aesthetics of emotion: "Now, the process of humanisation of instrumentalism cannot be conceived in a vulgar way, as a mere imitation, it means striving to find in instruments expressiveness and emotional warmth, that is inherent in human voice..."¹⁵

Still more convincing is the conformity with Hausegger in his proof of the musical expression "according to the origin".¹⁶ Hausegger's terms "Ausdruck" ("Lautausdruck") and "Äusserung" find an essential equivalent in Asafjev's "intonacija kak osmyslenije tembra", intonation as factor giving meaning to the timbre. This giving meaning to the timbre resulted according to Asafjev in significant and tuneful speech. "With this quality (i. e. imparting meaning to timbre) intonation affects both speech and music, while it precedes either."¹⁷

Characteristic of Hausegger is the fact that his elaborated and quite credible arguments and hypotheses operate in the sphere of musical prehistory or in

¹⁰ To interesting documents belong also Janáček's tunes based on psychology. Psychological tuning realism was, however not the last stage in Janáček's development. With the opera "Její pastorkyňa" Janáček closed the Czech musical era of the 19th century, whereupon he proceeded to conquests in the field of quite modern art.

¹¹ F. Hausegger: *Die Musik als Ausdruck*, Wien 1887.

¹² As. I, p. 8.

¹³ The problem here is not only "to play in pure intonation" but rather "to play with feeling".

¹⁴ As. I, pp. 9—10.

¹⁵ As. I, p. 13.

¹⁶ As. I, pp. 33—34.

¹⁷ As. I, p. 33.

the background of a rather commonplace assumption that the sound expression in speech, exclamations, unconscious sounds, as well as in musical manifestation depends on the psychological condition of the individual who manifests himself, and that his counterpart "understands" this expression if circumstances are favourable. Hausegger defends the standpoint that likewise mature art is an expression and therefore also a communication. Here, naturally, his argument encounters difficulties, and for this reason further expounding of his theory lands in contradictions: on the one hand he treats the problems wholly from psychological points of view (emotional grasping, instinct of playfulness, which, if given vent to, becomes a source of pleasure, etc.), and in doing so he introduces confusion by transposing onesidedly the socio-historical aspects of the investigated phenomena to the purely psychological key, while, on the other hand, this mechanical materialism changes suddenly and quite inconsistently into expressive manifestation of pure volition, sensation of being, and the like. This means running away from the consequences of mechanistic conception to uncontrollable spheres of the mysterious and imaginary. This tendency is an escape: in this way it would be hard to prove what music actually wants to say, what it is an expression of.

Asafjev starts with a similar argument, but proceeds differently, more synthetically.¹⁸ And now we have reached the milestone at which it is necessary to elucidate the basic meaning of the concept "intonation". It is not an easy task, for Asafjev goes on in his book reasoning and proclaiming things not very systematically and perspectively, in numerous planes and while dealing with most varied musical phenomena and subjects without offering an exact, consummate, univocal definition.

Asafjev writes: "... the living tone of the sound language, the life of tones and words (which enables us to perceive speech quickly), is concealed in the fluency and continuity of emotional vocal strain and tonic effort, closely linked up with breathing. This strain reflects with its fluency the continuity of thinking, for thinking as an activity of the intellect is only partly manifested in the

¹⁸ The tendency to overcome by a synthesis the dualism of content and form appears to be an inevitable necessity even today. Aesthetic reality cannot be mastered by a static separation of form and content. Besides, these concepts are associated with a number of other drawbacks. The traditional habit of inaccurate use and reversion (in fact, it has been only since the spread of German romanticism that "content" is supposed to express something like "the element of spiritual content of a work of art; the foregoing tradition saw the spiritual element in the "form") enveloped the two concepts in so many meanings that they can practically express anything.

The disintegration of aesthetic objects into "contents" and "forms" is connected with the rigidly objective orientation of the static Vernunftphilosophie. "Je mehr man sich aber die Dingwelt entfernt und je mehr man sich dem wirklich historischen Substrat der seelischen und geistigen Welt nähert, um so problematischer muss ein solcher, den schein der Überbeitlichkeit vorspiegelnder Spaltungsversuch werden, der alle Veränderungen auf die eine Seite ("obsahy" — note J. S.) und alles Bleibende auf die andere Seite konzentriert. Cf. Karl Mannheim: *Historismus*, Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, 52 Bd., 1924, p. 10.

interrupted flow currents of words fluctuating in our consciousness. In its substance thinking is melodious, fluent, and is conditioned by "intellectual breathing" and rhythm *sui generis*, representing thus "the intonation of consciousness". And it is just this phenomenon or "this state of tonic strain," which conditions both the "oral speech" and "musical speech", that I call "intonation".¹⁹ And further: "The existence of the intonation phenomenon binds together everything that takes place in music (creative and stylistic actions, as well as the development of elements of expression and the shaping of form) the entire musical material, perceiving it at the same time as a manifestation into one process connected with the growth of social consciousness, and produces a fully concrete environment, by means of which our intellect masters ideas dressed in a jointly emotional and semantic garment... The intonation phenomenon makes one whole of the creative production of music, of the reproduction of music, of the hearing and perceiving of music as well as of the perpetual process of culture in man; the perceptive activity of knowable order combined with the development of hearing, of acoustic perception, of acoustic memory..."²⁰

The above lengthy quotation summarizes the core of the problems dealt with and indicates a tendency to arrive at a formal synthesis. We shall attempt to elucidate the whole complex in parts.

In the "intonation" process an objectivization of the musical idea in time is being accomplished. This complex process implies two viewpoints that are very characteristic with Asafjev in reference to the question of the content: objectification, "fixing" of the thought implies namely partly the utterance, expression, i. e. a communicative, noetic accent, and partly it gives rise to a new object (artistic form), to the outcome of the former process perceived ontologically, and in this way we perceive the fact of information as a form of being.

The concept "intonation", which unifies the outwardly single but inwardly manifold process of artistic being, assumes thus the character of something that continually permeates this process in many ways. Essentially, we may distinguish two basic spheres of intonation:

1. Intonation as a component of social consciousness, as an idea that finds universal assertion in the sphere of "hearing". This conception made it possible for Asafjev's theory to obtain domicile in the world of history, as well. Instead, however, Asafjev resorts to the pattern of the relation between the so-called basis and superstructure. The concept of the musical content comprises the assumed relation of art to the outer world and its objectification in the work of art, but ultimately the whole set of problems implied in the concept is reduced to simple mirroring communication, which is denoted as knowledge, on the top of it.

2. Intonation as the result of the process of intoning, as a product, phenomenon, musical form.

The first semantic sphere is developed above all on the basis of the question

¹⁹ As. I, p. 153.

²⁰ As. I, pp. 153-154.

what is expressed and how, and further what position art occupies in the society.

Musical expression has a specific form and sphere²¹ and may be comprehended only from its specific angle.²² But: "In advanced stages of its development music as a conveyor of meaning becomes equal to all other manifestations of human want to acquire knowledge from the reflection and materialisation of surrounding reality, perceived and transformed, transsubstantiated by man."²³

The problem of reflected reality (also knowledge is mentioned) and specificity of musical manifestation, and thus also of communication is solved in Asafjev by a shortcut, which is, after all, characteristic of emotional aesthetics: The ideas contained are expressed "...in emotionally semantic attire" — and the emotional expressiveness is taken for basis of the whole intonation doctrine. This capacity of national content is one of the qualities of intonation: "It is possible to assume with confidence that every interval finds its substantiation in music... as an expressor of a certain emotional — semantic tone, as formed and substantiated intonation ... an intonation sphere, as a semantic and phonic manifestation of the boundless."²⁴

Interesting is the conception of musical form as comprising a meaning, which combines a certain feature aspect with the content aspect. This view is in Asafjev the nursery of numerous similes, suggesting that music is speech of its kind, the said similes not only being figurative but also striving to find positive analogies.²⁵ Very pronounced is the overestimation of the concrete communicative properties of music. To escape the consequences of this overestimation Asafjev vaguely confuses aesthetic reaction (perception, view) with grasping the idea (conceptual knowledge) which is to be communicated.²⁶

And thus he arrives at the following conclusion: "... rhythm and intonation appear to be the main attendants of musical expressiveness and impressiveness. If the two given stimuli of expressions assert themselves not incidentally, not mechanically — and this takes place when intonation and rhythm correspond with the content of the ideas and with the emotional tuning of the ruling classes among the people, then the process of acquiring well arranged notions gets natural and undistorted — music is heard as a true speech and is perceived as reality."²⁷

²¹ "... performance as basis of symphonism, as a key to fabulous possibilities of thinking both in music and through music...". As. I, p. 55.

²² "To hear" — it already means to understand...", As. I, p. 14.

²³ As. I, p. 29.

²⁴ As. I, p. 33.

figurative thinking." As. I, p. 13.

²⁵ "Motif, groups of motifs, periods... were formed and are formed in the origination of living intonation as well as in stylistic selection as an expression of figurative thinking." As. I., p. 13.

²⁶ "... music is always associated with intonation, otherwise it would be unperceivable...", As. I, p. 18.

²⁷ As. I, p. 54.

Thus music is perceived as a reflection, as art socially conditioned, as class art. At this view, however, Asafjev has arrived by co-ordinations, parallels, and the like, as we shall see when analyzing in more detail his conception of the process of reflection in music.

The main component in the relation between music and reality is naturally for Asafjev the concept "intonation", in its changeable signification, that is to say. We really conceive here intonation as an idea passing through the whole process. "... process of popular intonation²⁸ works out objects — intonations — because... these are not torn off formal categories, but we have to deal here with a complex of musical ideas durably dwelling in the consciousness of the given social environment."

Thus it is intonation conceived in a quite similar way as in Zich's semantic views;²⁹ it springs from "the abode" (sum up of concrete conditions of existence) as a natural manifestation of a certain community, and in a crystallized form it becomes a component of a social consciousness, which again is immediately connected with "the abode", yes, in Asafjev it even fuses with it. This means, in fact, that intonation³⁰ assumes again a wider, nearly unlimited meaning, as an integral part of the spiritual consciousness of its time, genius of the period, the living style of the epoch.³¹ Thus licence has no fixed limits, and the ability to convey ideas and content is projected into musical manifestation as such. And this projection is performed in a rather mechanical way: from the intonation atmosphere of the time good composers select intonations (that is to say, semantic ideas, but also directly the fluid — the spirit of the time embodied in sound), transforming them in a masterly fashion. In this way works originate which faithfully reflect the life of the society, having

²⁸ By intonation we mean here short tunes, etc., immediate sound manifestations of people. *Litteraria* 9, Bratislava 1966, pp. 196–224.

²⁹ *As.* I, p. 61.

^{29a} The concept "semantic idea" was coined in aesthetics and later also in poetics by Otakar Zich, pupil of Hostinský, musicologist, and Professor of aesthetics in the Charles University. He analyzed semantic musical ideas in his study *The aesthetic perception of music*, (*Estetické vnímání hudby*, *Věstník královské české společnosti nauk, třída filosoficko-historicko-jazykozpytná*, 1910, Prague 1911, pp. 1–97). A musical idea organically linked with a perception becomes with him semantic if acquiring the function of a "meaning conveyer". According to the theory about the autonomous, artificial world of music this "meaning" is again of a purely musical character. Thus Zich distinguishes e.g. matter-of-fact musical semantic ideas (melodic, harmonical, rhythmical), material semantic ideas (sound), technical semantic ideas (e.g. those of musical forms). As for Zich's conception and its place in the genesis of Czech semantics in art, cf. Oleg Sus: *Sémantický problém "výtvarné představy" u O. Zicha a J. Volkelta*, *Sborník prací filosofické fakulty brněnské university, uměnovědná řada (F)* 2, 1958, pp. 99–116; also Oleg Sus: *Genese sémantiky umění v české tvarové estetice*, *O literárnej avantgarde*, intonation.

³⁰ A more precise wording would be "the intonation stage", Asafjev leaves the term *Zeitraum von 1700 bis 1850*, Münster 1929.

³¹ Cf. e.g. *As.* I, pp. 51–52.

fulfilled the basic and inevitable condition laid down for a work of art which is to be comprehended and is to live; people, nation, epoch, all recognize in them what, in fact, they are familiar with already, their capacity for intonation. A common language has been used; the time understands well what it knows, and the circuit of artistic being is thus closed — tautologically, that is to say.

The idea of intonation selection is, as a matter of fact, nothing else than the mechanical principle of selection in the old imitation aesthetics (*Affektenlehre*).³² Art reflection is here based on the principle of imitation, whose static character is masked by stressing dynamism and artistic vitality.³³ The dominating feature of this aspect consists primarily in the fact that the whole process is conceived in one direction only (illustrating, imitating, reflecting), in a non-dialectic way: It is more or less just the direct way from the basis to the superstructure that is being considered. The connection is simply assumed in advance, that is through the medium of the only material foundation that is supposed to be reflected in thought, art, and music. The dialectal coalescence and inseparableness of the social "material" and "cultural" being is here altogether ignored; the creative function of art, its capacity for helping to shape the character of the epoch do not come to the forefront in Asafjev's meditations at all. The whole set of problems is treated only on the plane of mirror reflection.³⁴ The mechanical shortcuts connecting different structures and various levels on which knowledge is acquired have given rise to those numerous Asafjev's ideological curiosities.³⁵ In fact, it is only in the act of stressing the method and the norms of intonation selection, or perhaps in that which is projected into the work of art, which constitutes the alleged class character, and the so-called Marxist character, of this theory of intonation.

Intonation as a product of the process of intoning has partly been explained in the foregoing exposition already, for it assumes — simply owing to the mechanical connection of music with other sphere of social consciousness and being — the function of expressing and reflecting social being. Nevertheless, the sphere of contact between the structures Asafjev sees rather as associated with the intonation genesis, while intonation, as it is further expounded as a semantic musical idea, assumes in the process of his argument an elemental and formal character. Thus for instance, the relative immanence of the development of music is acknowledged in a certain respect, and Asafjev even

³² Auswahlprinzip; cf. W. Serauky: *Die musikalische Nachahmungsästhetik im Zeitraum von 1700 bis 1850*, München 1929.

³³ The basis is the same, the only difference is that instead of nature, its sounds, affects in man, and the like the only object of imitation is considered to be the society, its ideas, structure, and so forth. This standpoint is also the source of Asafjev's inclination to resort to history.

³⁴ As. I, pp. 30—31.

³⁵ E.g.: "...it was only the fact of a long and complicated fight for the place, connection, and significance of sounding every interval in the system of tones, that is fight for the quality of intervals, as we have seen it in the history of European music, that provoked the growth of musical art and conditioned its ideological significance...". As. I, p. 35.

lays on it a considerable stress.³⁶ From this point of view he approaches the problems of European musical thinking more as a musician endowed with penetrating feeling and insight than as a theorist.

The philosophical aspect and the general historical basis of Asafjev's theories are not very solid. For the most part his argument remains on the level of the quotation: "The epoch enforced . . ."

Characteristic of Asafjev's immature theoretical conception are his views concerning the so-called "intonation dictionary" and the relation between a creative artist and the society.

Asafjev's standpoint in the question of the intonation dictionary, and primarily the potential standardization implied in the ideas, produced later much harm, when vulgarizing enthusiasts got hold of them.

A relatively stabile kernel of intonation, or the intonation stage, in other words the respective degree of musical development, the content of the musical component of cultural consciousness of civilization at a given moment or in a given section of development, this all has no doubt a positive background and exerts an influence on musical production and a still greater influence on the degree of musical and aesthetic perceptiveness of the listeners. Asafjev, however, strikes out here a parth of problematic standardization, bordering on vulgarization. In accord with the principle of selection the composer ought to produce such things as are to be found in the intonation dictionary of his era. If he does so, he proceeds on the way of objectively depicting reality, his work is great and universally appreciated and therefore also valuable.³⁷ A composer ought to grasp this "objective" law and be ruled by it: "... the epoch heard what it wanted to hear and not what speculating forerunners were dreaming of."³⁸

A characteristic lack of dialectically conceiving the interrelation between being and consciousness is here evident and significant. A composer who strives to express his subjective visions irrespective of the spirit of his epoch (e. g. in the 40's Prokofjev and Shostakovitch) does not, according to Asafjev, produce good art, let alone living art! The fact which became generally known since the time of Hegel, i. e. that the whole human history is in man a perpetual act of selfcreation and the hence resulting connection of every individual, his thinking and primarily of his creation with this process, a connection presenting itself to man as a reality of being and consciousness — all this Asafjev failed to comprehend. And if this standpoint represents one of the foundation stones of the Marxist view of the world, then it is precarious to maintain that Asafjev's doctrine is the foundation of Marxist musicology.⁴⁰ It should also be pointed out that just uncertainty in these questions has been giving rise to the conception of musical illustration, realism, and the like — not only in Asafjev, but elsewhere too.

³⁶ As. I, p. 22.

³⁷ As. I, pp. 30, 56, 61, 155 etc.

³⁸ As. I, pp. 30—31.

³⁹ It is just here that Marx appreciated Hegel.

⁴⁰ Cf. e. g. V. Kučera: *Vývoj a obsah Asafjevovy intonační teorie* (Development and content of Asafjev's intonation theory), *Hudební věda*, IV, 1961, p. 7n.

From the process of historical selfcreation no particle of the "human world" can escape, whose main "seius modus" is historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*). For this reason art permeates social being, grows out of this being, but also creates it — and does this even in the most isolated, most subjective and least standardized good and bad manifestations alike. It is just the most subjective which is the product of an imperative intervention, not a priori, to be sure, but through its insertion into the selfcreating process, through its significance in the totality of being. Therefore also the aesthetic reactivity, artistic vision, the judgement of one's taste and its qualities must be included therein. These facts Asafjev fails to see when writing about the unreliable subjectiveness of the judgement of taste⁴¹ and when searching for "objective" criteria to be applied to musical content and artistic value. Here his synthetic programme comes to an end: he does not know how to bridge the gulf between the subject and the object.⁴² A characteristic feature is the fact that just from this gap in the conception — as a retreat towards objectivism — grows the theoretical basis of musical realism, the idea of reality being reflected in music by means of illustration, the assertion that man gets to know reality in an objective and concrete way through the medium of art. This process of reasoning means clear disjunction and oneness: ironical situation — in the name of objectiveness.

Thus Asafjev's synthesis presents itself as essentially incomplete, its methodological basis as problematic, and thus the liquidation of the fundamental discrepancy fails to reach its aim. The effort to determine "objectively" the content and value of artistic production in the finished product itself testifies to a new disintegration of the complex of problems into a strongly schematic modification of a dualism with formal content. This means that in Asafjev we find only elements of synthesis, only a start on the way to the synthetic goal. The monifying conception is in him the result of a tendency to get hold of everything empirically and transform it into a viewpoint. This view is, no doubt, immediate, living, and stimulating in many respects, but that is all. All the less can we speak in connection with Asafjev's theory of intonation about a coherent generalization of the process of being in art or about a general methodological efficiency, which could serve as inspiration and theoretical basis of a modern Marxist musicological method.

The term "intonation" was commonly adopted in Soviet musicology,⁴³ but this concept of many meanings has turned into a vague idea and word, applied primarily to denotation of various parts of musical material. Asafjev's intonation was, for the most part, not comprehended as an outcome and support of a definite aesthetic standpoint, but as a term denoting in the sphere

⁴¹ The taste judgement is not a theoretical principle for Asafjev, he locates it in a purely practical plane. *As. I*, p. 61.

⁴² This turn and discord were evidently the real background, in which excited disputes about content and form took place.

⁴³ Maybe it is also because in Russian conditions the term is not an altogether new one and because the terminological tradition combines the concept intonation as to meaning with parts of the musical material. Cf. e.g. B. Javorskij, *Strojenije muzykaľnoĵ reĉi*, 1908.

of musical art one thing or other — in accordance with Asafjev's single, isolated and often contradictory statements about various musical phenomena. Owing to the fact that Asafjev's intonation neither is nor can be clearly delimited as to its compass in concrete musical material, and that it is being applied in connection with musical forms of various extent, the scattered look of his followers, who altogether failed to grasp the synthetic significance of their teacher's concept, was bound to lead to at least a terminological catastrophe.⁴⁴⁻⁴⁹ Asafjev's ideas and principles served as a spring-board to a group of Prague Czech musical scientists and aestheticians, represented above all by Antonín Sychra and Jaroslav Jiránek. While both these authors develop Asafjev's views in typically Czech conditions, a number of Czech musical scientists (associated with the activity of the Brno musicological school) subject Asafjev's views to philosophic, aesthetic, and musicological criticism. By assuming this critical attitude to Asafjev and his theories the Brno research workers continue in the rich tradition of the Czech musical science ad aesthetics, represented by the names Otakar Hostinský, Otakar Zich, and Vladimír Helfert.

To point out further connections let us now discuss critical analyses of Asafjev's views, which are to be found in an extensive book by Antonín Sychra "Estetika Dvořákovy symfonické tvorby", and let us try to cast a new light on the whole set of problems.

Sychra's book "Aesthetics in Dvořák's Symphonical Work"⁵⁰ represents in its methodological part the most complete and most profound exposition and consummation of the intonation theory after Asafjev, not only in our country but in Marxist musicology in general. Of late Sychra's works found continuation in the studies of J. Jiránek. Sychra's contribution consists primarily in the fact that he worked out the intonation theory to the finishing touches, clearly formulated and — disputable. The attempts at a reliable delimitation of the concept "intonation" and at the same time at its practical utilization are, naturally, only partial aspects of Sychra's aesthetic and methodological conception, which he unfolds in his extensive work on Dvořák, and they are closely connected particularly with problems concerning content and form. When trying to assume a critical attitude to some details of this conception I must point out that by doing so I neither intend nor can evaluate Sychra's work as a whole, leaving without comment particularly its heuristic contributions and so forth. I should like to allude just to some general aesthetic

⁴⁴⁻⁴⁹ Cf. e.g. a discussion in the journal *Sovetskapa muzyka*, 1952-1953.

⁵⁰ Antonín Sychra: *Estetika Dvořákovy symfonické tvorby*, SNKLHU, Prague 1959. In the essayistic publication *Hudba očima vědy* (Music in the eyes of science), Československý spisovatel, Prague 1965, we find an elastic exposition of the last variant of Sychra's aesthetic and musicological credo. The conception has gained in merit by the application of some structuralist elements (indications of the functional aspect) and has been enriched by scientific proclamations nevertheless, its basis, formulated for the first time in Sychra's study "*Realismus v hudbě*" (Realism in music), Prague, remains unchanged. My commentary on "*Hudba očima vědy*" was expressed in the article "*Věda o hudbě*" (Science in music), *Orientace*, No. 1, 1967.

conclusions which are characteristic of the present state of our aesthetic research and are beyond doubt open to discussion.

Sychra's interpretation of intonation is twofold, in a more narrow sense of the word and in a wider sense, which essentially corresponds with an analogical duality in Asafjev's conception. "...intonation in a wider sense of the word has a figurative character, we might say that it is a typified image."⁵¹ We encounter here an accent distinctly conveying content, communication and manifesting expression,⁵² akin in some respects with intonation conceived as an idea in the process of aesthetic being. Sychra, however, adheres more closely to the more sensuous meaning of "the total character of the sound line."⁵³ By intonation in the more narrow sense of the word Sychra means "...typical turns, which form an indivisible part of intonation in the wider sense of the word and along with it often of the genre too, pointing thus at the same time also to a certain category of content and expression."⁵⁴ In this respect "...intonation is the least component, which is still affiliated with the sphere of expression, whereas the interval, for instance, is not independent as a depicting agent, it is an element of musical material, not an element of content."⁵⁵

These Sychra's words, already indicate division into form and depicting content, they indicate the fact that by the depicting principle we mean aesthetic impressiveness rather freely conceived in relation to the musical material; it being rather strange that interval is denied the capacity to have an aesthetic effect. No doubt, this attitude is connected with the conception of the content as a depiction, i. e. with the notion of the reflected perception of reality — and within this frame it would certainly be hard to explain such a small unit as interval hermeneutically, while for the more copious forms of musical material Sychra finds with the application of the comparative method analogies, and in accordance with them he explains the contents by transferring the extramusical "content" of the program music to absolute music.⁵⁶

Irrespective of the fact that in partial discussions Sychra often identifies the melodic type, genre, and intonation, he, nevertheless, formulates a clear definition — this being, in fact, the first instance in the history of the intonation theory.⁵⁷ On the basis of this definition it is most evident that he classifies Zich's musical semantic ideas according to the general expressive character. Intonation is conceived as a unit of content; but disjunction of form

⁵¹ Sychra, p. 31.

⁵² "...I call the sound affinity, connected closely with the content and expression, (in spite of the lack motif conformity), intonation affinity, intonation in the wider sense." Sychra, p. 30.

⁵³ Sychra, p. 31.

⁵⁴ Sychra, p. 32. Similarly is intonation delimited by Belyj; cf. *Nekotoryje problemy muzykal'nogo jazyka*, Sov. muzyka, 1952, No. 7.

⁵⁵ Sychra, p. 32.

⁵⁶ Asafjev was ahead when he in his thinking about the history of musical speech displayed the tendency to acknowledge the immanent development of musical structure.

⁵⁷ Sychra, p. 81.

and content takes place. Expressiveness is adopted as criterion, according to which intonations are mutually grouped, compared, classified, and finally organized. It is a unifying element, while an agreement in the musical structure need not be assumed. Apart from the fact that this expressiveness or depictiveness is a vague conception, escaping measurement and leading to imaginative interpretation, another even more important consideration comes into play: concrete material articulation of the work is declared to be the form. Expression is something that springs from the work, and Sychra perceives it as content. That is why stress is laid on the aspect of knowledge acquisition: "... the real content of a work of art is acquiring knowledge of reality arrested and expressed in artistic images".⁵⁸ Thus the content of music is its communicative relation to reality. The sphere of form comprises the art material, artistic technique, canonized schemes, and artistic types. To be sure, "... the form of a concrete work of art originates only when such a generally adopted scheme gets filled with concrete content... form may be defined as organization, arrangement of the material of the respective art into a picture".⁵⁹ Characteristic is the fact that Sychra speaks of arranging the material into a picture, not of arranging the picture itself (in conformation to his terminology).

Thus the picture, just like the content, is something that exists by itself, something that may get objectified by the art material, but need not. A plausible explanation of this reasoning might be found in the assumption that the form is conceived here as a scheme from the theory about musical forms, that is to say, not as a term from aesthetics, but even so the idea of its being filled with the content would appear more appropriate in lessons for a candidate of musical composition than in an aesthetic conception. Besides, it is necessary to realize that the musical "content by itself" must even in its latent subjective existence be ascribed a form, i. e. it must be in some manner objectified in its subjective stage of existence already. Or else — if there exists here at least a relative independence, of which Sychra is evidently convinced — the question may be reversed: What would happen should the independent and transcendent content not descend to the incarnating material at all? This, however, is out of the question, because the content is said to be primary. Yet, if it could be separated from its respective form, surely the form would have to be independent, too.

Sychra tries to master the set of problems in a general plane. In his polemic commentary on Jaroslav Volk he writes besides other things: "The word — with few exceptions (onomatopoeic words) — does not depict reality, it is only a conventional designation, a sign used for it. In contrast to it, a work of art reproduces reality, is in conformity with it. The most striking appears the difference between art and language when we deal with processes of giving likeness to something, e. g. in the fine arts. The form of work of art is just the act of organizing material into a picture. This means that the content of painting, piece of sculpture and the like is not subjective: it is objectified in a material object, it is inherent in it — independent of our consciousness —

⁵⁸ Sychra, quoted work, p. 108.

⁵⁹ Sychra, pp. 108–109.

just in virtue of the capacity to depict, of its similarity with the reality; the conformity of a fine art product with the reality may be varified by objective methods, like measuring, photography, film, etc.”⁶⁰ If this were true, then every good photograph would belong to the summits of artistic production, since it displays marvelous conformity with its respective reality if we put aside its transposition from the three-dimensional space to the two-dimensional one and from the spectrum of colours to black and white. Moreover, as the paragraph makes clear, the whole passage wants to be an argument in favour of the specificity of art, this specificity e.g. consisting in such differentiation of art from the word as to make it impossible to apply to the former the statement: “...without a subject no word (cf. the work of art; J. S.’s note) .. is a form with a definite content”.⁶¹ The perception of a work of art as a static material product is fully evident. Besides, if the content of the work is objectified in the finished product (obviously “in form” and “by form”), this content is inseparably associated with the method of objectification. It is therefore impossible for two musical fragments to be identical in content if their, let us say, melodic and interval constructions are different. This is, naturally, contrary to the assumption, on which Sychra has based his definition of intonation as a depictive component and therefore also content component.

The thesis about objective beauty existing independently of our consciousness and without its participation finds in Sychra’s conception its modification in his view that the content is objectified in a work of art quite objectively, without perceiver’s participation. This very controversial standpoint, which fully fails to notice positive contributions of, let us say, German critical philosophy applied to abstract sciences, and which by resorting to simplification practically ignores the development of traditional philosophic problems pertaining to the second-rate values, demands an independent and thorough critical commentary. In this connection we must content ourselves with merely pointing to the considerable simplification and mistaken argumentation of such statements. A work of art (and every object with aesthetic life in it) can fulfil its aesthetic function only in its real being, i. e. it does not exist as an aesthetic phenomenon other than in its function, in its natural relation to man and a social unit. This complicated relation must of necessity be the primary object of investigation, whereas in Sychra we can observe that he methodically reduces real complexity to an analysis of the finished product itself, with which he associates – in spite of the diffuse conception of content – extramusical circumstances by an arbitrary and tendentious selection. The process of the real and modified existence of art is broken, stopped, a work of art turns into a mere static fact. Confusion is evidently attached to the very object of investigation: aesthetics and musicology (social sciences) utterly lack the historical dimension, and therefore they neither have a sup-portable method.

Sychra maintains that, while the word is a conventional sign, art is a direct reflection and picture of reality. This thesis is not easy to prove – and in this

⁶⁰ Sychra, p. 109.

⁶¹ Sychra, p. 109.

connection we re-encounter the principle of intonation selection and dictionary we are already familiar with: "If the composer makes use of the intonation and genre characteristic features, of quotations and stylization, if he makes use of material appealing to senses and concrete perception, tested in practice (all this is Asafjev's "abode" (byt), particularly the musical component of his awareness; note J. S.), if he does not construct his material in an artificial and purely speculative way (i. e. if he does not live in his isolated subjective visions ahead of his time, according to Asafjev's formulation; note J. S.), then we may say even about absolute genres that" ... form is not only organized sound, being endowed with a content..."⁶² And still more clearly put: "... just as the composer, the perceiver does not live in a vacuum, but ... listens to every composition from the viewpoint of all music known to him, and for this reason he recalls associations that have got attached to it in actual life, which fact the realistic artist is bound to take into account."⁶³

Sychra's historical comparative method follows a purely hermeneutic aim: by parallels taken from the "content" program music it is to demonstrate the extramusical content in the absolute music.⁶⁴

If the artist is a realist, he draws in his work upon the intonation dictionary of his time, upon material "linked up with life", and arrives at an objective depiction of reality. Thus it is essentially Asafjev's selection of intonations we meet with here, amplified by attempts at an "objective" delimitation and comparative determination of the music content. The onesided approach to the reflection process comes distinctly to the forefront in the form of a shortcut, as we were able to demonstrate it in Asafjev. The "unreliable" and changeable taste judgement as the aesthetic indicator of the subjects is "objectified" by taking care that the listener's reaction is always determined concretely and generally, on the basis of knowledge acquirement, comprehending the content, and perceiving the depictive relation of the work of art to reality. This generalization, however, represents a simplification of the problem of aesthetic response as well as sacrifice of the concrete approach to a theoretic a priori attitude. It means, in fact, a liquidation of the problem as such: of its polarity, which is the functional spring of the system of aesthetic being, one pole is simply being cancelled. We are witnesses of a methodological identification of social science, characteristic specificity, and dialectic historicism with natural sciences, in whose traditional scope investigating consciousness is not a component of the investigated object.

I have not the least intention of indicating that the mutual relationship of art and reality is based on neutrality; I believe in the very opposite. The interrelation between music and the surrounding reality is an interrelation of being. It is therefore inappropriate to divide music into form ("instrument" of acquiring knowledge) and content ("reality" or at least its reflection — I have already pointed out that content is interpreted here as substance), which is perceived through the mediation of the form. Irrespective of the faulty formulation of concepts, the aesthetic aspect is not subject to verifi-

⁶² Sychra, p. 239.

⁶³ Sychra, p. 239.

⁶⁴ Sychra, p. 249.

cation; it is not possible to determine in respect to a criterion of knowledge (which?!) when the aesthetic aspect corresponds with truth and when it does not. All such attempts have failed up till now because they sprang only from the principle of taste judgment — and it is no universal criterion.

On the basis of the intonation conception of the process of depicting, the inspiration source in music is objectified: "If we carry the treatment of the question of intonation and genre characteristics to its consequences, historically, we shall not in the least doubt that these processes lead in the composition of program music or non-program music to the objectification of even the inspiration sources. In this way the historically instructed commentator — to use Hostinský's term — has further possibilities of explanation at his disposal."⁶⁵ It is therefore necessary to fall back upon the source of inspiration and search for ideas there!

The quoted conclusion not only ignores e.g. the contributory aspects of Mukařovský's delimitation of aesthetic function, but it is even contradictory to the well-known fact that the listener cannot "objectively" derive from the content of a musical work any positive information about the source of inspiration. Associations, which serve as a current argument in expression aesthetics, cannot contribute to the solution of this question owing to their being too incidental. If we were to identify the source of inspiration with the communicated content objectified in the finished product, we should flatly negate the very nature of existence of the aesthetic aspect, that is to say, its fulfilment in its function, which is determined primarily from the social standpoint, is performed through the subject, and is historically relative.

We return, therefore, to the above-mentioned gap in Asafjev's endeavour to accomplish a synthesis, to conceive music in its totality as a complex process. Sychra's conception in the matter of reflection and depiction of reality in music has not succeeded in dispersing this contradiction in Asafjev, or its consequences. Sychra, for his part, contrary to Asafjev, concentrates not on the complex character of art as a process, but on a static dismemberment of the finished product into form and content. No change is effected by the fact that he strives to transplant to the problems the state of being socially conditioned, the transplantation agents being the content category and a onesided interpretation of reflection and depiction. The most prominent theoretical reaction to the so-called intonation theory arrived at the foundations of modernized but essentially traditional content aesthetics, or — if we wish to put it figuratively and with consideration of the prevailing effort to analyse the finished product — at the standpoint of aesthetic formalism turned, so to say, inside out.

Translated by Samuel Kostomlatský

INTONACE JAKO PŘÍKLAD

Autor studie podrobuje kritice filosofické i estetické dosavadní názory na teorii o tzv. intonaci, kterou založil a rozvíjel v sovětské muzikologii zejména B. V. Asafjev

⁶⁵ Sychra, p. 240.

a která našla své pokračovatele v některých představitelích české hudební vědy. V souvislosti s kritikou teorie intonace je tu rozebírána kniha Antonína Sychry, *Estetika Dvořákovy symfonické tvorby* (Praha 1959). Sychra se ve srovnání s Asafjevem nesoustředí na komplexní bytí umění jako na proces, ale jako na statické rozkládání artefaktu ve formu a obsah. Na tom nic nemění skutečnost, že se Sychra snaží do problematiky vnést společenskou podmíněnost. Tak dospívá Sychra vlastně ke staré obsahové estetice, ke stanovisku estetického formalismu, obráceného naruby.