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THE AUGMENTED TONALITY IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH
CENTURY MUSIC

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Abstract

The appeal to the tonality from the first half of the 20th century occurs in the cultural areas where the contact with the tradition is tighter and there is no stress on the originality of the artistic expression, originality that in the Eastern European music tends to substitute the artistic through the underestimation or deconstruction of the already existing musical languages. On the contrary, the Russian musical culture is open to any formula that would enrich the sonorous universe, admitting in the area of the tonality systems certain sonorous organization specific to ethnic traditions or even more, European ones. In this way the tonality is not removed, nor is it only just surviving in this context. It undertakes mixtures, incisions, grafting, allusions, thus generating an ethos of a particular specificity.

Keywords: augmented tonality; musical language; sonorous organization;

1. INTRODUCTION

The *augmented tonality* represents a conquest of the romanticism, of the post-romanticism, of national cultures, of the Vienna school and of the neoclassicism, etc. gaining more and more space in the sensitivity of the composers of the end of the 19th century and especially of those from the first half of the 20th century. It expresses the crisis of the tonal relations, it is the factor that undermines the stability of several century old structures. The erosion of the tonal classicism starts with the enrichment of the three sound accord, with the emancipation of the dissonance, with renouncing the obsolete resolvings, with the anchorage of the harmonic discourse in a panoply populated with chromatic elements whose destabilizing role will culminate in renouncing any type of sonorous attraction. Such is the case of the affirmation of atonalism when the Vienna school elaborates the expression deprived of any human flesh for which the democracy of sounds meant an illusionary freedom.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Of course, the tonality crisis finds a solution in within other tendencies of composers as well. The neo-classical experiments and the urges towards cultures of folk origins will encourage the access to new sonorities, of tonal-modal nature.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To make a long story short, we could say that the augmented tonality will come to incorporate the type of continuous modulation based on chromatic modulations and sonorous enharmonic modulations, the accords with added notes, the allusions to Bartók's tonal-axis system and the polytonal structures, but also polymodal or even atonal, the chromaticism and excessive enharmonization which will determine the chromatic and enharmonic modulations, the landmarks of modal-folkloric nature, but also neo-modal, as well as the sonorities taken from jazz music.

4. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In this article we will try to identify every aspect mentioned above, referring to several pieces from the Russian music of the first half of the 20th century.

5. RESEARCH METHODS

At the basis of him we will make use in particular of the structural method whose origin is in its structuralism of Ferdinand de Saussure.

6. FINDINGS

First of all, here is *the second theme* from the first part of *Concert for violin and orchestra no. 2* op. 63 (1935) by Prokofiev, theme which starts in *B major flat* tonality but constantly evolves, surprising us:



This theme is the most authentic post-romantic in nature, of Lisztian and Wagnerian inspiration, treated unstably from a tonal point of view, as it modulates both inside itself, for several times, and on each of its return. Here, in the middle of the second measure, the orchestra modulates to *B major* through the 5 – 1 relation, *F sharp* and *C sharp* resulting from the ascending chromaticization of the 5th and 2nd steps of the *B flat major*. Of course, the B flat sound (an enharmonic *A sharp*) is the third of the dominant accord from the *B major* tonality, even if it is missing in this case. Thus, making use of the chromatic elements (in *B flat*), which have become diatonic (in *B major*), but also of enharmonic elements, Prokofiev modulates to seven ascending fifths. We are dealing here with a mixture between the chromatic modulation and the enharmonic one, intensely exploited during the post-romantic period.

B flat: I
 IV₆ I
 B: V7_#
 I₉
 E: V7
 III₆
 I₆ I₇
 E flat

Things do not stagnate, but evolves in a perpetual tonal transformation, so that, at the end of the third measure, a simple seventh generates a new modulation to the *E major* tonality, the end of the theme

meaning a re-exposure and a new modulation, this time to the *E flat major* tonality. The example above is one of the many cases offered by the post-romantic music where we meet the continuous modulation type with sounds that arrogate functions of any type.

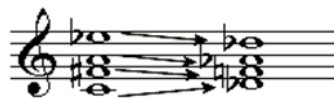
Prokofiev seems to generate modulations in a classical spirit which, in fact, are nothing but pretexts of making jumps to far tonalities, a defining characteristic of the postromantic style.

Still at Prokofiev we have instances where the *G minor* and *C sharp minor* tonalities are brought together in the first part of the same work, between measures 23 and 24, the pitch ratio between their tonics being one of augmented fifth/quint (diminished enharmonic fifth/quint), an aspect which is brought up in the 20th century by the creation and theoretical clarifications of the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók (1881–1945). He defines the tonal-axis system starting by listing the tonalities not according to the principle of perfect ascending and descending fifths/quints, but by listing them from a third to a small third.

The same holds valid in the case of Prokofiev as well, without any theoretical preoccupations of this kind on his behalf. He is rather intuitive about these general tendencies in the evolution of the musical language, his musical sensitivity displaying this aspect without stating truths of theoretical value. When he suddenly interweaves the *G minor* tonality with the *C sharp minor* one, his musical sensitivity had already accepted what would be formulated later. The empirical always precedes the theoretical sphere. The proof of this substitution also appears from the change of armour between the above-mentioned measures. Moreover, the augmented *C-F sharp* fourth which precedes the beginning of the first theme in *C sharp minor*, is no longer resolved by means of the augmented *B flat-G* sixth, but by attraction and resolving at the small *C sharp-E natural* third:

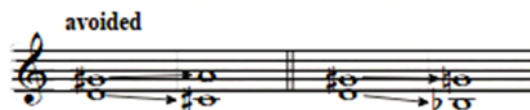


These determinations make us think of the tonal polymorphism of the diminished seventh accord, such an example also appearing in the 236-237 measure from the first part of the *Concert for violin and orchestra* (1948) by Dimitrie Kabalevski, where a diminished F sharp with a diminished seventh make



the connection to the *D flat major* tonality:

The enharmonic aspect of the augmented fourth interval is exploited to its fullest, the goal being that of feeling of tonal ambiguity. This holds true in the case of the same second theme at Prokofiev when the augmented fourth brings along a new resolution, based on a contrary harmonic development:



Of course, the Wagnerian musical revolution is as alive now as it was almost a century ago, even in the case of composers of neo-classical orientation. The same work of Dimitrie Kabalevski displays leitmotif-like allusions to Wagner. In measures 239-240 and 245-246 the composer inserts in the violin a famous melodic motif taken from *Tristan and Isolde*, based on a type of crossed chromatism:



Of course, the chromatic elements of all typologies, accords with added notes, overlapped accordic structure or polytonal passages complete the functional harmonic panel of the 20th century.

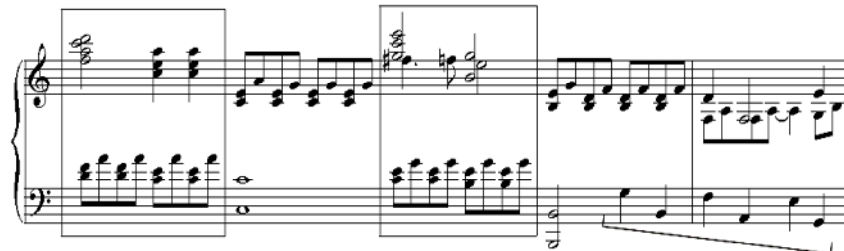
The same Kabalevski displays situations which allow chromatizations in opposition with surprising accidental harmonies which give birth to augmented and double-augmented intervals:



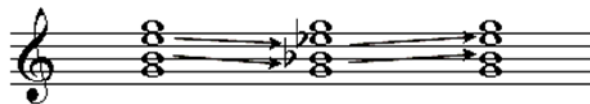
but also to an accord with a small added sixth,



and accords of seventh or augmented eleventh at Prokofiev, which are assimilated with some added note accords, of a profound harrowing nature which is felt within the limits of only two measures:



Still at Kabalevski, the chromatizations of sounds also happen in order to emphasise some other types of harmonic schemata which unveils a less usual path for the *C major* tonality as it consists of the swinging between the accord of the superior mediant, the one in *E minor*, and the *E flat major* one:



The relationship between the two accords is obvious. One notices the fact that the accords are moved to the 1st twist, both of them preserving the mutual third (the *G* sound). In this context, the sounds *B flat* and *E flat* can be interpreted as some inferior embroideries of the *E minor* accord. The *E flat major* accord has no intrinsic functional value but it represents a case of accidental harmony. Moreover, one can hardly talk about a sudden modulation of the tonality of *E flat*, but rather about a colouration of the harmonic discourse, about its enrichment with new sonorities, skilfully inserted within the traditional one. The functionality of this schemata contains relevant premises because the very first theme is based on the indecision between *E natural* and *E flat*, fact which constitutes a reminiscence of modal origin.

Here are some other situations of this type (measure 168), when, during the work/piece, the soloistic countermelody attacks with a normal sound, in *arco*, a passage largely constituted from a gradual

development, with little melodic jumps, based on an isochronal mono-rhythmia, the accompaniment being obtained on the grounds of this indecision between minor and major:



The Gist instrument unfolds a countermelody whose beginning unveils affinities with the *C major* tonality, the accompaniment being the one that regulates the sonority of *A minor*. Naturally, the same tonal bivalence is found here as well through the alternation of *A minor* with *A major*.

And of course, another situation is measure 188 where the accompaniment maintains rhythmical ostinatos, whilst during the second phrase, the second theme is taken partially imitatively by the orchestra at the same interval, by a three measures phase difference, the harmony being characterised by the tonal division between *D minor* and *D major*:



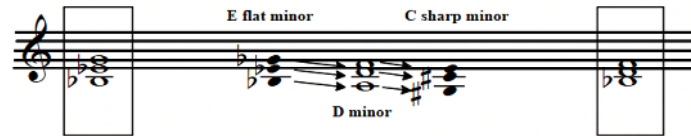
In another situation, the *B flat minor* and the *A major* tonalities are suddenly put together, demonstrating a significant tonal contrast, both by the qualitative difference between the minor and the major, and by the eight ascending fifths distance between their tonics.

At a quick look at the accords from the tonics of the two tonalities, one finds significant similarities. Their fundamentals are situated at a small second interval, whilst the thirds, from an enharmonic point of view, are mutual:



In another case we have the evolution of the harmonic frame based on the *E flat major* and *B flat major* alternation, with the imposition of the latter towards the end. The *D minor* accord claims its dominant function in the *B flat major* tonality, by bringing it in the second twist. This happens due to the substitution of the 5th step with the 3rd, a modal step with the function of a superior median. The accord brought up determines the opportunities for certain chromatic experiments since its sphere of influence

encompasses other two accords, still minor, situated at a small second interval, ascending or descending as against its fundamental:

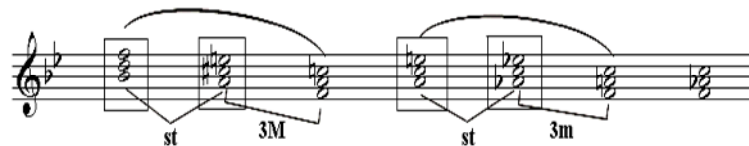


In doing so, here comes a generalised parallelism to all sounds of those accords, a mechanism employed mainly in the impressionistic music. The E flat minor accord is a result of the descending chromaticization of the third of E flat major's accord, whilst the accord of the C sharp minor comes from the harmonic or melodic variant of the *D minor* tonality, admitting, of course, the alteration of the subdominant as well (the fifth of this accord), fact which determines a harmonic relationship claimed even since the times of the gothic musical style.

At Prokofiev, we have a series of depressive chromaticizations, whose terminus point is to be found in the *B flat major* tonality, which is stated through the dominant accord (F major) with small seventh and diminished fifth:



The examples of intense chromaticization do not stop here. A transition passage precedes the processing itself within the development of the more important thematic elements, starting from *B flat major* and ending in *F major*, a series of arpeggios interpreted as in a dialogue, either by the orchestra, or by the violin, deconspiring its intensely chromaticized harmonic evolution.



Similar structures slide chromatically descending such as the *B flat major*, *A major*, *A flat major* accords, the introduction of the *F major* accord generating the chromatic indecision of *C sharp* with *C* and *A flat* with *A natural*, fact which confers modal allusions to this fragment.

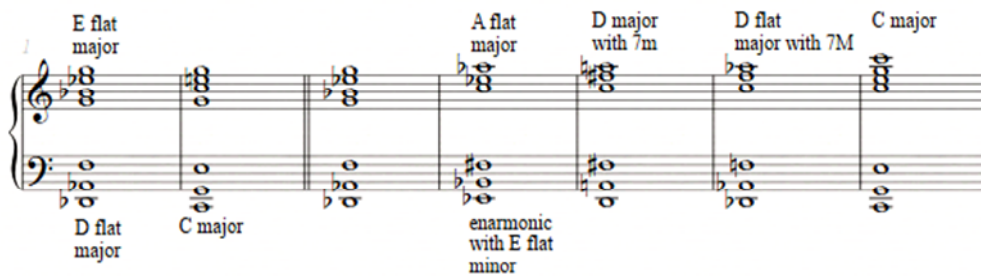
At the end of the development section from the first part of Prokofiev's concert there appears one of the most dramatic and monumental passages of this work, homophonically built within the entire orchestra, with a consistent writing density, poly-timbrally spread out, which entails, from a harmonic point of view, a series of descending chromatic intervals of different melodic lengths, with a *ritardando*

movement, fact which strengthens the monumental expression and prepares the new thematic moment of



the concert:

A new section from the end of Kabalevski's concert brings sonorities from the world of jazz. Here is a harmonic synthesis with structures of accordic overlaps, seventh accords or parallel chromatisms:



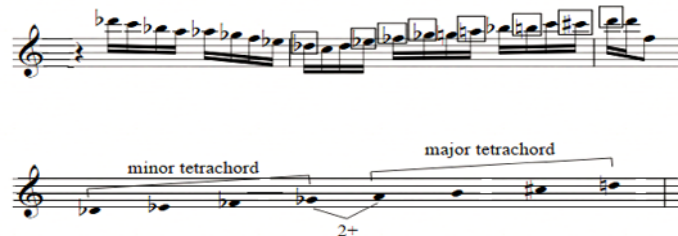
Here is one of Prokofiev's sarcastic humour moments, in which he hijacks the theme from the initial sobriety and confers a grotesque nature to it by the rhythmical diminishing of the thematic head and the polytonal conspiracy created between *C major/E minor* and *D flat major*:



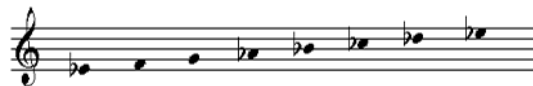
It is Prokofiev again who brings forth, by means of an *A natural* pedal, a type of orchestral writing specific to expressionism, which is based on two motifs, one made of ascending small sixths which chromatically succeed descendingly, and a second one, a simple ascending chromatic mordent, which already anticipates the specific theme of the next section. Through his manner of succession and alternation of motifs, through their orchestration ensured by the *klangfarbenmelodie* technique in a quasi-tonal ambience, Prokofiev reaches the limits of functional tonality:



But here are some situations containing new allusions to Béla Bartók, in the *Concert for violin and orchestra* (1940) by Aram Khachaturian, one passage being accomplished through a tetrachordal scordatura with an ascending extension of a semitone:



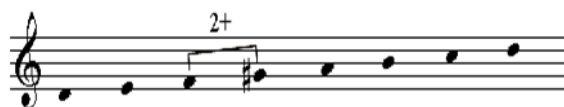
However, the great merit of the augmented tonality is represented by the insertion of a great diversity of folkloric, exotic and even neo-modal structures. The one who uses them the most is Aram Khachaturian, due to his affinities with the Armenian folklore. The second part of his concert abounds with elements of this type. The introduction begins with a calm sonority in the grave register which displays a constant modal frame. In the beginning we have a passage which crosses a *melodic E flat major*, the equivalent of the *acoustic mode 2*:



A Phrygian motif based on a triolet formula introduces Iberian sonorities, its role in the shaping of the musical form being referential:



Here is the structure of a mode called *chromatic 1* (measure 44), largely present in the folklore of any country. The basic characteristic element of this mode is the augmented second in the three and four steps whilst the large sixth and the small seventh on the tonic are some of the secondary characteristics:



It is only a few measures later (measure 50) that a new modal structure is inserted even if this aspect is not as apparent as the previous example, being followed by an *acoustic 4*, similar to the Phrygian one except for the fact that the fourth and the fifth steps are lowered by a semitone, making thus a fourth and a diminished fifth with the tonic:



Later on, some other sonorous structures appear as well, such as a pentatonicity (measure 53) enriched with chromatic elements,



some structures reminding of the harmonic minor (measure 55), even a *chromatic 4* mode (measure 58), similar to a Dorian mode on C but with a lowered fifth step, fact which determines the appearance of the augmented second between the fifth and the sixth steps, and of the diminished fifth on the mode's tonic,



or of an *acoustic 1* (measure 60), a lydian-mixolydian:



all the structure presented so far deconspire the great modal variety used by Khachaturian , the composer proving himself to be a profound connoisseur of the Armenian folklore, and not only, which he has the opportunity to work upon and to give life to in the cult creation.

Moreover, one may notice in the 82-84 measures the presence of a *chromatic 6*, whose structure resembles, due to its beginning, an *acoustic 4*, with the sole mention that the fifth on tonic becomes perfect, reason for which there appears an augmented second between the fourth and the fifth steps:



Khachaturian's predilection for chromatic modes is obvious because he preserves modal conjunctures of this type (*chromatic 3* – with an augmented second between the 1st and 2nd steps, and with an augmented fourth and a large seventh at the basis) in the development, such as the following:



Here is Khachaturian using a double chromatic mode as well (measures 87-88), mode known in the Romanian folk music as the *Gypsy mode*, and in the Byzantine music as the *mustard mode* or *key 6*,



or reiterating modal structures used in the first part of the concert, contradicting the thesis of chaotic or unconscious use of them:



It is true that, in the first part of Khachaturian's work, the soloist instrument unfolds at a certain moment, after having exposed the main theme, a series of arpeggios whose structure can be detailed by means of the following minor-major tetra-tones:



The bridge brings along modal typologies derived from the previously mentioned ones, this time completing the octave frame, reached as far as octaval semitonic hexatones:



Once again, Khachaturian demonstrates his inexhaustible artistry of inserting modal structures of oriental origin by proliferating chromatic structures such as the following one, with a hesitating melodic contour, assigned to the violinist, which leaves empty spaces within the octave:



But here are situations of neo-modal construction. In the first part of Kabalevski's work, within the section corresponding to the modulating phase of the sonata (measures 63-83), it follows an ambiguous tonal path. The interpretation is rather made through the perspective of the limited transposition modes, the entire fragment between measure 63 and measure 72, being in fact a truly modal zone. Analysing both the violin score, and the piano reduction, we notice Kabalevski's affinities with a modal background that was not unfamiliar and which he uses in the context of some syntheses with the tonal frame, enlarging the tonality in the spirit of certain common experience at that time. We have a *tone-semitone* mode (the *mode 2* theorized by Olivier Messiaen) transposed on the E flat sound, obviously taking into account the enharmonies that appear incidentally and not as a result of functional anticipations:



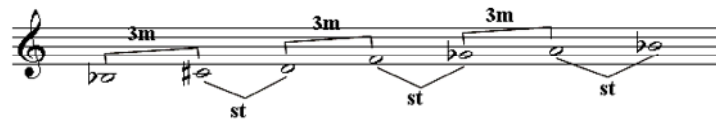
The same happens in the stage where one notices the preservation of the modal climate in the so-called modulating zone of the bridge which brings along the same tone-semitone structure, transposed this time on the *F* sound:



Going back to Prokofiev, a fragment of only four measures (measures 74-77) made of chromatic mixtures interpreted both by the violin, and the orchestra makes the connection with another subsection (measures 78-91) where the perpetuation of the figuralism at the soloist instrument, the repeated accords or the tremoloed pedals, the orchestration which, through the combined intervention of the horns and trombones, creates a moment of singular local colour accompanied in a polytimbral manner by the clarinet and the bassoon and later on by the oboe, the existence of a certain modal frame, the indecision of the melodic cells whose quasi-repetitive succession is resolved by the violinistic ostinato, and the allusion

to certain motifs from the main or secondary theme, as in a melodic collage, turn this page into one of the most authentic moments of impressionist nature, which Prokofiev confers a symbolic value of conclusion to.

The melodic path of the violin unveils a consistent modal frame for the entire duration of this subsection, the structure of the mode relying on the repetition of certain constituting groups (3m, 2m) so as they complete the entire octave:



Through its rigour, such a mode reminds of the structure of Olivier Messiaen's limited transposition modes. as a matter of fact, this structure is also to be found in the structure of *module 3* which is characterized by three symmetrical periodical groups. In this case, the second sound of each tetrachord is missing. Its entire theoretical organisation can be expressed as follows¹:

Structure expressed by semitones: (3,1,3,1,3,1)

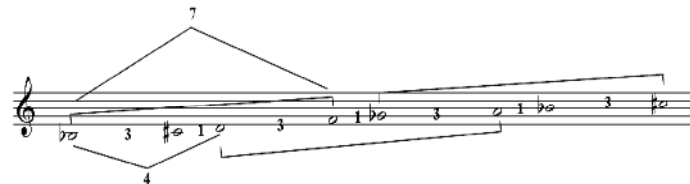
Cardinal: 6

Periodical group: (3,1)

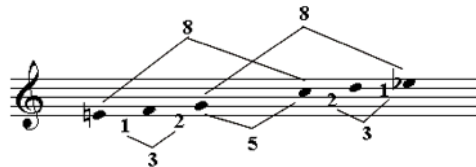
Symmetrical structures: 3

Transpositions: 4

At a closer look, one can notice the *sectio aurea* as the formative principle of the structure (3,1,3), this unveiling other constructive resonances as well which determine the identification of certain Fibonacci sequences (to be fair, starting from onther initial values whose ration is not taken into account) within the limits of a tetrachord:



We could, of course, mention Lendvai's analyses² which complete melodically each tetrachord, the intervals obtained this way representing the first five digits of Fibonacci sequence, 1,2,3,5,8, such a structure being the germseed of the so debated major-minor accord. Mention should be made that the example we offer is transposed, for simplification, into other notes:



And if such structures offer us a modal melodic frame, one should notice at Prokofiev the presence of the second theme from the third part, which is generated on the basis of such a structure:

¹ The analytical model is taken from Gheorghe Duțică, *Fenomenul polimodal în viziunea lui Olivier Messiaen*, Ed. Artes, Iași, 2003, pp. 8-11.

² László Ferenc, *Bartók Béla*, Ed. Kriterion, București, 1985, p. 252.



or some unmodified *alfa accords* (major-minor) incorporated within the harmonic fabric of the transition from the second part of the same work:

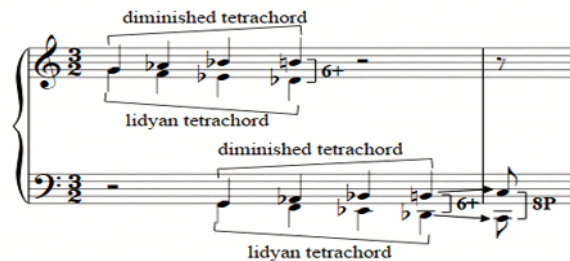


At Khachaturian, the second section of bridge of the first part brings a modal frame which completes almost entirely the empty spaces of the octave,



the mentioned structure being part of the tonal-modal (synthesis) integrated systems mentioned by de Victor Giuleanu³ when referring to those systems made of nine sounds on the octave frame.

On the other hand, what is interesting at Prokofiev from a harmonic point of view is the one measure connection (measure 156) by means of which the tonality of *C minoris* brought along, measure which speculates the functional attractiveness of the augmented sixth and its resolving in the octave. Moreover, the overlapping of an ascending diminished tetrachord on a descending lidyan tetrachord creates a specific polymodal atmosphere:



A similar thing happens with Khachaturian, the two structures being brought up this time by means of a parallel development, resulting a series of augmented fourths (with only one exception) which create a mysterious and exotic atmosphere:



³ Giuleanu, Victor, *Tratat de teoria muzicii*, Editura Muzicală, București, 1986, p. 490.

Khachaturian has also a moment of local colour which spreads a certain perfume of an exotic essence which juxtaposes minor accords from the first twist, whose ascending path has as its terminus point a minor accord in a direct state:



as well as situations where bimodal frames are built because the theme supports a Phrygian on the *E* sound:



while the accompaniment imposes a specific cadence upon the *aeolian on A* (5 without a sensitive and 1).

7. CONCLUSION

All these examples are musical utterances which unfold within the attractions of tonal and functional nature, enriching thus their content with sonorities which seem to have sprung from the popular practice or from any speculative-theoretical approach of the composers from the first half of the 20th century. Sometimes, their share is so great that one can hardly find relations of tonal nature, reason for which marking any armour becomes superfluous. It is Khachaturian's case as well, who gives up the marking of the armour of D minor. The art music has always supplied us with a great variety of sonorous combinations, of aggregates and structures which have gained, in time, a certain significance ready to be assimilated and thoroughly studied by the music lover's sensitivity. It often happens that a theoretical treatise scarcely manages to grasp a few essential formulas. It is never exhaustive as neither is the present study. The purpose of approaches like this is that of drawing the attention upon certain harmonic theories, insufficiently explored, whose richness proves the coexistence of seductive musical languages, never sufficiently explored, with inexhaustible expressive resources.

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