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Francis Poulenc's Music through Screen Media

Abstract

1931. F. Poulenc writes *Quatre Poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire* (FP 58), containing the poem *Avant le cinéma* (3rd part). While not sharing the poet's insight about the fate of cinema and its creators, the composer accurately reproduced the image of *Le cinéma muet* with fluctuating and colourful music in respect to the cinema of that time. Meanwhile, the era of films with sound began. Although he tried to write music for films, Poulenc did not literally become a "master of soundtracks". Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 21st century, the composer's music confidently takes root on the silver screen. Its presence in films, firstly, testifies to the status of F. Poulenc's composer heritage as a "musical classic", taking the position of a "strong style", and secondly, expands its perception experience, introducing the "new Poulenc" within "double coding". Thirdly and finally, the composer's creativity appears as an open conceptual project in the new "cinema incarnations". Along with this, the article also keeps in mind the "film looking"

effect on F. Poulenc's vocal and instrumental creativity. It is of note that F. Poulenc in his chamber vocal cycle *Calligram* shows his interest in the potential of synaesthetic relations of the music with graphic arts and cinema arts. Analysis of piano cycles and samples of certain genres produce the conclusion that "editability" in the French composer's creativity often goes as a forming tool and as a sense-making principle of the composition.

Key words

F. Poulenc's creativity. Film music. Film score. Interpretation. Montage.

Introduction

The topic *Poulenc and Cinematography* seemed exhausted until recently¹. The composer wrote little music for the cinema and it scarcely remained². The research material today is described in detail in the article by Jérôme Rossi³. In the autobiography *Moi et mes amis*⁴, there is not a single character from the film industry. Poulenc appoints his only composition about cinema – "*Avant le cinéma*" from "*Quatre Poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire*" (FP 58) Poulenc appoints "it's quite easy to sing"⁵. This remark of the

composer is used figuratively, emphasizing his rather skeptical attitude to early cinematograph (unlike Apollinaire). What can be the music that accompanies the mass sessions of "the great silent"? If we use the metaphor of F. Ramirez, the researcher of G. Apollinaire's creativity, then we can say that cinema, which "has long been behaving like an illegitimate child, that is, looking for fathers"⁶, was least of all obliged to Poulenc for forming its "sound image". When cinema was creating and cultivating a "new spirit" in art, especially in France, Poulenc, unlike his colleagues D. Milhaud, G. Auric, A. Honegger and many others, did not find himself on the way of the "tenth Muse". Meanwhile, the rapid beginning of a new artistic practice did not remain outside the composer's field of interests; what is more, his musical compositions are marked as "film-looking" ones⁷.

In its turn, cinema continues to master Francis Poulenc's creativity with growing dynamics, adjusting his music assimilation in a certain semantic spectrum. The purpose of this article is to comprehend the specifics of modern perceptions of Poulenc's music, which, among other things, is conditioned by its Presence in cinema and on television. The research methodology leads into the problem field, where relatively autonomous segments require complex consideration. Thus, Poulenc's experience as a film composer is generalized based on historical and archival data. Revealing the principles of cinematography in Poulenc's selected compositions is based on structural musicological analysis. Poulenc's music in cinema and filming of contemporary stagings of his operas is studied based on N. Goodman's ideas⁸, which make it possible to comprehend the unity of music and the artistic cinema world.

¹ The ideas expressed in the article were tested at the scientific-practical conference "Francis Poulenc and his friends in the modern musicological space" ("Francis Poulenc et ses amis dans l'espace musicologique contemporain") (Kyiv, May 17-19, 2019), presented within the framework of the international cultural project of *Tchaikovsky Ukrainian National Academy of Music* "Poulenc-fest. European spring at the Academy": <<http://knmau.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/informatsiynyy-lyst-eng.pdf>>. The conference was held with the participation of professor Hervé Lacombe – a renowned French scholar, head of the department of music and musicology at Université Rennes 2, the author of the fundamental monograph *Francis Poulenc*. It is also important to note that the grandnephew of Francis Poulenc, Monsieur Benoit Seringe who heads the Society of "Friends of Francis Poulenc" ("Association des amis de Francis Poulenc") in his letter to the conference organizing committee, expressed his admiration for the project and extended his congratulations on the organization of the first forum of such level in Ukraine: <<http://knmau.com.ua/pershij-mizhnarodnij-festival-yevropejska-vesna-v-akademiyi-pulenkfest/>>.

² SCHMIDT, C.: *The Music of Francis Poulenc (1899-1963): A Catalogue*. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1995, pp. 525-534.

³ ROSSI, J.: Francis Poulenc et le cinéma : fascination et méfiance. In KAYAS, L., LACOMBE, H. (eds.): *Du langage au style, singularités de Francis Poulenc*. Paris : Societe Francaise de Musicologie, 2016, pp. 345-363.

⁴ POULENC, F., AUDEL, S.: *Moi et mes amis: confidences recueillies*. Paris and Geneva : Palatine, 1963, p. 198.

⁵ Author's recommendation for the performance of Guillaume Apollinaire's song "Avant le cinéma". See: POULENC, F.: *Journal de mes*

mélodies. Ohio : Cicero, 1993. The analysis of the song as part of the cycle contains, for example, the reference edition by Carl B. Schmidt: *The Music of Francis Poulenc (1899-1963): A Catalogue*. Oxford : Clarendon press, 1995, thus, we don't consider it appropriate to include it in this article.

⁶ RAMIREZ, F.: Apollinaire et le désir de cinéma. In *Le Moyen Age dans le théâtre et le cinéma français: L'Histoire au XIXe siècle : Apollinaire. Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*. Paris : Association internationale des études françaises, 1995, pp. 371-389. [online]. [2021-09-07]. Available at: <https://www.persee.fr/doc/caief_0571-5865_1995_num_47_1_1883>.

⁷ The concept of "cinematography" (or "montage ability") in relation to Poulenc's music, as a rule, is used metaphorically, it is a "kaleidoscope of themes", unexpected changes in images and plans in his music. Many researchers point out the signs of cinematography in Poulenc's music, for example, see: MARTYNENKO, N.: Peculiarities of orchestra facture in Concert for piano with orchestra F. Poulenc (cis-moll). In *National Association of Scientists (NAU)*, 2020, No. 27, pp. 9-14; GLADKOVA, O., RYBALCHENKO, A.: "Ballet Les Biches" F. Poulenc:

to the question of the influence of jazz and european musical stylistics of the first half of the XX century. In *Herald of the Chelyabinsk State Academy of Culture and Arts*, 2014, No. 3, pp. 121-124; GOLOVNINA, N.: Ballets La Salade and Le Train Bleu by D. Milhaud in the Dialogue with the times. In *Bulletin of Vaganova Ballet Academy*, 2018, No. 2, pp. 6-16; SAMOILOVA, A.: Sonata for oboe and piano by F. Poulenc in the "Triad" series of the last chamber sonatas. In *Artistic work in modern culture: creativity - performance - humanitarian knowledge*. Chelyabinsk : South Ural State Institute of Arts, 2014, pp. 32-39; ZMIEVSKAJA, S.: On the theatrical aspect of dance in the French neoclassicist suite (based on the cycles of R. Laparra and F. Poulenc). In *Scientific works of the Belarusian State Academy of Music*, 2017, No. 40, pp. 116-128. [online]. [2021-09-07]. Available at: <<http://rep.bgam.edu.by/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/830/Zmievskaia.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>>.

⁸ GOODMAN, N.: *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. Indianapolis/ Cambridge : Hackett Publishing, 1976, pp. 177-221.

1 Music by Francis Poulenc for Cinema and in Cinema

To imagine what music was like in the early days of French cinema, people usually turn to René Clair's *Entr'acte de Relâche*, with Erik Satie's music. However, the material filmed in 1924, being perceived today as a striking example of early avant-garde cinema, was re-edited by the director much later in 1967. At the same time, the sound version of the motion picture appeared. E. Satie's music was recorded by his younger contemporary, student and admirer Henri Sauguet. Despite a certain 'retouch', the updated version of *Entr'acte* has retained the emphasized simplified style characteristic of silent cinema background music. Satie composed music "by shots", taking into account not the emotional or plot components, but the shot movement nature, its duration, using "street music" extensively. Exactly here, the composer's experience of creating the *musique d'ameublement* invented by him in 1916, came in handy. The film industry's rapid development made it possible to show real musical films on screen as early as 1927. F. Poulenc's attitude to the film music of that time, contrary to some of his later statements given in the article by Jérôme Rossi⁹, was rather ironic. This can be

judged by the musical version of G. Apollinaire's poem *Avant le cinéma* (1931). It should be noted that the composer dedicated it not to a movie star (as one might suppose), but to Madame Picasso, the dancer of the Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* Olga Khokhlova, clearly having in mind her place in the auditorium, and not on the screen.

The poem *Avant le cinéma*, published in the North-South review on April 15th, 1917, appears at first glance to be whimsical, emphasizing one of the functions which Apollinaire attributed to early cinema. It is about the role of ridicule in renewing the concept of art.

According to the poet, cinema is a modern "sapper" in the sense that it helps to undermine old definitions. But what is worth mentioning in this poem is the connection between a certain non-traditionality and cinema discovered by the poet. This union, just outlined in the poetic text, will flourish in French literature. The surrealists, Prévert, Queneau and, in general, many poets who were looking for new opportunities for free creativity, will continue to see kinds of free *Maquis* partisans in cinematographers who ridicule everyone and everything from the underground, "the darkness of the hall"¹⁰. A key question for the poet,

Paris : Societe Francaise de Musicologie, 2016, pp. 345-363.

¹⁰ RAMIREZ, F.: Apollinaire et le désir de cinéma. In *Le Moyen Age dans le théâtre et le cinéma français: L'Histoire au XIXe siècle: Apollinaire. Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*. Paris : Association internationale des études françaises, 1995, pp. 371-389. [online]. [2021-09-07]. Available at: <https://www.persee.fr/doc/caief_0571-5865_1995_num_47_1_1883>.

requiring turning to Almighty God is whether to call the new art *cinéma*, *ciné*, or "professeurs de province", *cinématographe*. The poet prophetically believed that all arts meet in cinema, and a musician will still play his role in accompanying "dynamic visual processions"¹¹.

Judging by the nature of the musical interpretation of Apollinaire's poetic lines, Poulenc did not share his film enthusiasm. Then, the musicians who connected themselves with cinema art least of all looked like "sappers" of traditional foundations. On the contrary, all of them including even his friends Honegger, Auric and Milhaud, actively worked in cinema from its early years yet did not overthink and "quite simply" replicated the classic heritage, reducing its "high" status to mass audience levels.

In his work, F. Poulenc neatly recreated the image of the *Great Silent and the music of the then cinemas constant change and colour despite the turbulent beginning of the sound film era*. As known¹², the first Poulenc's experience of creating a "soundtrack" for a film was a six-minute movie trailer *Sleeping Beauty* (1934, released in 1935). It was a witty puppet-drawn remake of the famous fairy tale, created by the animator A. Alexeieff and his constant collaborator C.

¹¹ IAMPOLSKY, M.: *The Memory of Tiresias: Intertextuality and Cinema*. Moscow : RIC Culture, 1993, pp. 114-115.

¹² LACOMBE, H.: *Francis Poulenc*. Paris : Fayard, 2013, p. 500.

Parker. The catalogue indicates that Poulenc was the author of the musical accompaniment and the harpsichord performer (!)¹³. At that time, A. Alexeieff, the inventor of 'pinscreen animation', having no stable income in Paris and being in a rather difficult material situation, could not completely devote himself to creative work, and during 1935-1939, together with Claire Parker and Georges Viollet completely took up the preparation of commercials producing twenty-five advertisements in total. The advertisement, in which F. Poulenc took part, was commissioned by the firm Nicolas, founded in Paris in 1822. It owned a chain of stores throughout France with branches in the UK, Belgium, Germany and Poland, and was known for a selling a variety of more than 1200 champagnes and other alcoholic drinks. The idea of a "beauty" sleeping in a bottle 100 years old was witty and perfectly associated with the archaic harpsichord sound improvised by Poulenc.

Poulenc earned his first, in fact, team experience of working in fiction cinema in 1937 in the film *Miarka, la fille à l'ourse*. The music was co-written by A. Honegger and the Hungarian Thibault Arshani. It is not known what exactly Poulenc contributed to the musical setting of this film. But judging by his next independent work in fiction films,

¹³ SCHMIDT, C.: *The Music of Francis Poulenc (1899-1963): A Catalogue*. Oxford : Clarendon press, 1995, p. 234.

one can get an idea of the extent of the creative originality in his film music. The 1942 adaptation of Balzac's short story *La duchesse de Langeais* is considered a definite stage in cinema history, summarizing the search of French cinema in the field of acting and directing, historical scenery, costumes, camera skills and background music. The screenwriter J. Girault filled the plot with serious statements about the nature of love, devotion, obsession, idealism and passion. The central musical image of the film is the waltz, beautifully stylized in the spirit of the 19th century, symbolizing the Parisian elite and life power, however, the chant (it will be heard by the character in the monastery during mass, who rushes about searching for the disappeared Antoinette), as well as the scene of writing where the allusions to P. Tchaikovsky's opera are found, are also noteworthy. The incredible plot of this film made it possible to avoid censorship during the Nazi occupation, although the nature of the relationship between the characters clearly hints at a "fascist" pressure and Antoinette's "resistance" to these forces is perceived as "heroic". Like the short story itself, the film embodies romantic love as something transcendent, although the music fits well into the traditional classic and romantic cliché.

In the same year, Francis Poulenc, together with Henri Sauguet, took part in the creation, or rather editing of the soundtrack for a short film about the history of dance

Symphonie en blanc by R. Chanes and F. Ardoin, wherein he appeared on the screen as the dancer S. Lifar¹⁴.

The turning point in the history of relations between Poulenc and cinema was 1948. From that time on, the composer's work became a resource actively explored by screen media without the composer's personal participation. Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rope* was released by the American studio "Warner Bros". It is characteristic that film critics regard this film as a unique example, being the first colour film by Hitchcock, where the director acted as producer himself and where James Stewart, one of the so-called Hitchcock actors, also starred. This film was an experiment in shooting technique. The film was shot in continuous shots of 4 to 10 minutes each (9 shots in total). The music in the frame appears in the scene when the guests gather for a cocktail in an apartment. One of the characters, who has strangled his classmate because of his rage, sits down at the piano and plays *Assez modéré* from Francis Poulenc - *Trois mouvements perpétuels* (1918, FP 14). At the piano, the murderer is nervous. The metronome beats too fast – so the heart beats, but the pianist wants to show his coolness. During the party, young people are tempted to impress a college professor who tells them about

¹⁴ Poulenc's next works in cinema: *Le voyageur sans bagage* (1943), *Le voyage en Amérique* (1951) analyzed by J. Rossi (Francis Poulenc et le cinéma).

⁹ For more information, please see: the article's part *La musique de film idéale selon Poulenc* in ROSSI, J.: Francis Poulenc et le cinéma : fascination et méfiance. In KAYAS, L., LACOMBE, H. (eds.): *Du langage au style, singularités de Francis Poulenc*.

Nietzsche and the superhuman at lectures. The criminals from time to time hand pieces of relevant information to their teacher, which then forms in the professor's mind into a single picture. By the end of the evening, he finds a corpse and puts the criminals into the hands of the law.

It is clear that at such a moment one can play something "very simple". But why Poulenc? In this respect, apparently, the preferences of David Buttolph, one soundtrack creator, who studied in Europe in 1923 and returned to the United States in 1927, played a role. Apparently, during that period he became acquainted with this music, which was clearly associated with the "new art". The theme of "perpetual motion" resounds in the subtitles of the orchestral transcription by Leo Frank Forbstein. Rope is the latest work of the 55-year-old conductor who worked as music director for Warner Bros. since 1926. Having created musical scores for hundreds of films, including early Vitaphone-technology sound films, he was responsible for the characteristically soft 'sweet' (dolce) sound of orchestral accompaniment in films. The musical image being endless, exhausting, repeating initial part from Poulenc's early piece, is, according to the filmmakers' intention, associated with the rope as the murder weapon itself. In addition, the elementary nature of the descending scale and its repetition give an idea of a certain immaturity and infantilism of the characters, although they consider themselves intellectuals and are

interested in modern music. The rope, like the chest with books, where the corpse is hidden, is a ruthless indication of Philosophy, undertaking to explain and connect everything. Its lessons (inadequate people's life is meaningless) are brought to life by young people. However, as Hitchcock shows through his characters, the philosophy is just "a small print, big words and bad sales".

Mouvements perpétuels in Hitchcock's film to a certain extent laid the frame where Poulenc's music subsequently found its place on the movie screen. This is music usually played in shot at party scenes. Thus, many cinematic allusions are found in Paolo Sorrentino's film *La grande bellezza* (2013). Above all, they appeal to the classics of Italian cinema and the inclusion of the same first part from *Perpetual Movements* as the soundtrack clearly appeals to Hitchcock. However, here the *Rope* music accompanies not young extremists but the Cardinal who, though advanced in years, does not lose his childlike vivacity being the incomparable exorcist of Europe, who brushes aside spiritual topics and discusses recipes at the Sunday party with keen interest. The character of P. Sorrentino's film roams around various social events of the Eternal City, where dancing guests arrange the longest trains in the whole of Italy. Poulenc's *Mouvements perpétuels* is a sign of their emptiness and infiniteness. But if Hitchcock's character tries to hide behind the carelessness of a straightforward mobile movement,

speeded up by a metronome rapidly rushing to the finish, Sorrentino focuses on an eternity called the perpetuum, emphasizing his "frozenness" by the fact that the Cardinal eats ice cream among the ladies and behaves like a child. The same party scene but this time in Northern Italy in the foothills of the Alps, is remade in the film *Call Me by Your Name* (2017). A young man, a 17-year-old musician who deals with transcriptions is at the piano again. In the previous scenes he plays young Bach's music in Liszt's style, "in the style of Busoni playing Liszt in young Bach's style", and so on ad infinitum, trying to get away from the simple primary theme... However, he chooses to play F. Poulenc's music for the guests at the Sunday lunch, but not the rustic *mouvements perpétuels*. Beyond his years, it is *Improvisation N. 15* in c minor, or rather the introduction to the main improvisation theme, concentrating on agonizing expectation and longing. The appearance of his beloved person in the background is illustrated by a virtuoso passage that is the inclusion of the character's "transcript" ambitions. F. Poulenc was writing *Quinze improvisations* (1932-1959) for almost thirty years: *Improvisation N. 1-10* (1932-1934, FP 64), *N. 11-12* (1941, FP 113), *N. 13-14* (1958, FP 170), *N. 15* (1959, FP 176). Each of the pieces is dedicated to a specific person, whose character inspired the composer. Among the addressees are friends, outstanding musicians, idols and inspirers of the composer's work. By addressing his music to

them, F. Poulenc indirectly creates a gallery of portraits, without losing the individuality of his own musical language. *Quinze improvisations* became a kind of Leit motif of the French musician's connection with cinematograph, reflecting, as in a mirror, not only the personalities of the addressees, but also to some extent the author of the cycle himself, becoming a special type of his vision of the world. He demonstrates the cycle's stylistic diversity, showing such features of his own composing style as a tendency towards sharp contrasts, bright emotionality and, of course, the melodic richness of the music. The integrity of the cycle's drama is ensured by the novelty composition principle, where the plot line unity grows from a series of short stories or episodes separated by a time distance allowing us to feel the plot's evolution. *Improvisation N. 15* in C minor (*Hommage à Edith Piaf*) is an expression of respect for the outstanding singer who has become a symbol of France. This piece takes a special place in F. Poulenc's creativity. It not only completes such a significant cycle, but is also the musician's last piano work. The composer improvises on the theme of the famous Joseph Kosma's song to Jacques Prevert's verses *Les feuilles mortes*, which first appeared in the film *Les Portes de la nuit* directed by Marcel Carné performed by Yves Montand, one of E. Piaf's lovers. It is noteworthy that Edith herself performed this song only in 1950, after the death of Marcel Cerdan, her greatest love, in

October 1949. E. Piaf performs and records the English version of the song *Autumn Leaves in America*, although the French version is more consistent with the music and poetic nature.

An amazing tragic coincidence is that in the same year, 1949, the talented artist and decorator Christian Berard who was very dear to F. Poulenc, passed away. The composer dedicated *Stabat Mater* to his friend's memory. The piece was created for solo soprano, mixed chorus and orchestra, but the echoes of pain about the past, of course, were also embodied in *Improvisation N. 15*. Like E. Piaf, F. Poulenc reflected his unique melodic talent in the piece. The stunningly subtle and beautiful improvisation melody evokes human voice associations, immersing us into French chanson of the 20th century. Perhaps, F. Poulenc's *Improvisation N. 15*, as heard in the film *Call Me by Your Name*, can also be considered like symbol of Elio's passing love, on the ruins of which he had to build his future. The similar keynote of lost love runs like a red thread through the entire life of Poulenc himself. Returning at various times to the theme of loneliness, embodying his own experiences in his work, the composer each time skillfully illuminated and enriched his works with new depth and maturity. The Presence mode of Poulenc's music in the on-screen art space is radically changed by John Duigan's film *Head in the Clouds* (2004). The orchestral intro to *Litanies à la Vierge Noire* (1936) counterpoints the scene of the

Gestapo interrogation of a girl. The scene with the tied hands clenched into fists which unclench is given as a close-up detail. As soon as the life is gone, one can immediately hear the sound of a children's choir. On the screen one can see the temple space where the main character is safe from his pursuers. The mature Poulenc's sacred music heard in shot brings a cathartic accent to the film's dramatic collision emphasizing the tragedy of what was happening. An important semantic emphasis is added using a fragment of Poulenc's *Sonate pour violon et piano* (*Violin Sonata, 1942-1943, FP 119*) dedicated to the memory of García Lorca in James Ivory's film *The City of Your Final Destination* (2009). The memorial connotations in this music are literally linked to the film's plot. One of the central characters is a famous writer's widow. By the will of fate, she is thrown into a South American backwater, far from everything that is so dear to her. The only connection with the world of her beautiful past is music. She constantly listens to vinyl, and plays one of Poulenc's sonatas on the record. In a dialogue with her uninvited guest Caroline (played by Laura Linney) who is an assertive biographer of her famous husband, the composer's fan who admires everything European, offers to listen to music. The director, pausing the action, makes the viewer listen to every sound of the meditative *Intermezzo* imbued with Spanish charm on the exotic prairie sunset background. "This is Poulenc..." Silence follows. "Well, do you like this place?" is responded by the

companion's indifference... A painful paradox is that a person who studies art turns out to be completely insensitive to the amazing beauty of the music.

The above examples where Poulenc's music is variously used in films reveal its deep property to organically integrate into any visual imagery.

2 Cinematics of Poulenc's Music

The composer's experience of working with film content did not remain inapplicable in his creativity. "Cinematicism" and "montage" can be traced not only in his theatrical works, but also in major musical forms, concertos, sonatas, etc. For example, we can observe this principle in the works created during different periods of his life. Being one of the French composer's early works, the cycle *Trois mouvements perpétuels* attracted the American filmmakers' attention. It embodies inexhaustible vitality and sparkling humour, balanced by gallant restraint of emotions. The idea of perpetual motion is embodied in the image of the surrounding world's urbanistic picture in three small pieces (*Balance-moderate, Tres modere, Alerte*).

It should be mentioned that exactly *Mouvement perpétuel* N. 1 caught the attention of the Hollywood horror classic Alfred Hitchcock. At first glance, such a playful and positive piece in no way corresponds to the picture's content. Thus, the director uses a cinematic counterpoint technique

that indicates a discrepancy between two levels – for example, music and image or music and action. This further emphasizes the absurdity and tragic grotesque of the plot presented on the screen.

The duration of the constantly falling linear construction, its endlessness and "eternity" of movement also vividly illustrates the deep meaning of the connection between "perpetual motion" and "rope". According to S. Žižek, this lies in the inextricable connection of words and deeds, because the film's lesson is that "challenging dangerous ideas can accidentally lead to their implementation"¹⁵.

F. Poulenc's interest in the possibilities of synesthetic music connections with graphics and cinema can be found in the chamber vocal cycle *Calligrammes* (1948, FP 140). The starting point of the composer's searches was the collection of the poems of the same name by G. Apollinaire, where some of the poems are framed in the form of graphic drawings reflecting the text's content, called ideograms.

G. Apollinaire's experiment not only testifies to the originality of the poet's thinking, but also goes along with modern poetry aspiring to visual impressions and specific views predominance. The French poetry researcher N. Balashov points to the interweaving of literary and cinematic principles in this work and illuminates the poet's attitude

¹⁵ ŽIŽEK, S.: *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out*. New York/London : Routledge, 2001, p. 35.

to his collection as an experience conditioned by "the development of technology involving switching to new methods of cinema and phonograph text reproduction"¹⁶. The author created a chain of successive concrete poems by pulling together various steps of poetic writing into a single visual image. Alternating with usual poems with active imagination, they take a movie-like form, where video plots alternated with text fragments create a kaleidoscope of affects and various moods.

This poetic experiment is an indirect confirmation of successive ties between cinema and lyric poetry, noted by V. Bozovic, which became possible due to the "increased degree of the poetry's concreteness"¹⁷. To some extent it proves the fact of cinema originating from moving pictures, noted by the same researcher. The most interesting in terms of poetic model implementation is the second miniature of the cycle *Mutation*. As this word is absent in the poem lines (as a rule, the texts selected by F. Poulenc bear a name borrowed from the poem's initial line or less often from the final line), it can be assumed G. Apollinaire was not motivated by the text's lexical composition,

¹⁶ BALASHOV, N.: Apollinaire and His Place in French Poetry. In LOGINOV, O. (ed.), KUDINOV, M. (trans.): *Poems. Guillaume Apollinaire*. Moscow : Publishing House Science, 1967, p. 260.

¹⁷ BOZHOVICH, V.: *Traditions and Interaction of Arts: France, from the late 19th to the early 20th century*. Moscow : Publishing House Science, 1987, p. 131.

but by some meaningful moments to choose the name. If we consider this more deeply, we can open up a kaleidoscope of fragmentary pictures and shots alternating with the narrator's "offscreen" exclamations:

"Des soldats qui passaient / Eh! Oh! Ah! / Un éclusier qui pêche / Eh! Oh! Ah! / Les tranchées qui blanchissaient / Eh! h! Ah! / <...> / Et tout a tant changé en moi / Tout sauf mon amour / Eh! h! Ah! [The regiment is leaving for the front. Eh! Oh! Ah! / The fisherman snoozing at the floodgate. Eh! Oh! Ah! / Dirty snow in the trenches. Eh! Oh! Ah! / <...> / Oh, how quickly I forgot everything except you. Eh! Oh! Ah!]"¹⁸.

These now appeal to the means of cinematography at the micro level, where separate joint shots form a single video sequence, causing a change in mood from fleeting and flickering emotions to the final state inspired by the final poetic 'shot'. Pierre Bernac is a famous chamber performer of Poulenc's music, with whom the composer often performed and toured with. He described the miniature, characterizing it as "a complete change, transformation that takes place in the poet's life". Here it is shown "with the help of descriptive pictures of his soldier's life"¹⁹. The performer focuses on the

¹⁸ POULENC, F.: *Mutation*. In POULENC, F.: *Calligrammes: Sept Mélodies sur des Poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire*. Paris : Heugel & Cie, 2002, pp. 4-6.

¹⁹ BERNAC, P.: *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*. London : Kahn & Averill, 2005, p. 225.

difference in moods that arise in each new shot, and in this regard, gives advice on performance, aimed at the most accurate reproduction of vivid episode pictures. The first *Eh! Oh! Ah!* must resemble crying women played *ff* and very *legato*. The second *Eh! Oh! Ah!*, played *f*, must be *marcato* and *non legato* to resemble the marching soldiers. The third is *pp subito* to remind about the peaceful scene of a gatekeeper fishing at the front. The fourth is *mf*, very simple, thus reminiscent of trenches dug in the white chalk of Champagne. The fifth is very intense as shellburst, strongly emphasized on *D*. A hint of boredom because of dampness in the trenches can be made with almost excessive *legato*. And the whole song's finale with brilliant *ff* to show the enduring love and the last *Eh! Oh! Ah!* is played very *legato*²⁰. The coexistence of fragmentation and dramatic integrity, achieved in the poem's text, due to the main theme of interjection glides, and the summarizing final line in F. Poulenc's music is also achieved through the active use of musical and colour effects providing an original background to each 'shot'. However, having passed through some multicoloured harmonic sounds in E minor – F sharp major – A major – G major and non-tonal fragments, the composer returns to the original E flat minor, unifying it with the beginning of the "film".

²⁰ BERNAC, P.: *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*. London : Kahn & Averill, 2005, p. 85.

Colouristic techniques are enhanced by textured and dynamic means, the expressive possibilities of which are emphasized due to contrasting comparisons: the composer gives a different density, volume, dynamic saturation to each new plot of the poetic text. Despite the ability of music to embody the most diverse emotional and semantic ideas, in "Calligrammes" by Francis Poulenc – Guillaume Apollinaire, the leading role is given to poetry. The metaphorical nature of the poet's language contributes to the emergence of voluminous, almost visible images, on the basis of which the composer creates vivid musical patterns. It is not only about reflecting the smallest nuances of moods and changing the tone of expression in accordance with poetic motives. It is a set of means that can even graphically outline the essence of the character. Thanks to the dividing function of a kind of chorus "Eh! Oh! Ah!" and a complete renewal of the ways of expressing, F. Poulenc creates a kind of video clip, in which each frame has its own mini-plot and individual design techniques. This kind of active transformation of a musical text into a unison kaleidoscope of poetic patterns contributes to the visualization of the main idea of the poem – the change. From this point of view, the vocal miniature of F. Poulenc becomes a decoder of poetic thought, giving it a sensually experienced form.

The idea of ideographic visual clarity also penetrates a number of miniatures-sketches. The collation

of poetic motifs, supported by tonal and harmonic means, contributes to the visibility of verbal and musical patterns. Such qualities of the vocal cycle of F. Poulenc – G. Apollinaire evoke direct analogies with cinematograph. Let us remind you that cinematic art theorists attach considerable value to the musical timbrality of both the visual range as a whole and its components up to separate frames. “If the visual frame has an independent and specific content, then the music <...> gives a generalized characteristic and thereby increases the impact of the image”²¹, – writes the film expert Z. Lissa. Developing the idea of music’s ability to impact the interpretation of the frame, the scientist recognizes the artistic advantage of editing, carried out taking into account musical regularities and compositional and technical laws²². One of the examples is the method of S. Eisenstein. The famous director, thinking about the means of making up the film, mentions tonal editing along with metric, rhythmic, overtone and intellectual editing. Expanding parallels with musical art, S. Eisenstein in his works used such synesthetic expressions that intersect with musical art as “audio-visual partition”, “tonality” of the object or “overtoneality”²³.

In general, the theory created by the film director has become a reference point for the research of E. Kurova, in which she calls S. Eisenstein a master of “conflict combination” due to his ability to hold attention for a long time by the virtual coupling of diverse tonal frames²⁴. The universality of the concept of “tonal editing” is confirmed by its ability to reveal the musical organization of a poetic text. The brightest examples are the last pieces of the cycle: *L’espionne* and *Voyage*. The difference between these miniatures is that the metaphorical poetic lines are designed to reflect the dynamics of feelings, emotions and states in the absence of a predominating plotline. These states often do not intersect with each other, but are presented in the form of a shot kaleidoscope. For example, a pile of contrasts in the final miniature *Voyage* is a bright picture appealing to time-lapse filming techniques. Thus, the first lines *Adieu, Amour nuage qui fuis et n’a pas chu pluie féconde* [*Farewell to love, ethereal like a cloud, like a whisper of life-giving rain*] become a kind of prologue, the next “shot” *Télégraphe oiseau qui laisse tomber ses ailes partout* [*Telegrams fall down like feathers from swan’s wings*] changes sad experiences for

a state of illusion and lightness; the third sharply contrasting episode *Où va donc ce train qui meurt au loin / Dans les vals et les beaux bois frais* [*But tell me where this crazy train is taking you through the dense meadows*]²⁵ is more lively in comparison with the overall picture of melancholic stiffness and finally, the plan also suddenly returns to the previous state of unsteadiness and light sadness.

By following poetic changes dramaturgy, F. Poulenc creates a sound sequence where visual effect in poetic pictures is embodied through contrasting tonal and textural transformations. Thus, *amour nuage* and *chu pluie* are rendered by F sharp minor with subtle transparent lines of vocal and instrumental unison. The shades of E flat minor and piano arpeggios give a picture of the light weightlessness of telegrams falling like feathers. The composer uses a chain of modulating chords to restore the image of a “flying train”, restores the colour palette of the initial fis-moll when returning the initial poetic motif of farewell. Such a reception is combined with the reception of a leitmotif “sound track” in similar episodes of cinema scene.

F. Poulenc chose only three poems written in concrete form, while the rest of the samples reveal another poetic concept facet, i.e. montage

21 LISSA, Z.: *Aesthetics of film music*. Moscow : Music, 1970, p. 33.

22 LISSA, Z.: *Aesthetics of film music*. Moscow : Music, 1970, p. 56.

23 EISENSTEIN, S.: Vertical mounting. In YURENEV, R.: (rev. end, ed.): *Selected works in 6 volumes, Vol. 2: Theoretical research and articles*. Moscow : Publishing house Art, 1964, pp. 192-199.

24 KUROVA, E.: Dialectical Method in Cinema (Based on the Theoretical Works of S.M. Eisenstein). In *South Pole. Studies in the history of modern Western philosophy*, 2019, Vol. 5 (1-2), pp. 59-67. [online]. [2021-09-07]. Available at: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/dialekticheskiy-metod-v-kino-po-teoreticheskim-rabotam-s-m-eyzenshteyna>.

25 POULENC, F.: *Voyage*. In POULENC, F.: *Calligrammes: Sept Mélodies sur des Poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire*. Paris : Heugel & Cie, 2002, pp. 22-24.

film principles involved in poetry. Nevertheless, the composer’s different aspirations do not allow us to speak of their inconsistency, since the spatial visualization of poetic images unfolded in time is characteristic of both the ideographic space and the film, whose artistic means were used by F. Poulenc in different parts of the composition. Taking over G. Apollinaire’s “montage principle” of joining various impressions, plots and paintings F. Poulenc demonstrates not only a lively reaction to the poetic action dynamics, but also his openness to progressive trends in writing art. In F. Poulenc’s concert genre, we can also observe how “montage” becomes “a mean of forming and a semantic principle of composition”²⁶. The choreographic concert for piano and eighteen instruments *Aubade* (1929, FP 51b) consists of eight separate episodes united by one plot. The emergence of “shots” in this piece became its drama basis, where the content development is carried out not due to a long unfolding of developments, but due to the different episodes alternation. The appearance of inserted dance numbers within the main storyline causes a feeling of some sections being incomplete and events remaining “behind the scene”. The sudden “jumping” to the

next part, bypassing some of the previous events, is also associated with the principle of “gluing the seams” of the cinema genre. The result of mastering specific cinema lexicon can also be traced in the *Concerto for Two Pianos* in D minor (1932, FP 61), where the composer “seems to be trying to follow the atmosphere of a street booth or a circus performance on the streets of Paris, and the kaleidoscopic nature in the sequence of themes, images and tempos creates the impression of a real holiday, demonstrating extraordinary wit and the author’s sense of humour”²⁷. The *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* in C sharp minor (1949, FP 146), written in traditional three-part form, is also built on the mosaic principle. In the first sonata *allegro* section based on the exposition of constantly updated thematic formations, the composer introduces an inserted episode instead of music development, as if deliberately emphasizing the moment of “joining” and the absence of transition between shots.

3 La voix humaine from Bluebeard’s Castle: Poetics of Cinematography in the Stage Reading of F. Poulenc’s Mono-opera

The principles of film montage also influenced the modern interpretation of Poulenc’s operas. Some well-known directors have researched his operas and with various results. From numerous examples, we can cite the Paris performance-diptych, which combines two compositions: the opera *Bluebeard’s Castle* by B. Bartok and *La voix humaine* by F. Poulenc (1959, FP 171)²⁸ directed by K. . This outstanding Polish opera and drama director represents the artistic generation that declared itself in the 1990s. It was a period of acute political events and a radical renewal of musical and theatrical aesthetics. K. Warlikowski strove to overcome the isolation of the elite theatrical art for small halls and exquisite audiences, which was cultivated by his predecessors. The director’s teacher Lupa from Krakow was fond of the theories and personality of the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. And K. Warlikovsky’s performances are characterized by the abundance of symbols and archetypes testifying to the collective unconscious influencing a person. In many of the director’s performances, the associative space expansion and subsequent accent on the main motives of the piece is achieved through the prologue and inserted

26 SINELNIKOVA, O.: Montage Principle and Musical Form. In CHERNYAK, E., KUZORO, K. (eds.): *Tomsk State University Journal of Cultural Studies and Art History*, 2009, No. 31, p. 69. [online]. [2021-09-07]. Available at: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/montazhnnyy-printsip-i-muzykalnaya-forma>.

27 MARTINOVA, N.: Trends in urbanism piano music of Erik Satie and the representatives of the “French six”. In SMOLIAK, O. (ed.): *The Scientific Issues of Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. Specialization: Art Studies*, 2011, No. 2, p. 135.

28 For the first time, the play was shown on the Garnier Palace stage, from November 23 to December 12, 2015. It already started to be put on the stage again on March 17, 2019. The musical director of the performance was the famous Finnish conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen.

episodes without music, as well as by adding parallel plot series in the form of film quotations. This also happens in the Parisian diptych theatre performance.

The play begins with a prologue without music. It features three main performers of both operas. The Duke (Canadian bass John Rele) acts as a circus magician, whose assistant is the character of *La voix humaine*, the famous soprano Barbara Hannigan. They demonstrate typical circus acts where the assistant rises into the air, and then the magician takes a rabbit out of the top hat. This takes place in the proscenium, and the background is a large, dimly-coloured video projection of an empty theatre hall where only one spectator sits in the front row and watches the circus performance. This is Judith, the future character of B. Bartok's opera, whose role would be played by the Russian mezzo-soprano singer Ekaterina Gubanova.

We see a modern sofa to the left of the spectators, on the right side by the wings there is a small lacquered bedside table where we see bottles and glasses as well as a telephone. This subject, as it were, should prepare us for the diptych's second part. However, it is interesting that the female character of *La voix humaine* will not actually use the phone. The main mise-en-scenes are built on a mirrored floor in this part, whose reflection we will simultaneously see on the big screen from behind, and will also take place on the sofa itself. The scene part to the audience's right is associated with the appearance of

illuminated showcases with different inner contents in B. Bartok's opera. They are taken out and displayed every time when it comes to the seven mysterious doors in the Duke's gloomy palace. At Judith's demand, he will open the doors one by one. We will see what is in the showcases themselves. In parallel, a black and white image of a boy's face with traces of blood on it will appear on the screen. When the doors open, and according to the text, there will be a lake of tears behind them, this boy will actually sit in the middle of the showcase, holding a rabbit on his knees, the same as one as the magician took out of the top hat in the prologue. A hint at childhood phobias and conflicts is important for understanding the closed doors symbolism. The Duke's secrets are the result of his childhood traumas, and he seeks to hide them from Judith. A parallel film plot that accompanies this performance part is associated with the famous film *Beauty and the Beast* by Jean Cocteau. Created in the early 1930s, the film was renovated in 2011 and thus attracted renewed attention. The shots from the film with the Beast's face, played by Jean Marais in the film, appear from time to time during B. Bartok's opera. They were already voiced by the main character's monologue, connecting the two parts of the performance.

How did the director connect two such different works in his concept such as the opera by B. Bartok and mono-opera by F. Poulenc? According to his approach, it can be concluded that the insane passion of Poulenc's female character

has a downside. It is destructive not only for herself, but also for her partner. Therefore, Barbara Hannigan is on the verge of despair and self-destruction in the play. It can be understood that the phone conversation exists only in her imagination. Her behaviour is almost uncontrollable. Her close-up face in the video version is distorted by smeared makeup, she can hardly move and cannot stand on her feet, falls to the floor and then rises, her words are accompanied by impulsive spasmodic movements and gestures. At the end of the scene with the showcases at the mysterious Duke's castle, her lover will appear in a bloody shirt. He will try to establish contact with her to try to stop her from committing suicide. However, he fails, and the performance ends with a fatal shot. The style of F. Poulenc's work interpretation refers to the extremes of expressionist drama and cinema. The outstanding performer Barbara Hannigan works brilliantly in such a thrilling manner. Modern civilization is trying to subordinate a person to general stereotypes and patterns of behaviour, by all means to violate the privacy of their inner world. Respecting such integrity is the essence of love. The fierce passion of the female character in *La voix humaine* looks different. She kind of appropriates as it were, possesses her object, falling into a state similar to drug addiction, and cannot determine human relations without negative consequences. The absolute openness to which the female characters of Bartok and

Poulenc aspire in K. Warlikowski's version is possible only in the relationship between man and God. And this is because God, who knows all the hidden corners of the human soul, still gives man freedom of choice, trusts him to form his own self and build his personal inner world on his own.

Conclusion

Francis Poulenc's creativity is actively mastered by screen media, revealing explicit and hidden associations with "film language in its work"²⁹. The presence of his music on the movie screen today does not play a background role only. It does not just evoke a certain emotion "through the composer's head", but exists in shot precisely as Poulenc's music. It sets a salon mood (like the scenes of meetings in Italian salons). At the same time it realizes the concept of childishness in its hidden (*Rope*, *Call Me by Your Name*) and open manifestations (*Head in the Clouds*). Poulenc's music exists on the screen as embodied Beauty. For all its versatility, the French composer's art heritage today is of interest to cinema as an inexhaustible resource of beautiful music of sincere faith and direct expression, especially

necessary when the environment scares and makes us afraid. At the same time, the shooting of his operas' contemporary productions, on the contrary, reveals the shadow spectrum of connotations. The style of F. Poulenc's music interpretation refers to the extremes of expressionistic drama and film noir. The influence of "cinematics" on the composer's vocal, piano, chamber and operatic creativity is also quite noticeable, "montage" often acting as a semantic principle of composition. It is of note that F. Poulenc in his chamber vocal cycle *Calligram* shows his interest to the potential of synaesthetic relations of the music with graphic arts and cinema arts. Analysis of piano cycles and samples of certain genre gives the conclusion that "editability" in the French composer's creativity often acts as a forming tool and a sense-making principle of the composition.

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²⁹ For more information, please see: LACOMBE, H.: *Francis Poulenc*. Paris : Fayard, 2013; ROSSI, J.: *Francis Poulenc et le cinéma: fascination et méfiance*. In KAYAS, L., LACOMBE, H. (eds.): *Du langage au style, singularités de Francis Poulenc*. Paris : Societe Francaise de Musicologie, 2016, pp. 345-363.

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