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## Composition and Stylistic Features of Bagatelles for Piano Op. 1-5 by Valentyn Silvestrov

### ABSTRACT

During the last decades, V. Silvestrov's creative interests have mostly focused on the creation of bagatelle. The artist turned to this genre in the early 2000s, shortly after publishing the collection-cycle Bagatelles for piano op. 1-5, which has not yet been fully explored from a musicological point of view. We reveal certain features of the compositional construction of the Bagatelle cycle: the unification of all the pieces from the microcycles into a single whole with the help of the note *attacca*, the predominant use of strophic forms based on the development of one musical image. Certain stylistic constants of Bagatelles include the quasi-improvisational presentation of musical material, the predominant use of timbral expressiveness of the piano's upper register and quiet dynamic nuances, which collectively help to embody the fragile, lyrical and contemplative images of the pieces. The given characteristics make it possible to attribute the bagatelles to the lounge style. It was observed that bagatelles in V. Silvestrov's creativity can be considered as a stylistic metagenre, which implies the belonging of bagatelle (as a metagenre) to the composer's style.

### KEYWORDS

V. Silvestrov

Bagatelle

Stylistic metagenre

Composer's style

## Introduction

The creativity of modern Ukrainian composer Valentyn Silvestrov is known not only in Ukraine but also abroad. The artist's original style works attract the attention of performers and are heard at many international festivals. V. Silvestrov's compositional style underwent a certain evolution: at the beginning of his creative career, he preferred avant-garde writing techniques, and in the 1960s he was a member of the 'Kyiv Avant-Garde' group. However, the artist gradually moved away from the avant-garde and became interested in the postmodern trend in art. Subsequently, the creatively rethought foundations of postmodern aesthetics became the basis for the formation of his late style. I. Melnychenko points to such changes in the creative paradigm. The researcher notes that: "Silvestrov's work is a truly unique phenomenon of modern art. Being in the very center of the cultural era, being one of the key figures of postmodernism, and being, to a certain extent, a legislator of style <...>, on the way to knowledge through creativity, Silvestrov, formally fitting into the manner of expression inherent in modernity, involuntarily contrasts his creative path with the ways of development of modern art" (Melnychenko, 2017: 299).

Characterizing three periods of the composer's creativity, the scientist points out that the departure from avant-gardeism, which began in the 70s and 80s, was marked by the appearance of elegiac, emotional, and humaneness in his works. (Melnychenko, 2017: 299). Also, according to I. Melnychenko, in the second period of his creativity, the composer "began to form a religious worldview (with which, by the way, his music revealed the depth of philosophical thought, became a synthesis of thought and feeling, a synthesis of rational and emotional principles in a unifying method of cognition through creativity), it was this that led the composer's creativity to the concept of the presiding principle of silence when creating music, when listening to it and playing it." (Melnychenko, 2017: 299). It should be noted that such a concept of silence is clearly manifested in the bagatelle genre to which the artist turned in the early 2000s.

The philosophical orientation of the composer's style is also noted by N. Riabukha. Exploring the specifics of the embodiment of the piano sound image in the composer's chamber-instrumental works, the musicologist notes that "The piano sound image in V. Silvestrov's works, starting from the mid-60s and ending with the last third of the

twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, reflects two diverse ontological forms of human existence – ‘human being playing’ (‘homo ludens’) and ‘human being contemplating’ (‘homo meditans’). At the same time, the composer’s attitude to the sound and its expressive properties works to reveal ‘eternal’ themes (‘human existence in the macrocosm’, ‘the relationship between human and nature’, ‘human and the handmade world of art’), which reveal to us, the listeners and interpreters, the meaning-image of contemporary music” (Riabukha, 2012: 132).

Quite comprehensive information about the composer’s artistic and aesthetic views is provided by the book *Symposion (ΣΥΜΠΟΣΙΟΝ). Meetings with Valentyn Silvestrov* (Silvestrov, 2013), which is a collection of opinions about the art and creative activity of the artist, expressed by well-known contemporary figures of culture and art, and *Wait for Music*, which includes transcripts of V. Silvestrov’s public performances in Kyiv in 2007, during which the artist reflects on the essence of modern music and reveals the specifics of the composer’s work on opuses written in different years (Silvestrov, 2010). This book also contains the composer’s remarks about the Bagatelle cycle, op. 1-5, which is the subject of our study.

It should be noted that at the moment, studies devoted to the examination of various aspects of V. Silvestrov’s compositional style are mostly presented in the works of Ukrainian musicologists, while foreign researchers are mainly interested in the second period of creativity, a comprehensive study of which is presented in the works of Peter Schmelz (Schmelz, 2014; 2021). Also, there is a study devoted to V. Silvestrov’s creative activity in the 2014–2022 years, during which the composer’s works reflected the events of the Revolution of Dignity and the War in Ukraine (Gillies, 2023). However, the mentioned works of Western musicologists, although they contain valuable observations necessary for a deeper understanding of V. Silvestrov’s compositional style, still leave out of the attention the principles of the bagatelle’s genre embodiment in the artist’s oeuvre.

It is noteworthy that V. Silvestrov’s composition work is very diverse and includes symphonic, chamber-instrumental, choral, chamber-vocal works, opuses for solo piano, as well as music for films. However, now the main attention of the artist is focused mainly on piano opuses, among which works written in the bagatelle genre occupy a significant place.

At the moment, there are several sources containing information about the specifics of the bagatelle genre in the composer's creativity. An important scientific source in the context of the topic is Motsarenko's dissertation (Motsarenko, 2021). It should be emphasised that at the moment this study and the article by this scientist (Motsarenko, 2019) are the only ones that comprehensively examine the genre of bagatelle in V. Silvestrov's creativity. In her dissertation, K. Motsarenko notes that bagatelles "acquires a special significance for V. Silvestrov, bringing to life the phenomenon of bagatelle style as a unique author's concept of the Ukrainian composer's musical work and acquiring a universal meaning in the scope of his creative thinking in general" (Motsarenko, 2021: 210). Also, K. Motsarenko sees signs of a metagenre in V. Silvestrov's piano bagatelles and reveals certain stylistic constants, among which is the placement of an idea in a small form, which is a component of the macrocycle of an open fractal structure ("a bagatelle as a kind of 'module' mounted with other similar ones, 'invites' with harmonious incompleteness, establishes a connection, Meeting in a high sense"); bagatelle, as a synonym of real ("a pure idea of a genre that can manifest itself in other genres"); the saving function of the bagatelle ("the bagatelle is a kind of 'talisman' of musical culture, its precious 'gene pool'; a nucleus-cell from which, even with the total destruction of all living things, valuable, original things can sprout"). (Motsarenko, 2021: 140). In this study, the scientist addresses the consideration of the cycle Bagatelles op. 1–5 but limits herself to a detailed performance analysis and issues of its interpretation without paying attention to the compositional and stylistic features of the cycle.

Another important source for understanding the specifics of V. Silvestrov's bagatelle is the composer's comments on his own opuses, given into brochures to CD-albums with author's recordings of bagatelles. It is worth noting that the composer's notes are quite metaphorical, and some of them, which, in our opinion, most aptly describe the specifics of the bagatelle genre, will be presented at the beginning of the next section of this article. Also, some of the composer's reflections that reveal the inner essence of the genre under consideration can be found in the book *Waiting for Music*. For example, V. Silvestrov notes: "I realized that bagatelles are musical moments. They are similar to poems that appeared as if by chance" (Silvestrov, 2010: 263). It is remarkable that K. Motsarenko also emphasises "metaphoricality as an integral part of the genre idea of the bagatelle, which is fully revealed only in the context of the composer's entire musical and

philosophical universe” in her article (Motsarenko, 2019: 149). Such an approach to the understanding of this genre, in our opinion, determines the entire compositional specificity of these piano miniatures, which is connected with the conditional *quasi-improvisational* nature of the development of the material and certain simplicity and immediacy of the musical expression, which is embodied both in the textural and the melodic-thematic levels.

Therefore, the review of the scientific discourse related to the study of the composer’s style provides the necessary methodological basis, which helps to understand the essence of the composer's interpretation of the bagatelle genre and the features of his bagatelle style.

### **Analytical review of the cycle bagatelles for piano op. 1-5**

Collection Bagatelles for piano op. 1-5 (2005-2006), to which “Silvestrov selected and compiled five cycles from among his numerous ‘Bagatelles’ and assigned to them the opus number 1-5” (see preface to the score (Silvestrov, 2009)), can be considered the first example of a bagatelle cycle that gradually expanded, becoming part of the larger Bagatelles – I cycle, which in turn is part of a single macrocycle. Evidence of the author's desire to create a certain compositional unity of bagatelles cycles can be served by several albums dedicated to bagatelles. The first CD-album *Valentin Silvestrov Bagatelles Performed by the author* (released in 2015) contains a recording of 22 cycles (Silvestrov, 2015). On the next album, which was released in 2017, V. Silvestrov represented the cycles Bagatelles – XXIV, Bagatelles – XXV, Bagatelles – XXVI, which “most accurately reproduce the integrity and metaphoricity of these super-cycles.” (Silvestrov, 2017: 7). It is interesting that the composer calls them “‘symphonies for piano’ (in the literal sense of the word ‘symphony’ – consonance). He also metaphorically says about these works as are “‘symphony of moments’, ‘melodies of silence’ made up of not only sounds, but also pauses –which are music as well. Perhaps, in this works on of the functions of music shall manifest itself – to be a consolation...” (Silvestrov, 2017: 7). As for the cycle Bagatelles – XXIII, at the moment it is available only as a digital album on the ‘bandcamp.com website’, where its release date is April 6, 2022. (Silvestrov, 2022).

Thus, to date, the composer has 26 cycles of bagatelles, which are combined into a large macrocycle, and called by V. Silvestrov as the ‘Cycle of Cycles’. However, despite the

presence of such a large number of opuses of bagatelles created by the composer, a rather extraordinary situation arises regarding the absence of scores for these works, since at the moment only the first published Bagatelles op. 1–5 is available for purchase. Other opuses have not yet been officially published by the author and are not made available to the general public.

The collection Bagatelles for piano op. 1–5, or as we think it is more appropriate to call it – the first sample or a kind of predecessor-prototype of the future Bagatelle – I cycle, contains pieces of the bagatelle plan, which, however, are quite different in terms of their genre definitions, indicated in their titles. Such genre synthesis and penetration of genre features of bagatelle into other genres, such as Waltz, Lullaby, Pastoral, Postludium, which allows to consider bagatelle in the work of V. Silvestrov as a metagenre. This feature of the composer's understanding of bagatelle style is indicated in the work of K. Motsarenko. She interprets the concept of metagenres in a broad context since, in her opinion, “‘genetic traits’ that bring a ‘trifle’-bagatelle into the sphere of metagenre mostly lie in the zone of non-musical, interdisciplinary, general cultural context” (Motsarenko, 2021: 141).

Bagatelles for piano op. 1-5 opens with ‘3 Bagatelles’ op. 1 (2005), which creates a kind of microcycle of three miniatures that, according to the composer’s intention, should be performed continuously, one after the other, as indicated by the *attacca* remark at the end of the first and second miniatures.

Bagatelle I has a light, lyrical-contemplative, even in a certain sense carefree character, like a spring morning, when the radiant glow of the sun envelops everything around. Such a fragile musical image is formed primarily thanks to interesting harmonic findings. In this miniature, the composer uses an extended tonality, which provides an opportunity to emphasize and diversify the major scale that is felt quite well in this piece<sup>1</sup>.

According to its compositional structure, Bagatelle I is a rounded binary form with a coda, based on the material of the first section of the miniature. The first section is written in a parallel period. Its feature is that in the interval plan, each of the two sentences is marked by following a single rhythmic-intonational pattern, which changes somewhat at the end

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<sup>1</sup> In this case, the emphasis is on the scale of C major.

of the second sentence. This way of working out the musical material corresponds to the specifics of the folk song tradition, which is also usually based on the variable development of the melodic line with multiple repetitions of the same musical structure. This (variable) way of working with thematic material, combined with small changes in harmony at the end of each sentence, gives the composer the opportunity to find various facets of the theme sounding and thereby enrich the figurative and substantive side of the miniature.

The beginning of the second section does not bring a significant contrast to the overall development, but it is somewhat different in terms of intonation. If in the theme of the first section the alternation of ascending and descending intonations prevailed in the melodic line, then descending intonations prevail here. In Bagatelle I, V. Silvestrov exclusively uses the dynamic nuance *p* in its various gradations, and the most vivid nuance found in the sheet music is *mp*. It should be noted that the use of quiet dynamic nuances in combination with the ability to perform a piece on the *una corda*<sup>2</sup> can be considered not only as one of the features of V. Silvestrov's bagatelle style. In our opinion, such intimacy of musical expression can be a hint that the composer in these works seeks to express certain rather secret thoughts and impressions, to emphasize the presence of a certain subjective, personal aspect in their dramaturgy.

The next Bagatelle II is in contrast to the previous miniature, as it is close to a lyrical-heroic folk song in terms of its figurative and melodic-intonation structure. Such an impression is facilitated by the sing-song nature of the thematic material and the use of certain melodic and harmonic turns inherent in the style of Ukrainian song. Also quite eloquently in this sense is the fact that for this miniature the composer chooses a verse-chorus form, which is quite common in folk music. For a better understanding of Bagatelle's form, let's give its diagram: a+a<sub>1</sub>+b+b<sub>1</sub>+a +c +a<sub>1</sub> coda.

The first section is a period of two sentences, the second of which contains certain slight changes of the melodic line. The use of such a variable development of the melody can also serve as indirect evidence of the composer's intention to rely on the specifics of the folk song tradition. In the interval ratio, both sentences of this first theme of the piece are

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<sup>2</sup> The remark *una corda* is placed by V. Silvestrov in parentheses at the beginning of all the pieces of this cycle.

marked by the predominance of ascending quarto-fifth intonations, which give the thematism a sublime-declamatory, decisive, even heroic character. A rather interesting compositional and dramaturgical solution in this microcycle is the presence of a certain intonation affinity between the themes of Bagatelle I and Bagatelle II. This similarity is manifested in the construction of phrases that begin with upward movement and end with a downward movement.

As for the themes in 'b<sub>1</sub>' and 'c', they do not constitute a significant contrast to the thematic material of the first section and can be perceived as its logical extension. In the theme 'b<sub>1</sub>', the lyrical-song basis is more revealing. Its feature is the use of hidden polyphony in the part of the right hand: the upper voice is marked by a downward movement at second intervals, and the second voice complements these lamenting intonations with a double repetition of the sounds e, b, c. At the same time, the left-hand part always performs only a harmonic function and does not contain any polyphonic development techniques.

**Figure 1.** Bagatelle II op. 1. A hidden polyphony in the right-hand part (Silvestrov, 2009: 7).

The theme 'c' (mm. 39-44) is in a certain sense the opposite of the theme 'b<sub>1</sub>' in its intonation structure: second intonations are used there in an upward movement and create the effect of a gradual, decisive rise. At the end of this theme, certain openness and incompleteness of the musical thought is felt, and its last, questioning intonation seems to hang on in the air with the help of *tre corde* pedal, on which, according to the composer's intention, it should gradually fade out during the pauses in the right-hand



part. After that, the composer returns to the theme 'a', which from a compositional and dramaturgical point of view can be perceived as an answer to the question posed earlier. The coda of the piece is based on the intonations of the theme 'c', from which only two motives remain in the process of development, which should gradually disappear in the pedal overtone haze.

Regarding the tonal solution of this miniature, it is worth noting that here, as in the previous Bagatelle, V. Silvestrov uses the expressive possibilities of extended tonality (or, as V. Silvestrov himself points out, "tonal atonality" (Silvestrov, 2010: 278). Without setting out any key signs at the beginning of the work, the artist, however, preserves the feeling of a certain tonal basis, marking signs of alteration directly in the musical text itself. Thus, in Bagatelle there is a perceptible reliance on the tonality scale of E minor in the theme of the first section (a+a<sub>1</sub>) and its appearance during the piece, deviations from A minor in theme 'b+b<sub>1</sub>' and C-sharp minor in theme 'c', as well as E major in the coda.

The last piece of the microcycle op. 1—Bagatelle III, has a lyrical, light dance character and resembles a sophisticated waltz, which is facilitated by the advantage of the triple meters (3/8) over the other meters used in this miniature. One of the features of Bagatelle III is the use of various agogic deviations, small delays and accelerations of tempo, which appear throughout the development of this miniature. It should be noted that such an agogically saturated, *quasi*-improvisational way of presenting the thematic material is characteristic not only of Bagatelle III but also of all previous and subsequent miniatures from op. 1–5 and helps to create the impression of changeability and immediacy of musical images, each of which as if whip out from life under the influence of a momentary creative inspiration<sup>3</sup>. Bagatelle III is also quite interesting in terms of its compositional structure, since here the artist again uses the verse-chorus structure, which transferred to a purely instrumental environment. Schematically, it can be represented as follows: a+a<sub>1</sub>+b+a<sub>2</sub>+a<sub>1</sub>+b+a.

Since the specifics of this form deserve some comment, let's turn to a more detailed consideration of each of its sections. The theme of the first section (a+a<sub>1</sub>) is graceful, lyrical and dancely. It is written in a parallel period form. Here the composer uses the principle of variable development of musical material. In this sense, it is very interesting

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<sup>3</sup> This corresponds to the composer's idea of the bagatelle as a cult of the moment.

to compare the first and second sentences, in the first measures of which the composer uses both minor and major sounds (see m. 3 – G minor, m. 11 – G major). This is easily embodied in the extended tonality in which this work is written. It should also be noted that the thematic material of the second sentence, which in a certain sense is similar to the first one in its intonational structure, is presented in major. Thus, due to the modal change of these two sentences within the same period, there is a certain modification in the figurative-emotional coloring of this theme.

The theme of the next section of Bagatelle III ('c' according to the scheme), like a<sub>1</sub>, sounds in the key of G major. There is also a certain tempo change in this section of the form because the author's note provides for a more mobile tempo (*Allegretto* instead of the initial *Moderato*). Fast, bright and light, this new theme is an organic continuation of the previous development. From the intonation point of view, this section is marked by the predominance of the sequential downward movement of the melodic line, which is broken only at the end of this theme by the introduction of an ascending three-tone motive (mm. 32-35). Also, in the second part of the theme, there is a gradual return to the minor sound, which is obviously due to the further appearance of the theme of the first section in the minor version. Despite the fact that in some sense there is a return to the initial theme of the bagatelle's first section, the composer avoids literal repetition and again makes slight corrections to the first sentence ('a<sub>2</sub>' according to the scheme). The thematic material in 'a<sub>2</sub>' is represented with small harmonic transformations that occur due to the introduction of the e-flat sound into the melodic line, which changes the harmony of the major major seventh chord used in the first sentence of the first section to the sound of the minor major seventh chord. (Compare mm. 3-4 and 39-40 in Bagatelle III (see Silvestrov, 2009:10, 12)).

So, the first microcycle from the cycle Bagatelles op.1-5 is completely complete from a compositional and dramaturgical point of view and is organized quite monolithically, since all miniatures according to the author's intention should be performed *attacca*. The common unifying factor here is the use of extended tonality, mixed meter, and small agogic deviations (*rit.*, *accel.*), which collectively create the impression of *quasi-improvisational* development of the musical material. Also, all these miniatures are characterized by the use of quiet dynamics, a tendency towards a certain simplicity, transparency of textured presentation, which collectively creates the effect of

chamberness, intimacy of musical expression and allows to observe in these pieces the features of the lounge style.

It should be noted that the lounge style is characterised by chamberness, improvisation and jazz influence, which in this case is realised through the use of the expressive possibilities of extended tonality, in particular a somewhat unexpected juxtaposition of the sounds of major and minor, and harmonic saturation. Besides, in this context, it is worth pointing out the variable development of the thematic material, which in our opinion is harmoniously complemented by the already mentioned *quasi*-improvisation and creates the effect of a spontaneous musical performance, as if it were born under the influence of immediate inspiration. It should be emphasised that similar composer's decisions regarding the textural, dynamic, tonality, metre and rhythmic organisation of the musical material can be observed in the following four microcycles (op. 2, op. 3, op. 4 and Postludium op. 5), which also allows us to consider them through the prism of the lounge style.

The next microcycle, '4 Pieces' op. 2 (2006), is somewhat different from the previous one. Most of the works from op. 2 do not have a genre definition of 'bagatelle', however, if we rely on the idea of K. Motsarenko about the metagenre interpretation of bagatelle in V. Silvestrov's creativity and the opinion of the researcher that "into its life-giving 'orbit' can enter even less universal genres that are close in terms of the structural principle of creating an image of the world and/or the philosophical and aesthetic basis" (Motsarenko, 2021: 141), this way of interpretation and genre content of this cycle Bagatelles op.1-5 turns out to be quite natural.

However, let's return to the analytical consideration of the compositional and stylistic features of the miniatures from the microcycle '4 Pieces' op. 2. For the compositional embodiment of the first miniature – Lullaby – the composer chooses a verse-chorus form, which is determined by its song genre basis, indicated in the title. The Lullaby opens with a short introduction based on descending third's intonation in the right-hand part, which, when repeated, creates a swaying, lulling effect and introduces to the musical image of the piece. The theme of the first section of the form (a+a<sub>1</sub>) is lyrical and fragile in nature. Here, as in the previous pieces from op. 1, V. Silvestrov develops the theme of the melodic line (right-hand part), using mainly the sounds of the upper registers of the piano (one-

line – three-line octaves), which are light in their timbral nature. This composer’s intention helps to create rather unique sound images endowed with lightness, weightlessness, a certain detachment, fantastic, and at the same time sublime.

In terms of rhythm and intonation, the theme of the first section of Lullaby is marked by a certain repetition. For example, quite often the artist uses a rhythmic pattern of four sixteenths – dotted eighth – sixteenth in 4/8 meter.

**Figure 2.** The beginning of Lullaby op. 2 (Silvestrov, 2009: 15).

This rhythmic pattern permeates all sections of the form, relating them to each other and creating the impression of monolithicity, the unity of musical development. It is worth noting that in Lullaby V. Silvestrov again uses a variable development of musical material, as well as small agogic deviations and mixed meter, which in the aggregate is characteristic of the specifics of the compositional organization of folk songs and in this case helps to emphasize the genre basis of the work. However, the work with thematic material in this miniature is somewhat different from what we have seen before. In Lullaby, the composer is not limited to making certain slight corrections to the melodic line but also more actively uses various modes and harmonic modifications, in particular certain unexpected transitions from minor to major sound. These juxtapositions are especially evident in the introduction and coda, where immediately after the minor sounding of similar motives, their major version is given.

The second miniature from the op. 2 – Pastorale, which should immediately follow the Lullaby (remark *attacca*), turns out to be quite contrasting in its figurative structure to all previously considered miniatures. Its introduction immediately attracts attention with its solemn, exalted-majestic character. In it, the composer abandons the quiet sound and chooses a wider dynamic palette from *f* at the beginning of the introduction to *p* at its end. From a melodic and intonational point of view, the introduction of Pastorale is based on the sequential development of the descending motive in the right-hand part, which, in combination with the sustained organ point on the A-flat note in the contra-octave, actually gives the theme a solemn prelude character. Such a feature of thematic material, completed in the subsequent use in the main section of the work of a whimsical melodic line enriched with melismatics, allows us to make an assumption that V. Silvestrov relied on the stylistics of the clavier-organ samples of this genre.

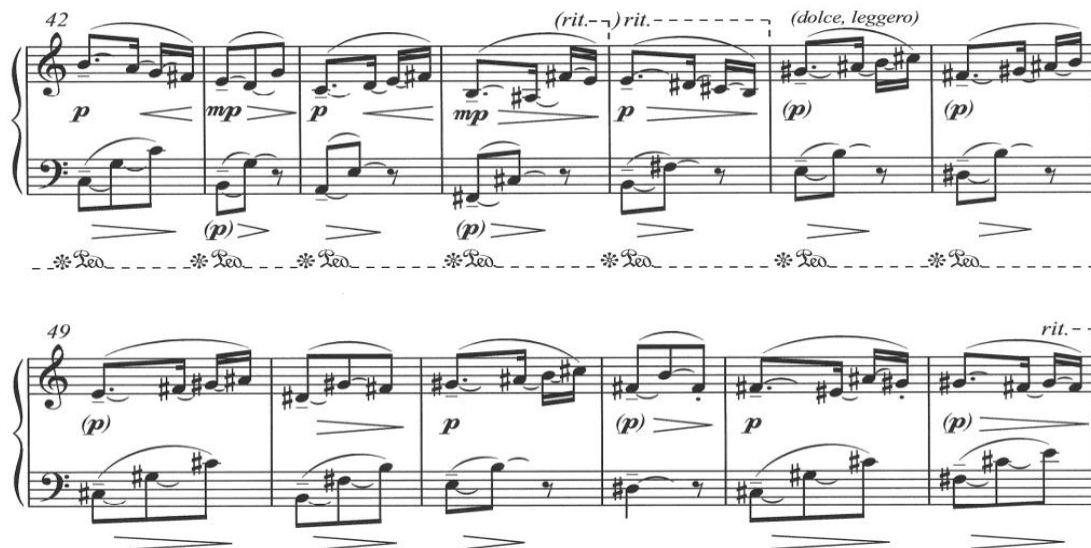
In this piece, V. Silvestrov also uses the harmonic expressive possibilities of extended tonality without indicating the key signs at the beginning of the piece, but at the same time preserves a vivid sense of a certain tonal basis. In the first sentence of the first section<sup>4</sup>, one feels the reliance on G minor, and in the second on G major. The theme of the second section does not introduce a significant contrast to the overall development of the piece and, by nature, is close to the theme of the first section. In our opinion, the use of a similar scale-like ascending movement in the melodic line in the right-hand part at the beginning of these themes is quite revealing in this sense. However, the composer avoids the literal identity and slightly changes their rhythmic patterns. The first theme uses a smooth sixteenth-note movement, while the second theme uses a dotted eighth and three sixteenth notes (mm. 11 and 47).

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<sup>4</sup> This miniature is written in the rounded binary form.



**Figure 3.** Pastorale op.2. The beginning of the first theme (see from m. 11) (Silvestrov, 2009: 18).



**Figure 4.** Pastorale op.2. The beginning of the second theme (see from m. 47) (Silvestrov, 2009: 19).

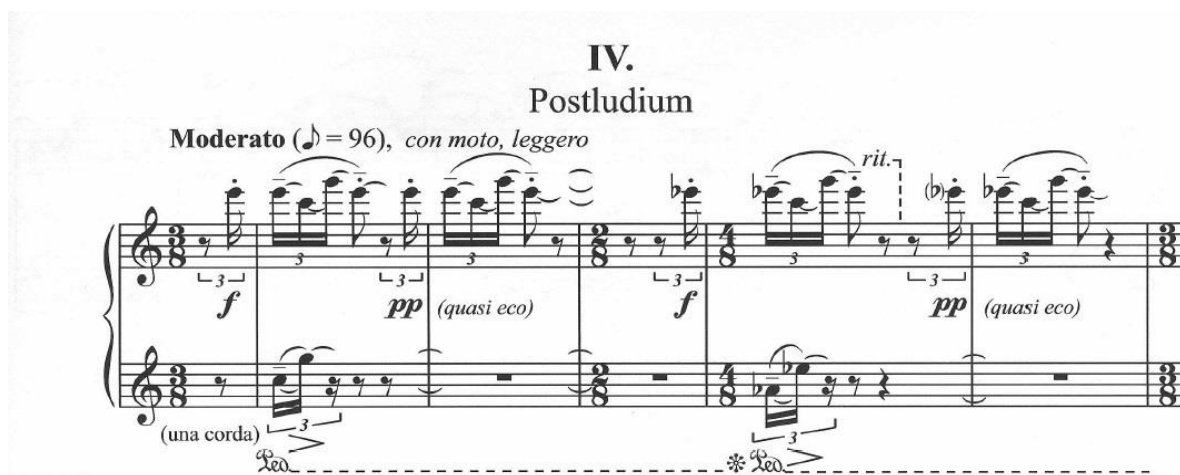
The coda is built on the theme of the introduction, from which only individual intonations gradually remain at the end of the work, as if echoes of the previous development.

In the next piece from op. 2 – Bagatelle, lyrical light and pastoral imagery also prevail. This miniature begins with a small introduction (1–5 mm.), whose texture is based on the arpeggiated chords of F major, D minor, B-flat major, and G major in an ascending melodic movement in the upper light register of the piano. Such a peculiar game with the alternation of major-minor modes gives the character of the introductory theme brightness, which thus shines like a gemstone and sparkles in the sun with different

colors. When moving from the introduction to the presentation of the main theme of Bagatelle, the composer changes the meter signature from 4/4 to 2/4. Quite interesting is the fact that, unlike all the previous pieces, in this Bagatelle the composer uses a change of meter quite rarely, only twice during the entire work, going to the meter 1/8. Perhaps such a stricter style of writing is dictated by the nature of thematic material, in which one feels the manner of writing of French harpsichordists. This is evidenced by the capricious melodic line, the use of melismatics, the transparency of the texture and the gracefully pastoral, carefree character of the musical theme.

To create such a light character of the sound, V. Silvestrov completely abandons the bass register, placing the part of the right and left hands in the upper registers of the piano, namely from one-to three-line octaves. With this technique, the artist also, in a certain way, brings the timbral sound of the piano closer to the specificity of the light, bright timbre of the harpsichord. At the same time, from the point of view of the harmonic language, expressive means characteristic of both the romantic tradition prevails in Bagatelle, in particular, the presence of a significant number of deviations in various keys, and the use of extended tonality, which is already traditional for V. Silvestrov's bagatelle style. Also, in this piece, the composer uses a structure of two repeated periods, which can be denoted by the 'Introduction AA Coda' scheme, and thus interpreted as a strophic form. All the specified compositional and stylistic features of this miniature make it possible to see signs of stylization in it. In this case, there is a synthesis of stylistic features of different eras (the era of French harpsichordists, the romantic era and modernity).

Completes the microcycle '4 pieces' op.2 miniature, called Postludium, which has a sublimely light, lyrical character. Like the previous miniature from this microcycle, Postludium opens with a short introduction and ends with a coda, the thematic material of which is identical to the introduction. This creates the effect of a certain frame within which the main musical material of the piece develops. An interesting compositional find in the theme of the introduction (and, accordingly, the theme of the coda) is the use of an echo reception, which is formed by repeating the same motive in the dynamic nuances of *f* and *pp*. The need for performers to create such a sound effect is indicated in particular by the author's note in mm. 2 and 5.



**Figure 5.** Postludium op. 2. Introduction. (Silvestrov, 2009: 25).

In addition to both miniatures having an intro and coda, there are a few other significant similarities between the two that are worth noting. One such key point that brings these pieces together is the almost complete lack of meters' change. Like the Bagatelle, the main section of Postludium is almost entirely sustained in a single metro-rhythmic pulsation (in this case in 3/8). Exceptions in this sense are the themes of introduction and coda, as well as the small fragment at the end of the first section of the Postludium, based on the intonations of the mentioned themes. The form of these two miniatures also turns out to be similar, since V. Silvestrov again chooses a strophic form (Introduction AA Coda).

The main theme of Postludium, which develops during the first section (period), has a rapid, light character, and its metro-rhythmic organization suggests a waltziness, which is facilitated by the triple meter (3/8) and a certain swaying created in the left-hand part by the use of ascending arpeggiated chords with repetition of the rhythmic formula two sixteenths – eighth – quaver rest. Also, this effect of swaying, a certain internal movement, is completed by the specificity of the motive-intonation structure, namely, the gradual alternation of the upward and downward movement of the melody. Thus, this miniature can be considered as one of the vivid examples of metagenre since it contains a synthesis of several genre features (waltz, postludium, bagatelle).

The next microcycle is placed by the composer in Bagatelles op. 1-5 – '3 Waltzes with Postludium' op. 3 (2005–2006). An interesting difference of this microcycle is the presence of a dedication at the beginning of the work<sup>5</sup>. As in the previous microcycles, the

<sup>5</sup> V. Silvestrov dedicated this microcycle to his friend and composer *André Volkonsky*.



composer connects the miniatures in a single continuous line of development, using the *attacca* remark after each piece. Another feature of this microcycle, which relates it to the previously discussed opuses 1 and 2, is the metro-rhythmic freedom (*quasi-improvisation*), noted by the composer himself in the sheet music, which is manifested in the use of mixed meter and microagogic. Certain parallels with other cycles can also be found in the predominance of quiet dynamics, the transparency of the texture, and the predominant use of the upper registers of the piano. In addition, in '3 Waltzes with Postludium', V. Silvestrov continues to use extended tonality, obviously, trying to find a wide range of harmonic colors to embody his musical images.

Waltz I has a light lyrical character. This work is written in the strophic modified form and consists of two periods and a coda (scheme AA<sub>1</sub> Coda). Noted that a similar principle of form organization is used by the composer in the following waltzes, which gives this microcycle compositional and dramaturgical unity. The theme of the Waltz I op. 3 draws attention to its emphatically vocal nature. The artist chooses a very smooth development of the melodic line, avoiding frequent jumps and preferring seconds and thirds in the interval ratio. In the second section (mm. 25-51), the composer uses a variable development, making slight corrections to the repetition of the main theme, which concern only the melodic line and do not change the general harmonic framework. A small coda, based on the initial intonations of the Waltz I, ends with the sounds of the F-sharp major chord. However, in terms of intonation, this chord is not perceived as stable, and its last c-sharp sound, repeated several times, creates the effect of incompleteness and dramaturgical openness, as if putting a question mark and making you expect what will happen next.

According to the composer's intention, the following miniature with op. 3 – Waltz II should be performed immediately after Waltz I and thus can be perceived as some continuation of the development of the previous light-lyrical musical image, now in a calm and contemplative perspective. This piece is also based on the formation of one musical image, and its compositional structure can be described as modified strophic (scheme A A<sub>1</sub> Coda). In the theme of Waltz II, the composer uses a rather interesting melodic and intonation solution. Building a melodic line that has an emphatically instrumental character, the composer constantly alternates motives that sound in

different octaves<sup>6</sup> and acquire different timbre shades. Such a timbre-register find creates the impression of a dialogue, as if the lyrical heroes of the Waltz exchange lines while dancing.

**II.**

**Moderato** (♩ = 104), *con moto (poco rubato), dolce, leggero e trasparente*

\*) Mit der linken Hand etwas leiser spielen als mit der rechten. / Play slightly more softly with the left hand than with the right hand.

**Figure 6.** Waltz II op. 3. The theme with an imaginary dialogue in the melodic line. (Silvestrov, 2009: 30).

Coda Waltz II is also based on the initial intonations, and, as in the previous piece, it ends on an unstable interrogative second intonation, d natural – e-flat, which seems to hang in the air, gradually melting in the overtone haze, which is formed thanks to the pedal sustained until the end of the piece.

In the Waltz III, which is also preceded by the note *attacca*, V. Silvestrov again returns to the moving tempo. In its compositional structure, this Waltz is similar to the two previous ones, as it is entirely devoted to the development of one musical image, presented in the first section of the form. However, here the composer somewhat expands the general form by using small connections-transitions between sections, the thematic material of which slightly changes with each new appearance. Completes the entire composition of the coda, which combines the thematic material of the beginning of the Waltz III and the connection-transition. The main theme of the Waltz III is elegant, lyrical and light. The emphasized grace of the theme is provided by a capricious melodic line and accompaniment based on arpeggiated chords, the continuous alternation of which creates an effect of a certain swaying. Also in Waltz III, V. Silvestrov already traditionally for the bagatelle style uses an extended tonality, this time relying on the sound of A-flat major.

<sup>6</sup> For example, one-line – two-line octaves or one-line – small octaves.

The next compositional feature of this work, which also acts as a certain marker of V. Silvestrov's bagatelle style, is a flexible metro-rhythmic basis, quiet dynamics, as well as the combination of one piece with another with the help of *attacca*.

The considered microcycle ends with a piece identified by V. Silvestrov as Postludium IV, which differs in its compositional and dramaturgical specificity from previous miniatures from op. 3. Postludium is written in rounded binary form. The main theme of Postludium, written in the form of contrasting period (mm. 1-17), has a light lyrical, somewhat nostalgic character. From the intonation point of view, it is characterized by declamatoryness, which is manifested by the presence of an intonation rise within musical sentences followed by a fall, as well as a flexible metrorhythm, which actually allows to imitate the effect of live speech.

The next opus, placed by the composer in the Bagatelle cycle op. 1-5 – '3 Bagatelles' op. 4 (2006). An interesting feature of this microcycle is the ratio of pieces according to the principle of tempo contrast, thanks to which a fairly balanced compositional and dramaturgical structure of the whole is formed. In op. 4, it is also possible to note some stylistic constants that were already observed in other miniatures of the cycle op. 1-5. These include: the use of expressive possibilities of extended tonality, with the absence of key signs but with a noticeable reliance on a sound line of a certain tonality; mixed meter, small *accel.* and *rit.* within phrases, and predominance of quiet dynamics; the presence of small *cresc* and *dim*, sometimes even within a single measure (microdynamics); the predominant use of timbre colours of the upper registers of the piano. Such stylistic constants give the pieces chamberness, conditional improvisational character, which, as already mentioned, allows us to see in them a certain manifestation of the specificity of musical expression inherent in the lounge style. However, in terms of form and figurative structure, the pieces from this microcycle do not always fall under any one specific criterion, so it is worth dwelling on this issue in more detail.

Bagatelle I op. 4 is written in a strophic form and consists of two similar sections. The nature of its theme is lyrical and light, with an emphasized waltzness, which is formed both by the predominance of the triplet movement in the right-hand part and the use of an ascending movement on arpeggiated chords. Bagatelle II being an example of sophisticated, bright, somewhat excited lyrics, is in a certain sense similar to Bagatelle I

in its pronounced waltziness. However, in relation to the form and intonation component of the melodic line, it differs somewhat from the previous miniature. Bagatelle II is written in strophic form with a coda, and its theme, in contrast to the theme of Bagatelle I, has a rather capricious melodic line, saturated with jumps on wide intervals.

Bagatelle III is characterized by a different compositional and dramatic solution than the two previous miniatures from op. 4. Here V. Silvestrov chooses rounded binary form with a codetta. The theme of the first section of the form has a lyrical-narrative character, and its melodic line is approached by the composer to the specifics of live speech thanks to smooth rises and falls of intonations, micro-dynamics and agogic within phrases. The second section of Bagatelle III adds major modal colors to the minor sound of this piece, but from the thematic point of view, it does not contain a significant contrast and is perceived as a further development of the musical image presented in the first section. When the thematic material of the first section is repeated, it is not presented in the initial version but has small correlations in the melodic line, which makes it more expressive.

The last microcycle from the considered cycle Bagatelles op. 1-5 consists of only one miniature – Postludium op. 5 (2005). It is devoted to the exposition of one musical image, represented within the period that constitutes the first section of the form and then repeated again without changes (scheme: Introduction A A Coda). The melodic line of the theme of the first section is quite smooth and compact in range, which suggests its vocal-speech nature.

In terms of imagery, this miniature is full of sadness and nostalgia. Its thematic material is dominated by second intonations and shaded, gloomy of the minor mode colors, which are sometimes colored in the light shades of the sound of the major. Despite the fact that this miniature placed at the end of the cycle with the eloquent title Postludium can be interpreted as a certain afterword or final word from the author, from a dramaturgical point of view, it lacks a pronounced completeness. After returning in the coda to the alarming intonations of the introduction (nona sounding in great and contra octaves), the composer uses the intonation of the beginning of the theme, which does not receive any logical conclusion but seems to hang in the air and gradually melts in the overtone pedal haze.

Another compositional feature of Postludium, which distinguishes it from other

miniatures, is the almost complete absence of timbral colors in the bright upper register. Basically, the theme of Postludium is presented in a soft, richer timbre range of the one-line – small octaves, and the highest point here is the E note of the two-line octave. However, in general, this work fully fits into the specifics of V. Silvestrov's bagatelle style and is similar to the previously considered miniatures of the cycle Bagatelles op. 1-5, as it also has the already mentioned metrorhythmic freedom, *quasi-improvisation*, the presence of micro-dynamics and a quiet general dynamic palette.

## Conclusions

So, a detailed analytical examination of the cycle Bagatelles op. 1-5 by V. Silvestrov made it possible to reveal certain stylistic and compositional regularities concerning both the structure of the cycle as a whole and each of the miniatures that make it up. At the compositional and dramaturgical level, the composer unites each microcycle into a single whole with the help of the remark *attacca*. In terms of forms, V. Silvestrov prefers the strophic form devoted to the development of one musical image. At the same time, the composer manages to avoid a certain monotony by using variable development of the thematic material, which quite often manifests itself precisely in small corrections of the melodic line of the theme when it is repeated. Working with the musical material of each miniature, the composer chooses certain similar ways of its representation: the predominant use of quiet dynamics, which only sometimes reaches the *mf* sounding level, *quasi-improvisation*, which is manifested in the use of mixed meter, microdynamics and microagogics (small *ritenuto* and *accelerando* sometimes even within two measures), the predominant use of light timbral colors of the sound of the instrument (the upper registers of the piano), the predominance of calm, light-lyrical images. In addition, the artist actively uses the possibilities of extended tonality, which allows him to create unexpected changes and juxtapositions of major and minor sound, quite typical for jazz music, as well as to enrich the harmonic basis of the pieces, which would be somewhat limited within the traditional tonality system, with clearly defined mode and harmonic relations. Together, all the specified means of expression give the piano miniatures of the cycle a sense of chamberness and allow them to be attributed to the lounge style.

It is also worth mentioning separately the interesting combination of improvisation and quiet dynamic nuances in Bagatelles op. 1-5. Such a ratio gives the dramaturgy of

Bagatelles the immediacy of musical expression and creates the impression that the musical image, reflecting the fluidity of the moment, is in a constant elusive movement and the process of becoming and unfolding (relatively speaking in the process of finding oneself), gradually revealing the entire spectrum of intimate personal experiences (quiet dynamics, as if a conversation in a whisper) and emotions laid by the composer in each miniature.

The following observation regards the specifics of the bagatelle style in V. Silvestrov's creativity. Based on the fact that bagatelles play a leading role in the composer's work, and when trying to name modern composers who turn to the bagatelle genre, we are most likely to have an association with the work of V. Silvestrov and his style. We can attribute bagatelles not only to the category metagenre but also interpret them from the standpoint of stylistic metagenre. The concept of stylistic metagenre refers to the belonging of bagatelle metagenre to the style of V. Silvestrov, or the connection in our minds of bagatelle (as a metagenre) to the style of the artist. A somewhat similar situation arises with the work of another artist – F. Chopin. When we think of the mazurka in classical music, it is more than obvious that what comes to mind are F. Chopin's mazurkas, which also occupied a significant place in the composer's work and are firmly fixed in our consciousness in connection with the name of the Polish master. However, in the case of F. Chopin's creativity, we will not be talking about a stylistic metagenre (which is a characteristic feature of V. Silvestrov's style), but about a stylistic genre.

Continuing this idea, it is worth noting that despite the considerable number of works devoted to the study of Chopin's style (in particular, among rather recent studies it is worth mentioning such works as the fundamental monograph (Rink, 2018) and article (Venli, 2018)), this aspect of understanding the mazurka genre in Chopin's work is still out of the focus of researchers' attention.

However, in our opinion, this concept of 'stylistic genre' can be considered in a broader sense and applied not only to the works of a particular composer but can be interpreted more broadly. For example, the features of a stylistic genre can be observed in the works of many romantic composers. For F. Mendelssohn, such a stylistic genre can be Songs Without Words, for R. Schumann – the genre of piano miniatures, for G. Verdi – the genre of opera. Yet, it should be emphasised, that today musicologists quite often turn to the

consideration of various aspects of the concept of metagenre (in particular, pastoral (Lei, 2021) and world music (Nenić, 2006) are considered as metagenres) or even propose the model of “meta-genre form” (Popov et al., 2022), which helps to reveal the semantic content of modern and postmodern works. But at the same time, the concept of a stylistic genre, or a stylistic metagenre, has not yet received scientific comprehension and requires further research.

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