

# “MEDITATION” IN THE MUSICAL CREATIVITY OF THE EUROPEAN ACADEMIC TRADITION OF THE 19TH - 20TH CENTURIES

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**Abstract:** Meditativeness today is considered one of the characteristic features of spiritual searches and, at the same time, specifics of various types of creativity. This is the result of the actualization of its factors in the religious, psychological, philosophical and certainly artistic and other spheres of culture of the last century. The purpose of this research and the necessary prerequisite for the subsequent understanding of the peculiarities of the development of meditativeness as one of the principles of modern musical creativity is the initial generalization of data about those opuses in Western academic creativity and experimental planes of musical art of the 20th century, in the title of which the term “meditation” is present. The following conclusions emerge from this investigation: as a result of the generalization of data on “Meditation”, which was carried out on the basis of the titles of works with the presence of the term “meditation” in them in Western academic creativity and experimental planes of musical art of the 20th century, it can be asserted that, in this area, genre-forming processes and certain stages dominated by certain stylistic devices are enough clearly visible. These tools are endowed, on the one hand, with the typological unity of aesthetic-stylistic and semantic concepts; on the other hand, they represent the originality of the author's approaches and spread their influence on the next milestones in the development of meditativeness, close to its acquisition of worldview or stylistic significance.

**Keywords:** Meditation, Meditativeness, Reflection, Concept, Notion, Worldview, Model.

## 1 Introduction

Finding balance and harmony with oneself and the surrounding world is a question that has worried mankind for a long time. It intensified in the last century, at the same time actualizing the search for sources of achieving such a state in various planes - religious, psychological, philosophical and, of course, artistic. These searches led to the use of different terms, based on different genres and stylistic systems. Today, this kind of path is often described as “meditation” - self-immersion or concentration, which, however, largely reflects the influence (broadly speaking) of Eastern cultures in the period of the 1960s and 1970s. At the same time, the essential feature of modern meditations, say, in the art of music, is the limitation of external expansiveness in favor of spiritual concentration, intense psychological self-understanding or sacred penetration through certain experiences into the essence of the phenomena of the inner or outer world. In this context, “the purpose of music is to sober and calm the mind, thus making it receptive to divine influences” [6].

However, as it turned out, the term “Meditation” was interpreted as “reflection” in the European academic tradition for a long time, which was determined by the interpretation of the Latin term, and such an “interpretative direction” not only prevailed in the 19th century, but was also largely inherent in the next, 20th century. The names of the works in the Cyrillic reprints and directly the stylistics of such opus testify to this.

## 2 Materials and Method

In order to explain the situation and create a systematized basis for the next stages of studying meditativeness in musical art as a component of general cultural processes, it is expedient to identify such compositions in world creativity with the maximum possible degree of thoroughness and to outline some of the most significant “milestones” in the formation of the modern corpus of musical meditativeness in various manifestations of its fundamental concepts. At the same time, it should be pointed out that, according to the applicability of the concept in analytical and theoretical apparatuses when studying the art of various composers, the disclosure of the meaning of “meditativeness” remains within the general cultural, philosophical, psychological, and religious boundaries [24, p. 19]. For example, being one of the central concepts of A. Kameneva's dissertation research (meditativeness in the structure

of M. Shukh's artistic consciousness “as a way of understanding the world in intonation dimensions” [10, p. 81]), it does not acquire a clear definition, and the scientist herself admits that “meditative music in general is a very ambiguous concept” [10, p. 42] and “the concept of meditativeness is a multifaceted and ambiguous concept” [10, p. 77]. There are few works in which the sources of meditativeness are named in the course of studying religious, in particular, Christian works [8, p.13]. At the stage of creating a statistical base of research, primarily reference publications, from which data on such works are gathered (Strickland, 1991; Chilvers and Glaves-Smith, 2009; Gagné, 2019) are extremely important, as well as the author's explanations of own compositional ideas and concepts (Messiaen, 1973; Oliveros, 1974).

## 3 Results and Discussion

In modern scientific works within Ukrainian musicology, the concept of meditativeness is used quite often, and an initial attempt to systematize its appearance in the scientific literature of the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century has already been made. Such research was carried out by V. Antipova, applying it in the article “Influence of the Indonesian gamelan on the work of European and American composers of the 20th century” [3, p. 56]. The researcher points to the appearance of “the first publications about meditative compositions... in the American press as early as the 60s of the last century” and at the same time only casually notes that they “appeared in the press under the headings “trance music”, “pulsating music”, “procedural music”, “phase music”, “music with repeated structures”, “music according to the model”” [3, p. 56]. Such a valuable remark, however, shows a high degree of experimentation in the assimilation and adaptation of Eastern experience in traditional sphere of influence of Western academic culture.

Bypassing the consideration of essentially meditative fragments, presented by a significant array of episodes or parts mainly in cyclical compositions, the list of works with only this name already in the 19th century was quite significant in the instrumental and vocal-instrumental spheres. Among them, in particular, there were the following:

For organ: “Meditations” by Volkmar Busch (1812-1893; 1854), “Meditation” by William Faulkes (1863-1933; 1894), “Meditation” by Isaac Van Vleck Flagler (Isaac Van Vleck Flagler; 1844-1909; 1895), “Meditation” by Frederick William Batchelder (1838-1911; 1896), “Romance and Meditation” Op.37 by Louis Adolphe Coerne (1870-1922; 1896), “Meditation” for the organ by Nathan Hale Allen (Nathan Hale Allen; 1848-1925; 1896);

For piano: “Meditation of a Young Girl” (“Méditation d'une jeune fille”) Op.41 by Julius Eggard (1834-1867; 1859), “Meditation” by Charles Fradel (1832-1899; 1885); “Meditation” Op.31 Mel Bonis (1858-1937; 1898);

Instrumental ensemble: “Meditation” Op.59 by Marie-Auguste Durand (1830-1909; 1869); duet for solo instrument and piano “Meditation” by Giuseppe Arrigo (1838-1913; 1896);

For solo instruments and a certain orchestral composition: “Meditation” for two oboes, organ and string orchestra Op.68 by Charles Lefebvre (1843-1917; 1887), “Meditation” from “Thais”; arrangement for piano with orchestra by E.L. Jefe or Klieber) by Jules Massenet (1842-1912; 1894);

For symphony orchestra: “Meditation” by Jules Bordier (1846-1896; 1885).

In parentheses, there are composer's years of life (it contributes to the idea of chronological and stylistic preferences) and the date of writing the work (appeal to the genre in a certain period of life).

It is worth noting that, among such works, there are compositions whose titles contain information about the subject of "reflection", for example – "Meditation on the Adagio from the Lunar Sonata" ("Meditation über das Adagio aus der Mondschein-Sonate" Op.296 for violin and piano by Karl Böhm (1844-1920; 1883) or "Meditation on the theme of Bagatelle" ("Méditation d'après la thème Bagatelle") Op. 3 for violin and piano by Camille Saint-Saëns (Camille Saint-Saëns; 1835 – 1921; 1892).

Among the vocal and instrumental opuses, there are the song cycle "Religious Meditation (Mother of the Savior)" ("Méditation religieuse (Mater Salvatoris)") for voice and piano by Émile Pessard (1843-1917; 1875) and a cantata for the opening ceremony of the jubilee exhibition in Philadelphia on May 10, 1876 "The Centennial Meditation of Columbia" for choir and orchestra by Dudley Buck (1839-1909; 1876) to the text of the poet Sidney Lanier.

It is important to pay attention to certain nuances that will play a role in the development of the genre direction, or rather, the multi-vector field of meditations in the subsequent stages. An illustrative example is the following one. Unlike "The Centennial Meditation of Columbia" by D. Buck and "Religious Meditation (Mother of the Savior)" by E. Pessard, which largely depend on the standards of well-established genres (solemn cantata and song cycle) and in which meditateness is present only in the form one of the main elements of the name, the composition of Berlioz represents the opposite trend and at the time of its creation it was impressive with an innovative approach to the implementation of the concepts of the very notion of "meditation". At the same time, they give a clear idea that, due to the presence of the keyword in the title, genre parameters actually show non-subordination to any typological criteria.

However, paying attention to the peculiarities of vocal-instrumental samples, it is possible to suggest that namely the textual bases make it possible to detect, at least, certain modifications in the sphere of contemporary "reflections" and a gradual, albeit not too pronounced, approach to the modern understanding of meditateness in music art. In this connection, let us pay attention to the text of Louise Belloc based on Thomas Moore (1779-1852) to "Religious Meditation" ("Méditation religieuse"; possible translation – "Religious thoughts") op. 56 for six-part choir and small orchestra by Hector Berlioz (1831):

*All this world is but a fleeting shadow;  
nothing is real but heaven.  
The glitter of the wings of glory is false and fleeting;  
flowers of love, hope, beauty  
flowers on the grave;  
there is nothing brighter than the sky!*

It contains concepts typical of Western religious traditions, such as the transience of the "visible" world and its charms, its ghostliness (in the form of the shadow concept), man as a traveler limited by the "tumultuous day" of his earthly journey with all its "false" achievements, and, most importantly, the duality of the "heavenly" and earthly worlds-dimensions. But what lies behind the metaphor "the torch of genius, mind", which at first glance appeals to the images of the Enlightenment and rationalism, is actually not so unambiguous. One way or another, but the idea of "enlightenment" is hidden in it as directed to the intelligent understanding of intuitive comprehension or cognition on the basis of the extinction (nirvana) of fleeting emotions and possessions in the pursuit of liberation or spiritual enlightenment, which combines the highest goals of both Christian and, for example, Buddhist spiritual practice. In the historical context, this factor cannot be ignored, since the British culture at that time (the first third of the 19th century) had already assimilated the influences and practices of the non-Middle East. In this understanding, the juxtaposition of "earth" and mystical "real", "brighter than all" and "calm" "heavens", although obvious and indisputable for romantic poetry, is already penetrated by ideas somewhat different from Puritan-British postulates, opening the way to an unusual and

rich renewal of the usual world picture. Perhaps this hidden plan became the impetus that attracted the brilliant French composer.

Analyzing the circle of appeals to musical "meditations" in the first half of the 20th century, similar trends are revealed as in the previous period. For example, "meditations" for the organ written in the first decades of that century contain the principles of organ chorale preludes based on the variation principle. Among such works, there are Charles Wakefield Cadman's "Meditation" (1881-1946; 1904), "All Faithful" Christmas Meditation op.183 by William Faulkes (1863-1933; approx. 1909), "Meditation on 'Crimond Psalm 23'" and "Veni Creator" (1900s) by J. Stuart Archer and "Serious Meditation" ("Méditation sérieuse") op. 243 by Homer Newton Bartlett (1845-1920; 1912). The same trend belongs to "Meditation on the Old Bohemian Chorale of St. Wenceslas" op. 35 for string quartet by Josef Suk (1874-1935; 1914; author's transcription for piano and string orchestra), in which, from a stylistic overview, the principles of hymnism, chorale and romantic pathos are synthesized. Compositions similar in name, written in this period for other solo instruments and ensembles, on the other hand, gravitate towards a romantic style with varying degrees of complexity of the musical language. This is "Meditation" op.61 for piano by American artists Arthur Foote (1853-1937; 1907), duet for violin and piano "Meditation" op.15 No.2 by Arthur Bergh (1882-1962; 1913) and written during the period of study Four meditations for orchestra op.14 by the Polish composer Czesław Marek (1891-1985; 1911-1913).

However, several works go beyond such standards. One of the first attempts is the symphonic poem for solo cello and orchestra "Meditation" op.16 by Eugène Ysaë (1858-1931; 1910), which is dominated by introverted contemplation, that is nevertheless replaced in the central section by a dramatized statement that in culmination reaches a high level and is associated with Liszt-Wagner pathetic climaxes. A much more radical version of "meditation" is the eponymous piece for cello and piano by Mykola Roslavets (1881-1944; 1921), written by him in the Kharkiv period. In 1921-1923, he was the rector and teacher of the Kharkiv Music Institute, at the same time heading the department of artistic education of the People's Commissariat of the Ukrainian SSR. Avant-garde principles of artistic activity were embodied by him, in particular, in spreading the creative ideas of the representatives of the "New Vienna school" - A. Webern and A. Schoenberg.

This "Meditation" embodies the idea of a "new worldview" and, accordingly, the renewal of the system of organization of the musical fabric. Nevertheless, in the activity of searching for a non-trivial way of expressing an avant-garde idea of the worldview, it is obvious that it relies on the models and principles of late romantic poetry. On the other hand, in "Meditation on Two Themes from the Day of Genesis" (1919) for a similar instrumental ensemble, a contemporary of Roslavets, Ivan Vyshnegradskyi, gravitates significantly more towards contemplative meditateness and, in addition, presents the microchromatic system of this composer, which can be understood as a way out at that time to a higher level of experimentation with sound fabric as a "sound continuum" focused on one emotional field. It is natural that the genre-stylistic spectrum of musical "meditations" has been significantly updated since the second half of the 20th century in connection with the general intensive development of art as a result of the penetration of computer and digital technologies into its sphere, the rapid rethinking of stylistic spectrums, the mutual influence of various types art, etc. One of these areas was film music, in which the poles of "meditation" are represented, on the one hand, by the light romantic "Hour of Meditation" (from Victor Saville's film "24 Hours of a Woman's Life") by Philip Green (1911-1982; England; 1968), on the other hand - music by the American composer of Japanese origin Teiji Ito (1935-1982) to Maya Deren's short film of the same name "Meditation on Violence" (1948/1949). The musical "Meditation on Violence" unfolds in accordance with the main idea of the film - the use of physical movement as a unique means of visual expression, embodied in a sound fabric based on the synthesis of

elements of traditional Japanese theater music with sound tendencies of early American avant-garde cinema. The constantly repeated intonation-rhythmic formula, maintained in a fairly stable timbral solution, is associated with a certain "looping". The smoothness of the middle layer seems to repel the sharp intonations of other textured layers. It is interesting that, due to the rather significant variability of these extreme layers and certain modifications in the central one, in general, a distinct impression of ostinateness/repetition of figures is created, which is very inventively dispersed in the musical canvas.

Tendencies towards the development of concepts at the beginning of the century turned out to be durable. In one case, they were associated with patriotic-nostalgic impulses of the post-war period. It is significant that such "meditations" appeared at chronologically different stages of the development of musical creativity and in geographically distant schools. A characteristic example of this "line" is "Meditation" for piano, harp, and string orchestra by the Polish and American artist Esther Allan (born Ester Boyarska; 1914–1985; 1950), which appeals to the romantic period of Polish musical creativity and in some places is distinctly saturated with associations regarding the music of its brilliant representatives. Examples of the same direction are "Meditations on Five Icelandic Themes" by the Icelandic composer Jörunn Viðar (born 1918; 1965), in which the composer uses original metric schemes and ornamental figures of Icelandic folk songs, as well as "Hungarian Meditations in Memory of Milán Füst" for soprano, piano and orchestra by Lajos Papp (1935–2019; until the 1970s) and "Concerto meditative" for guitar and strings by the Czech composer Jana Obrovská (1930–1987; 1971). It is quite natural that after such examples, meditateness "seeps" into the memorial sphere and appears as a "musical offering" to traditions in a correspondingly rich context of representations. Such an opus is the piano cycle "Kaleidoscope" written in 1966 by the Slovak composer Eugen Suchoň (1908–1993; 1971). It is important that there was a peculiar branching of meditateness in it: the third part presents "Meditation and Dance (In Memory of Bartok)" [Adagio, but not really, Allegro barbaro], and in the penultimate, fifth part, "Three parts from contemplation (To the unknown hero of the Slovak National Uprising)". Such an approach turns out to be not only non-trivial, but also anticipating the trends of the following decades – at least at the level of the cycle's organization, when one of its parts is attributed as a meditation (like Part II in Stephen Brodie Gibson's Sonata (before 2013)).

It is significant that "meditative" influences penetrate into the field of popular music of the postmodern era. In this connection, it is necessary to mention, in particular, "Tango Meditation" for piano by the American composer Christopher Berg (born 1949; 1986).

In the second case, it is about sound experiments with complicated chromaticism, testing the possibilities of twelve-tone and other innovative stylistic ideas. This stylistic "offshoot" includes the "Meditations" for two pianos, strings and percussion by the Yugoslav artist Petar Ozgijian (1932–1979; 1962), the microtonal "Meditation" for mixed choir and saxophone quartet by the Estonian composer Erkki-Sven Tüür (born 1959; 2003).

Quite a radical experiment for the time of writing (1969) is "Fresco" by the famous German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen for four orchestra groups, in the subtitle of which the author indicated its important characteristic: "Wall sounds for meditation". This piece was conceived and realized as music for the foyer of the Beethovenhalle in Bonn. Let us note that some critics characterize the work as music for the "foyer" (Wandelmusik; Wandelgang or Wandelhalle), thereby creating an allusion to the connection both with the "water music", "carnival music" specific to the Baroque era, etc., and to future ambient samples. This "meditation" can also be classified as spatial music, since listeners in their visit to Beethovenhalle change their individual "perspectives" moment by moment. In

addition, the idea of "meditations" was used by the composer in his operas.

Here, three retrospective programs of his music, performed live and recorded, were to be presented simultaneously in three auditoriums. The meditative tone, by design, was supposed to be formed during the perception of cluster glissandos and slowly changing sound "bands" and "surfaces". The glissando served as an important reference for the distanced and limited space of the private rooms of the orchestral groups. That is, in fact, "meditation" acquired the meaning of a psychological concept for penetrating the atmosphere of "wall sounds" or sound murals. This was pointed out by the composer himself in the introduction: "A fresco ... can create a 'sound environment' by itself, in connection with visual exhibitions (in museums), or in complexes of sacred spaces, as well as in meditation rooms or parks, serving as an aid to concentration".

It is symptomatic that in the same year (1969) with this work by K. Stockhausen, "Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité" – "Meditations" or "Reflections on the mystery of the Holy Trinity" – for the organ of the genius Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992) appeared. In the sequence of nine untitled meditations, an important key to understanding their semantics and symbolism is the author's prefaces to each, and the composer sought to clarify not only verbal meanings, but also sound matter itself, calling his method "communicative language" or cryptophony.

The purpose of these "Méditations" is to understand God by listening to certain sounds. This purpose is read, in particular, in the preface to the fourth play: "All that we can know about God is summed up in these words, so dense and so simple: He is Words that we understand only in flashes, in rare and brief illuminations. Almost all of this work creates a climate, preparing the final vision. The unusual timbres and songs of the selected birds should evoke some unknown dimension" [15, p. 29]. Therefore, meditations reveal "some unknown dimension" for the composer, and such a definition is not unique in his work. Choral meditations are believed to be present in the "Transfiguration" oratorio and the mystery opera "St. Francis". Such episodes, involuntarily evoking an association with César Frank's "Commandments of Bliss" and - deeper in the national tradition - directing the search for sources to the previously mentioned work of H. Berlioz, are marked by ecstasy and religious awe.

The importance of meditateness in the panorama of musical art of the last third of the century is comprehended both in view of the penetration into the deep planes of sound-writing symbolism created by the culture, and the continuation of the search for hitherto unknown dimensions declared by O. Messiaen. An example of the development of this trend is the "sound meditations" of the American composer and leader of electroacoustic improvisation Polina Oliveros [20]. The first on this path were the minimalist and innovative "Meditation on the Points of the Compass" (for 12 solo violins, choir and percussion, 1970), the idea of which was developed in "Sonic Images" (1972).

The next innovations were "Sonic Meditations I–XII" (1971) and "Sonic Meditations XII–XXV" (1973). These opuses appeared in the process of developing a kind of "abstract" style of the composer and turning to the technology of tape and electronic music. The traditional sound organization was thus overcome, so to speak, from the middle. Therefore, in the end, the last two of the named works can be adapted for any solo or ensemble performance, as they are 25 short textual instructions that describe a performing or listening activity. To some extent, they are a conceptual answer to J. Cage's "4.33" – an answer from the standpoint of postmodern play. At the same time, the group of participants is gradually brought into the desired state, while the very term *meditation* "is used simply to mean focusing on an idea, an object, or the absence of an object without distraction or divided attention" [17, p. 3].

Understanding this meditative practice and the concepts embedded in it led to the fact that the next stage, stimulated by the study of Indian and Eastern cultures and religions, became the approach of the composer to the discovery of a way to teach people to recognize their own musicality. She saw this way in meditative improvisation based on meditation practices within ritual or ceremonial forms.

But in general, the context of meditation in Western art of the last third of the 20th century turned out to be quite "polarized". Among the compositions not named above, which represent the persistence of the genre's development along the lines of chorale preludes for organ, piano, or other compositions, there is Francis Shaw's Meditation for Radio for Christmas "Voices around a Star" (1972), Meditation on the Malotte "Lord's Prayer" for piano and string orchestra by Richard Freeman-Toole (born 1951; USA; 1988), "Meditation in Remembrance about Milan Faust" (1990) for soprano, piano, and orchestra by the Hungarian composer Lajos Papp (b. 1935)

#### 4 Conclusion

There is no doubt that the range of works that directly embody the techniques, principles, and the very concept of meditation, mostly learned in religious practices, is much wider than the given examples and data. They are present in the works of such prominent artists as John Cage, Terry Riley, La Monte Young, Lawrence Ball, Tony Scott, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Ben Johnston, and R. Murray Schafer.

The presented panorama of data on "Meditation", made on the basis of the titles of works with the presence of the term "meditation" in them in Western academic creativity and experimental planes of musical art of the 20th century, allows asserting that, in this field, genre-forming processes and certain stages dominated by certain stylistic devices can be clearly traced. Therefore, the study of meditations in musical creativity as a specific genre formation, the stylistic means used by composers to achieve this genre status, as well as - more broadly - meditateness in musical creativity is a very promising and relevant task, at least in view of the strengthening of intercultural interactions during at least half a century, as well as an understanding of the peculiarities of the deployment of meditateness as one of the principles of modern musical creativity.

Today, confusion with the rhythm is more often associated with the game and with those characters who are closer to Turnerovskaya, liminoidality or Schechner's game, hiding the sacred roots of the game, rather than with the ritual, which had the form of individual initiation. On the other hand, the magico-religious rituals themselves are museumized and aestheticized, turn into protected heritage, function as part of festivals or folklore shows, or become a more or less exotic tourist attraction. Today, the question of the relationship between music and meditation looks very far from the cosmogonic sources that constituted the unity of musica mundana, musica humana, and musica instrumentalis. This was due to various processes that changed the understanding of both meditation and music.

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