

Historical Genesis of Choral Writing in Western European Music

Olena Zaverukha *
Tetiana Cherneta **

Abstract: *The purpose of the article is to shed light on the historical genesis of choral writing in the context of Western European music. The novelty of this article is that choral writing is considered an important factor in the forms and genres of Western European choral art development (ranging from monody to polyphony). The historical and stylistic evolution of choral writing is outlined on the basis of some significant works of leading scientists. For choral writing cognition we should take into account certain stages of its historical genesis, such as choral music's written forms formation.*

Keywords: historical genesis, choral writing, genre, style, composer's thinking.

Introduction

The choral art's flourishing is associated with the traditions of compositional writing formation and development. Understanding the choral writing's historical and stylistic traditions as a form of choral art cognition necessitates its deep study from the point of view of a historical aspect: as the development of the new at the level of comprehension of the old. It is the historical evolution and improvement of written graphical notations an element of professional thinking that have influenced the latest trends in modern choral art.

The category of "singing" arose from the word itself. This aspect is evidenced by the Holy Scriptures, where we can read that "In the beginning was the Word", which, according to Carl Stumpf's hypothesis, "derives music

* Olena Zaverukha, PhD in Arts Study, Associate Professor of Department of Academic and Variety Vocal Institute of Arts of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine
e-mail: o.zaverukha@kubg.edu.ua (corresponding author).

** Tetiana Cherneta, PhD in Arts Study, Associate Professor of Department of Academic and Variety Vocal, Institute of Arts of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine

from accents and intonational human language”¹. The efforts of many generations created more and more sophisticated systems for translating the “live” sound of music into the language of character graphic recording – notation. Comparing a musical text’s samples of different times and peoples, you can see that they are different. But for all their differences, they have something in common: music is recorded using special symbols. They have been changed for the centuries of musical culture, and it took a long time for the formation of the writing form of the musical notation used today.

Features of the medieval choral writing

In the medieval singing practice, there was a modal system as a form of pitch organization of music. It consisted of: *ambitus*, which is interpreted as the range of the mode system; *initium* – the initial melodic formula; *finalis* – as the final tone; *repercussion* – dominant stable tone (after finalis). The modal system was represented by monodic (unison) singing. Its first generalization examples are Gregorian chant and Byzantine chants (types of choral writing), which have remained in the musical notation. Gregorian chant is a song of the Roman Catholic Church, which developed in the period of the 4th-6th centuries and was approved by Pope Gregory I. The Gregorian chant contains three types of liturgical singing: *syllabic* (each sound corresponds to one syllable), *neume* (each word corresponds to a group of two to four or more sounds) and *melismatic* (each syllable has from ten to thirteen sounds)². The 8 diatonic modes were formed on the basis of the Gregorian chant. The next monuments of the medieval Latin hymnography adjoining Gregorian chant are sequences and tropes, whose role corresponded to the question-answer in the liturgical order. This peculiarity was performed antiphonally by two choirs. A sequence had the function of expanding the singing in the form of a jubilee, and a trope, which was used exclusively in the liturgical beginning, – addition of the melismatic type to the Gregorian chant. Another type of performance was formed in the Byzantine church, which was carried out with a sustained bass sound – ison (the main mode sound around which the melodic line is built).

The relationship between theory and practice in the medieval music begins with the work of Guido of Arezzo (991/992 – after 1033), who created a four-line staff, united by curly brackets – accolade and marks (neumes). The lines of the staff serve as indicators of exact symbols, namely the clefs, defined by certain letters at the beginning of the monochord (*c* and *f*) and the lines themselves, painted in a certain color as a sign of these letters (yellow –

¹ C. Stumpf, *Proiskhozhdeniye muzyki [The origin of music]*. Leningrad: Triton, 1927, p. 17.

² L. Dyachkova, *Gamoniya v Zapadnoyevropeyskoy muzyke (IX – nachalo XX veka) [Harmony in Western European music (9th - beginning of 20th century)]*. Moscow: RAM im. Gnesinykh, 2009, p. 17.

c, red – f). Regarding the writing system realized by Guido of Arezzo, the four-line notation became the prototype of the modern five-line notation³: the square notation changed to a round one with the advent of musical steps. Due to the appearance of lines, each note sign received its own graphic height and it became possible to place them both on the line and between them. Together with the transition to writing on a paper, there was a division of musical notation into “white” (blank) and “black” (filled). A representative of note was Johannes Ciconia at the end of the 14th century-beginning of the 15th century. Color indicated the duration of the sound, and the location on the lines – its height. Those signs were called notes⁴.

The improvement of musical notation in the period of the 13th-14th centuries was marked by developing the mensural notation, which visually conveyed the pitch of sounds and their duration. A system of special graphic signs for rhythmic recording of notes and pauses was introduced and the exact ratios between all durations were established. The Notre-Dame French school (in the late 12th and early 13th centuries) represented a typological and historical stage of the Middle Ages, marked by the transition from unison singing to polyphony (from monody to polyphony), the “adequacy of sounds and their proportions”⁵, where the characteristic feature of the stylistic system is rhythmic. It is reflected in various manifestations, like the isorhythmic principle of composition, which determined the intonation of music. Organum is one of the earliest types of medieval polyphony (9th -13th centuries), in which at the level of traditional intervals of unisons, seconds, thirds, fourths and fifths appear an increased fourth and diaphony (duet). Its significance lies in greater freedom of voices, where the opposite movement of voices is the fundamental principle of voice leading⁶. Thus, the first polyphonic song forms appear, which are unified by genre diversity, as follows: rondeau, ballade, virelai, where the writing systems are composed of note-against-note polyphony: “two lines move in one direction, the third in the opposite; two voices form a dissonance among themselves, and consonance with a third”⁷ and also motet, madrigal, caccia. In the motet, the leading medieval genre of the 13th century, there were shifts in the rhythmic revolution, transition from modal to mensural rhythm. The representative of this period was Pérotin the Great, who divided voices into choral parts

³ in the 14th century the representative was Johannes de Muris.

⁴ the Latin word *notation* means “marking, writing”.

⁵ V. Shestakov, *Muzykal'naya estetika zapadnoyevropeyskogo Srednevekov'ya i Vozrozhdeniya* [Musical aesthetics of the Western European Middle Ages and Renaissance]. Moscow: Muzyka, ed. 1966, p. 57.

⁶ N. Simakova, *Kontrapunkt strogogo stilya i fuga. Istoriya. Teoriya. Praktika* [Counterpoint of strict style and fugue. History. Theory. Practice.]. Moscow: Kompozitor, 2002.

⁷ Ju. Evdokimova, *Mnogogolosiye srednevekov'ya X–XIV v. Istoriya polifonii* [Polyphony of the Middle Ages of the 10th – 14th centuries. The Polyphony History]. Moscow: Muzyka, 1983, p. 106.

(duplum, triplum, quadruplum and tenor – “hold, conduct”). This led to an appearance of four voices singing.

In choral writing Arsnova (14th century), representatives of which are Philippe de Vitry, Johannes de Muris, Guillaume de Machaut, there is a proportionality of the rhythmic organization’s mensural distribution. It has measure – Modus major (Maximodus), Modus minor, Tempus⁸, a note value⁹ – maxima (the longest duration), longa (long note), brevis (short note), semibrevis (half of short), prolatio (represented by Philippe de Vitry), as a system of semibrevises’ distribution (minima – the shortest duration, semiminima – half of the minima and shorter durations of fusa and semifusa)¹⁰. The technique of the medieval isorhythm (Johannes de Muris) is in a complex relationship of the two ostinato elements: *talea* (taleo) – repeating rhythmic pattern and *colore* (color) – melodic pitch pattern.

Due to the declamatory nature of the syllables, a metric (novenaria 9/8, duodenaria 3/4; senaria perfecta 3/4; senaria imperfecta 6/8; quaternaria 2/4; duodenaria 3/4; octonaria 2/4, tempus perf. cumpr. maj. – 6/4, tempus perf. cumpr. min. – 3/2, tempus imperf. cumpr. min. – 4/4) and time distinction appeared (taktpunkte or punctus division). Willy Apel¹¹ compares tempo and metric structure: tempus unperfectum cum prolatione imperfect, tempus imperfectum cum prolatione perfecta, tempus perfectum cum prolatione imperfecta, tempus perfectum cum prolatione perfect.

Development of choral writing during the renaissance

There were radical changes in the musical thinking of the representatives of the Dutch Polyphonic Choral School of the Early and High Renaissance (15th-16th centuries), as follows: polyphony transformed from decorative to functional. This aspect was evidenced by the first treatises on music theory, which appeared at this period. Thus, a representative of the strict style, Bartolomé Ramos de Pareja (Spanish music theorist), in the treatise “Musica practica” (1482) determined the eight-step major scale and the consonant function of the intervals – thirds and sixths. The music theorist

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ A. Schering, *Istoriyamuzyki v tablitsakh [The history of music in tables]*. Leningrad: Academia, 1924; W. Apel, *French secular music of the late fourteenth century*. Edition of the literary texts by Robert W Linker and Urbant Holmes JR University of North Carolin with foreword by Paul Hindemith Yale University. Mediaeval Academy of America Cambridge Massachusetts, 1950.

¹⁰ T. Livanova, *Istoriya Zapadnoyevropeyskoy muzyki do 1789 g.* [The history of Western European Music until 1789]. Moscow: Muzyka, 1983.

¹¹ W. Apel, *French secular music of the late fourteenth century*. Edition of the literary texts by Robert W Linker and Urbant Holmes JR University of North Carolin with foreword by Paul Hindemith Yale University. Mediaeval Academy of America Cambridge Massachusetts, 1950.

from the Low Countries Johannes Tinctoris published a work on the art of counterpoint, taking into account the duration of the note and its metrical organization “*Liber de arte contrapuncti*” (1477). The basis is consonance, and the dissonance function acts as the destruction of the harmonic sounding of polyphony. A Swiss music theorist Heinrich Glareanin who wrote “*Dodekachordon*” in 1547 argued for a system of medieval modes, namely 12 diatonic modes, including the Ionian and Aeolian, focused on the major and minor systems. An Italian music theorist Gioseffo Zarlino played in his turn a significant role in the development of choral writing during the High Renaissance (the Venetian School). In his opinion, “the most natural polyphony composition is of four voices, and the most perfect choral performance is the simultaneous pronunciation of words”¹². Gioseffo Zarlino was the successor of Heinrich Glarean’s work. According to Hugo Riemann, Gioseffo Zarlino's achievement was to create the present music system, that is: “...theoretical definition of the sounds’ relationship in a pitch, both in scale and in harmonies”¹³. This doctrine is an achievement in chord theory and a new look at the determining of relationships between sounds. Thus, Gioseffo Zarlino testified the conditional arrangement of the thirds of major and minor chords, which led to the changes in the mode system.

Polyphonic choral writing of the first half of the 15th century was embodied in the output of an English composer John Dunstaple. His innovations in polyphonic music are characterized by the feature of three-voices choral texture writing, where the melodiousness of voice leading and the improvisational characteristic of melodic movement can be observed. The peculiarity of the melody that the composer uses for “free” voices is determined by its affinity with cantus firmus, held in the part of the tenor or the superius. John Dunstaple developed the genre of the declamatory motet, in which the musical rhythm is subject to the rhythmic structure of the poem. The isorhythmic principle of writing and the imitation method of performance are used in the motets. John Dunstaple changes the nature of voice leading within one composition, avoids timbre and dynamic monotony and achieves a subtle nuance of choral sounding.

The Renaissance polyphonic polyphony of choral writing reached its heyday in the works of Heinrich Isaac, Jean Mouton, Pierre de la Rue, Adrian Willaert, Nicola Vicentino, Cipriano de Rore, Josquin des Prez, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Orlande de Lassus. It is marked by the transition to

¹² V. Shestakov, *Muzykal'naya estetika zapadnoyevropeyskogo Srednevekov'ya i Vozrozhdeniya* [Musical aesthetics of the Western European Middle Ages and Renaissance]. Moscow: Muzyka, ed. 1966, p. 496.

¹³ H. Riemann, *Katekhizis istorii muzyki: Istoriya muzykal'nykh instrumentov. Istoriya zvukovoy sistemy i notopisaniya* [Catechism of the Music History: History of Musical Instruments. History of sound system and notation]. Moscow: Knizhnydom «LIBROKOM», 2012, p. 145.

another musical and choral style's system, which is traced in the formation's principles (cantus firmus; melodic coloring as a method of free cantus prius factus development; technique of imitations and canons) and intonation principles (vertical and harmonious composition).

Until the middle of the 15th century in the polyphonic terminology there is basically one concept of "counterpoint", which contains almost all kinds of polyphony. Ebenezer Prout¹⁴ explains the meaning of the counterpoint writing, where one melody in combination with others form a "correct" harmony. The word comes from the Latin "contrapunctum" (a dot), which in this sense means punctum contrapunctum – "against a dot", or "against a note" (a narrow meaning). A broader meaning is the art of two or more voices combining, each of which has an independent melodic meaning. An Austrian composer and music theorist Johann Joseph Fuxin wrote in 1725 a fundamental work "Gradus ad Parnassum", which reveals the meaning of counterpoint in five species, in the following way: the first – "note against note – it is the simplest composition of two or more voices which, having notes of equal length, consists only of consonances"; the second - "the second species results when two part notes are set against a whole note"; the third – "four quarters against a whole note"; the fourth – "two half notes set against a whole note... ligature or syncopation, and can be either consonant or dissonant"; the fifth – "florid conterpoint should be of all kinds".¹⁵

Written forms of choral polyphony (Johannes Ockeghem, Jacob Obrecht, Josquin des Prez, Orlande de Lassus) develop in two directions of music – spiritual (including masses, magnificats, psalms) and secular (referring to polyphonic songs, ballads). Dutch composers have created an original vocal and choral style. In fact, innovative in the masters' voice leading was the development of the dissonance-delay technique, which arose when trying to emphasize the direction of the melody to the stable tone. To reinforce this attraction, one of the voices is held. The saturation of polyphonic texture with chains of delays with wavy singing solutions is one of the most powerful factors of dynamization of musical idea of the 15th and 16th centuries.

In the Venetian School (represented by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Francesco d'Ana, Adrian Willaert, Andrea Gabrieli and Giovanni Gabrieli) along with the polyphonic composition of choral writing the chord one was developed, which was associated with the emergence of a new concert style – polychoral vocal writing with instrumental accompaniment, where vocal and vocal-instrumental genres of choral spiritual concert came to the fore, of "sacred symphony" and "ariose ricercar". With the development

¹⁴ E. Prout, *Counterpoint: strict and free*. London: Augener&Co, 1890.

¹⁵ J. Fux *Gradus Ad Parnassum. The Study of Counterpoint*, New York-London: W.W. Norton&Company, Inc., 1965.

of secular concerts and the flowering of organ, lute, and violin art, the instruments (trombones, violas, etc.) entered church music. Thus, the secular vocal and choral genres appeared: caccia, ballata, frottola, villanelle, lauda. There was a tendency to a homophonic texture with the selection of the upper voice and harmonic bass melody, which continued its development in the Baroque era.

The characteristic features of the madrigal of this period (represented by Jacques Arcadelt, Adrian Willaert, Cipriano de Rore, Andrea Gabrieli, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Luca Marenzio, Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa, Claudio Monteverdi) are: composition of a strophe form for 4-6 voices (10). The new methods' compositional technique expressiveness, harmony (chromatics and microchromatics, reduced and increased intervals, sextes, septimes, octaves, unprepared dissonances), rhythm and form grew in the madrigal. The madrigal script's textural feature was unified by the chord and polyphonic composition and their change.

In the final stage of the Renaissance, the system of basso continuo (thorough-bass) writing engendered (Orlande de Lassus, Claudio Monteverdi, Heinrich Schütz, Henry Purcell, Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart). It is divided into three stages: early (middle of the 16th-beginning of the 17th century), high (beginning of the 17th century-beginning of the 18th century), and late (the 20's-60's of the 18th century) – an adoption of a homophonic-harmonic composition with basso continuo in music. Singing by "bass" has a variety of functionalities: it forms the structure of the vertical and the chord, establishes the texture variation, determines the voice leading and its location. The thorough-bass writing (Riemann, 2012) was an important way of transition from the modal to the tonal system, which developed in the Baroque era. Its essence is the core of organization and centralization of harmony, texture and formation in general.

Features of choral writing in the baroque era

At this historical stage the development of writing was characterized not only by the establishment in music of a homophonic-harmonic composition with a thorough-bas (basso continuo) as a new paradigm of writing. Major-minor system and modulation are formed and the fugue is seen as the highest form of free writing. A number of new music genres emerged: instrumental (concerto, overture, sonata, symphony), vocal and choral (opera, cantata and oratorio). Describing the evolution of baroque polyphonic writing, researchers distinguish two stages: Early and Late (High) baroque (the end of the 16th-1st half of the 18th century). Early baroque revealed a new interpretation of polyphonic writing. In spiritual works there was a mystical symbolism of the text excluding the expression or acting of

color effects. The chains of delays, long and developed lines, their complementarity of voice leading prevailed there. Secular music appealed to the realm of the soul, melody and accompaniment predominated in it. Herewith the melody contained expressive inversions that played the role of rhetorical figures. There was improved the homophonic principle of writing associated with functional-harmonic thinking, the distribution of choral parts on chord-harmonic and register principles: descant (soprano), alto, tenor, bass¹⁶ (from the 16th century) with the development of polyphonic choral writing, forming the specifics of a cappella singing.

As it was defined by Lyudmila Dyachkova¹⁷, at the Baroque era, a system of tonal affinity was created, which included ten tonalities with a centralized C basis, namely: *B-g, F-d, C-a, G-e, D-h*. At the same time, the technique of rapid transition from major (joy) to minor (sentence of tragedy) was used as a reaction to the “sudden contrast of states”.¹⁸ A fundamental means of expression of Baroque music is the modulation writing system, which characterizes the conceptuality of construction – the transition from one tonality to another. It determines the corresponding process of transformation – meaning a change in emotional state.

In the Spanish and German choral schools (the 17th century) there was a crystallization of the writing way – alternating entry of voices with theme and opposition. Its features refer to polyphonic themes, composed of a number of characteristic intonations, which were prominent in the voices' performance and oppositions, where the moving melody smoothly slid evenly along the theme line.

The important writing principles of the end of the 16th-17th centuries were chromatism and enharmonics, the founder of which was Nicola Vicentino. The chromatization principle in melodic flow was applied in two directions: for the reflection of unexpected emotional colors and in the consistent “sliding” of melodic lines. The descending chromatic movement was meant to create an atmosphere of mysticism and expressiveness, which was emphasized by a harmonious solution. At the same time, tonal thinking is liberated, where musical constructions have received an additional basis – in other words a tonal plan (sequence of changing tones).

In combination with the above-mentioned stylistic innovations of the Baroque era, the fugue appeared as the highest form of polyphonic thinking and free writing: “...the name was given because the first voice seemed to be

¹⁶ This voices distribution is determined according to their function in the musical texture.

¹⁷ L. Dyachkova, *Garmoniya v Zapadnoyevropeyskoy muzyke (IX – nachalo XX veka)* [*Harmony in Western European music (9th - beginning of 20th century)*]. Moscow: RAM im. Gnesinykh, 2009.

¹⁸ A. Dmitriev, *Polifoniya kak factor formoobrazovaniya* [*Polyphony as a Formation Factor*]. Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1962, p. 122.

running forward, and all the others who entered later, as if they were chasing it”¹⁹.

A significant stage in the development of choral writing during that era was the output of Johann Sebastian Bach. According to Albert Schweitzer²⁰, the composer based his choral polyphonic work on a chorale that reflects the content of the Biblical history and holidays. The choral writing by Johann Sebastian Bach is defined by a distribution on tutti and solo, alternation of forte and piano (their abrupt change), declamatory, polyphonic (imitation and stretta) formation, ostinato, recitative, application of the cantus firmus technique, 8-48 voices, dichotomy. Johann Sebastian Bach's polyphonic mastery in choirs was in use of the alternation principle of polyphonic writing and chord composition, which created contrast in the work's composition. Chordality had the function of form and texture's contrast cultivation as opposed to the polyphonic writing structure, which was unified by voices' imitation leadings. Polyphonic writing and chord composition were used by the composer on the principle of voices' combining not only horizontally, but also vertically in a double chorus performance, where the first chorus was an imitation, and the second one was a harmonious basis for textured accompaniment. The defining form of Johann Sebastian Bach's polyphony was a combination of free voices and a strict choral melody. In choral arrangements the composer used a “polyphony of layers”²¹, which was built on the choral parties' independence interaction principle and orchestral accompaniment. The genre variety of Johann Sebastian Bach's vocal and choral works consists of: masses, passions, cantatas, oratorios. The composer used the *turbæ* (from Latin “people”) in choral works, which characterized the dramatic development.

The musical epoch of the High Baroque (the 17th century-first half of the 18th century) appealed to the polyphonic writing form. Stylistics returned to the forgotten potentials of melodic waves' wide breathing and multilevel layers. Mathematical transformations and sophisticated combinations of complex counterpoint were restored. At this period, homophonic writing prevailed, where the melody had the function of musical idea, and other voices were the accompanying figures. The spread of homophony in the European music has determined the development of harmony in the modern sense and the creation of new musical forms.

In the 17th century a special system of tablature writing was used to record instrumental works. It was a scheme formed of alphanumeric pitch

¹⁹ E. Prout, *Fuga* [Fugue]. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye muzykal'noye izdatel'stvo, 1922, p. 12-13.

²⁰ A. Schweitzer, *Johann Sebastian Bach*. Moscow: Muzyka, 1964.

²¹ V. Protopopov, *Istoriya polifonii: Zapadnoyevropeyskaya muzyka XVII – pervoychetverti XIX veka* [The Polyphony History: Western European Music of the 17th - First Quarter of the 19th Century]. Moscow: Muzyka, 1985, p. 185.

notations and additional symbols that clarified the rhythm and dynamic shades. These schemes were diverse with regard to visual aspects. They reflected the features of musical notation, the specifics of the musical instrument for which they were intended. Tablatures also differed in symbols: letters, numbers, rhythmic signs and their combinations. Among the many variants of tablatures there were linear and nonlinear tablatures. In linear, the number of lines corresponded to the number of polyphonic voices in the choral texture. By the early 18th century, tablatures had been replaced by a simpler and more convenient way of recording a polyphonic work – music notes.

Features of choral writing at the age of classicism

A significant role in the further development of choral writing belongs to the age of Classicism (the 18th century – early 19th century), marked by the interaction of homophony and polyphony. The Viennese classical school is one of the peaks of the world's musical culture. Its aesthetic principles are an optimistic worldview and have philosophical depth, humanism, national roots, democracy of musical writing, high professionalism. Its bright representatives are Christoph Willibald Gluck, Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven. Vocal and choral genres' directions continued to develop (opera, oratorio, mass, motet, cantata, gradual, canon, secular choral song), which originated during the Baroque era. For example, Christoph Gluck's opera reform led to a rethinking of the choir's dramatic function.

Joseph Haydn created a lot of pieces of music with the choir's participation. He is an author of oratorios, masses, cantatas, graduals, canons. The basis of Joseph Haydn's genre preferences is a polyphonic writing, about which Vladimir Protopopov writes as relating to a new stage in the historical development of polyphony, "where the theme receives counterpoints in the form of melodic, and sometimes harmonious figuration which intertwines and supports its basic tones".²² The fugue in the composer's choral writing has a final function. In the peculiarities of fugue's writing in the choral performance there is a reliance on the harmonious texture, where the melodic theme is accompanied by another voice. The structure of the thematic structure in the works of Joseph Haydn is based on the principle of "polyphony of homophonic themes" and "homophony of polyphonic themes".²³ The technique of thematic development in fugues has methods of generalization (inversion) of the theme, intense stretta, moving counterpoint, canonical sequences. Choral writing by Joseph Haydn has a polyphonic principle of thinking as a necessary "component of the language".

²² *Ibidem*, p. 319-320.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 339.

An important stage in the development of classicism's choral writing is the work of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. In the field of polyphony, the composer combined the features of strict and free writing. The polyphonic texture of his works is characterized by two tendencies: striving for brevity and laconic intonations in the melody of polyphonic. The subject of Mozart's fugues is correlated with mode and rhythm, which in development affects its common, namely, in the principles of mode's functionality organization. The shape of the fugue is divided into three types: core, deployment and homogeneity²⁴.

Ludwig van Beethoven's choral writing also shows an inseparable link between polyphony and harmony. His compositional writing is characterized as polyphony on a harmonious basis. For example, in "Missa solemnis" polyphonic writing is based on two principles: reprise and figurativeness, where their interaction has dramatic significance. It is necessary to note the role of Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in the development of choral music. Introducing the choir into the symphony, namely in the finale, the composer approved the genre of choral symphony, which is followed by Hector Berlioz, Franz Liszt, Gustav Mahler. Therefore, monothematism is an important means of compositional writing in the symphony.

Development of choral writing at the romantic age

Further development of choral music of the 19th century (i. e. era of Romanticism) was enriched with new features in figurative content and means of expression²⁵. The means of choral writing incorporated all the achievements established by previous epochs, which gave impetus to further discoveries in written choral creativity. Significant changes have taken place in the choral writing of Romantic composers. Hence, timbre coloring becomes fundamental, whereas the architectonics of the work has a secondary role. In addition, one can notice the expansion of mode and key to twelve chromatic levels, as well as the increasing importance of dissonance and complication of thinking in general. In the composers' creative activity there is a noticeable tendency of genre synthesis, concerning not only the interaction of choral singing with other musical genres (e. g. a symphony), but also the influences on it of theater, painting, literature, poetry, etc.

²⁴ *Ibidem.*

²⁵ V. Protopopov, *Zapadnoevropeyskaya muzyka XIX – XX v. Istoriya polifonii [Western European music of the 19th - 20th centuries. The Polyphony History]*. Moscow: Muzyka, 1986.

Compositional techniques of the 20th century

In the 20th century the latest compositional techniques are nowadays used by composers in the 21st century, as follows:

- “linearity”, which provides an independent and equal function of all voices, where the melody acts as a pitch line at the level of musical fixation;
- “aleatorics” (the term is proposed by Pierre Boulez) is defined as “incomplete fixation of the musical text that is relatively freely implemented or even ‘accomplished’ during the performance”.²⁶ An aleatory writing is perceived at the level of improvisational performance (based on the random principle);
- “sonorism” (the term belongs to by Yuri Kholopov and Yuri Khominsky) – “music of sonorities”.²⁷ Sonorous writing is expressed by timbre (colors) and structural components (sound organization and its expression). The presentation of the sonorous writing in the textural correspondence takes place in the vertical organization of consonances, perceived as a holistic structure of artistic and sound texture modification;
- a component of pointillism (the term is proposed by Witold Lutoslawski) is a sound point (fragmentary sounds). The presentation of pointillism writing is performed by wide interval moves in the form of multi-register dots, separated by pauses, serving as information factor of the spatial parameter;
- “dodecaphony” (the term belongs to Arnold Schoenberg) – consists of “1) twelve-tone scale and 2) the principle of aninvariant’s series”.²⁸ A serial technique is a constructive logic of the structure, which indicates the serial unity of a number of sounds (at their combination in any parameter: rhythmic, pitch, dynamic, articulatory, timbre), which are characterized by their unique structure;
- a repetitive technique “means various composition techniques, based on the repetition of functionally brief constructions”;²⁹
- monostylistics or “style unity”;³⁰
- the “music of timbre” operates “sound-timbre layers and lines”;³¹
- spatial music is “any music connected with physical space”³², in which “real or imaginary physical space becomes a special artistic topos”;³³

²⁶ V. Tsenova, *Teoriya sovremennoy kompozitsii [The Theory of Modern Composition]*. Moscow: Muzyka, ed. 2007, p. 412.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 382.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 314.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 465.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 431.

³¹ T. Kogoutek, *Tekhnika kompozitsii v muzyke XX v. [Compositional technique in the music of the 20th century]*. Moscow: Muzyka, 1976, p. 236.

³² V. Tsenova, *Teoriya sovremennoy kompozitsii [The Theory of Modern Composition]*. Moscow: Muzyka, ed. 2007, p. 450.

³³ *Ibidem*.

- the principle of montage is understood as “gradual recording or overlaying of individual sound formations on a clear tape”;³⁴
- “polystylistics” (the term is used by Alfred Schnittke) according to Evgeniya Chigaryovais refers to “...combining in one piece of music two or more style models <...> in a contrasting or complementary relationship”;³⁵
- the technique of micropolyphony (developed by Gyorgy Ligeti) is associated with the structural organization of sonorous texture, namely, aimed at creating an undifferentiated phonation by means of counterpoint of many lines, accurately written in the score.

These compositional techniques are primarily rooted in instrumental music. Nowadays, not all compositional techniques are used in choral practice, which is dictated by the specifics and capabilities of a singing band. These include specific music, repetitive technique and the principle of montage. There is an extreme vocal in the singing tradition: screaming, sudden change for long intervals of more than an octave (vocal works “Adventures” and “New Adventures” of Gyorgy Ligeti).

Conclusions

The coverage of historical stages of polyphonic choral works recording’s development in Western European culture was carried out according to the criteria of genre and stylistic orientation. A comprehensive consideration of the historical genesis of choral writing made it possible to reveal the main stages of its formation in Western European choral music (ranging from the 6th to the 20th century). This led to the conclusion that choral writing, its types and varieties are a fundamental category that determines not only the composer’s style of thinking in the process of a polyphonic piece of music creation, but also the style of the historical epoch in general. In addition, the study of historical and stylistic traditions of choral writing in Western Europe from the Middle Ages to the 20th century has shown that its established forms are the “cradle” of modern choral writing, and that the established forms in the 20th century compositional techniques are used by contemporary composers.

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³⁴ T. Kogoutek, *Tekhnika kompozitsii v muzyke XX v. [Compositional technique in the music of the 20th century]*. Moscow: Muzyka, 1976, p. 221.

³⁵ V. Tsenova, *Teoriya sovremennoy kompozitsii [The Theory of Modern Composition]*. Moscow: Muzyka, ed. 2007, p. 431.

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