

Verbal and Musical Reflections on the Eternal in A. Berg's Operas

The article examines how the music of Alban Berg's operas «Wozzeck» and «Lulu» reflects thoughts about the eternal contained in their primary sources – the dramas of G. Büchner and F. Wedekind. Unlike Büchner's drama, in which all ideas about the eternal appear in a negative and even grotesque form, Berg finds an opportunity to express in music, in intonation and composition, various manifestations of the eternal, including its ideal understanding, coming from Christianity. In the opera «Lulu», the main character symbolizes a radical transformation of the image of "eternal femininity," but at the same time retains its original essence in some ways. The new approach in this article is related, firstly, to the correlation of the image of Lulu with the concept of eternal femininity and, secondly, to the interpretation of the central moment in the Ostinato film music (the interlude between the second and third scenes of the second act of the opera «Lulu» and between the two underlying dramas of Wedekind) as a stop in time between its flowing in a forward and reverse motion. It is with this moment that the expression of the timeless essence of the feminine nature is connected.

Introduction

Alban Berg entered history as one of the most prominent representatives of Expressionism — an aesthetic that seemed to have firmly and irrevocably broken with all the positive ideals of the Classical-Romantic past. And yet the composer himself was a spiritual heir to Gustav Mahler, spoke of the "great social significance" of his music¹ and, like his "comrades" in the Second Viennese School (A. Schoenberg and A. Webern), could not conceive of himself outside the centuries-long tradition of European music and culture. The outcome that Berg achieved as a truthful, honest response to the "challenges of modernity" was a presentation of that culture's values in their severely deformed state.

“Mill Wheels” and “Lux Eterna” in Wozzeck

Here we explore how Alban Berg's music reflects the thoughts of eternity, both intrinsic to Georg Büchner's drama and introduced by the composer's interpretation of the plot. Büchner's drama presents negative images of the eternity, first, as “mill wheels”, i.e., cyclic rotations and “evil infinity” (Captain) and, second, as the illusory “immortality” of an inventor (Doctor). Contrary to Büchner's drama, there is in Berg's opera the concept of eternal as unconditionally valuable, as an ideal, which will be considered in the paper as well.

¹Berg, A. "On Musical Forms in My Opera Wozzeck." In *Foreign Music of the 20th Century: Materials and Documents*. Moscow: Muzyka, 1975. P. 156.

1 The plot of Büchner's drama *Woyzeck* (1837) as such (the murder of a lover out
2 of jealousy) is completely trivial and could become the basis for a simple opera of
3 the Verist type. However, this simple plot is conveyed in a very complex text,
4 saturated with philosophical thoughts and extreme states, approaching almost the
5 theater of the absurd. This was the reason why Büchner's drama became the basis
6 for the libretto of the most significant expressionist opera of the 20th century –
7 Berg's *Wozzeck*.

8 One of the manifestations of the depth and dramatic expression of the text is
9 the collision between the flow of everyday reality, in which, it would seem, there
10 is nothing but an elusive moment of the present, instantly disappearing into the
11 past, on the one hand, and the presence of the idea of the eternal in various forms,
12 on the other. The theme of eternity arises from the very first words of the play. The
13 Captain, a narrow-minded and primitive man, who is shaved by his subordinate,
14 soldier Woyzeck, tries, to the best of his understanding, to talk about eternity: "Fear
15 takes over our world when you think about eternity. All is vanity of vanities. And
16 what is eternity? Eternity is what is eternal, it is clear to everyone; but it turns out
17 wrongly – no, and the eternal is not eternal, but one moment, yes, just one
18 moment"². What is important here? After these confused arguments with tautology
19 and lack of logic, it turns out that eternity is understood not as a timeless value, but
20 as an endless cycle (bad infinity), the symbol of which is the mill wheel: "When I
21 think that our earth turns around in a day. It's a waste of time! What's all this about?
22 I can't see the mill wheel"³.

23 Other references to eternity are frankly negative or even grotesque. Just before
24 the murder of his beloved, Woyzeck says to Marie: "How sweet your lips are,
25 Marie. I would forget Heaven and Bliss if I could kiss them often"⁴. So, eternity is
26 not worth the moments of love for Woyzeck. And here are the words of the
27 Apprentice from the scene in the tavern: "My soul, my immortal soul smelled of
28 vodka all over! It stinks for no reason!"⁵.

29 How does Berg's music react to verbal references to eternity? The musical
30 embodiment of the Captain's words is very remarkable. On the words "I think
31 about the eternal", a rather comical stop was made on a high note (si of the first
32 octave), and then a move down the "endless" chain of pure quarts symbolizing "bad
33 infinity". But another thing is noteworthy: in the words "I do not heat mill wheels"
34 (protest), one of the key intonations of the opera sounds – the motif of "si – la – mi
35 – sol". This motif anticipates Wozzeck's leitmotif "We are poor people" (d-sharp –
36 si – mi – sol) and at the same time contains the theme that opens the third act when
37 Marie reads the Bible (sol– re – fa). This same interrogative intonation is included
38 in one of the most important themes of *Wozzeck*.

²Bühner, Georg. *Woyzeck*. In Büchner, G. Sochineniya. Transl. E.T. Rudneva. Moscow - Leningrad.: ACADEMIA, 1935. P. 232.

³Op.cit.

⁴Berg, Alban. *Wozzeck*. Leningrad: Muzyka, 1977 (in Russian). P. 260.

⁵Berg Alban 1977, 189-190.

Another image of the imaginary "eternity" is associated with the Doctor's dreams of immortality, which, in his opinion, will be provided by the theory he created. This surrogate of immortality has received a grotesque musical expression. At the end of the Passacaglia on a twelve-tone theme (let me remind you that the opera *Wozzeck* was written before Berg turned to the dodecaphone technique). The Doctor repeats the word "immortal" four times in ecstasy, and at the last repetition a twelve-tone theme is played, harmonized by sharp dissonant chords.

However, unlike Büchner's play, Berg's opera has moments that really create a sense of Eternity with the help of music. One of them is associated with Marie, whose image is ambiguous. But her best side is related to motherhood. After the Lullaby that Marie sings to her son, the child falls asleep, and the music also "falls asleep" in a bright, blissful peace – time seems to stop, on the harmony of "fa – la – do – mi". This stopped moment is perceived as a sign of eternity, the eternity of motherhood. There is nothing like it in Büchner's play, and in the opera it is the most romantic moment – the only moment embodying the ideal. This ideal is extremely fragile, and already at subsequent appearances, right up to the very end of the opera, this light chord is clouded and becomes more dissonant: under the fifth "la – mi" in the high register, not the pure fifth "fa – do" is "laid" in the bass, but the tritone "si – fa". Other moments symbolizing eternity and eternal values will be discussed below.

It is important to understand how Berg builds the form of the opera as a whole. The surface layer is well known and obvious: it is known that the composer used instrumental forms of the past. On the one hand, *Wozzeck* continues the tradition of "literary operas" such as Debussy's *Pelléas and Mélisande* and Strauss's *Salome*, which, in turn, go back to Wagner's musical dramas, where music, as is commonly believed after Wagner himself, follows the literary text and its form is determined by this the text (which, of course, cannot be taken literally – and Wagner's music shows the highest degree of independence). On the other hand, Berg wanted to present the music of his opera as something independent of the text. The tool shapes were designed to give strength to the structure. Has Berg achieved the desired result? And if not, what result did he achieve? And what is the deep meaning of using certain traditional forms.

As we know, Berg purposefully designed the musical composition of the entire opera:

'As Berg pointed out, the ratio of three acts forms a proven three-part form (A, B, A)" precisely in so far as Acts I and III (despite the fact that the latter, of course, does not represent a musical recapitulation of the first) reveal a certain architectonic parallelism. Both surround, precisely because of their short playing duration, I could say temporal symmetry, a much longer and more full-fledged middle act.

1 And while he – we will see – reveals a musically complete image from the first to
2 the last bar, the forms of both extreme acts are much looser”⁶.

3 Berg also made changes to the text of Büchner's play. They mainly concern the
4 reduction or exclusion of a number of scenes, as a result of which the actions of the
5 main character look more unexpected and less prepared in the opera. So, the scenes
6 of buying a knife and leaving a will are excluded – in the opera, the murder looks
7 like a more spontaneous and not as thoughtful and prepared action as it was in the
8 original source. In this regard, it is natural to recall that Berg, when composing his
9 opera, was guided as a model by Debussy's opera *Pelléas and Mélisande* based on
10 the symbolist drama of Maeterlinck. Berg built the structure of *Wozzeck* and the
11 number of scenes on the model of Debussy's opera⁷. However, the most noticeable
12 change concerns the end of the opera, and it is also connected with *Pelléas and*
13 *Mélisande*, namely, with the end of the opera. In the last scene, when *Mélisande*
14 dies, her daughter is brought in, and the line is played: "It's the baby's turn." The
15 tragic fate of the mother will continue in the next "cycle" - the fate of her daughter.

16 Büchner's text, more precisely, its completed part (for the play is not finished)
17 ends with the suicide of the main character. In the opera, this scene is followed by
18 an orchestral episode, which Berg calls the epilogue. This is a tragic epitaph for
19 *Wozzeck*. However, after the epilogue (which, by definition, is placed after the
20 main narrative), another scene is given, which Berg synthesized from two sketches
21 by Büchner that were not included in the text of the play. One sketch is a completely
22 indifferent conversation of children who are going to run to look at the dead Marie
23 - just as an unusual phenomenon. In another sketch, a character named "The Fool"
24 by Büchner rides a toy horse. But Berg passes on his role to Marie's son, who plays
25 with the children. And when the children are going to look at the dead Marie, her
26 son continues to ride a "horse" with complete misunderstanding of what
27 happened. Thus, the idea of the ending of Debussy's *Pelléas* does not just develop,
28 but is elevated to a degree: an unambiguous image and forecast of the next "cycle"
29 are given - the son of the deceased hero will take an equally difficult, tragic and
30 largely meaningless path. Büchner's unfinished play became the basis of the opera
31 – quite finished, but with an "open form" (in the sense of G. Woelflin).

32 Now let's return to Berg's thoughts on the integral composition of the opera:
33 "These two extreme acts, thus architectonically constructed a little more freely,
34 whose sequence of scenes, therefore, follows more than one mental unity (the five
35 characteristic plays of Act I, the five principles of unity III), these two extreme acts,
36 therefore, surround, like the two "A's" of a three-part song form, the middle act,
37 musically designed much more firmly, the five scenes of which are inextricably
38 linked as parts of one (in this case dramatic) symphony”⁸.

⁶Tarakanov, Mikhail. *Muzykal'ny teatr Albana Berga* [Alban Berg's Music Theatre]. Moscow: Sov. kompozitor, 1976 (in Russian). P. 265.

⁷Veksler, Yuliya. *Alban Berg i ego vremya* [Alban Berg and his Time]. St. Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2009 (in Russian). P. 487.

⁸Op.cit.

1 As you can see, Berg is quite consciously trying to build a composition with
 2 looser extreme acts and a firmer middle one – in this case, he uses the terminology
 3 of his teacher Schoenberg Fest – Locker. But, firstly, the "three-part form" of the
 4 opera, which Berg even compares with the song, in practice becomes inversion
 5 (when a more solid section takes the place of a loose, developing one). Secondly,
 6 Berg's point of view on his opera needs to be commented on, since it not only sheds
 7 light on the author's intention, but also indicates the difference between the result
 8 and what the author himself declared. So, contrary to Berg's comments, the second
 9 act is very little larger than the first, and the fact that the last act is the shortest is a
 10 long-standing operatic tradition. Apparently, the image of the five-movement
 11 symphony as a form of the second act gave this act a much larger size in Berg's eyes
 12 than it actually was. Interestingly, in order to convey the actual action (and not the
 13 exposition of the characters, the plot or the outcome), Berg chooses the form of a
 14 symphonic cycle – such an understanding of the symphony as a single process of
 15 development aimed at the finale is completely natural for a follower of Mahler, as
 16 Berg was. However, to what extent does this symphony turn out to be "harder"
 17 than the extreme acts? And to what extent do instrumental forms dominate
 18 operatic ones in extreme acts? "Five characteristic plays" of the first act: 1) the
 19 "ancient suite", which in turn consists of five parts (Prelude, Sarabande, Gigue,
 20 Gavotte, Aria), not counting the reprise of the Prelude; 2) Rhapsody on three
 21 chords, 3) Military March and Lullaby, 4) Passacaglia and 5) Andante affettuoso
 22 (quasi rondo). They are not connected in any way with each other by the change of
 23 characters and stage situations and do not form any integral structure by
 24 themselves. Integrity is determined by the logic of theatrical action, as it has always
 25 been in opera. A military march and a lullaby are genres traditional for operas of
 26 the 19th century, and the "aria", as if from an "ancient suite", turns into an operatic
 27 aria, more precisely– Vozzek's arioso "We are poor people". For the scene of the
 28 Tambourmajor's violence against Marie Berg chooses the form of a rondo (quasi
 29 rondo), the refrain of which becomes the primitive, "hammering" theme of the
 30 Tambourmajor – a musical cyclic rotation, "mill wheels". The second act ends in the
 31 same way: the finale of the "symphony" is an Introduction and Rondo martiale
 32 (where the refrain is still the same theme of the Tambourmajor). It should be noted
 33 that the "scherzo" of the symphony (the scene in the tavern where Wozzeck
 34 watches Marie dancing with the Tambourmajor) contains as many as three trios
 35 and thus very expressively supports the idea of aimless circular movement (it is
 36 there that they talk about a soul that smells of vodka). After this scherzo, the final
 37 scene (a drunken Tambourmajor beats Wozzeck for no reason) is perceived as the
 38 apotheosis of violence, destroying itself – and the form of the finale, and thus the
 39 form of the entire symphony of the second act. This form becomes open and thus
 40 "loose". Paradoxically, the finale of the symphony (and the second act) turned out
 41 to be one of the most loose episodes. And, of course, Berg does this quite
 42 purposefully, deconstructing classical genres and forms. In general, it is important
 43 to emphasize that in the conditions of atonality prevailing in Wozzeck, the contrast

of solid and loose, as well as the degree of hardness itself, are very conditional and relative things.

The "weak" construction of the third act, consisting of six inventories, is also purposefully built. At first glance, six different, unrelated episodes tell us that the whole is "falling apart". And to some extent it is. But it is still interesting to see how these inventions are connected. The inventions on the tone (scene 2, the murder of Marie) and on the six-note chord (scene 4, the death of Wozzeck) contain constant sound elements, as if stopping time, presenting existential moments "close-up" and "from the inside" so that they become proportionate to eternity. The prototype of such "stops" was the Rhapsody on three chords from the first act, the music of which is repeated in the introduction of the finale (chorus of sleeping soldiers) of the second act.

The inventions on the theme (scene 1, Marie reads the Gospel) and on the key (the orchestral epilogue between scenes 4 and 5) give images of the eternal in the Christian sense – as a higher world, transcendent to the real world. Along with Marie's Lullaby from the first act, these are the most "solid" episodes of the opera. Even the scherzo (the fourth movement of the symphony) and the triple fugue of the second act (the second part of the symphony), not to mention the Passacaglia of the first act, are rather attempts to build solid forms, but in fact their deconstruction (so, the twelve-tone theme of the Passacaglia is barely audible and therefore quite ghostly, like the Doctor's dreams of immortality). The "hardness" of the scherzo, despite its tonal certainty, is shaken both by the excessive number of trios (as many as three), which creates another image of "mill wheels", and by the "dissolution" and almost disappearance of the main theme in the recapitulations. On the contrary, these inventions are distinguished by the clarity of tonality and tonal plans (C minor and D minor, respectively), as well as the concentrated relief of the thematic material. Of course, this is due to their semantic functions: the appeal to the Gospel as the highest value and the mourning generalization of Wozzeck's fate. It is only in the orchestral epilogue, when Wozzeck is no longer alive, that post factum music makes sense of what has happened. The form of the epilogue is a logically structured process, a synthesis of the most important themes of the opera, leading to a tragic climax. This is an extremely solid construction, distinguished by tonal and thematic certainty, the only time in the opera embodies a high tragedy, and therefore catharsis, which is possible only in a world with a center. This is the non-effective and timeless quintessence of the entire opera, the most striking sign of eternity in its text. But this is also the clearest exception against the background of the rest of the text – due to the fact that this text is predominantly atonal.

The inventions on rhythm (scene 3, in the tavern, after the murder of Marie) and on the continuous movement of the eighth (scene 5, children playing – recall the expression of Heraclitus: "Eternity is a child playing") create an image of continuous but aimless movement in a circle.

Thus, the inventions of the third act form three arches or "rhymes" by creating various images of eternity: 1) a stopped moment in an existential situation, 2) a solid structure bearing a transcendent eternal meaning, or, conversely, 3) aimless circularity. It is for the latter image that the "last word" remains, despite all the weight and significance of the tragic epilogue-epitaph. At the level of the entire opera, cyclicity is expressed through the end of each act with the same harmony, which returns us to the same thing, putting not a dot, but an ellipsis.

Thus, Berg, using traditional forms, but often quite unconventionally disposing of the contrast of "solid" and "loose", complete and open, purposefully forms a world that aimlessly and senselessly spins like mill wheels, but still contains (unlike Buchner's original source) a passionate and hopeless appeal to God, to the highest meaning and Eternity.

About the modification of the eternally feminine in *Lulu*

In Berg's second, unfinished opera — *Lulu* — the literary source, F. Wedekind's eponymous dilogy comprising two dramas (*Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box*), while depicting the baser sides of life, bears a clear imprint of Symbolist-Expressionist aesthetics. This circumstance lends the principal character, Lulu, a considerably greater multidimensionality and mystery. As N. I. Degtyareva aptly and perceptively observes:

"Despite the obvious, glaring immorality of the opera's main heroine, the music of the love scenes featuring her illuminates the highest poetry of human feeling. This is how Berg expressed his unconditional reverence for beauty. And therein lies the opera's central contradiction."⁹

As is well known, the ennobling of heroes — and especially heroines — in opera genre relative to their literary sources is a fairly stable tradition: one need only compare *Carmen* in P. Mérimée and G. Bizet, *Manon* in the Abbé Prévost and Massenet, *Katerina Izmailova* in Leskov and Shostakovich. Apparently, M. E. Tarakanov was reasoning within this tradition when he wrote:

"In the image of a woman indifferent to human suffering, Berg emphasizes charm and elegance, endowing Lulu's part with supple melodies. But did Wedekind's drama provide grounds for so radical a transformation of its characters? The answer to such a question is more likely to be negative."¹⁰

Paradoxically, however, Wedekind's drama does offer quite compelling grounds for Berg's interpretation — one for which Berg, in fact, hardly even needed to substantially transform Lulu's image. Wedekind's heroine is not a simple "monster,"

⁹ Smirnov, Valeriy (editor). *Istoriya zarubezhnoy muzyki. Nachalo XX – seredina XX veka* [History of Foreign Music. Beginning of the 20th Century – The Middle of the 20th Century]. Vol. 6. St. Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2001 (in Russian). P. 354..

¹⁰ Tarakanov, Mikhail. Berg. In *Muzyka XX veka. Ocherki*. In 2 parts. Part 2, book 4. Moscow: Muzyka, 1984, (in Russian). P. 441.

but a fundamental deformation and transformation of the image of "eternal femininity." Although those words do not appear in Wedekind's text, it is made entirely clear that Lulu symbolizes a certain complex of qualities eternally inherent in the female sex. There are also oblique references to Goethe, who actualized and "brought to life" the concept of eternal femininity. Earth Spirit (the title of the dilogy's first drama) is a character from *Faust*, where Pandora is also mentioned. Yet Wedekind himself links the concept of "earth spirit" and its evil essence not to Goethe but to Schiller: right at the very beginning, before the prologue, the Servant recites a verse epigraph from Schiller's *Wallenstein*:

But nature made me of a coarser stuff,
And my desires will hold me fast to earth.
The evil spirit rules this earth, and not
The good¹¹.

The essence of the opera's central image is revealed immediately, in the Prologue, where the animal tamer, among other beasts, presents the serpent Lulu:

"She was created to cause misfortune,
To lure, to entice, and to poison,
And to kill — and all without evil intent."¹²

"Without evil intent" is a significant addition, evoking the image of "indifferent nature." Before carrying the serpent away, the tamer addresses her tenderly: "Innocent one! My treasure"¹³. The spirit of Symbolism is present in the action itself, in connection with the real woman Lulu. In response to the painter Schwarz's phrase "Your hair breathes the freshness of morning"¹⁴, Lulu replies: "I am of water." Thus, a parallel is drawn with the legendary image of Melusine — Mélisande — who periodically transforms into a serpent. (In Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* no such transformation occurs, yet even there the heroine is closely linked to the aquatic world.) The element of water is a symbol of ceaseless changeability, which is present in *Lulu*, who symbolizes something eternal. Her lovers call her by various names, most of them symbolic: Eva, Mignon (again an association with Goethe), Nelly.

Schwarz, working on Lulu's portrait, remarks: "I have never before had to paint anyone with such an incessantly changing face. Not a single expression could be held for long"¹⁵. A portrait — an image, a likeness — captures the deep essence of a person, as if "summing up" their entire life and inner world. But in Lulu's case it turns out that her essence is an elusive secret that cannot be seized and fixed on canvas. At the

¹¹Lamport: "The Robbers Wallenstein" / translated with an introduction by F.J. Lamport. Penguin books Ltd, 1979. P. 370–371.

¹²Wedekind, Frank. *Lulu*. Transl. S. Gorodetskiy, Vs. Meyerkhold, P. Giberman. Moscow: Agraf, 2019 (in Russian). P. 31.

¹³Op.cit.

¹⁴Op.cit. P. 75.

¹⁵Op.cit. P. 34.

end of the dilogy, when Lulu demands that the portrait be removed from her sight and thrown out of the window, her latest lover — Alva — replies:

"No. Before this portrait my self-respect returns to me. It makes my fate comprehensible. Everything we have lived through becomes so natural, so understandable, clear as the sun. Let he who feels safe gazing upon those full, blooming lips, those large, innocent, childlike eyes, and that rosy-white, luxuriant body — let him cast the first stone at us."¹⁶

A little later Alva continues the discussion of the portrait:

"The childlike expression of her eyes, despite everything she has experienced since then, has remained exactly the same. [...] Thank God one does not notice the progressive decline when one lives together constantly. A woman blossoms for us at the very moment when she is destined to ruin a man forever. Such is, after all, her natural purpose."¹⁷

The reflection of the main heroine in works of art is, one might say, a recurring motif throughout the dilogy. Alva compares his beloved to a symphony:

"I feel through your dress your figure, like a symphony. These slender bones — this is the cantabile; this delightful crescendo; these knees, this capriccio — the mighty andante of sensuality."¹⁸

Watching Lulu dance in the theatre, Alva — being a writer — muses to himself: "Of course. One could write something more interesting for her"¹⁹ and in effect outlines the plot of Wedekind's own drama. Interestingly, Berg, who wrote the libretto himself, turned Alva the writer into Alva the composer, and in the opera the plan of the drama becomes the plan of an opera instead. In this way, both Wedekind and Berg introduce a layering of time: the very moment of their creative conception is discussed within the play and within the opera.

In Alva's lines one notices not only infatuation with Lulu's beauty, but also reverence for her, and boundless respect:

"Oh Lord, I saw that you were — immeasurably above me. And I felt toward you, I think, more respect than toward my mother. Just think: when my mother died — I was only seventeen — I went to my father and demanded that he marry you at once, or else we would fight a duel!"²⁰

The numerous quotations were cited in order to demonstrate that even in Wedekind's drama Lulu is far from a simple heartless villain. One could also adduce

¹⁶Op.cit. P. 289.

¹⁷Op.cit. P. 291.

¹⁸Op.cit. P. 220.

¹⁹Op.cit. P. 129.

²⁰Op.cit. P. 125.

phrases spoken by Lulu herself, testifying to her refined inner world. Thus the "highest poetry of human feeling" that fills Berg's operatic music was already present in Wedekind. Of course, music renders that poetry considerably more emotionally intense and tangible.

Lulu is the first opera written in the twelve-tone technique. The themes and series of all the characters are derived from the prime series, and this carries a very great expressive significance. Just as the "demonically-eternal-feminine" essence of Lulu (the invariant) manifests itself exclusively through variant modifications (the "core" of her personality being an unmanifested secret "sealed with seven seals"), so too does the prime series-invariant constantly be present throughout the ever-changing musical fabric.

In such conditions, "the eternal" may manifest itself in the image of the senseless turning of "mill wheels." And Berg, constructing the composition of his opera, took special care to ensure this. The final scene of the opera takes place in London, where Lulu, her second husband Alva, and a former lover — the old man Schigolch — live in poverty, kept by Lulu, who has turned to prostitution. In Wedekind's play she is visited by four clients. And according to Berg's initial plans²¹, he followed the plot of the play; however, he ultimately reduced the number of clients to three — in order to present them as doubles of Lulu's former husbands and lovers. The double of the doctor-husband (a spoken role) is the professor (a non-speaking role); the double of the painter is a Black man, ruler of an African country (tenor), who kills Alva; the double of Schön — the only man Lulu ever loved and whom she shot when he gave her a pistol for her to use on herself — is Jack the Ripper, who kills Lulu. The roles of the double-clients are played by the same actors as the lovers.

Thus, the tragedies of the opera's earlier acts are reflected in the final scene not literally but as farces, and in the same sequence. The outcome, however, is the opposite: whereas formerly all the men perished through Lulu's agency, now she herself perishes. Most striking and paradoxical of all is the shared musical material in the duet of Lulu and Schön and in the final duet of Lulu and Jack the Ripper. As N. I. Degtyareva writes:

"The duet is built on musical material that previously expressed Lulu's love for Dr. Schön, subsequently killed by her. Listening to the most poetic music, one might think — if one does not attend to the meaning of the words being sung — that one is hearing one of the most beautiful love duets in the world operatic literature. In reality, what is being discussed is the price Jack the Ripper will pay for possession of Lulu's already faded (and health-threatening) charms — though those charms are the furthest thing from Jack's mind: he thirsts for the blood of his next victim."²²

²¹Hall, Patricia. *A View of Berg's Lulu through the Autograph Sources*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996. P. 61.

²²Smirnov. P. 355-356.

1 It is worth noting, however, that the opera's music is so complex and difficult to
 2 memorize that the recurrences of material are recognized more intuitively — and
 3 this fundamentally distinguishes them from the recurrences in Romantic operas,
 4 which are perceived as unmistakable repetitions. In this respect, a more immediately
 5 expressive and structural role is played by the endings of acts on the same harmony
 6 (a device used in *Wozzeck*).

7 But are there in the opera *Lulu* any images of eternity in a different, Christian
 8 sense — eternity as the radiance of the highest, divine meanings? We have already
 9 noted the role of the series as an invariant shimmering through a multitude of
 10 variant-reflections — and this concerns the pitch content. But the same principle
 11 extends to compositional structures as well. The opera contains numerous modified
 12 repetitions, often conditioned by the device of "multiplied roles." The doubles of
 13 Lulu's lovers appearing in the final scene are the most vivid example, though the
 14 device is by no means exhausted by them. There are more multiplied roles; their
 15 summary table is given in Patricia Hall's book²³. The appearance of doubles is
 16 accompanied by the use of the same series and often the same musical fragments, as
 17 in the case of the aforementioned duet of Lulu — first with Schön, then with Jack the
 18 Ripper. And the duet music sounds once more in the orchestral Adagio.

19 Instrumental forms: The first act is based on sonata form, but interrupted by
 20 other scenes. The principle of the second act is that of a rondo (this designation is
 21 absent from the opera itself but is present in the sketches and in the completed
 22 orchestral suite, the *Lulu-Symphonie*). The basis of the third act is variations²⁴. One
 23 might say that these interrupted forms also create the effect of a kind of
 24 "shimmering."

25 In addition to ordinary repetitions, Berg in *Lulu* employs his favorite (though
 26 not especially frequent) device — the presentation of material in retrograde
 27 (palindrome). Derived from early polyphony, this device acquired new life and new
 28 meanings in the twentieth century. Its most conspicuous embodiment is found in
 29 Hindemith's opera *Hin und Zurück* (*There and Back*). In the opera's simple plot, events
 30 escalate to a domestic drama and almost lead to a murder. But at the very last
 31 moment before the irreversible, all events (as if on a filmstrip run in reverse) proceed
 32 in reverse order, which the music naturally reflects as well — in other words, the
 33 direction of time is reversed for the sake of a happy ending.

34 Berg had recourse to the retrograde device even before the appearance of
 35 Hindemith's opera — for example, in the Chamber Concerto. In *Lulu* there are two
 36 palindromes: one is of "local" significance and connected with a theatrical situation.
 37 In the theatre, Lulu the dancer returns to her dressing room (Act I, Scene 3, sextet,
 38 mm. 1177–1203). The other palindrome, in the composer's own words, reflects the
 39 entire essence of the tragedy — the "Ostinato" between the first and second scenes of
 40 Act II, accompanying the film footage (no stage action takes place at this moment).

²³Hall P. P. 88.

²⁴Jarman, Douglas. *The Music of Alban Berg*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979. P. 201.

In Berg's words: "The interlude which brides the gap between the last act of *Earth Spirit* and the first act of *Pandora* is also the focal point of the whole tragedy. In it begins, after the ascent of the preceding acts and scenes, the descent of the following scenes"²⁵ [Jarman 1979, 198]. This refers to Lulu's ascent from the very bottom of the social ladder and her subsequent fall back to, one might say, the "bottom." In other words, the center of the opera is the point of Lulu's highest ascent — so Berg determined, defining the place of the film music within the opera as a whole. However, if we recall that the film footage accompanying this interlude is connected with Lulu's imprisonment for the murder of Schön and her subsequent release (or rather, escape), then understanding the central point of the opera as the moment of the heroine's highest ascent would be an oversimplification. The central point turns out to be thoroughly ambivalent.

What, then, is the point, and why did Berg need this mirror symmetry here? Although Berg wrote the musical retrograde specifically in the central Ostinato, his words quoted above suggest he was prepared to regard the entire opera in such terms. In this film-symphonic center the composer concentrated all the most important series (the leitmotif-series of the characters).

"Since palindromic or retrograde motion is, by its very nature, 'anti-time,' inevitably closing the circle by returning to the point at which it began and at which the whole process could begin again, the 'Film Music' interlude at the centre of the opera both marks the turning point of the drama and symbolizes the circular construction of the work as a whole. Through purely musical means Berg, thus, identifies as the central subject of the opera an idea that is only hinted at the original Wedekind plays."

"Anti-time" is attainable only in art, and it can be expressed most directly in music. But before time, together with the events that determine it, reverses direction, it must — for the briefest of moments — come to a halt: and this is precisely what happens at the very center of the opera, at the center of the film interlude. Surrounded by the brutal, urbanistic sounds of the Ostinato, this center — coinciding both with Lulu's highest social ascent and with her imprisonment, which paradoxically frees her from contact with men no better than herself (only less candid in their inability to conceal the fact) — this "musical moment" outside of time expresses the entire eternal essence of Lulu's fragile and unprotected soul, and it is this very moment that becomes the "core" of all her most tender vocal passages.

²⁵Op.cit. P.237.

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