

# From Composer to Pianist: The Musical Text as a Medium of Dialogue and Interpretation

## Do Compositor ao Pianista: O Texto Musical como Meio de Diálogo e Interpretação



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**Abstract:** The article analyzes the performative actualisation of a musical work, understood as a complex communicative act based on the dialectical interaction between the composer (author) and the performer (interpreter). The central mediator in this system is the artistic text, usually represented by the musical text (score). The author emphasizes the dual function of the score: on the one hand, it serves as a channel for transmitting the author's intention - a set of conceptual, structural, and sonorous aspects of the artistic and figurative idea, encoded by means of the semiotic system of musical notation (fixing pitch, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, etc.). On the other hand, due to the inevitable semiotic limitation and internal incompleteness of notation, which is unable to record all the nuances (agogics, dynamics, timbre, microdynamics, touché) with absolute precision, the musical text (score) becomes a dialogue space. This incompleteness necessitates the active interpretative activity of the performer, who is not a passive relay. Still, an active subject who decodes, hermeneutically

comprehends, and sonically recreates (actualizes) the author's intention. Thus, the musical text sets the normative framework but requires creative replenishment. The relevance of the study of this communicative system is justified by its fundamental significance for understanding the ontological status of music, the mechanisms of listener perception, the dialectics of the correlation between the author's intention and performer's freedom, as well as rethinking the role of the performer as a subject of interpretation, conducting a dialogue with the text and the author.

**Keywords:** Musical notation. Author's intention. Interpretation. Dialogue space. Performing freedom.

**Resumo:** O artigo analisa a atualização performativa de uma obra musical, entendida como um ato comunicativo complexo baseado na interação dialética entre o compositor (autor) e o intérprete (executante). O mediador central nesse sistema é o texto artístico, geralmente representado pelo texto musical (partitura). O autor enfatiza a dupla função da partitura: por um lado, serve como canal de transmissão da intenção do autor — um conjunto de aspectos conceituais, estruturais e sonoros da ideia artística e figurativa, codificados por meio do sistema semiótico da notação musical (fixação de altura, ritmo, tempo, dinâmica etc.). Por outro lado, devido à inevitável limitação semiótica e à incompletude interna da notação, incapaz de registrar com absoluta precisão todas as nuances (agógica, dinâmica, timbre, microdinâmica, *touché*), o texto musical (partitura) torna-se um espaço de diálogo. Essa incompletude exige a atividade interpretativa do intérprete, que não é um transmissor passivo, mas um sujeito ativo que decodifica, compreende hermeneuticamente e recria sonoramente (atualiza) a intenção do autor. Assim, o texto musical estabelece o quadro normativo, mas requer complementação criativa. A relevância do estudo desse sistema comunicativo justifica-se por sua importância fundamental para a compreensão do status ontológico da música, dos mecanismos de percepção do ouvinte, da dialética da correlação entre a intenção do autor e a liberdade

do intérprete, bem como pela necessidade de repensar o papel do intérprete como sujeito da interpretação, em diálogo com o texto e com o autor.

**Palavras-chave:** Notação musical. Intenção do autor. Interpretação. Espaço de diálogo. Liberdade interpretativa.

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## 1. Introduction

Performative actualization of a musical work is defined as a complex communicative act caused by the dialectical interaction between the composer as the primary creator and the performer as the interpreter. The central mediator in this communicative system is the artistic text, usually represented by the score, which acts as a channel for transmitting the author's intentionality — a complex of conceptual, affective, structural, and sonorous aspects of the idea, encoded by the composer with the help of a specific semiotic system of musical notation. This system, which operates with generally accepted symbols to fix the fundamental parameters of the musical fabric (pitch, rhythm, metre, tempo, dynamics, articulation, phrasing) and includes an extensive network of verbal and symbolic directives regarding the nature of performance, constitutes the primary layer of information that represents the composer's intent.

However, like any sign system, musical notation is characterized by inherent incompleteness and a limited capacity to convey all nuances of musical thought with absolute precision and exhaustiveness. Specifically, it often captures discrete meanings for phenomena that exist on a continuum (such as agogic and dynamic gradations), while leaving significant hermeneutic space for interpretation in areas such as timbre, microdynamics, intonational expression, and the character of sound production (*touché*). These aspects are particularly significant for instruments with rich timbral and dynamic capabilities, such as the piano. This semiotic limitation of the text necessitates active interpretive activity on the part of the performer, who, in this context, acts not as a passive relay of recorded information but as an active subject who decodes, hermeneutically comprehends, and, ultimately, reconstructs the author's intention in a specific sound reality during performance. Consequently, the artistic text (score) functions not only as a channel of transmission but also as a dialogical space in which the interaction between the composer's intention and

the performer's interpretation takes place. It sets the normative framework, but requires active interpretative replenishment, determining the final performance result and giving specificity to the interaction in the composer-performer (pianist) system.

It is worth noting that the interaction between composer and pianist assumes the characteristics of a dialectical process, reflecting the relationship between philosophy and art. The composer's idea, like a philosophical concept, initially exists as an ideal structure—a thought about music—and the musical text (score) is an attempt to translate this abstract idea into the language of concrete symbols (Pham, 2025).

The study of communicative aspects of interaction within the composer-performer system, mediated by the artistic text (score), is of fundamental relevance for musical art for several interrelated reasons. These include the ontological status of the musical work, the determination of the listener's perception, the correlation between the author's intention and the performer's freedom, and the understanding of the role of the performer, who is not merely a technical executor of the author's instructions but a subject of interpretation guiding the performance. This also includes examining the role of the composer-performer within this system.

Thus, the study of communication between composer and performer through the prism of the artistic text is the key to understanding the fundamental processes of music's existence as a performing art, the mechanisms of its impact on the listener, and the complex dynamics of interaction between the creative idea and its sound embodiment.

The study aims to comprehensively examine the functioning of the artistic text (score) as a mediator and dialogue space within the composer-performer communication system. This involves analyzing the mechanisms by which the composer's intention is encoded and translated within the musical text, as well as the methods of its artistic and performative interpretation. To achieve our objective, we have raised the following research questions:

What structural and verbal means of musical text are used by composers to encode artistic intent, and how were they determined in different historical periods (from Baroque to Romanticism and Modernism)?

How did the degree of detail or incompleteness of notation (from free Baroque forms and basso continuo to Romantic regulation and avant-garde experiments of the 20th century) affect the freedom of performing interpretation?

What role does the cultural and historical aspect (national traditions, performing schools) play in shaping the specifics of musical communication “composer–performer”?

## 2. Literature Review

The study of communication between composer and performer inevitably relies on the theoretical foundations of musicology, which regards the artistic text (score) as the primary medium of this interaction. Foundational works in the field of music theory and musical semiotics (e.g., Aranovsky, 1974; Aronova, 2001; Gontsov, 2005; Gundorina, 2012; Dubinets, 1997; Katunyan, 2005) confirm the status of the score as a complex sign system. Scholars demonstrate that musical notation, developed over the centuries, functions as a specific “language” of the composer, intended to encode and preserve the author’s intention. This system operates with a set of commonly accepted symbols used to indicate the main parameters of musical texture, including pitch, rhythm, meter, tempo, dynamics, articulation, and phrasing. It also includes verbal and symbolic instructions designed to convey the imaginative and emotional structure and character of the performance.

An essential aspect of the theoretical understanding of the problem is the analysis of the interaction between composer and performer. Historical and musicological studies, particularly those addressing the history of performing styles and the evolution of notation (e.g., Kuzmin, 2010; Malinkovskaya, 2019; Pereverzeva, 2018; Petrov, 2016), demonstrate a significant evolution in both

the notation system and the nature of communication. Thus, Malinkovskaya (2019) points out that in the Baroque era, scores often contained only the basic framework (e.g., the basso continuo system), assuming a significant share of performing freedom and improvisation in the realization of ornamentation, dynamics, and articulation. During the Classical and especially the Romantic era, there was a tendency toward the progressive detailing of the composer's instructions. Composers sought greater control over the sonic outcome by introducing detailed dynamic, tempo, articulation, and affective remarks. In the music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this tendency reaches polar manifestations: from the desire for total control over all sound parameters (in serialism) to the introduction of aleatoric elements that again expand the field of interpretive freedom and imply an active dialogue between the performer and the text. Understanding this historical context is necessary for an adequate interpretation of scores from different eras (Malinkovskaya, 2019).

Modern theorists of musical performance, such as Ekimovsky (1997), Malinkovskaya (2019), and Suponeva (1993), emphasize the active, creative role of the performer. The performer is regarded as a subject of interpretation who engages in dialogue with the musical text. Interpretation is understood as an act of co-creation, in which the performer, drawing upon both the text and its context, produces a unique sonic realization of the musical work.

According to Yakupov (2016), music is a dynamic art that unfolds in time yet possesses an internal logic that leads to unity. Its spiritual depth and harmony create a mystery that puts a limit to rational analysis – there remains an inscrutable «transcendent» essence. This means that we can easily study the external, sonic aspects of music, but its true, spiritual meaning remains largely hidden. Understanding this more profound meaning, the very essence of artistic value, is only possible through understanding how the composer translates their ideas into the language of music (encoding) and how the listener decodes them (decoding). Musical communication is therefore a two-way process involving not only



sounds but also mechanisms of comprehension. Analyzing music must take into account both its material side and how meaning is encoded and decoded. In addition, the understanding of music is also influenced by hidden factors, such as cultural background, listening habits, and ethnic characteristics, which shape perception through the assimilation of general cultural codes rather than through the decoding of a specific message (Yakupov, 2016).

The primary material of musical communication is the musical text (sound, musical notation, transformed into other forms, for example, graphic, digital, etc.), which uses expressive means of musical language to represent the musical form given by the composer, “materializing” their artistic idea (Yakupov, 2016).

At the same time, modern research in the fields of musicology and pedagogy has indicated that communication between composer and pianist is a multidimensional process, in which biographical, cultural, interpretive, and pedagogical factors are combined. For example, Chen (2024) analyzed the main motivational factors of high-class pianists based on the biographies of Cliburn competitors. The author demonstrated that the interpretive strategy of the performer is shaped not only by the text of the score, but also by a broad cultural and personal context. It is known that the musical text becomes only one of the layers of communication, which is always interpreted through the prism of individual experience. The historical dimension of this problem is revealed in Dingle’s (2016) work. This author analyzed the figure of Olivier Messiaen as a pianist. The researcher demonstrated that the performer can act simultaneously as a “romantic” and a “modernist,” and can expand the composer’s textual instructions with their own interpretive energy. Here, the literary text has become a tool for fixing the author’s will and a space for the meeting of different stylistic paradigms that require intellectual and emotional flexibility from the performer.

The issues of musical translation and adaptation have also been analyzed in modern studies. Grajter (2024) proposed a conceptualization of the concepts of “musical translation”, “arrangement”, “cover version”, and “performance interpretation”



as forms of transformation of the literary text. For the dialogue between the composer and the pianist, this means that any performance contains elements of “translation”, where the performer leaves the transcoding of the author’s contents into a new communicative meaning.

The pedagogical aspect receives special attention. Lei and Luparenko (2024) and Ma (2024) examined the primary differences in piano performance and teaching methods across various countries. They determined that national pedagogical traditions begin with the technical aspects of interpretation and end with the concept of the performer’s role in communication with the author. The Chinese and Italian schools, for example, treat the balance between textual accuracy and creative interpretation differently, which opens up a more expansive space for understanding “national dialogues” with the musical text.

An additional dimension of the interaction between composer and pianist is described in the work of Caravaca Gonzalez (2024), where the influence of string instruments in piano performance is clearly evident. The author emphasized that interpretation is often shaped by inter-instrumental allusions and “transfer” of performance practices, which enriches the dialogue between text and performer beyond the boundaries of a single instrumental tradition.

Puccinelli (2024) studied joint performance in vocal-piano duets. The author demonstrated that communication in this format extends beyond the “composer-performer” framework, encompassing the dialogue between the singer and pianist. The literary text serves as the basis for collective interpretation, where mutual sensitivity and co-creation take precedence.

Yi (2024) indicated that an integrative approach to interpretation should synthesize historical, methodological, and stylistic components in the practice of piano performance. He determined that an adequate disclosure of the literary text is possible only if the historical-stylistic sense, as well as methodological and technical strategies, are taken into account. The latter should help the pianist realize the potential of the score.

Thus, contemporary literature defines the literary text as a space for dialogue between the composer and the performer. If the classical musicological tradition emphasized the function of musical notation as a codification of the author's intention, then recent studies (Chen, 2024; Grajter, 2024; Lei & Luparenko, 2024; Puccinelli, 2024; Devadze & Gechbaia, 2024) have shown the multi-layered nature of this process, in which biographical factors, national pedagogical schools, inter-instrumental influences, and collective forms of performance play an important role. Despite the considerable number of works devoted to certain aspects of notation, the history of performance, and the theory of interpretation, there is a lack of studies offering a comprehensive analysis of the score as a space of dialogical interaction between composer and performer at the micro-level of specific musical works.

Existing studies do not always fully reveal how the composer's specific notational strategies (choice of symbols, degree of detail, nature of verbal remarks) are perceived and decoded by performers, and how this is reflected in the variability of interpretations. This is particularly true of contemporary music, where innovative notation techniques are often utilized.

### 3. Methodology

The methodology of the research consists of the textological approach, which is aimed at an in-depth study of the score as a semiotic system, the primary carrier of the author's intention and the object of fixation of a musical work, as well as the interpretive (hermeneutic) approach, the essence of which is to analyse the processes and results of the performing reception and performative perception of the musical text.

We have selected a range of piano works from various historical periods and styles to analyze, to trace the evolution of notational strategies and the nature of composer-performer communication. The selection includes works from four periods:

the Baroque, characterized by a relative brevity of notation in terms of dynamic and affective indications, implying a considerable degree of interpretative freedom based on knowledge of stylistic conventions; the Classical, which demonstrates a gradual expansion of the arsenal of dynamic and articulatory indications; the Romantic, characterised by considerable detail in the score, an abundance of verbal remarks aimed at conveying the emotional content and character of the performance; and the Piano period, characterized by a high degree of notation in terms of dynamic and affective indications.

This selection of material will enable a vivid comparison of composers' different communicative strategies and reveal how the means of capturing intent and the amount of information delegated to the performer's discretion have evolved historically.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Musical language and text as spaces of communication

In the contemporary scientific discourse encompassing musicology, semiotics, cognitive sciences, and the philosophy of music, the concept of "musical language" lacks an established epistemological status and a generally accepted, unambiguous definition. The existing variety of interpretations reflects different methodological paradigms and research emphases.

1. Structural-syntactic approach. Several researchers tend to interpret this phenomenon through the prism of its structural organisation. Within the framework of this paradigm, "musical language" is identified with a set of invariant principles of sound organisation characteristic of a specific style, epoch, or composer's idiom. Emphasis is placed on identifying stable syntactic regularities and normative associative links between sonorous elements (intervals, chords, rhythmic figures, and timbres), as well as typified models of their deployment over time.

2. The alternative viewpoint insists on the purely metaphorical status of the term. Proponents of this approach argue that music as a sign system lacks the fundamental characteristics inherent in verbal language systems. These include, for example, double membership (the presence of levels of insignificant units — phonemes and significant units — morphemes/lexemes), arbitrariness of the sign (conventional relationship between the signifier and the signified), developed referential semantics (the ability to directly point to objects and phenomena of extra-linguistic reality), and the possibility of formulating propositional judgements.

3. The third research group, while acknowledging the inevitable metaphorical use of the term, nevertheless believes that the degree of analogy between musical and verbal communicative systems is more substantial and more profound than in the case of other sign systems of non-verbal art, such as “the language of painting” or “the language of architecture.” The arguments in favor of this viewpoint include the presence in music of a complex hierarchical structure, principles of syntactic organization, stylistic variation, and an obvious communicative potential for intersubjective interaction.

4. From the point of view of the communicative approach, “musical language” is understood as a semiotic system that provides the possibility of creating, transmitting, and interpreting musical messages. This system is based on:

1. Expressive means — a structured set of sonorous parameters (pitch, duration, volume, timbre), as well as textural, harmonic, melodic, rhythmic, dynamic, and formal elements, along with stylistic and genre idioms;

2. Musical semantics — a system of meanings associated with expressive means, mainly of affective, symbolic, and associative nature, formed within the framework of a specific cultural and historical tradition;

3. Musical grammar (syntax) — a set of implicit or explicit rules and principles governing the organisation, combination, and development of expressive means in time to form meaningful musical structures.

Thus, musical language is considered a functional, codified system that enables the intersubjective exchange of specific musical and aesthetic information and affective states in the process of musical activity (composing, performing, perceiving).

Within the framework of structural-semiotic analysis of a musical work, V. Grigoriev (1987) proposes a multilevel model of a musical text, distinguishing in its organisation three hierarchically subordinated components, each of which has its own specificity and functional load.

The graphical-acoustic (notational) component is the material basis of the musical text, fixed in the conventional system of graphic notation. It includes a set of musical notation signs (graphemes) that define the pitch and rhythmic parameters of sounds, as well as accompanying symbolism (dynamic, agogic, articulatory, and other notations) that regulate the nature of performance. The emotional-associative layer (subtext) is a field of extramusical associations and references linking a given work to a broad socio-cultural, historical, and biographical context ("life"). The formation of this layer is conditioned both by the intensionality of the musical text itself (semantic vectors embedded by the author, specific intonation and genre markers, rhetorical figures, etc.) and by the apperceptive base of the recipient. The text contains particular structures (e.g., recognisable intonations, genre models, timbre allusions) that function as triggers activating the listener's perceptual and cognitive mechanisms, actualizing their previous experience: both musical (auditory thesaurus, knowledge of styles, genres) and, more broadly, life (emotional, existential, cultural). The conceptual and semantic layer (supra-text) includes the ideological intent, the dominant aesthetic attitude, the system of images, and the overall picture and semantic drama. This layer is not inherent in the text as an object, but is generated in the process of reception, both by

the performer (interpreter) and the listener. The supra-text is the result of semiosis — the process of meaning generation in the act of communication between the work and the perceiving subject (Grigoriev, 1987). Within the framework of semiotic reflection on the nature of musical language, there is an ongoing debate regarding its sign status. A number of researchers (Aranovsky, 1974; Aronova, 2001) argue for the non-familiar character of the musical semiotic system. Their reasoning is based on the observation that the structural units of music (intonations, motifs, themes, etc.) lack a stable and unambiguous denotative function. In other words, they maintain that it is impossible to establish a fixed referential correlation between elements of musical language and specific objects, phenomena, or concepts from extramusical reality that would serve as their denotata.

In contrast, another group of scholars (Brown, 1986; Morawski, 1961; Stone, 1980) recognizes the sign nature of musical art but classifies the signs used in it as specific and asemantic. According to this perspective, music operates with signs that are contentless or extrasensory in nature, meaning they lack stable, conventionally fixed semantic content or referential linkage to the objective world. Thus, music is acknowledged as a sign system that functions with signs devoid of explicit semantics (Morawski, 1961). According to Medushevsky (1961), a musical sign is a material acoustic formation with a distinctive structure. Its role in music is multifaceted and may involve evoking thoughts and images of the world, expressing emotions and evaluations, influencing or redirecting the listener's perception, and signifying its relationship with other signs within the musical text (Medushevsky, 1961). In his concept of musical semantics, Medushevsky (1961) differentiates three categories of meanings: syntactic, semantic, and communicative. Syntactic meanings are conditioned by the structural relations of musical signs — their potential or realised relationship within a musical text or system. They characterize the internal organization of music. The referential function of signs conditions semantic meanings, their correlation with extramusical reality: the objective world,



the sphere of cognitive processes (thoughts, ideas), the affective sphere (feelings), and the axiological system (human, spiritual values). Hence, communicative meanings are determined by the pragmatic function of signs, which consists in their ability to exert a controlling, regulative effect on the listener's perceptual processes.

#### 4.2. The evolution of musical notation: from open structures to detailed regulation

In the system of musical communication, graphic notation has consistently been one of the most visual and reliable channels of information transmission between composers (authors) and performers (interpreters). The historical trajectory of the development of notational systems in Western European culture covers at least a thousand years and reflects broader socio-cultural transformations.

The first examples, preserved mainly in medieval monastic scriptoria, were based on unwritten notation. It recorded only approximate contours of pitch movement, relative ratios of voices or, sometimes, applicative prompts for instrumentalists. Such a system did not provide an exact reproduction of the composer's intention, but instead served as a mnemonic support for performers who already had an oral tradition of singing. The turning point came around 1027, when the Italian theorist and teacher Guido d'Arezzo introduced the prototype of modern linear notation. The use of lines to accurately record pitch bridged the gap between theoretical knowledge and performance practice. This significantly improved the level of accuracy in music transmission and enabled the reproduction of the composer's intended sound more closely. The next stage was the introduction of printing technologies. In 1481, Ottaviano Scotto first printed musical samples, and in 1501, Ottaviano Petrucci improved the movable type for polyphonic collections. Thanks to the advent of printing, music gained unprecedented stability, accessibility, and standardization. From



this moment on, and until the twentieth century, printed notes remained the main channel of dialogue between composers and performers, until they were gradually replaced by sound recordings, radio, and digital media (Zhukova, 2021).

Thus, the historical evolution of notation demonstrates a constant desire for greater accuracy and stability in the transmission of musical content, which corresponded to the needs of changing cultural aspects. As musical language became more complex, the notational system continued to evolve and differentiate. A need arose for a more universal notation that could adequately capture the diverse types of music. However, this process was characterized by an inherent dialectical tension: the desire to increase the precision and detail of musical notation inevitably led to a restriction of its mobility and a narrowing of the hermeneutic space for the performer. Each new indication in the score (dynamic, agogic, articulatory, etc.) minimized the likelihood of interpretive deviation from the author's intended will but simultaneously reduced the variability of interpretations and the degree of creative freedom of the performer. Increasing the density of normative information in the musical text reduced the polysemy of basic symbols. This tendency is clearly illustrated when comparing the relatively transparent urtexts of Baroque scores (e.g., sonatas by D. Scarlatti) with the detailed instructions typical of piano works of the Romantic era or their 19th-century revisions (e.g., works by F. Chopin), where the composer or editor strives to regulate the parameters of performance as precisely as possible.

#### **4. 3. Musical Notation: Balance between Authorial Regulation and Performative Freedom**

The contrast between Romantic and Baroque notation indicates that the density of the author's instructions affects the freedom of the performer. While the Romantics sought to prescribe every nuance of sound, Baroque scores relied heavily on the stylistic knowledge and imagination of the interpreter.

In the example of a fragment from Chopin's Sonata Op. Frequent changes in dynamics emphasize the dramatic character, while frequent crescendos indicate the build-up of tension. In contrast, the fragment of D. Scarlatti's Sonata lacks dynamic markings altogether.

### Fragment 1 - F. Chopin. Sonata No. 3 (Op. 58)<sup>1</sup>

**Allegro maestoso**

Red. \*

### Fragment 2 - D. Scarlatti. Sonata in G Minor<sup>2</sup>

*Essercizio 12*

**Domenico SCARLATTI**  
(1685-1757)  
Restitution : P. Gouin

**Presto**

Red. \*

This comparison between Chopin and Scarlatti illustrates two opposing strategies of musical communication through notation: one tends to maximize the regulation of the performer's actions, while the other leaves a vast space for interpretive freedom.

<sup>1</sup> <https://musescore.com/user/35288416/scores/6721132/piano-tutorial>

<sup>2</sup> <https://pianokafe.com/music/domenico-scarlatti-sonate-k12/>

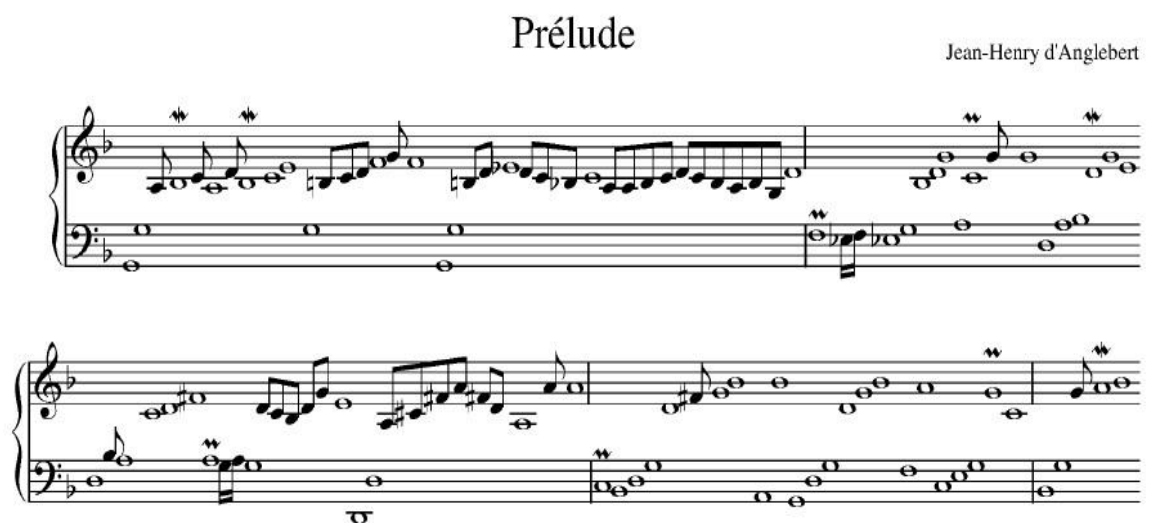
However, in addition to such contrasts, the history of music has also seen notational systems that were deliberately constructed as incomplete. Their essence was to actively involve the performer as a co-creator, turning the musical text into a flexible framework rather than a rigid instruction. In the era of Romanticism, vividly personified by Chopin, musical text was increasingly perceived as a detailed script designed to minimize ambiguities and ensure the most accurate embodiment of the author's intention. In contrast, in Scarlatti's sonatas, the absence of remarks makes the text much more open, turning it into a framework that comes to life only thanks to the performing imagination and stylistic competence of the interpreter.

This contrast proved that musical notation is never a neutral or transparent mediator. It made it possible to demonstrate the complex interplay between the composer's authority and the performer's freedom. Thus, in some historical periods, this balance tended towards strict control, while in others, it favoured greater participation by the performer and improvisational freedom. At the same time, beyond these polar examples, there were also notational practices that were deliberately created as incomplete. Their goal was not so much to leave "gaps" as to invite the performer into an active co-creative dialogue, transforming the notation into a dynamic communicative space rather than a rigid instruction.

In the history of music, there are types of notation deliberately created with a lack of detail. Such notation not only allows but often implies a certain amount of improvisation on the part of the performer. In the Baroque period, such "free" forms of notation, reflecting this experimental approach, were characteristic primarily of the genres of prelude and fantasy. One of the most striking examples of this approach is preludes without beat features (preludes non mesurés – unmetalled preludes). This is a specific genre of French harpsichord music from the 17th and 18th centuries, represented in the works of Louis Couperin, Jean-Henri d'Anglebert, Jean-Philippe Rameau, and other notable masters. The notation of such works is extremely laconic: it usually

lacks note durations, bars, tempo markings, and a clear rhythmic structure. However, this apparent freedom is in fact a serious challenge for the performer, as it requires an in-depth knowledge of the performance style, traditions, and historical context of the Baroque era. The correct interpretation of such music depends on the performer's understanding of harmonic logic, rhetorical figures, and the ability to recognize and adequately reproduce characteristic melismatic (ornamental) turns, which largely determine the rhythmic pulsation and dramaturgy. Often, the key to deciphering is other, more detailed notated works by the same composer: analyzing analogies allows you to identify formulas characteristic of the author and apply them to the performance of non-metrical pieces.

### Fragment 3 - Jean-Henri d'Anglebert. Prelude<sup>3</sup>



When François Couperin (1973) composed his seminal didactic treatise, *The Art of Playing the Harpsichord*, he included a series of preludes notated in measured form (with bars, marked durations, and agogic nuances). It is noteworthy that the composer found it necessary to accompany the musical text with verbal instructions, seeking to verbalize hidden norms and minimize the risk of interpretative deviations. F. Couperin was concerned that the limited notational means made it difficult

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.musicaneo.com/ru/sheetmusic/sm>

for foreign musicians to adequately perceive the specifics of the French style, which prompted him to describe in such detail the principles of ornamentation (melismas), fingering techniques, and other aspects of articulation. In doing so, Couperin emphasizes the dialectical nature of the relationship between notation and performance: "Although these preludes are written in rhythm [i.e., mesurised], the performer does not have to follow the musical notation scrupulously. The prelude is a composition in which the imagination can be set free..." (Couperin, 1973).

The phenomenon of preludes non mesurés indicated that Baroque musical notation was often conceived not as rigid instructions but as an invitation to co-creation. In particular, the absence of a metrical grid did not imply indifference to form. Still, it reflected an aesthetic orientation towards improvisational freedom, in which the performer had to recreate stylistic norms, relying on knowledge of rhetorical figures and harmonic schemes. In this sense, notation functioned as a "sketch" or "hint" rather than a completed communicative act, and assumed the cultural competence of the interpreter as a necessary element of the musical message. Couperin's subsequent decision to notate such preludes in metered form and to supplement them with detailed verbal explanations establishes the existence of a tension between implicit tradition and the need for explicit codification. His treatise testifies to composers' growing awareness of the risks of intercultural misunderstanding (mainly when music was disseminated beyond national schools) and their desire to regulate interpretation. The most striking and systematic example of deliberate notational incompleteness is the practice of the digitized bass (basso continuo). In the seventeenth century, the improvisational realization of a complete keyboard (or other harmonic) part based on a digitally notated bass line was not only a pragmatically determined method of replicating parts in the era of hand copying. This technique became the foundation of the professional training of keyboard instrumentalists and a definite element of a vast stratum of Baroque keyboard and ensemble music (Gao & Xia, 2025).

The role of the basso continuo player was not reduced to the modern categories of soloist or accompanist; it was dynamic and allowed for spontaneous deviations. During the performance, the musician carried out a spontaneous unfolding of the musical fabric, relying on the minimum amount of information provided by the composer. In the context of such performance practice, a complex code of unwritten stylistic conditions, varying according to national school, chronological period, and individual composer's style, became crucial. For example, the principles of transcription of early Italian basso continuo differed significantly from late Italian or French norms. Some of these conventions were basic, while others were more subtle, variable, and subject to subjective influences.

Although Baroque notation (except for specific symbolism for melismas) is visually similar to modern notation in many respects, its semantic and pragmatic content underwent significant changes. Just as the meaning of words and expressions changes over time, the interpretative interpretation of musical notation has evolved under the influence of cultural transformations, shifts in aesthetic paradigms, and modifications in performance practice, so understanding the historical context becomes critical for adequately decoding the musical text of the past (Perepelitsa, 2013).

Between the Baroque and Modern periods, the role of notation continued to change in line with aesthetic shifts. In the Classicism era, represented by Haydn and Mozart, notation became increasingly standardized, but still required stylistic competence from performers to reproduce ornamentation, cadences, or improvised passages adequately. In the Romantic era, this flexibility gradually diminished: Liszt, Wagner, and Brahms sought greater control over tempo variations, articulation, and dynamics. Thus, there was a shift from a relatively open communicative model, where notation invited the performer to co-create, to a more prescriptive one, where authorial authority dominated.

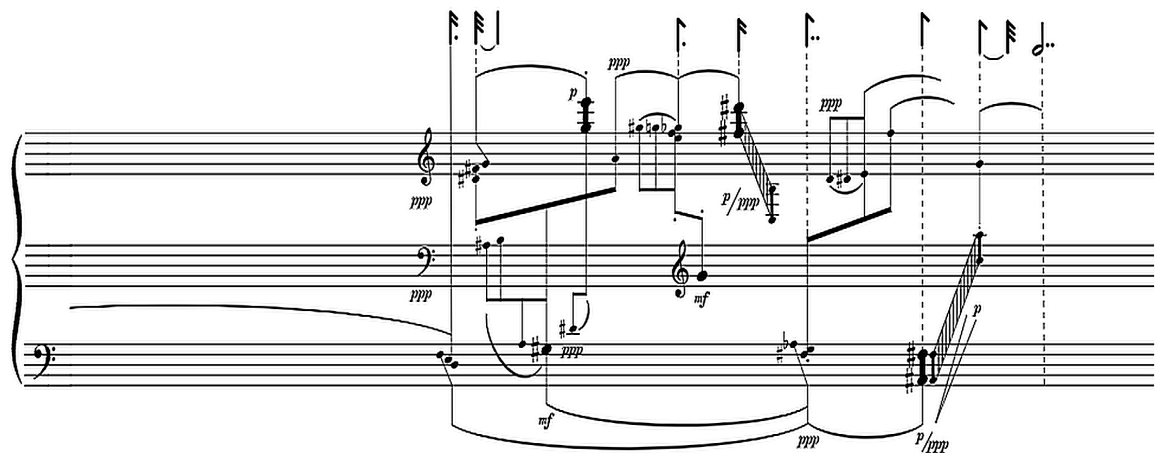


This historical trajectory demonstrates that notation not only records sounds but also encodes cultural attitudes toward performance. Sometimes it serves as a dialogical framework that stimulates interpretive freedom, and sometimes as a rigid script that restricts liberty in the name of precision in embodying the author's intention. It is this dialectical dynamic that prepared the ground for the radical experiments of the twentieth century, when composers, faced with the new sonic possibilities of atonality, advanced techniques, and electronics, were forced to develop fundamentally new systems of musical recording.

As A. Perepelitsa (2013) noted, the desire of modern music (from the second half of the 20th to the early 21st century) to reflect the diversity of sounds and movements of the surrounding world has led to fundamental changes. The musical material has become significantly more complex due to the introduction of atonal systems, intricate rhythms, and innovative methods of sound production, such as playing in clusters, on a "dissected" piano, using sticks, threads on strings, or incorporating electronics. This need for new sounds has necessitated the development of numerous new forms of musical notation capable of accurately capturing specific performance techniques and sound effects, thus facilitating adequate artistic and performance interpretation (Perepelitsa, 2013). The primary parameters that determine the choice of notational means for modern composers are the legibility of the musical text, the correlation of graphic symbols with the acoustic result, and the principle of economy. These aspects are also essential for performance interpretation. On the other hand, the composer's intention to achieve maximum precision and expressiveness in conveying the idea often leads to the complication of musical notation. In the sphere of piano music, this may concern, in particular, the rhythmic component, which is sometimes fixed in very sophisticated ways, as in K. Stockhausen's *Klavierstück X* (Perepelitsa, 2013).



#### Fragment 4 - K. Stockhausen. Klavierstück X<sup>4</sup>



Specific radical innovations in Western European avant-garde notation represented one pole of development in the 20th century, particularly this striving for maximum accuracy and control. At the same time, another trajectory was formed in the post-Soviet cultural space: composers turned to hybrid forms of notation that combined modernist experiments with national traditions. Thanks to this, the musical text became not only a technical tool for recording sound, but also a carrier of cultural identity, reflecting the dialogue between European and local intonation models.

Characteristic features of the notation in this excerpt are the composer's use of a single key, the designation of black keys with alteration signs immediately before the notes, and the rejection of beat division and indication of size. Particular attention should be paid to the detailed elaboration of the rhythmic pattern, along with the composer's careful recording of all the nuances of the performance.

Beskembirova Alya is a composer born in 1969 in the Omsk region of Russia. From 1988 to 1993, she studied in the special piano class at the Kurmangazy Alma-Ata State Conservatory. Her instrumental and vocal works for various instruments have been successfully performed at regional, republican, and international competitions and have been included in the repertoires of children's

<sup>4</sup> <https://musescore.com/logically/klavierst-ck-x-karlheinz-stockhausen-klavierst-ck-x-page-22-k-stockhausen>

music schools, music schools, and the Tattimbet Music College. The author accompanies the musical notations she uses with a list of explanations. At the same time, the symbols introduced by the composer herself are always deciphered at the end of each work.

#### Fragment 5 - Alya Beskembirov The Waltz of Dreams<sup>5</sup>



The example of Ali Beskembirova has demonstrated the role of contemporary composers in creating their own systems of signs, accompanied by explanatory glossaries, in her scientific developments, in which modern notation serves as a tool to capture the diverse artistic manifestations of composers of our time. Their music reflects deep and complex images drawn from social life, nature, outer space, philosophical reflections, folklore, and other multilevel contexts of the surrounding world (Perepelitsa, 2013). This practice simultaneously asserts authorial authority and restores an element of dialogue, as the performer must actively study and decipher a personalized system of symbols.

Piano works by contemporary composers of the Republic of Kazakhstan are also of interest. As M. Sapieva (2017) points out, in the piano works of young composers, the rethinking of folklore origins is organically combined with the free application of various techniques of modern composers' language (Sapieva, 2017). For example, the piano works of Alexander Romanov (born 1941), who graduated from the Tashkent State Conservatory and is the founder of the first regional school of composers, are of interest.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.musicaneo.com/ru/sheetmusic/sm-205451\\_vals\\_snovidenij.html](https://www.musicaneo.com/ru/sheetmusic/sm-205451_vals_snovidenij.html)

Let us pay attention to the polyphonic cycle dedicated to the works of Johann Sebastian Bach, “Tribute to Bach’s Portrait” (1985), which consists of preludes and inventions, a prelude, and a basso ostinato. For example, the free unfolding of musical thought in Prelude No. 9 is improvisational in nature, which is emphasized by the absence of the author’s indication of size – a technique often found in 20th-century composers.

Fragment 6 - A. Romanov. A tribute to Bach’s portrait<sup>6</sup>



Hence, Alexander Romanov’s cycle “Homage to the Portrait of Bach” showed another dimension of these searches. His work synthesized baroque polyphonic models with improvisational logic and Kazakh monody tradition. He formed an interesting musical text that balances between strict stylistic imitation and open invention. In his work, the notation is based on the space of intertextual dialogue between eras and cultures.

This prelude showcases a distinctive blend of musical ideas, drawing on elements from the Baroque era (particularly its figurative structure), modernism (improvisational character and linearity), and the traditions of Kazakh instrumental music (e.g., monody).

<sup>6</sup> <https://repo.kspi.kz/handle/item/527>

Kenes Duisekeev (born 1946) graduated from the Kurmangazy Conservatoire in Almaty. His Nocturne (1986) was written in three-movement form.

### Fragment 7 - K. Duisekeev. Nocturne<sup>7</sup>

[illegible]

Thus, in Kenes Duisekeev's Nocturne, dense chordal texture and sharp dynamic accents showed that prescribed musical notation coexisted with expressive freedom of interpretation. The score combined virtuosity with cultural resonance. His work synthesized European pianistic rhetoric with intonational gestures of Kazakh folklore. In Kenes Duisekeev's Nocturne, a dense chordal texture and sharp dynamic accents demonstrate that prescribed musical notation coexists with expressive freedom of interpretation. The score combined virtuosity with cultural resonance. His work synthesized European pianistic rhetoric with intonational gestures of Kazakh folklore. The composer's tempo and dynamic indications are of interest in this work. Bright presentation and expressive dynamics are key to the performance of this virtuoso concert work, where sharp *sfff* accents mark the chordal texture. This musical work is remarkable in that it harmoniously combines elements of traditional Kazakh culture with the techniques of modern academic composition.

7 <https://musescore.com/user/36962362/scores/8323970>

Moreover, Bakir Yakhyanovich Bayakhunov - People's Artist of the Kazakh SSR. Three sonatas for piano reflect the composer's creative aspirations. This includes an interest in the music of the East, a combination of European and Eastern traditions, and the folklore basis of the intonation material.

The First Sonata, "Echoes of the Muqam," is dedicated to the Uyghur muqam, characterized by its meditateness, rhythmic elements, and instrumental coloring. Dedicated to the memory of the Dungan poet Yasyr Shivaz, the Second Sonata characterizes the mentality of the Dungans of the CIS, who left their historical homeland after the defeat of the Dungan Rebellion in China in the last third of the 19th century, directed against the oppression of the Qing dynasty. The melody repeated in the finale symbolizes the eternity of the national worldview. A different task is set in the new version of the Third Sonata (2023), in which Kazakh musical folklore is presented in the form of baroque music.

#### Fragment 8 - Bakir Bayakhunov. Echoes of the Muqam<sup>8</sup>

The image displays a musical score for a piano piece, specifically measures 12 through 16. The notation is written on a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. Measure 12 begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#), featuring a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes and a bass line with sustained chords. Measure 13 continues the melodic development with various dynamics like *m.d.* (mezzo-dolce) and *m.s.* (mezzo-sostenuto). Measure 14 shows a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (*ff*) section. Measure 15 and 16 show a change in tempo and key signature, with a 2/8 time signature and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The score includes various musical notations such as *cresc.*, *ff*, *sfz*, *f*, *m.d.*, *mf*, and *m.s.*, as well as performance instructions like *Reo.* (Repeat) and *\* Reo.* (Repeat with asterisk). The score is marked with measure numbers 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16.

Bakyr Bayakhunov's piano sonatas have identified the significant communicative power of notation as a cultural code. The composer employed Eastern modal structures and symbolic melodies within the framework of European sonata form. In this way, he transformed the score into a mediator not only of

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bayakhunov.ru/noty-dlya-fortepiano>

musical content, but also of ethnic and historical significance. The performer acts as a mediator between two traditions, actualizing the hybridity inherent in the musical text.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that modern notation is not only a technical means of recording sound but also a powerful artistic medium. It has also become an essential means of reconciling cultural identity, embodying a balance between precision and openness, between authorial intention and the freedom of performance. In the work of Kazakh composers, this interaction has acquired a special dimension, as notation serves as a bridge between European academic heritage and local folklore traditions. In addition, it has also offered the performer interpretative and intercultural challenges.

## 5. Conclusions

The analysis revealed that the musical text serves as a crucial communicative system, combining structural and syntactic parameters (harmony, rhythm, texture) with verbal remarks (tempo designations, characterological instructions). In different historical periods, this balance was manifested in various ways: from transparent and relatively “open” baroque texts to a high level of detail in romanticism and further searches for new symbols in modernism. Thus, the means of notation record the sound fabric and encode the aesthetic attitudes of the composer.

A comparison of examples showed that the density of the musical notation directly correlates with the level of performing freedom. If the romantic tradition (Chopin) sought to regulate the sound as much as possible, then baroque practices (preludes non mesurés, basso continuo) formed a space for improvisation and co-creation of the performer. At the same time, modernist experiments of the 20th century. (Stockhausen, Beskembirova) complicated notation and combined the desire for accuracy with



the emergence of individual authorial systems of symbols. Thus, from “open” forms to highly detailed scores, a constant dynamic between authorial regulation and performer’s freedom of interpretation can be traced.

Cultural and historical features always mediate communication between the composer and the performer. It has been proven that in the European tradition, the transition from one era to another led to a transformation in the very understanding of the musical text: from the improvisational dialogicity of the Baroque to the “total control” of Romanticism and subsequent avant-garde innovations. In modern Kazakh composers (Romanov, Duisekeev, Bayakhunov), notation has become a space for intercultural synthesis, which involves the union of European genre models and local folklore intonations.

Thus, musical notation should be considered not as a static fixation of sound, but as a historically changing communicative matrix. It embodies the composer’s intention, while setting boundaries for interpretation and reflecting cultural contexts. This is its unique role in the dialogue “composer - performer - listener”, which unfolds through different historical stages and takes on new forms in the modern era of digitalization and intercultural interactions.

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A. Z.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing.  
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