

**Shostakovich's String Quartet no.15 in E-flat minor, op.144:**

**How an Icl Thread Connects the Narrative to the Music**

by

Brian Thomas Sanders

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Supervising Committee:

Dr. Megan Sarno

Dr. Elyse Kahler

Mr. Jordan Moore

Ms. Amy Hatch

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## ABSTRACT

**Shostakovich's String Quartet no.15 in E-flat minor, op.144:****How an ic1 Thread Connects the Narrative to the Music**

Brian Thomas Sanders, Masters

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2021

Supervising professor: Dr. Megan Sarno

There has been ample increase in music-theoretical analysis in Shostakovich's late works, yet there has been one composition that has comparatively evaded this attention. String Quartet no.15 in E-flat minor, op.144 has been approached with hermeneutics and descriptive analysis; however, music-theoretical analysis is lacking. The quartet has certain musical characteristics that have not been analyzed, which leaves the perspective of this work incomplete. An unfortunate result is that the mixture of musicological and theoretical analysis is a daunting task. According to Patrick McCreless: "any depth would lead quickly into a world of intriguing musical relationships and hermeneutic enigmas."<sup>1</sup> The aforementioned 'musical relationships' and 'hermeneutic enigmas' is a characteristic of Shostakovich scholarship. Music theory and musicology are equally utilized in Shostakovich research. Music theorists inevitably become musicologists out of necessity. This enigma results in an imbalance between the dual approach of musicological and theoretical approaches, where hermeneutics have been the majority of analysis. However, scholars such as Stephen C. Brown, Jonathan Drury, Levon Hakobian, and Michael Rofe, have recently used music theory and analysis to better understand Shostakovich's late-period style. Though the literature has increased, String Quartet no.15 remains in the shadows of other late-period works. My thesis will provide a much needed music-theoretical analysis of the quartet. I will provide analysis of important musical features that have not been analyzed while centering on my primary focus—the ic1 becoming a thread that links the plot of the quartet within its movements.

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick McCreless, "Dmitri Shostakovich: The String Quartets," in *Intimate Voices: The String Quartet in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2, ed. Evan Jones (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 34.

## Introduction

As analysis of Shostakovich's works has evolved through the years, we have come to a clearer understanding of Shostakovich's utilization of twelve-tone rows. However, as much as is revealed, we may never fully uncover every clue or hallmark to satisfy our ascertaining pursuits. Wendy Lesser summarizes this reality—

You are drawn to the life because you love the art, and you imagine that knowing more about the life will bring you closer to the art, but for the most part the life is a smoke screen getting between you and the art. You pick up threads and clues, searching for a pattern that explains the whole, forgetting that a great deal of life (and art) depends on chance events. You can never definitively find the hidden springs of an artwork; you can only attempt to grasp the results as they gush forth, and with music, which is nearly as changeable and bodiless as water, that grasp will be especially tenuous.<sup>2</sup>

However tenuous it may seem, every grasp at Shostakovich is one more attempt to understand his idiosyncrasy. Shostakovich literature is prevailingly musicological, and even theoretical entries have a substantial amount of hermeneutical elements to relay his methodologies. I dare say, for Shostakovich, it is almost impossible to be purely theoretical. Because of this approach to Shostakovich, music theory and musicology are equally utilized in Shostakovich research: Music theorists inevitably become musicologists out of necessity. This is the case for twelve-tone rows in Shostakovich's music. He utilizes his personal twelve-tone technique to incorporate both absolute and programmatic qualities, meaning some compositions uses twelve-tone rows for purely musical reason and others are used for hermeneutical reasons. Thus a presumably

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<sup>2</sup> Wendy Lesser, *Music for Silenced Voices: Shostakovich and His Fifteen Quartets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 2.

“absolute” musical technique is also being used as a programmatic signifier.<sup>3</sup> This Thesis will present analysis from both spectrums which include—*Seven Romances on Poems of Alexander Blok*, vi, ‘Secret Signs’, op.127 (1967), String Quartet no.12, op.133 (1968), Symphony no.14, op.135 (1969), and the primary composition String Quartet no.15, op.144 (1974). For better understanding of Shostakovich’s utilization of twelve-tone rows, a background of his philosophy of this technique will be necessary.

It was not until the late 1950s that serialist qualities began to appear in Russian compositions, with the Khrushchev Thaw beginning to take effect in the Soviet Union. As more compositions began to appear with serialist elements, sides were taken in the approval or disapproval of these techniques being used in contemporary works. Shostakovich was presumably on the side of disapproval. He did not support the composers who started to use dodecaphonic techniques, with his comments revealing his dismissal of the techniques—

Dodecaphony, serial, pointillist and other kinds of music are one of the greatest evils of twentieth-century music...they came into existence fifty years ago and yet I cannot name a single work in this vein which lives and has an influence on the public to this day.<sup>4</sup>

As crass as these comments may appear, Shostakovich’s comments on dodecaphony can be seen to change in the development of his adoption of the technique. In an interview about the Twelfth Quartet before its debut, he states—

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<sup>3</sup> Whether twelve-tone technique is considered purely absolute or also having programmatic capabilities will not be explored here, though a future paper will be devoted to this thesis.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 303

As far as the use of strictly technical devices from such musical "systems" as dodecaphony or aleatory is concerned ... everything in good measure. If, let's say, a composer sets himself the obligatory task of writing dodecaphonic music, then he artificially limits his possibilities, his ideas. The use of elements from these complex systems is fully justified if it is dictated by the concept of the composition.... You know, to a certain extent I think the formula "the end justifies the means" is valid in music. All means? All of them, if they contribute to the end objective.<sup>5</sup>

The statement of “the end justifies the means” summarizes Shostakovich’s utilization of twelve-tone rows. The purpose of the composition comes first, whereas the techniques used serve the composition as a whole.

As Shostakovich adopted twelve-tone techniques, or dodecaphony, he also adopted a new subject for his compositions to explore—death and mortality. One plausible benefactor for this change in mentality is his physical health.<sup>6</sup> After a performance in Leningrad in May 28, 1966, Shostakovich was lead to the hospital, where the diagnosis was a heart attack followed by a one month stay in medical care and a two month recovery period.<sup>7</sup> As he regained his strength, he eventually composed his first composition after his heart attack, which happens to be the *Alexander Blok* cycle finished in February 1967. In a letter on 3 February he wrote his recent reflections on his recent experience—

I have become disillusioned with myself. Rather, [I have become convinced] that I am a very dull and mediocre composer. Looking back on "the path traversed" from the vantage of my sixty years, I can say that twice in my life great ballyhoo was made over me (Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District and the Thirteenth Symphony). Ballyhoo with a very strong effect. However, after everything calms

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>6</sup> At this current time, we do not have the access to enough documentation to absolutely confirm this correlation with hospital visits and the adoption of twelve-tone techniques. What we do have are various quotes that plausibly connect the phenomena of physical health to “twelve-tone” compositions.

<sup>7</sup> Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000;1999), 248-249.

down and returns to normal, it turns out that both *Lady Macbeth and the Thirteenth* and *Symphony* are "fuk," as they say in *The Nose*.... However, the composition of music-an affliction in the nature of a disease-haunts me. Today I completed seven romances on texts by A. Blok.<sup>8</sup>

He further revealed to visitor Venjamin Basner that he conceived the idea for this work in the hospital, but was unable to realize it.<sup>9</sup> This will not be the only occurrence of a "twelve-tone" composition will be influenced by physical health or hospital visitation. This has led many to interpret his use of twelve-tone rows to symbolize death and mortality.<sup>10</sup> This symbolism of death is in fact the narrative of primary focus with the "twelve-tone" compositions analyzed in this paper, excluding *String Quartet no. 12*.

Moving forward, a clear differentiation between Schoenbergian twelve-tone technique and Shostakovich's twelve-tone technique must be understood. The proceeding serialist procedures and terms are common, however, the function will otherwise be contradictory to the Schoenbergian method. On a broader scale, Shostakovich will juxtapose twelve-tone techniques within the tonal framework of a composition. This raises concern as Milton Babbitt notes that the tonal and twelve-tone systems rely on fundamentally dissimilar principles.<sup>11</sup> However, Shostakovich has masterfully combined the two opposing systems with deliberate melding of serial and non-serial elements. Although in the genesis of Shostakovich twelve-tone analysis, scholars believed that Shostakovich used twelve-tone rows to temporarily complicate tonality

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<sup>8</sup> Pis'ma k drugu: Dmitriy Shostakovich-Isaaku Glikmanu, comp. I. Glikman (Moscow, 1993), 225-226, Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000;1999), 252.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>10</sup> Miriam B. Webber, "Harmonic Syntax in the "Serial" Works of Dmitri Shostakovich," (2013).

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Mead, "An Introduction to the Music of Milton Babbitt," (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 9-11



and then always return to tonal harmony.<sup>12</sup> Recent literature has denounced this view, revealing deep integration of twelve-tone technique and Shostakovich's formal plans for individual movements and entire compositions.

With Shostakovich adopting both a narrative of death and dodecaphony simultaneously, it seems impossible to denote the connection between these two phenomena. Thus, String Quartet no.15 is the penultima of both the narrative of death and twelve-tone rows.<sup>13</sup> To fully unearth the lack of analysis within this composition, both musicological and music-theoretical approaches must be utilized with equal importance. Though descriptive and hermeneutical analysis of String Quartet no.15 is plentiful, there are numerous musical elements that have yet been discussed that are crucial to the comprehension of the narrative. Before my analysis of String Quartet no.15, I will provide the necessary analysis and information for the purpose of my analysis of String Quartet no.15. Chapter 1 will cover the literature review of music-theoretical methodologies of Shostakovich's compositions, while chapter 2 will be the analysis of the three aforementioned compositions—*Seven Romances on Poems of Alexander Blok*, vi, "Secret Signs", String Quartet no.12, and Symphony no.14. Chapter 3 will then be my analysis of String Quartet no.15; first I address the narrative, then I proceed to the musical analysis, and I end with a reading that combines the two. A better understanding of Shostakovich's combination of both the narrative of death and twelve-tone rows will be the result, with the hope of furthering Shostakovich research and influencing future scholars to continue to input their research into the ever-growing Shostakovich community.

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Schmelz, "Shostakovich's "Twelve-Tone" compositions and the politics and practice of Soviet serialism," in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel Fay (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 315.

<sup>13</sup> It can be debated that Symphony no.14 holds this description, as chapter two explains why that may be the case. I personally believe they both hold equal weight, as I will explain later in chapter two.

## I. Scholars' Methodologies for Shostakovich's Compositions

Shostakovich's methodology of twelve-tone rows, and in turn other Russian theory practices, is a self-governed approach. As stated at the end of the introduction, the ends justify the means. Analysis of his late works reveals that his use of dodecaphonic techniques, among other Russian compositional techniques, are more complex than previously assumed. He uses bits and pieces of techniques to serve the purpose of the overall composition, further blurring the lines of his consistency of his utilization of techniques. But since the theoretical evolution of Shostakovich's music is still in development, and due to the lack of resources and the "inconsistent" approach, theoretical models may come across as elementary or as lacking depth. However, that does not mean the models established are inadequate or illegitimate. Hindemith's description of music theory provides a definition that supports the legitimacy of Shostakovich's theoretical methodologies—

Music Theory investigates, arranges, and explains the working material of the composer. The ideal goal of this investigation, arrangement, and explanation is to comprehend once and for all the whole domain of tone in all directions and relationships, so that every conceivable sort of music can be explained, so far as its technical nature is concerned, whether it be a composition that comes down to us from the remotest ages or the work of a composer of the future.<sup>14</sup>

That is exactly what Shostakovich scholars are attempting, to "smooth the path" of the rocky terrain of Shostakovich theoretical analysis. Perhaps the prominent problematic nature of the duality between musicological and theoretical approaches can be blamed for the simplistic theoretical methods. For if musicological means are to always be present within a theoretical

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Hindemith and Arthur Mendel, "Methods of Music Theory," in *The Musical Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1944): 20

approach, then it is difficult to separate between the two with the result of theoretical models being simplistic.

The present era of Shostakovich's music seems to be the era of the establishment of theoretical methodologies based from the previous years of descriptive musical analysis. With that being said, there are a few music theory models that were established from the musical analysis of Shostakovich's works. If Shostakovich uses twelve-tone rows in a self-governed approach, then by logic the methods used will need to also be "self-governed" in a sense. The majority of methods pertaining to twelve-tone rows stem from serialist practices, such as pitch-class and interval-class, row inversions, trichords, tetrachord and hexachords, and the use of a matrix. These methodologies, or at least the terms, are then used to legitimize newly established Shostakovich theoretical models. Stephen C. Brown and his literature on Shostakovich are a great place to observe how these methods and integration of the serialist elements are used for Shostakovich's works. The pieces of literature that have helped me are "Twelve-Tone Rows and Aggregate Melodies in the Music of Shostakovich"<sup>15</sup>, "ic1/ic5 Interaction in the Music of Shostakovich,"<sup>16</sup> and "Dual Interval Space in Twentieth Century Music."<sup>17</sup>

The first literature entry listed, which happens to be the newest entry, analyzes twelve-tone row qualities and integrates his previously created interval-class model with the new row model. He begins by creating a criteria of differences between Shostakovich's twelve-tone usage

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<sup>15</sup> Stephen C. Brown, "Twelve-Tone Rows and Aggregate Melodies in the Music of Shostakovich," *Journal of Music Theory* 59, no. 2 (2015): 191-234

<sup>16</sup> Stephen C. Brown, "Ic1/ic5 Interaction in the Music of Shostakovich," *Music Analysis* 28, no.2/3 (2009): 185-220

<sup>17</sup> Stephen C. Brown, "Dual Interval Space in Twentieth-Century Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 25, no.1 (2003): 35-57

and Schoenbergian serial practice.<sup>18</sup> Then as the article progresses Brown creates a table of row characteristics that are a result of the five criteria listed, shown in Figure 1.1. The approach is what Brown calls *aggregate melodies*, which is a term of a broad perspective to fully encapsulate the diversity of Shostakovich's rows. The criteria and the aggregate melody types are seemingly to be of an almost open forum to fit all of the different fragments of the row's characteristics. The complexity that I have mentioned before is the complexity of diversity. Thus the models need to make room for that diversity, whether in description or theoretical model. And because of this complex diversity, simplicity is key, which Brown does. His simple explanation of *aggregate melodies* represents the combination of simplicity and complexity, a broad perspective with the ability to hone in on specificities.

**Figure 1.1. Aggregate Melody Types**

- Type 1*: States all twelve pitch classes with no repetitions
- Type 2*: States all twelve pitch classes with no repetitions but then continues onward for one or more pitches
- Type 3*: Repeats one or more pitch classes before stating all twelve, but not after
- Type 4*: Repeats one or more pitch classes both before and after stating all twelve<sup>19</sup>

Proceeding models do become more specific, but they are a product of this broad perspective of Shostakovich's works. Brown then presents models that investigate the rows qualities more in depth as a result of the broad models provided beforehand.<sup>20</sup> These models present what he calls

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<sup>18</sup> Stephen C. Brown, "Twelve-Tone Rows and Aggregate Melodies in the Music of Shostakovich," *Journal of Music Theory* 59, no. 2 (2015): 193.

(Note the juxtaposition between Shostakovich and Schoenberg is the beginning of the analysis.)

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

chromatic and diatonic zones of activity within the stated rows.<sup>21</sup> In the examples presented during this section, Brown uses a combination of pitch-class set and a derivation of Schenkerian analysis to highlight the pitches that represent the diatonic or chromatic zones. Both are used in combination to present Brown's theory.

Brown states that both compositions present an aggregate row in the beginning and each row presents two crucial micro-motivic material that progress throughout the movements—trichordal motives in the Twelfth Quartet and ic1/ic5 relations in Sonata for Violin and Piano. Figure 1.2 shows an example of Brown's analysis of String Quartet no.12, second movement.<sup>22</sup>

**Figure 1.2. Instances of trichordal motives in String Quartet no.12, II, mm.1-7**

(a)

Allegretto  $\text{♩} = 108$

The figure shows a musical score for String Quartet no. 12, II, mm. 1-7. It consists of four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' with a quarter note equal to 108 beats per minute. The score is divided into measures 17 and 18. Various trichordal motives are highlighted with circles and stems, and some are labeled with numbers in parentheses. Dynamic markings include 'f' and 'ff espress.'.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 203-212.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 216.

The circles represent the twelve-tone row and its pitch-class derivatives. Though a loose knit type 4 row, the aggregate row spells out B $\flat$ -C-B-C $\sharp$ -D-E $\flat$ -A-G $\sharp$ -F $\sharp$ -G-F-E. Brown points out that the row is separated between two chromatic hexachord sets—B $\flat$ -B-C $\sharp$ -C $\sharp$ -D-E $\flat$  sounding in the tails between the violins and viola, and E-F-F $\sharp$ -G-G $\sharp$ -A in the trichord motive in the cello. The cello hexachord is further divided into a trichord motive in m.1—A-G $\sharp$ -F $\sharp$ —with the second trichord a transposition down a major second of the first—G-F-E—sounding in m.3. Here we see an example of the processes and the complexity of Shostakovich's twelve-tone rows according to Brown's methodology. We first establish what type row it is, in this example a type-4 row, and then proceed to find any smaller details that create the genetic makeup of the row. And as Brown presents, the resulting micro-units of the row serve a primary role for the development in the rest of the movement. Brown's process of representing multiple models of broad and narrow methodologies highlights a crucial characteristic of Shostakovich's "twelve-tone" compositions, an effect I call "The Umbrella Effect". The opening aggregate row presents micro-unit thematic gestures that presume to create a majority of the musical development of the proceeding music. Whether they are specific intervals, which will be explained in more depth down below, pitch-class sets, diatonic or chromatic hexachord sets, or trichord motives, the twelve-tone rows presents micro elements that create the material of the composition.

In another article Brown demonstrates his analysis on interval-class procedures in Shostakovich's music.<sup>23</sup> Brown creates a model he labels as ic1/ic5 relations, a derivative from his concept of Dual Interval Space.<sup>24</sup> He states that twentieth-century music features many

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<sup>23</sup> Stephen C. Brown, "Ic1/ic5 Interaction in the Music of Shostakovich," *Music Analysis* 28, no.2/3 (2009).

<sup>24</sup> Stephen C. Brown. "Dual Interval Space in Twentieth-Century Music." *Music Theory Spectrum* 25, no. 1 (2003).

passages that contain the interaction between two intervals which function as building blocks for either brief sections or an entire piece.<sup>25</sup> This concept is not specific to Shostakovich, as Brown uses examples from Webern's Concerto op.24, second movement and Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, "Nacht".<sup>26</sup> However, the ic1/ic5 is a specific model for Shostakovich. Figure 1.3 shows a visual representation of what a dual-interval space is.<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 1.3. ic1/ic5 space**

	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	
..	F#/G $\flat$	G	G#/A $\flat$	A	A#/B $\flat$	B	C	..
..	B	C	C#/D $\flat$	D	D#/E $\flat$	E	F	..
..	E	F	F#/G $\flat$	G	G#/A $\flat$	A	A#/B $\flat$	..
..	A	A#/B $\flat$	B	C	C#/D $\flat$	D	D#/E $\flat$	..
..	D	D#/E $\flat$	E	F	F#/G $\flat$	G	G#/A $\flat$	..
..	G	G#/A $\flat$	A	A#/B $\flat$	B	C	C#/D $\flat$	..
..	C	C#/D $\flat$	D	D#/E $\flat$	E	F	F#/G $\flat$	..
	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 36 & 44.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen C. Brown, "Ic1/ic5 Interaction in the Music of Shostakovich," *Music Analysis* 28, no.2/3 (2009): 187.

The operations are based on graph theory, using x-axis and y-axis locations, and serialist procedures such as transposition and inversion.<sup>28</sup> As stated in “Dual Interval Space,” the ic1/ic5 space can refer to sections or an entire piece. Brown states that instances of ic1/ic5 interaction increases in his later works, however, he finds the concept in his pre-late works as well.<sup>29</sup> Works such as Piano Sonata No.1, op.12, Piano Sonata No.2, op.61, Symphony No.8, and *Aphorisms*, Op.13 make an appearance in ic1/ic5 examples.

The next music theory method presented will not be as mathematically based as the previous examples, with good reason. The methods above present a purely musical model, whereas the model created by Hakobian is a mixture of musical and narrative to explain the functionality of the twelve-tone rows in Symphony no.14. In “*The Nose and the Fourteenth Symphony*”, he creates a table that organizes the rows between two types called Type-1 or Type-2, similar titles to Brown’s descriptions. Table 1.1 shows a simple table of what the two types of rows are.<sup>30</sup>

**Table 1.1. First/Second Type qualities for the twelve-tone rows in Symphony no.14**

Type 1	Type 2
Predominantly composed of fifths and fourths. Present notably in movements 2,3,5 and 8. Related to notions of cold indifference, monstrosity, and of the meaningless of death.	Predominantly composed of seconds and thirds/sixths. Present notably in movements 1,3,4,7, and 10. Related to notions of human emotions; grief, sorrow, and compassion.

<sup>28</sup> Miriam B. Webber, “Harmonic Syntax in the “Serial” Works of Dmitri Shostakovich,” (2013), 8-10

<sup>29</sup> Stephen C. Brown, “Ic1/ic5 Interaction in the Music of Shostakovich,” *Music Analysis* 28, no.2/3 (2009): 216.

<sup>30</sup> Kristian Hibberd, “Shostakovich and ‘polyphonic’ creative,” in *Shostakovich Studies* 2, ed. by Pauline Fairclough (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 201.



The differentiations between Hakobian's rows are admittedly crude, demonstrating that the rows can't be reduced to a common denominator.<sup>31</sup> Like Brown's *aggregate melody* table Hakobian's descriptions are broad to encompass the diversity of the rows. However, the difference is that the rows represent narrative qualities, with the rows representing the content of the poems used.

Hakobian summarizes the mixture of musical and narrative theory aspects of the rows—

In his later works, Shostakovich occasionally turned to an analogous method of style juxtaposition, endowing it with transparent, extramusical meaning. He also used elements of twelve-tone composition—as part of this method.<sup>32</sup>

Symphony no. 14 has been deemed the most successful example of Shostakovich's late-style.

This method blurs the lines between musical and narrative functionality and presents purely musical elements as holding meaning, and even further into the musicological realm, a narrative.

Michael Rofe takes the rows established by Hakobian and links two more aspects to create a trio of pitch organizations that provide the foundation of the opening passage in the first movement—Intervallic manipulations of the *Dies Irae* cell, resultant dodecaphonic collections, and motion between points of tonal stability.<sup>33</sup> The cellular derivations resemble a Brown function of ic1/ic3 that derives from the opening twelve-tone row. It also shows the pitch-centric tonality that the rows begin to provide in the quartet. The method of Rofe is different, but also in a sense similar to Brown's methodology while also using Hakobian's method of the differentiations of the twelve-tone rows and their narrative implications. Rofe shows how to

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<sup>31</sup> Levon Hakobian, "The Nose and the Fourteenth Symphony," in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel Fay (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 176.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Rofe, "Shostakovich as Symphonist; Shostakovich as Modernist: Symphony no. 14," in *Dimensions of Energy in Shostakovich's Symphonies*, (1st ed.) (London: Routledge, 2012), 188-190.

combine all of the concepts of the music theory methods to provide an overall framework of Symphony no.14.

The final theoretical method I will present is Shostakovich's third-relations. Brown states that: "Shostakovich's music often features third relations in various forms and at various levels of structure."<sup>34</sup> However, Shostakovich uses third relations with different functionalities. Rofe's graph, shown in Figure 1.4, reveals Shostakovich's use of third-related key centers.<sup>35</sup>

**Figure 1.4. Symphony no.14 opening material**

The figure displays a musical score analysis for the opening of Shostakovich's Symphony no. 14, marked 'Adagio' with a tempo of 126. The score is presented in four layers:

- Original:** Shows the original notation in 3/4 time, marked *pp*. It features a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. A box labeled 'I' is placed above the first measure of the melodic line.
- Cellular derivation:** Shows the original melody broken down into individual notes and small groups, with brackets indicating the derivation process.
- Resultant rows:** Shows two rows of notes derived from the original material. Row 1 is a sequence of notes: Bb, A, G, F, E, D, C, Bb, A, G, F, E, D, C, Bb. Row 2 is a sequence of notes: Bb, A, G, F, E, D, C, Bb, A, G, F, E, D, C, Bb. A note (E) is shown in parentheses and labeled '(no E in Row 2)'. Brackets connect notes between the two rows.
- Tonal implications:** Shows the tonal implications of the notes, with circles and lines indicating relationships between notes. The notes are labeled (I) and V.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen C. Brown, "Axis Tonality and Submediant in the Music of Shostakovich," *Music Theory Online* 15, no. 2 (2009): 1.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Rofe, "Shostakovich as Symphonist; Shostakovich as Modernist: Symphony no. 14," in *Dimensions of Energy in Shostakovich's Symphonies*, (1st ed.) (London: Routledge, 2012), 189.

Rofe shows the tonal relations of the first movement with three distinct bands—minor-third relations to G, major-third relations to G, and C-major as an independent key.<sup>36</sup> In the staff labeled ‘Tonal Implications, the root of the tonal centers are G-Eb-B-G-Eb-B, producing a descending major-third harmonic progression.<sup>37</sup> Rofe labels these third relations as “points of stability”, regarding the first movement of Symphony no.14 ‘De Profundis’. With Shostakovich using cellular manipulation and dodecaphony to provide the third-related keys, it may be best to label these as points of tonal stability and not necessarily key centers.<sup>38</sup>

Each of these methods enlightens the musical material utilized by Shostakovich. Regarding the devices for serial and post-tonal techniques, they are used in the world view of the Soviet composer.<sup>39</sup> The benefit of approaching his works through these differing and native lenses can bring out elements of the work that were previously hidden. And to clarify, I believe the biggest benefit is that each method must be used specifically with the philosophies of Shostakovich and the identities of the Soviet approach. This method simultaneously gives us a map to show in what direction we should go and the freedom to discover newfound analysis. This dichotomy shows a perspective that scholars share, in where two ends of the spectrum reside in one entity. Wendy Lesser begins her first chapter that points to this exact dichotomy—

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>37</sup>As a side note, this third-related key centers is a connection to the Jazz legend John Coltrane in his infamous Giant Steps, in which I will be doing a paper on in the near future of the connections between post-tonal theory and jazz.

<sup>38</sup> However, this could be up for debate, but will not be explored in this paper.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Schmelz, “Shostakovich’s “Twelve-Tone” compositions and the politics and practice of Soviet serialism,” in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel Fay (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 335

In him, there are great contradictions. In him, one quality  
obliterates the other. It is conflict in the highest degree.  
It is almost a catastrophe.  
—MIKHAIL ZOSHCHENKO,  
in a private letter about Shostakovich, 1941<sup>40</sup>

She then continues this thread of contradictions to his personality, his physicality, his upbringing during the Stalin regime, and even his “allegiance” to the Soviet Union. These factors extend to the contradictions of his works—tonality, modality, atonality, twelve-tone rows, and “twelve-toneness.”<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the approach with which we take in using these methods is the more important factor than the use of the methods themselves.

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<sup>40</sup> Wendy Lesser, *Music for Silenced Voices: Shostakovich and His Fifteen Quartets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 1.

<sup>41</sup> Christopher Segall, “Yuri Kholopov and Twelve-Toneness,” *Music & Politics* 14, no. 2 (2020): 1.

## II. Shostakovich's "Twelve-Tone" Compositions

### *Introduction*

In discussion of Shostakovich's "twelve-tone" compositions, it is not uncommon to see quotation marks around the word "twelve-tone," and in the case of Brack "serial".<sup>42</sup> The scare-quotes do not appear when the phrases are referring a type of serial medium, such as twelve-tone writing, twelve-tone rows, or twelve-tone melodies. They appear specifically in the categorization of his late works with serialist techniques from 1967-1975. To summarize, Shostakovich's compositions cannot be labeled as true Schoenbergian serial compositions, but instead each one evidences the specific approach Shostakovich adopted for a composition. The title "twelve-tone" compositions efficiently communicates Shostakovich's general serialist approach. The list of "twelve-tone" compositions is still evolving, however, a consensus of late-period compositions as "twelve-tone" can be understood from the lists of Peter Schmelz, Stephen C. Brown, Levon Hakobian, and Mariam Brack Webber.<sup>43</sup> All three agree on most compositions being placed on the list, with a few differences.

For the purposes of this thesis, I am concerned not with which compositions should and should not be on the list but rather identify a small corpus from which I will identify hallmarks of Shostakovich's "twelve-tone" idiom.<sup>44</sup> What I have found is that the idioms used in previous

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<sup>42</sup> Miriam B. Webber, "Harmonic Syntax in the "Serial" Works of Dmitri Shostakovich," (2013), 1.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Schmelz, "Shostakovich's "Twelve-Tone" compositions and the politics and practice of Soviet serialism," in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel Fay (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 348.

Stephen C. Brown, "Twelve-Tone Rows and Aggregate Melodies in the Music of Shostakovich," *Journal of Music Theory* 59, no. 2 (2015): 192.

Levon Hakobian, "Symbolism of Twelve-Tone Rows in Shostakovich's Late Music," from lecture at *Shostakovich-100 Symposium* (Goldsmith's College: University of London, 2006), 1-5.

Miriam B. Webber, "Harmonic Syntax in the "Serial" Works of Dmitri Shostakovich," (2013), 2.

<sup>44</sup> Although I do plan to explore the matter in later years.

works appear in the String Quartet no.15, alongside other non-serial techniques unique to the work. The non-serial techniques are in fact old techniques used in a novel way: because this composition has a narrative, these techniques represent the overall narrative.<sup>45</sup> This chapter's primary focus is the twelve-tone row techniques used in certain compositions that are related to String Quartet no.15. All the above-listed compositions are important, but I have chosen to focus on three that best support my argument. The compositions I will analyze are the first "twelve-tone" composition, the composition that is considered the most "twelve-tone" work, and the composition that is closest to the relationship between twelve-tone rows and the narrative of death. These compositions will display qualities and techniques used in String Quartet no.15. In the final section of this thesis, I will integrate the analysis of the three along with a discussion on the narrative elements of String Quartet no.15. I will begin with his first "twelve-tone" composition, *Seven Romances on Poems of Alexander Blok, 'Secret Signs,'* op.127, in which techniques that recur in String Quartet no.15 first appear, such as an ic1 signaling statements of structurally significant motives derived from twelve-tone rows and the coexistence of two unrelated rows in different movements.

***Seven Romances on Poems of Alexander Blok, 'Secret Signs', op.127***

In his early twelve-tone works, he adopted the approach of "twelve-toneness" and twelve-tone rows that do not relate to each other nor determine the remaining material of the composition. His first twelve-tone composition, *Seven Romances on Poems of Alexander Blok*

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<sup>45</sup> The next chapter will cover the subject of narrative.

op.127, is an example of this approach, in particular the sixth movement ‘Secret Signs.’<sup>46</sup> The movement begins with a twelve-tone row in the first three measures shown in Example 2.1. On the third beat of m.3, a ‘B’ appears, resulting in the ic5 ascent from F# to B telegraphing the

**Example 2.1 Opening row from *Seven Romances on Poems of Alexander Blok*, vi, ‘Secret Signs’, op.127**



melody entering in m. 8. This foreshadows the significance of the pitches F# and B in the movement, along with G#.<sup>47</sup> Although the row itself is not the foundation of the proceeding material, the ic1 and ic5 from the row are used in structurally important elements. These two intervals are not uncommon in forming twelve-tone rows in Shostakovich’s later “twelve-tone” compositions. For example, Ic1 dominates the opening row of the first movement, “My Poems,” of Shostakovich’s composition *Six Poems of Marina Tsvetayeva*, op. 143 (1973).<sup>48</sup> Ic5 is a primary interval used in the creation of the opening row in his String Quartet no.12, which will be shown later in this chapter. Besides the two interval classes being used in the creation of the row itself, they also establish an integral non-serial interval through the movement, similar to “My Poems”.<sup>49</sup> We see the ic1 being used as a starting point for motivic material in mm.14 and

<sup>46</sup> Or mysterious signs

<sup>47</sup> It’s possible to view the tonal framework of this movement as a modal mixture between the Ionian and Aeolian mode (or relative key relations of B major and G# minor, possibly an instance of Neo-Reimannian third relations)

<sup>48</sup> Miriam B. Webber, “Harmonic Syntax in the “Serial” Works of Dmitri Shostakovich,” (2013), 39.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 40.

**Example 2.2. Cello excerpt from *Seven Romances on Poems of Alexander Blok*, vi, 'Secret Signs', op.127, mm.14-15**



15 as the cello plays—F#, G#, G, F, E—shown in Example 2.2. Ic1 also appears in other places. In m.35, the sustained F# in the violin resolves to an F-natural to begin the motivic material, and again in m.40. Similarly, the F# moves a half-step upwards to G in m.42. Likewise, a sustained C# descends to a C natural in m. 46 before the second twelve-tone row appears in the cello in m. 47. The semitone that begins the motivic material does not lead to twelve-tone material, either from the opening row nor another unrelated twelve-tone row. However, the thread that ties the proceeding non-serial motivic material and the opening row is the ic1 that begins the movement.

The significance of the non-serial motivic material opening with ic1 is that, as the motive transfers from long tones to short tones, the resulting ic1 is used as the transfer point between the two rhythmic values. The measures previously mentioned are positioned between long tones around the pitch F# leading to another occurrence of the twelve-tone row in m.24. The non-row material following the opening row in mm.4-7 make an exact appearance. If it occurred only once, it would lack significance. However, it occurs in every motivic instance that isn't the sustained F# and second appearance of the opening row, until the second row appears in m.47. Like the pitches F# and B that foreshadow the tonal framework throughout the movement, the opening ic1 foreshadows the thematic gestures within the movement. The ic1 acts like a thread that ties together the opening twelve-tone row and the proceeding motivic material up to the second twelve-tone row in m.47.



I should mention that not every semitone moves in the same direction as the opening ic1 of the row. For instance, ic7 will invert to fit an ic5 function, and a trichord will be reordered to fit the pitch class of (013).<sup>50</sup> This treatment is in fact in line with the philosophy that Shostakovich has in his twelve-tone approach, and the inverting direction of the interval is as legitimate as the original ascent or descent of the model row quality, as in the ascending ic1 of the opening row of ‘Secret Signs.’

The second row appearing in m.47 is a new series, not related to the opening row in any way. (Example 2.3) This second row neither foreshadows a new tonal framework, nor features intervals that play an important role in the development of motivic material like the opening row did. In fact, the row seems to avert any tonal reference.<sup>51</sup> Schmelz would classify this as a row that causes harmonic instability.<sup>52</sup> There is a distinction of the importance between the two rows. The second row’s purpose is for harmonic instability, whereas the first row seems to present certain elements that define the overall framework of the movement. The first row appears unaccompanied in the beginning, the second appearance of the first row is in between stanzas

**Example 2.3. Twelve-tone row from *Seven Romances on Poems of Alexander Blok*, vi, ‘Secret Signs’, op.127, m.47**



<sup>50</sup> In describing interval classes for Shostakovich, it is common to go above an ic6, especially when pertaining to an inversion of an interval-class below ic6. Refer back to the Brown articles in which you will witness this common occurrence for analyzing Shostakovich’s music. This represents one of the many ways in that Schoenbergian serialist procedures are used yet changed to best portray Shostakovich’s twelve-tone idiom.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>52</sup> Peter Schmelz, “Shostakovich’s “Twelve-Tone” compositions and the politics and practice of Soviet serialism,” in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel Fay (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 307.

and serve as a transition, and the final appearance in m. 82 between the violin and cello. This also functions as another transition from the final lyrics to the sustained F#s that lead *attacca* to the opening of the seventh movement. The row is used as a marker between the music and text. The multiple functions of this row cannot be overlooked in its importance. Although this would be classified as his first “twelve-tone” composition and not a serial work, how he uses the opening twelve-tone row to establish particular musical elements that are crucial to the overall aesthetic of the work will be a quality we will need to pay close attention to in the proceeding works. This method is in fact similar to what we will see in String Quartet no.15.<sup>53</sup>

### **String Quartet no.12**

String Quartet no.12 is considered to be one of Shostakovich’s pieces that most utilized twelve-tone rows, alongside Symphony no.14.<sup>54</sup> The elements presented in the *Blok* cycle have increased significantly. His attention to detail between the twelve-tone row and non-serial material has increased significantly. The function of the row to signifying the form is used more clearly, while the ic1 and ic5 are used here again. What is the greatest difference is the integration of non-serial material that derive from the twelve-tone row. Shostakovich is essentially combining two musical foundations that naturally oppose each other. Brack summarizes this juxtaposition—

As Milton Babbitt noted, the grammars of tonal and twelve-tone music rely on fundamentally dissimilar principles. Hence, the diatonic scale underlying tonal motion depends on hierarchical functions relating to the combination of individual

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<sup>53</sup> Expounded on in more detail in the final chapter.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Schmelz, “Shostakovich’s “Twelve-Tone” compositions and the politics and practice of Soviet serialism,” in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel Fay (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 314.

intervals within each seven- note collection, whereas twelve-tone logic denotes a numbering of the entire chromatic aggregate and thus differentiates itself by the permutation and ordering of the intervals themselves.<sup>55</sup>

Essentially they should not be able to cooperate with one another, yet Shostakovich finds a way to tastefully combine the two. Though it's best not to view as one system dominating the other, but as a mutual cooperation as the composer sees fit. But effectively we can say that the entire movement is contrived from the opening row. String Quartet no.12 no doubt shows Shostakovich's highest compositional utilization of his twelve-tone techniques. Similarly to 'Secret Signs,' the first movement of String Quartet no.12 begins with an unaccompanied twelve-tone row in the cello shown in Example 2.4. Also similarly to 'Secret Signs,' the row seems to center on an ic1. But unlike 'Secret Signs,' this row utilizes a second interval class of ic5 to produce the row. The opening row produces three pairs of fourths ascending stepwise, in the pattern C-F, D-G, Fb-Bbb. The fourth is the primary thematic interval, while the minor second is the secondary. As will be explained further, the fourth and minor second are the foundational intervals for a majority of the melodic, and even harmonic, content. According to Keller, "Once you have mentioned the fourth and the minor second, you really have said everything—

**Example 2.4. Opening row from String Quartet no.12, i**



<sup>55</sup> Miriam B. Webber, "Harmonic Syntax in the "Serial" Works of Dmitri Shostakovich," (2013), 5.  
Andrew Mead, "An Introduction to the Music of Milton Babbitt," (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 9-11

harmonically, too.”<sup>56</sup> The minor second and fourth is not an uncommon pairing in Shostakovich’s late works. One will notice that the pair F-C $\flat$  does not create a perfect fourth, but rather an augmented fourth. The issue with the augmented fourth is that it is not a true diatonic fourth, such as the three pairs of fourths previously mentioned are diatonic fourths. However, the intervals can be considered fourths in all three forms—perfect, augmented, and diminished.<sup>57</sup> McCreless argues why this is acceptable for Shostakovich by saying—“Note that the strong tonal context suggests that we read the augmented fourth G $\flat$ -C diatonically as a fourth, and that we need not use pitch-class/interval notation, as in atonal music.”<sup>58</sup> So if one decides to view this as a fourth with as much prevalence as the stepwise pair, then there would be no error in their argument.

Another possible approach is to view it as an inverted ic5 creating an ic7. This is possible through the ic1/ic5 graph created by Brown shown in Figure 2.1.<sup>59</sup> Starting with pitch class 0, C, in the middle, we see ascending fourths moving downward in the graph—C-F-A#/B $\flat$ -D#/E $\flat$ . However, every fourth mentioned can be changed to a fifth by inverting along the y-axis. So now C-F can be C-G. F-C is in fact part of the ic1/ic5 graph. The last two notes, A $\flat$ -D $\flat$  is another ic7 inverted from an ic5. This produces a 5-1 tonal harmonic progression, one of the most obvious tonal operations. This will not be the only time twelve-tone rows to some degree emphasized a 5-1 tonal harmonic progression. At first glance the contradiction between diatonicism and

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<sup>56</sup> Hans Keller, “Shostakovich’s Twelfth Quartet,” *Tempo*, no.94 (London,1970): 12.

<sup>57</sup> Patrick McCreless, “Dmitri Shostakovich: The String Quartets,” in *Intimate Voices: The String Quartet in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2, ed. Evan Jones (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 25

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen C. Brown, “Ic1/ic5 Interaction in the Music of Shostakovich,” *Music Analysis* 28, no.2/3 (2009): 187. (Refer back to page 15 Figure 1.1)

twelve-tone functions is a problem. As stated in the Introduction, Milton Babbitt comments that tonality and twelve-tone music operate on two separate principles.<sup>60</sup> How can polar opposites function together in harmony? Shostakovich weaves twelve-tone rows and tonal implications together, to where even an operation on the opposite end of the spectrum can be treated to tie into the overall tonal framework. He is not the only one to provide tonal implications within non-tonal compositions. According to Dika Newlin, Schoenberg's compositions *Piano Concerto* (1942) and *Ode to Napoleon* (1942) integrated tonal implications in his twelve-tone operations, creating what he calls a "super-tonality".<sup>61</sup> The comments were made in 1953, 14 years before Shostakovich starting using twelve-tone rows. If tonal implications within twelve-tone works were considered plausible, by Schoenberg no less, then Shostakovich's tonal implications integrated into his twelve-tone operations is not so far-fetched.

The repetition of the fourth takes the interval as an intervallic framework of the twelve-tone row and repurposes it as tonal functionality, a motive. After the opening row is stated, the cello plays a sequence of notes that span a fourth from mm.2-5—Db-Gb, Eb-Ab, F-Bb, and Gb-C. Again, the final Gb-C is still considered a fourth. The same appears in the first violin from mm.10-13. Then in m.14, we see the fourth interval appear again, this time in a different motivic fashion. The fourth interval, Eb-Ab, is played and once again in succession, creating a four note motive based off of the fourth interval from the row. That motive appears again in m.15, Db-Gb, and in m.16, C-F. This is a method that we see often with Shostakovich. He will take the important intervals from the first row, the primary row, and utilize them in non-

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<sup>60</sup> Andrew Mead, "An Introduction to the Music of Milton Babbitt," (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 9- 11

<sup>61</sup> Dika Newlin. "Some Tonal Aspects of Twelve-Tone Music." *The American Music Teacher* 3, no. 2 (1953), 2.

serial material. The secondary interval, the semitone, is also seen used in this way. The first violin holds an Ab in m.2 until m.5 it ascends to a Bbb, then resolves back to Ab. It even uses the same two tones as the row, Bbb-Ab. Again, this treatment includes tonal implications. The Bbb can be viewed as a pre-dominant harmony to the dominant Ab. Though no explanation is needed in terms of twelve-tone functions, the flat 6 plays a prominent role in the tonal implications of Shostakovich's twelve-tone rows. Steven Laitz makes first mention of what is called pitch-class motives.<sup>62</sup> The focus is chromatic pitches centered on scale degrees 5 and 6.<sup>63</sup> The b6 is used as a neighboring tone to accentuate the 5th scale degree, or pc7, within a Db tonality. The opening row starting on pc11, or scale degree 7, of Db does not deter the tonal implications, since again Shostakovich is combining twelve-tone and tonal systems.

In fact, the twelve-tone rows and the tonal implications, along with the overall tonal context, create an unlikely alliance. The twelve-tone rows amplify the tonality while simultaneously the tonal context amplifies the rows. Hans Keller explains that the placing of twelve-tone rows within a tonal context “lends them a novel function.”<sup>64</sup>

Not only is their motivic significance thrown into relief, but the manifold interrelations between them emerge with crystalline clarity.—which is really why he can afford to use a whole bunch of them: they inevitably impress themselves intensely upon the aural attention whenever they occur.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Steven Laitz, “Pitch-Class Motive in the Songs of Franz Schubert: The Submediant Complex,” Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Rochester. (Eastman School of Music: 1992)

<sup>63</sup> Patrick McCreless, “The Pitch-Class Motive in Tonal Analysis: Some Historical, Theoretical, and Critical Observations,” *Res musica* (the journal of the Estonia Musicology Society) 3 (2011): 52.

<sup>64</sup> Hans Keller, “Shostakovich's Twelfth Quartet,” *Tempo*, no.94 (London,1970): 9.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

The two opposing principles work in parallel with each other, and analysis on the opening row alone reveals the interrelations between the two principles. However, the opening row connects with the overall tonal context along with influences on non-serial material. The opening row also influences the remainder of the rows in the first movement. There are a total of 9 rows in the first movement, as shown in Table 2.1.<sup>66</sup> The opening row is the primary row; the remainder of the rows are derived from the opening row. The primary relations between the rows are based on ic5 relations and Neo-Riemannian theory. Each row, with exception of row 2, begin with ic5, thus strengthening the importance of the interval of a fourth. Additionally, each row, with exception of

**Table 2.1. Twelve-tone rows from String Quartet no.12, i**

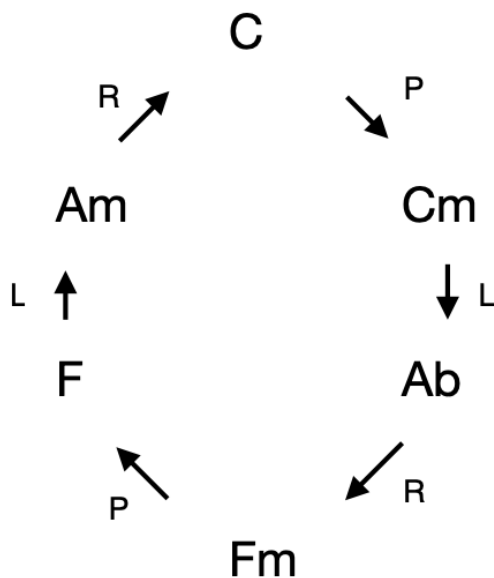
<u>Number of row</u>												
1 <i>m.1</i>	C	F	Cb	Bb	D	G	Gb	Eb	Fb	Bbb	Ab	Db
2 <i>m.19</i>	F	Ab	Db	D	G	C	B	A	Bb	Eb	Fb	Gb
3 <i>m.29</i>	Ab	Db	Gb	Cb	A	G	C	F	Bb	D	Fb	Eb
4 <i>m.48</i>	A	D	Gb	Bb	Eb	Db	C	F	Cb	Fb	Ab	G
5 <i>m.79</i>	C#	F#	C	B	D#	G#	F	E	G	Bb	A	D
6 <i>m.99</i>	C	F	B	Bb	D	G	Fb	Eb	Gb	Bbb	Ab	Db
7 <i>m.118</i>	A	D	G	Gb	C	F	Db	Bb	Fb	Eb	Cb	Ab
8 <i>m.124</i>	A	D	G	Gb	C	F	Db	Bb	Fb	Eb	Cb	Ab
9 <i>m.161</i>	C	F	Cb	Bb	D	G	Gb	Eb	Fb	Bbb	Ab	Db

<sup>66</sup> I am choosing to exclude the two rows in mm.30-34 played in Violin 1, as the rows are unrelated to the primary row. They are by no means unimportant.

row 2 again, begin with either the pitch C or A, with row 5 starting with C# and row 3 with Ab.<sup>67</sup>The pitches create a third relation, which Shostakovich features in various forms and structures in his music.<sup>68</sup> Even though row two may seem unrelated, the beginning pitch F is another third relation from A. Also that C-F is a fourth relation, or ic5, along with Ab and C# from rows 3 and 5 also spelling an ic5.

These pitches also create the aforementioned Riemannian PLR *Tonnetz* shown in Table 2.2. Although Neo-Riemannian theory is a method of harmonic relations, we can take the roots of each chord and relate them to the beginning pitch of each row. We then have all of the rows related in third relations. The C# may seem the outlier, however, a simple S, Slide, process of the

**Table 2.2. *Tonnetz* graph of the beginning pitches of the twelve-tone rows in String Quartet no.12, i**



<sup>67</sup> As row 2 seems to have multiple factors of non-relations with the primary row, exclusion of this row from the list is plausible. However, I chose to include it as it relates to the preceding row 3 and row 8 in that the row begins on the downbeat of the measure rather than the upbeat of 1 like the remainder of the rows.

<sup>68</sup> Stephen C. Brown, "Axis Tonality and Submediant in the Music of Shostakovich," *Music Theory Online* 15, no. 2 (2009): 1.



beginning pitch C still retains the third relations, as C#-A is a major third. As for the aforementioned rows excluded from the list, they too relate in some fashion to the given *Tonnetz*. Both rows in mm.30 and 34 begin with Eb, producing another minor-third relation to the pitch C in multiple ways. To get from a C major triad to an Eb major triad is a PR operation. It is not uncommon for Shostakovich to use the triads or key centers C-major and Eb-major, as in String Quartet no.1 and String Quartet no.15.<sup>69</sup> The significance of placing all rows within this Neo-Riemannian method is to show the strength of relations between the rows. The rows are not random, they are linked in a way that allows the first movement to have some kind of form, some kind of organization. They are not merely interrupting tonality as Schmelz said of the 'Secret Signs' rows, they are the foundation of the entire movement.

Before I explain the relations between the rows, I would like to point out the similarities between the first and last rows. Pitch-wise, they are identical. Yet there are other relations that strengthen the importance of the opening and closing row. First, they are the first and last row to be played in the movement. This creates a bookend effect similar to how the rows were used in 'Secret Signs.' The difference between the two examples is that the final statement of the row in 'Secret Signs' is played in canon between the violin and cello. The pitches are exact, however how the rows are treated within the context of the movement differs. Though it may seem insignificant, when we see how the rows are treated within the context of the movement, we see that compositional factors are as important as the pitches themselves. The opening and closing row of String Quartet no.12 are identical in pitch, articulation, register, compositional treatment (unaccompanied), compositional placement (beginning and end), orthography, and almost

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 1

identical in dynamics with the opening in *piano* and the closing in *pianoforte*. With multiple qualities being identical, it's difficult to not combine the two rows as one row used for a similar purpose. To use a visual explanation, the opening row signifies the beginning of a journey while the closing row signifies the journey has come to an end, similar to the opening and end acts of a play. The rows in between would then be considered the plot that develops as a result of the two pillar acts.

I talked about how each row, excluding the second row, begins with ic5. There is another commonality between certain rows, shown in Table 2.3. Row 6 is almost identical to the primary row, with one exception. In fact, you might even declare them to be identical. However, there is an interesting change that Shostakovich made to only two specific pitches. Keller also found relationships between rows 5 and 6. He mentions that the first half of the fifth row is in transition identical to the first half of the first row, and the second half of the fifth row is, in principle, identical to the second half of the sixth row.<sup>70</sup> However, he misses the mark. All three rows are identical except for pc 6 and 4. They are switched between what I call the axis point, pc3.<sup>71</sup> The

**Table 2.3. Rows 1 and 6 from String Quartet no.12, i**

<i>Row 1</i>	C	F	B	Bb	D	G	Gb	Eb	E	A	Ab	Db
	0	5	11	10	2	7	6	3	4	9	8	1
							┌──────────┐					
<i>Row 6</i>	C	F	B	Bb	D	G	E	Eb	Gb	A	Ab	Db
	0	5	11	10	2	7	4	3	6	9	8	1
							┌──────────┐					

<sup>70</sup> Hans Keller, "Shostakovich's Twelfth Quartet," *Tempo*, no.94 (London,1970): 13.

<sup>71</sup> I have yet to see this element of Shostakovich's rows explained, thus the term 'axis point' is a term I am aiming to coin for this particular function.

question is why the minute change to the row? What is the significance of switching only 2 pitches? The simple answer, I believe, is that the rows were meant to closely resemble the primary row but are slightly different as the movement is still in development. We will see this minute change within the rows in the Serenade analysis of String Quartet no.15. We are not ready to hear the fully sounding primary row just yet. Row 5 sounds in m. 79, and a few similarities to the opening row besides the pitches are in play. It is unaccompanied, and is a T1 transposition. The harmonic semitone shift is foreshadowed starting in m.75 with an A natural from a preceding Ab. This sets up the eventual key change to D minor in m.80. The fifth row can be viewed as a return to the primary section. Yet we begin a semitone above the original Db tonality. This semitone treatment is not uncommon for Shostakovich, which McCreless has explained in detail.<sup>72</sup> The sixth row sounds in its original prime form in m.99. This row then leads us back to Db major tonality. Each row is used as a signifier of an important key change. The row sounds like its prime form, however the minute switch of pc 6 and 4, along with key changes shortly after the row is stated, provides a subconscious aesthetic effect of a returning section of music while not being a complete return. At first glance, one could easily recognize rows 5 and 6 as a repeat of the primary row, yet maybe there is something that may seem off, or a little different. The listener's ear would prove correct as this subtle change serves as a reminder of the primary row, yet the end has not arrived. There is still more development to be done. So far I have not noticed this in the other "twelve-tone" compositions of Shostakovich's repertoire. Be that as it may, that is not to say that this process is not present. Shostakovich displays his ingenuity by switching only two pitches and resembling major compositional factors such as

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<sup>72</sup> Patrick McCreless, "Shostakovich and the Politics of D Minor and Its Neighbours, 1931-1949," in *Shostakovich Studies 2*, ed. Pauline Fairclough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 121-89.

form and integration. It is a reminder that Shostakovich is a man of detail, as shown by the abacus on his work desk or his uncommon punctuality with clocks.<sup>73</sup> Minute details such as the seemingly insignificant switch of two pitches must not be overlooked.

### **Symphony no.14**

Symphony no.14 could be considered the penultimate composition of his late-period. Regarding twelve-tone rows, Hakobian describes the work as the “‘Rosetta Stone’ to unlocking an understanding of the significance and symbolism” of his use of twelve-tone rows.<sup>74</sup> Schmelz states that, “The Fourteenth Symphony has points of twelve-tone use as extensive as any in the Twelfth Quartet.”<sup>75</sup> He adds that no composition moving forward used rows as extensively as the Twelfth Quartet and Symphony no.14, further linking the two works as the penultimate of “twelve-tone” compositions.<sup>76</sup> Regarding the symphony as a whole, Michael Rofe calls it his “most modernist symphony.”<sup>77</sup> Regardless of which description you choose to agree with, Symphony no.14 is a crucial composition in his late-period. The piece follows the approach of the *Blok* cycle with soprano and chamber accompaniment. The analytical approach for this piece must combine musicological and theoretical approaches. I mentioned above that this conjoined approach is necessary for Shostakovich, though to various degrees depending on the piece.

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<sup>73</sup> Wendy Lesser, *Music for Silenced Voices: Shostakovich and His Fifteen Quartets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 190.

<sup>74</sup> Kristian Hibberd, “Shostakovich and ‘polyphonic’ creative,” in *Shostakovich Studies 2*, ed. by Pauline Fairclough (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 201.

<sup>75</sup> Peter Schmelz, “Shostakovich’s “Twelve-Tone” compositions and the politics and practice of Soviet serialism,” in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel Fay (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 311.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>77</sup> Michael Rofe, “Shostakovich as Symphonist; Shostakovich as Modernist: Symphony no. 14,” in *Dimensions of Energy in Shostakovich's Symphonies*, (1st ed.) (London: Routledge, 2012), 204.

Symphony no.14 is an example of both approaches weighing in equally on the overall analysis. Although the previous analyses have been primarily about twelve-tone rows, my analysis of the Fourteenth Symphony will be different. One of the main reasons for this is that the work is dense. Aspects such as form, orchestration, systems of pitch organization, dodecaphonic processes and musical/lyrical connections along with musicological aspects such as the narrative and various narrative elements of the piece, influences, dedicatees, philosophical approaches, and the creative process are all important factors in the analysis. Another reason is that now we have a clear narrative to go along with the musical analysis, which transfers our focus from uncovering a narrative like with String Quartet no.15. Thus a musicological and theoretical approach must co-operate to get a full understanding of this work. I will not cover every element mentioned, instead explaining the ones that are most related to my analysis of String Quartet no.15. The primary takeaways will be how the twelve-note rows are utilized according to the context of the text, the tonal implications established by the rows, and motivic cells that are used separately but derive from the rows.

In terms of influence, it is commonly understood that Mussorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death* is one of the primary influences for the Fourteenth Symphony. After he had finally finished the orchestration for the "symphony"—as mentioned previously he was still unresolved on what to call the work—on 2 March 1969, he finally designated the work as his opus 135 Symphony no.14. In a letter to Glikman on 19 March he states—

It occurred to me that there exist eternal themes, eternal problems. Among them are love and death....I have never dealt with questions of death. Just before entering the hospital I heard Mussorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death*, and my idea of treating death finally crystallized.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000;1999), 260.

To further the confirmation that Mussorgsky's work was the inspiration for the Fourteenth Symphony, at the premiere on 21 June 1969 he gave an introduction explaining the decision on the subject matter—

It is not because I am rather old and not because—as an artilleryman would put it—shells are bursting all around me and I am losing my friends and relatives. I should like to recall the words of that remarkable Soviet writer Ostrovsky, who said that life is given to us only once, so we should live it honestly and handsomely in all respects and never commit base acts. In part, I am trying to polemicize with the great classics who touched upon the theme of death in their work. Remember the death of Boris Godunov. When Boris Godunov has died, a kind of brightening sets in. Remember Verdi's *Otello*. When the whole tragedy ends and Desdemona and Otello die, we also experience a beautiful serenity. Remember member *Aida*. When the tragic demise of the hero and heroine occurs, it is assuaged by radiant music. I think that even among our contemporaries ... take for instance the outstanding English composer, Benjamin Britten. I would also fault him in his *War Requiem*....

It seems to me that all this stems from various kinds of religious teachings that have suggested that as bad as life might be, when you die everything will be fine; what awaits you there is absolute peace. So it seems to me that perhaps, in part, I am following in the footsteps of the great Russian composer Mussorgsky. His cycle *Songs and Dances of Death*—maybe not all of it, but at least "The Field Marshal"—is a great protest against death and a reminder to live one's life honestly, nobly, decently, never committing base acts.... [Death] awaits all of us. I don't see anything good about such an end to our lives and this is what I am trying to convey in this work.<sup>79</sup>

Not only is Mussorgsky's work affirmed as inspiration, but we also obtain the approach Shostakovich takes on death. That death is inevitable, yet there is a triumph over death, a peace upon death, a radiant finale as the final bell rings. The approach is an uplifting one, with death seen as the antagonist and we the protagonist who will inevitably prevail even as death fully embraces us. In fact, it is the final act of death that in turn blossoms this triumph for us,—similar

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

to Lucifer believing he has defeated Jesus—yet it is this very defeat that in turn blossoms the final victory. Yet the text reveals multiple perspectives of death that do not necessarily point to this triumphant narrative. With a closer look into the narrative of each movement we see that the 11 movements are a cumulative attempt by Shostakovich to portray, as he states, “a great protest against death and a reminder to live one’s life honestly, nobly, decently, never committing base acts...[Death] awaits all of us.”

I will refrain from covering the entirety of the symphony. However, I will provide a basic narrative outline of the work, analysis of movements 1-2, and a description of the link between movement 1 and 10 and its importance. Figure 2.1 shows the following 11 movements, while

**Figure 2.1. Symphony no.14 Movements 1-11 Titles**

1. ‘*De profundis*’ (Adagio), words by Federico García Lorca (bass solo);
2. ‘Malagueña’ (Allegretto), words by García Lorca (soprano solo);
3. ‘Loreley’ (Allegro molto – Presto – Adagio), words by Guillaume Apollinaire after Clemens Brentano (dialogue of bass and soprano);
4. ‘The Suicide’ (Adagio), words by Apollinaire (soprano solo);
5. ‘On Watch’ (Allegretto), words by Apollinaire (soprano solo);
6. ‘Madam, look!’ (Adagio), words by Apollinaire (dialogue of bass and soprano);
7. ‘At the Santé Jail’ (Adagio), words by Apollinaire (bass solo);
8. ‘The Zaporozhean Cossacks’ Reply to the Sultan of Constantinople’ (Allegro), words by Apollinaire (bass solo);
9. ‘O, Delwig, Delwig!’ (Andante), words by Wilhelm Küchelbecker (bass solo);
10. ‘The Poet’s Death’ (Largo), words by Rainer Maria Rilke (soprano solo);
11. ‘Conclusion’ (Moderato), words by Rilke (duo of soprano and bass).

**Figure: 2.2a/b. Text from Movements 1-2, Symphony no.14**

*“De Profundis”*

Those one hundred lovers  
are sleeping for ever  
beneath the dry earth.  
Andalusia has  
long red roads.  
Cordoba, green olive trees  
where a hundred crosses  
can be raised  
in their memory.  
Those one hundred lovers  
are sleeping for ever.

*“Malaguena”*

Death walks in and out of the tavern.  
Death walks in and out of the tavern.  
Black horses and sinister people  
wander the deep paths of the guitar.  
And there’s a smell of salt and women’s blood  
on the febrile spikenards along the coast.  
Death walks in and out,  
out of and into the tavern walks death.<sup>80</sup>

Figure 2.2a/b shows the text of movements 1 and 2. The unification of the poetic content is the theme of death.<sup>81</sup> Only 8 movements—1-6 and 10-11— devote their subject to death.<sup>82</sup>“De profundis”, as Rofe mentions, portrays death as natural and beautiful. The setting seems to begin in a grave sight of sorts set in Southern Spain. The locations ‘Andalusia’ and ‘Cordoba’ are described with pleasant qualities, possibly providing a setting of serenity. Death is portrayed in third-person visiting ‘one hundred lovers’ that are ‘sleeping forever beneath the dry earth’. The words used produce a light- mannered aesthetic, as if death is a human, metaphorically speaking, contemplating the cycle of life and death by wandering a beautiful gravesite in a beautiful setting. “Malaguena” then transitions to death as an actual character with its official entrance.

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<sup>80</sup> Russian transliterations: Anastasia Belina-Johnson English translations of the original French, Spanish and Russian texts by Susannah Howe (tracks 1-8); Anastasia Belina-Johnson (track 9); Susan Baxter (tracks 10-11) [https://www.naxos.com/sungtext/pdf/8.573132\\_sungtext.pdf](https://www.naxos.com/sungtext/pdf/8.573132_sungtext.pdf)

<sup>81</sup> Kristian Hibberd, “Shostakovich and ‘polyphonic’ creative,” in *Shostakovich Studies 2*, ed. by Pauline Fairclough (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 200.

<sup>82</sup> Levon Hakobian, “Shostakovich in 1953–75,” in *Music of the Soviet Era: 1917-1991* (London: Routledge, 2017), 220.



Rofe's description of a malevolent and omnipresent force is presented by death as he "walks in and out of the tavern." Death is an inevitable entity that comes and goes as he pleases. This relates to what Shostakovich mentioned about death—"death awaits us all."<sup>83</sup> The third movement, "Loreley", and the fourth movement, "Le Suicide", are a pair. "Loreley" presents the character Loreley as a "sorceress fair" who meets the second character, the bishop. The bishop had summoned her to the court house for her sorceress ways, yet absolved her because of her beauty. We then learn that she is grieving as she says, "My lover has left a far-off land, so let me die, since there is nothing I love. My heart aches so that I must die." As she is sent away from the courthouse, she pleads to climb up to a cliff to look upon her reflection of the river one last time. The text ends with her jumping off the cliff as she sees an illusion of her lover in a boat floating in the river. We transition to the fourth movement, "Le Suicide," which acts as a commentary on the previous movement. The text of the movement has a similar element to the first and second—the repetition of the opening sentence placed at the end of the song. I will explain the connection between this poetic device and the musical material below.

The fifth movement, "On Watch" is about a young soldier spoken about in third-person. The narrative is about a sister grieving the deaths of her brother and her lover, the young soldier, who is dying in the trenches of war.<sup>84</sup> The poem continues to reveal her angst and desires of incest as she continues her grieving. The poem leads into movement 6, "Madam, Look!". Movements 5 and 6 are a larger unit (similar to the pair of movements 3 and 4); the sixth movement offers a commentary on the fifth movement. The scene is quite gruesome. Death

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<sup>83</sup> pg.26

<sup>84</sup> Kristian Hibberd, "Shostakovich and 'polyphonic' creative," in *Shostakovich Studies 2*, ed. by Pauline Fairclough (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 204.

enters in the first line of text now personified as a companion showing compassion to the sister. Death grabs the sisters attention as a good Samaritan, “you’ve dropped something.” The sister replies, “It’s my heart, nothing much,” and she slowly turns to hysteria of laughing fits as the pain of her loss is too much for her to bear. Her reaction to death’s “concern” for her heart shows both a denigration and an expression of horror at the finality of death.<sup>85</sup>

The seventh movement, “At the Sante Jail,” is one of the movements Hakobian does not consider to be devoted to death. However, the lone prisoner speaks his woes as he heads into a deprivation of freedom. Certain lines that represent death personify this deprivation.<sup>86</sup> The allusion to the character Lazarus in the New Testament shows that the prisoner is headed into death. In the fifth and sixth stanza the prisoner pleads with God as one would plead on their way to hell on Judgment Day, and the sixth stanza the prisoner intercedes to God on behalf of his deteriorating condition. (Figure 2.3) Movements 8 and 9 are not devoted to the subject of death. The eighth movement, “Reply of the Zaparogue Cossacks to the Sultan of Constantinople”, seems to be in stark contrast against the whole symphony. The Zaparogue Cossacks’ responds to

**Figure 2.3. Text from movement 7, ‘At the Sante Jail,’ Symphony no.14**

What will become of me, o God,  
 you who know my pain,  
 you who gave it to me?  
 Take pity on my dry eyes, my pallor...

And on all those poor hearts beating in prison.  
 Love, my companion,  
 take pity above all on my feeble wits  
 and this despair that’s overpowering them.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>86</sup> Levon Hakobian, “Shostakovich in 1953–75,” in *Music of the Soviet Era: 1917-1991* (London: Routledge, 2017), 220.

the Sultan with fiery passion and complete disdain, and the opening line of text immediately shows this hatred—“More criminal than Barabbas, horned like fallen angels.” Why did Shostakovich put this poem here? Is the Zaporogue Cossacks’ response representative of this triumphant protest against death personified by the Sultan? Perhaps he wanted to change the narrative of the work, as the previous movement’s poetic content was more lamenting than victorious. My assessment is that Shostakovich is finally raising his fist against the carnage death has left with the previous characters. The ninth movement, “O, Delvig, Delvig!,” is mentioned to not have a subject of death.

However, I disagree with Hakobian for the reason of extramusical factors. Firstly, the poem used is the only poem by a Russian poet, Wilhelm Kuchelbecker. The main character of the poem, Delvig, happens to be the Russian poet Anton Delvig. The two Russians were a part of a Russian trio of poets who became friends, including the infamous Alexander Pushkin. The trio attended the Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum, an educational institution founded by the Tsar Alexander I. Delvig passed away on 26 January 1831, and “O, Delvig” is a poem Kuchelbecker dedicated to the deceased friend and poet. The text Shostakovich used for the ninth movement is four stanzas, with Kuchelbecker presumably asking questions to the deceased friend in the first and third stanza. The first question, “O, Delvig, Delvig, what is the reward for poems and noble deeds?” presents a question one would understandably ask as one confronting the untimely death of a dear friend. The second question, “O, Delvig, Delvig, what is persecution?” may seem to come out of nowhere, yet the answer is the result to the first question—“Bold inspired deeds and sweet songs are destined for immortality!” Thus Kuchelbecker concludes that the two poets and their work will always be in union with each other; though death has ended their friendship, their

union will not be severed. Thus the ninth movement is indeed devoted to death, albeit more subtly than movements 1-6.

The eventual victorious conclusion of the ninth and the rebellion against the Sultan in the eighth provides a change in tone, which leads into an interesting choice of the second to last poem. Movement 10, ‘The Death of the Poet’ is linked to the first movement. Narratively speaking, the first movement is death metaphorically visiting a hundred lovers, representing the inevitable reality that death exists. The tenth movement shows death’s literal visit to the dying poet.<sup>87</sup> In terms of order, the first movement begins a discussion on death by presenting the inevitability of the unscathed force—“Death awaits us all”. When we can agree on that, the remaining discussion of death can continue. Towards the end, the narrative now seems to point towards the composer himself.<sup>88</sup> The narrator reveals that the mind and talent of the poet has withered because of death’s grip on the poet. The last stanza reveals this opposition between the genius of the poet and death’s pursuit to rid of this genius shown in Figure 2.4— Death seems to have won. The protest and triumph in the previous two movements have been cut down by the scythe of death, and death reigns victorious. Yet there is still one more movement. The eleventh

**Figure 2.4. Text from movement 10, ‘The Death of the Poet,’ Symphony no.14**

Oh, his visage and vision was this whole wide-open space,  
 which as yet still wants to go to him and woos him,  
 and his make, now dying in trepidation,  
 is tender and open, like the inside  
 of a fruit going bad through contact with the air.

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<sup>87</sup> Kristian Hibberd, “Shostakovich and ‘polyphonic’ creative,” in *Shostakovich Studies 2*, ed. by Pauline Fairclough (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 203.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.



non-serial material from String Quartet no.12. Rofe points to the opening motif of the row as the *Dies Irae* motif, which Rofe calls the “germ cell” of the first movement.<sup>90</sup>The manipulations of this motif opens to Rofe’s analysis of the resulting third interval, and contrasting fourth interval, as important features of the symphony as a whole. He goes onto state that Hakobian observes many collections can be categorized in this way, namely the dodecaphonic rows.<sup>91</sup> The claim of the opposition of the intervals is that they create “a connection between musical and poetic content” and holds structural significance. Hakobian adds that the famous “lament motif” of two identical descending minor seconds is present, though not subsequently.<sup>92</sup> He is referring to the opening Bb-A in m.1 and Gb-F in m.4, which turns out to be a repeat of the *Dies Irae* motif transposed down a major third. It is then presumable that any third-based collection mentioned by Rofe or predominantly third-based type 2 rows all stem from the opening *Dies Irae* motif. Although the row to non-serial relations aren’t as stellar as a String Quartet no.12, the integrations of this motif from the row still follows Shostakovich’s tendency to present important features from an opening row. Hibberd considers the row as a thematic framing device for the symphony as a whole.<sup>93</sup>

From the entrance of the vocal part in m.13 to m.42 the third dominates the vocal line shown in Example 2.6a. Then in rehearsal number 6 the dominant interval is switched to the fourth shown in Example 2.6b. If we are to follow the topoi of Hakobian, the third-based melody

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<sup>90</sup> Michael Rofe, "Shostakovich as Symphonist; Shostakovich as Modernist: Symphony no. 14," in *Dimensions of Energy in Shostakovich's Symphonies*, (1st ed.) (London: Routledge, 2012), 201.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>92</sup> Levon Hakobian, "Shostakovich in 1953–75," in *Music of the Soviet Era: 1917-1991* (London: Routledge, 2017), 221.

<sup>93</sup> Kristian Hibberd, "Shostakovich and ‘polyphonic’ creative," in *Shostakovich Studies 2*, ed. by Pauline Fairclough (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 202.

**Example 2.6a/b. Vocal excerpts from Symphony no.14, i, ‘De Profundis’, mm.13 & 42**

a)



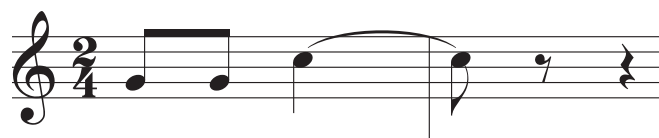
b)



represents the third-person character to show the human emotions of grief, sorrow, and compassion, then transitioning into cold indifference, monstrosity, and the meaninglessness of death for the fourth-based melody. The transition from a third-based to fourth-based melody acts as a subliminal message of foreshadowing of death’s inevitable entrance in the second movement. The third-based melody represents the human-like sorrow of the inevitability of death, and the transition to the fourth-based melody is changing the tone into cold indifference. Death is headed its way to present herself to us, and that coldness is a narrative device preparing for the death’s entrance.

We are then lead to the second movement, “Malaguena”. The vocal part enters in m.5 singing a fourth, G-C shown in Example 2.7. The connection between the two is significant as m.5 is the first entrance of the main character, death. Death is portrayed as human-like as the third-person text continues to sing ‘Death came in and left from the tavern.’ Then one measure after rehearsal number 10 a type-1 row appears in the viola, cello and bass. A second type-1 row appears in rehearsal number 11 as the text finishes its first sentence also in the viola, cello, and

**Example 2.7. Vocal excerpts from Symphony no.14, ii, ‘Malaguena’, m.5**



bass. The two rows make a second appearance two measures after rehearsal number 17 and at the beginning of rehearsal number 18. The first row is repeated again in rehearsal number 19, however, this time the rhythm is augmented to twelve measures. The predominance of the type-1 row and the fourth-based collection in the melody represents the coldness that death leaves in its wake. The monstrosity of death is that she nonchalantly walks in and out of the tavern, knowing well enough her nature. Though death may not be sinister in intent, death will be death to mortals regardless. Thus the monstrosity of death will be prevalent no matter how innocent death may appear.

For both movements, the poem uses the poetic device of repetition, where the first sentence is repeated at the end. Shostakovich uses musical material to represent this repetition. The opening row of the first movement is repeated in m.64, now transposed up a fourth, to signify the closing material/transition into the second movement. The same function happens in the second movement. The opening row is repeated in rehearsal number 19 signifying the closing/transitional material into the third movement. Though before the movement ends the row leads to the rhythmically accelerated and crescendo figure stated earlier. The book-end treatment of the rows is brought over from the *Blok* cycle and the first movement of the Twelfth Quartet. The musical materials Shostakovich uses enhances the narrative of the work. The rows, interval based collections, placement of the rows, and the characteristic of the rows and interval collections tell the story that the text tells. We can receive hints at what the tone of the poem is, and use these musical materials as clues into the interpretation into the individual poems and the overall narrative. They also solidify the different perspectives of death Shostakovich explores,



and movements 1 and 2 exemplify the proceeding process of connection between the narrative and musical material.

### **Conclusion**

Unlike the String Quartet no.12, the Fourteenth Symphony's musical materials do not stand within themselves. They are used as story devices to highlight the overall plot, similarly to how the music enhances the story of an opera. Here we see the combination of the musicological and theoretical methods at work. Both are needed to fully grasp the genius of this composition, and although I claim that the narrative decides the musical material, they are parallel to each other. It is reminiscent of the *Blok* cycle, however, Shostakovich's late-period characteristics were only beginning, while this symphony has a few years of compositions plus the immaculate String Quartet no.12 to borrow material from. In terms of twelve-tone rows, the *Blok* cycle gives a glimpse at what method Shostakovich planned to use for the rows when a narrative is present, and the Twelfth Quartet shows how a work by Shostakovich would function if the backbone of the composition is twelve-tone rows. The Fourteenth Symphony is the more mature example of the musicological/theoretical approach. And as I stated before, this foreshadows my approach to String Quartet no.15. Each of the elements I have presented between the three compositions will be used to uncover the "unfinished" narrative. The major difference is that Symphony no.14 has a clear narrative solidified by the text and Shostakovich's comments. The String Quartet no.15 has neither. However, scholars have uncovered the narrative in between the lines of the work, and I will pursue to highlight the musical material that has yet to be discussed to further highlight the narrative of String Quartet no.15.

### III. String Quartet no.15 in E-flat minor, op.144

#### *Introduction*

I will begin with compiling what scholars have declared about the narrative, show my analysis, and then use my analysis so strengthen, highlight, reveal anew, or contradict the existing narrative premise. Mostly I am in agreement with the previous scholarship. The descriptions of, theoretical methodologies for approaching, and autobiographical readings of String Quartet no.15 in the existing scholarly literature are all legitimate from renowned scholars. The disagreement is not because of error of assessment but rather an incomplete perspective. String Quartet no.15 has been described more than analyzed in depth, thus hermeneutic analysis has been thoroughly explained. Yet the musical features have not shared the same attention. Scholars such as McCreless suggests that an in-depth analysis of the piece is a daring task.<sup>94</sup> My aim is to even the playing field of musicological and theoretical analysis by focusing on the musical features of the quartet. As is the nature of the work, the musicological analysis must be included in the musical analysis. Thus my approach will be a dual musicological and theoretical analysis, with the primary objective on the theoretical analysis. For String Quartet no.15, and the collection of quartets, Shostakovich composes in a way that lends the analysis itself to be more literary-based, as if they possess secretive programmatic qualities.<sup>95</sup> That is not to say that there is no purely musical analysis of qualities such as the overall formal structure, but rather that it seems almost impossible to avoid the relying on this work's narrative as the driving force of my analysis. Multiple times I have mentioned that it is

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<sup>94</sup> Patrick McCreless, "Dmitri Shostakovich: The String Quartets," in *Intimate Voices: The String Quartet in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2, ed. Evan Jones (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 34.

<sup>95</sup> Wendy Lesser, *Music for Silenced Voices: Shostakovich and His Fifteen Quartets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 290.

almost impossible to study Shostakovich's music without combining musicological and theoretical practices—String Quartet no.15 is the pinnacle of this statement. When musical analysis exists, mostly it is used to strengthen a narrative explanation. This is neither right or wrong, it is the nature of the work. However, if musical analysis will be used to highlight a narrative perspective, than a focus on the purely musical elements needs to be prioritized for the sake of the narrative. Of course because of the nature of this composition, it would be foolish to delve into depth of the purely musical analysis without first understanding what the presented narrative is supposed to be.

### **Narrative and Plot**

The overall consensus is that the narrative of String Quartet no.15 is about death. But not just any death, the composer's own death. Judith Kuhn states that many have come to the conclusion that this composition is Shostakovich's requiem.<sup>96</sup> Although scholars such as Laurel Fay states that String Quartet no.15 "could be regarded as a personal requiem."<sup>97</sup> The significance is the differences in the definitive language. Kuhn states the many scholars have concluded that the narrative *is* his personal requiem, whereas Fay states that the narrative *could be* his personal requiem. This represents the fact that the analysis is still in development for this work, that although most agree the narrative is death, some scholars are hesitant to definitively state that this composition is his personal requiem. There are legitimate reasons for this hesitancy. First and foremost, String Quartet no.15 carries no dedicatee: we do not know who

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<sup>96</sup> Judith Kuhn, "The string quartets," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*, ed. Pauline Fairclough and David Fanning (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 67.

<sup>97</sup> Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000;1999), 280.

this work was for, thus we cannot definitively state that this work was his requiem. And yet, it is suspicious that Shostakovich decided not to dedicate it to anyone. Even more suspicious is that the Beethoven Quartet cellist, Sergey Shirinsky, passed away after a rehearsal of the Fifteenth Quartet on 18 October 1974.<sup>98</sup> If he had not already dedicated String Quartet no.14 (1973) to Shirinsky, it is possible that this quartet could have been dedicated to him.<sup>99</sup> Of course, this is only speculation. Second reason is that there are no comments made by Shostakovich about this particular work. Comments from Shostakovich legitimize the narrative of death in the Fourteenth Symphony, but no such statements about String Quartet no.15 are extant. Therefore, we must use comparable elements of his previous compositions and relevant comments about compositions that have elements related to String Quartet no.15. One can understand the hesitancy to declare outright a definitive answer on the narrative. Nevertheless, this does not excuse us from highlighting possible dramatic and musical elements that would legitimize the narrative. Whether hesitant or bold to declare this piece as a requiem, the agreeable on the narrative of death remains constant. Thus death is the narrative we have all agreed upon.

String Quartet no.15 is not the only composition with the subject of death. Shostakovich composed the Fourteenth Symphony with the same overall narrative of death. Though another major difference is that the content of the poems of the Fourteenth Symphony is the signifier of that the narrative is, whereas String Quartet no.15 has no such narrative signifier. It is an instrumental work, and the debate on whether instrumental music can represent a narrative meaning will be discussed later. What I will point out is that one will inevitably gravitate towards

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>99</sup> Wendy Lesser, *Music for Silenced Voices: Shostakovich and His Fifteen Quartets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 250.

a narrative being present. With String Quartet no.15, there are a few narrative elements that seemingly contradict Shostakovich's comments on the balance between literary and musical signifiers. The first element that is noticeable before ever listening to or reading the music is the movement titles. Movement titles are not unknown to Shostakovich, but are not common. Notable is the movement titles of the Second (1944) and Eleventh (1966) Quartet and his early work *Aphorisms* for piano, op.13 (1927) shown in Table 3.1. Even though the movement titles seem to contradict Shostakovich's earlier comments, the use of these titles resemble Shostakovich's other comments: "In recent years I've become convinced that the word is more effective than music. Unfortunately, it's so. When I combine music with words, it becomes harder to misinterpret my intent."<sup>100</sup> The words 'convinced' and 'unfortunately' reveal that this statement represents a change in perspective rather than self-contradiction. The comments at the Union Composer's meeting took place in 1951 and it is understandable that Shostakovich could have changed his stance within that significant amount of time. Thus, according to Drury, the programmatic titles are a traditional gesture to aid the listeners to divide the quartets into passages of time according to the story.

The movement titles in String Quartet no.15 have all been used before, except for Epilogue and Intermezzo. But that is not the only thing that is noticeable. The glaring difference is the placement of the 'Elegy' movement, shown in Table 3.1. In String Quartet no.15 it is placed in the beginning and followed by a Serenade. Whereas 'Elegy' is towards the end in String Quartet no.11 and even though it is placed early on, in *Aphorisms* it follows a 'Nocturne' movement and proceeds to the 'Funeral March'. But why the placement of the 'Elegy' is

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<sup>100</sup> Jonathan Drury, "Traditionalism in Shostakovich's Fifteenth String Quartet," in *South African Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 10 (1990): 15.

**Table 3.1. Movements titles of String Quartet no.15, *Aphorisms* for piano, and String Quartet no.11**String Quartet no.15

1. Elegy
2. Serenade
3. Intermezzo
4. Nocturne
5. Funeral March
6. Epilogue

*Aphorisms* for piano, op.13

1. Recitative
2. Serenade
3. Nocturne
4. Elegy
5. Funeral March
6. Etude
7. Dance of Death
8. Canon
9. Legend
10. Lullaby

String Quartet no.11

1. Introduction
2. Scherzo
3. Recitative
4. Etude
5. Humoresque
6. Elegy
7. Finale

important I will now explain. Movements 2-5 portray death in a conventional fashion—

Serenade, Nocturne, Elegy, Funeral March. According to Richard Burke String Quartet no.15 has an inner chronology that is similar to *Aphorisms*—Serenade, Intermezzo, Nocturne, and Funeral March. The elegy is a poem of mourning written for a specific loved one, a famous figure or a tragic event. However, funerals were performed differently in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Instead of a minister and relatives or loved ones speaking in front of the masses, a respectful silence was performed. The members would then write elegies on paper and pin it to what is called a pall, or the velvet cloth that covered the coffin. The elegies would travel, with the pall still attached to the coffin, to the grave site. In this funeral procession, the elegy takes place before the funeral march, and that is how the movements are ordered in *Aphorisms*. However, that is not the case with String Quartet no.15. For why would an elegy be placed before the

funeral march, and in fact before the serenade and nocturne, which signifies the process of the character coming to terms with one's own mortality? This has led to speculation on the intended narrative the order portrays, that the quartet has a cyclical nature. Lesser states that the reversal order of the 'Elegy' and 'Epilogue' movements form the cyclical nature—

So the quartet as a whole contains a strange reversal: at the beginning everything is all over, but by the end it is in a state of flux. This too makes it circular, for we feel the need, at the end, to go back to that more fixed state of endlessness, instead of the more tremulous, unbalanced state in which the quartet leaves us.<sup>101</sup>

Richard Burke states that String Quartet no.15 has a similar inner chronology to *Aphorisms*—Serenade, Intermezzo, Nocturne, and Funeral March—which form what he calls the “central movements”.<sup>102</sup> This relationship between the first and last movement and the four center movements are the two main elements of this circular narrative. Since the 'Elegy' is put first, the rest of the quartet functions as the telling of a story, a poetic rendition of Shostakovich's own process of his mortality. The 'Epilogue' functions as a summary of the previous story given, as a closing statement to the end of the funeral, which is its literary function.<sup>103</sup> If only the movement titles were evidence of this narrative format, then Burke's analysis would be lacking. However, the musical features in the first and last movements legitimize the circular nature.

In m.203 of the first movement, we begin the transition to the second movement, shown in Example 3.1. The motif used is a remnant of the opening motif, yet not exactly a repeat. The first violin sustains a Bb that will eventually lead to the beginning of the story in the second

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<sup>101</sup> Wendy Lesser, *Music for Silenced Voices: Shostakovich and His Fifteen Quartets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 267.

<sup>102</sup> Richard Burke, “The Moving Image: Time and Narrative in the Fifteenth Quartet,” in *A Shostakovich Companion*, ed. Michael Mishra (London: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 441.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.

### Example 3.1a/b

a) Movement 1, 'Elegy', mm. 203-210

203 24

*pp* *morendo* *attacca*

b) Movement 6, 'Epilogue', mm. 90-97

*mf* *dim.* *tr* *pp* *pp*

92 *morendo* *morendo* *morendo*



movement. The almost funeral-march like motif is played *pianissimo* with instructions *morendo* and *attaca* towards the last two measures. In m.90 of the last movement, we begin with the same motif from m.203 in the first movement, although with rhythmic variance and a few deviations. Yet mm.206-210 are repeated exactly in the first violin and cello as mm.92-97 in the last, with the last movement mildly augmenting the rhythms. This leads to the function of the last movement ending how the first movement ended, which leads to the conclusion that the last movement circles back not to the beginning, but to the very end of the first movement about to begin the story in the second movement. This brings up the differences between story and plot. The story is the actual order of events, while the plot is the way in which the story is told. According to Burke, the story should be the ‘Serenade’ through the ‘Epilogue’ with the ‘Elegy’ as the closing section of the plot.<sup>104</sup> However, that is not the case here. The narrative order is that the ‘Elegy’ is the movement that operates as a common narrative device, the flashback.<sup>105</sup> The ‘Serenade’ through the ‘Epilogue’ is the story the ‘Elegy’ is telling. If this is the desired plot of Shostakovich, what does that mean for our interpretations of the narrative? This means that the ‘Elegy’ is a “stand alone” movement which preps us for the actual story to begin in the second movement. If this is the case, then what musical elements clarify this desired plot order?

Let us first take a look at the ending motif of the first movement compared to its opening motif. The ending motif is, as I mentioned before, a remnant of the opening motif, shown in Example 3.2. The opening motif begins with the melody in the second violin sustaining an Eb for four measures and two statements of the primary motif. The motif deviates from the sustained Eb

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 441.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 441

**Example 3.2. Opening motive from String Quartet no.14, i, 'Elegy'**



to encircle the Eb by whole steps, playing an F and Db for the two quarter notes. The whole step, or ic2 to foreshadow forthcoming serialist analysis, plays a prominent role. From the beginning to m.37, whenever the primary motif is repeated it always begins with the whole step, ic2. When the primary motif reenters in m.128, the motif begins with the same whole step, ic2, encircling now a D instead of an Eb, implying a modulation to D minor. By this point, the expectation is that any occurrences of this motif to be whole step based. However, the ending motif is played as a half step, ic1. This jars our expectations and brings us to attention from the monotony of the entire movement. This change of the whole step, ic2, to the half step, ic1, is a foreshadowing of the upcoming story. The sentence that will transition from the speaker speaking his own words to the now telling the story. But even before this occurs, we hear the same half step, ic1, remnant in mm.162-163. This is Shostakovich preparing us for his final statements before he begins telling the story. Thus the ending motif is two-fold—it is recalling the statement, or thesis even, in the opening speech and it is preparing us for the upcoming tale. The motif at the end of the last movement begins with the half step, ic1, as in the end of the first movement and not the whole step, ic2, interval dominating the majority of the primary theme throughout the first movement. This strengthens the claim that the last movement is in fact circling back to the end of the first movement, and the plot order of the 'Elegy' function as a flashback and the remaining movements as the story the 'Elegy' tells. But this is not the only element that refers to this plot

order. In fact it is the relationship between the intervals used in the ending motif of the first movement and the various crucial melodic themes throughout the remaining movements—the half step, or ic1. As a placeholder, this is when I will begin my focus on how the musical elements reference the narrative of String Quartet no.15. This is when the narrative becomes more clear. Although Shostakovich may have evolved his stance on the balance between literary and musical devices in portraying images of a narrative, the musical elements are what truly allow this narrative to come alive. The analysis I will provide is combined with other scholarly analysis, though there are quite a few important elements that have neither been spoken of before or not gone into enough depth to recognize the gravity these musical elements obtain.

### **The significance of ic1**

Figure 2 shows the overview of my analysis. It is important to state now that the connection between the use ic1 throughout the story provides us the opportunity to notice other musical elements that are important —Twelve-tone rows, eleven and ten note rows resembling twelve-toneness, other important intervals such as the fourth or ic5, synthetic chords, juxtaposition between major and minor modalities, and connections between the movements that serve as a thread tying the story together. Thus the significance of the ic1 is similar to the bullet point outline of a paper, providing crucial structural points throughout the work. Each appearance of ic1 within a significant structure point in the movements serves as a narrative. Though only a simple interval, this interval class itself is the thread that connects the story throughout the movements. I will present the elements in which ic1 is significant and then will go in to depth with each in chronological order according to the movements. My aim is to show

that the ic1 thread that connects the movements can be linked to the progression of the plot and is a musical feature that represents the narrative. Table 3.2 shows the primary ic1 relations I will focus on.

The half step, or ic1, plays a significant role throughout the story movements—Serenade to Epilogue. This interval is the primary interval that begins movements—Serenade, Intermezzo, and Nocturne—and ends movements—Elegy, Serenade, Intermezzo, Nocturne, and Epilogue. However, it isn't simply the ic1 that is significant, it is the relation between each appearance of

**Table 3.2. Primary ic1 Relations, String Quartet no.15**

<b>Significant ic1 relations</b>	
<b>First movement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juxtaposition between opening motif, signaling a preparation for the second moment, which acts as the transition from storyteller to story.</li> </ul>
<b>Second movement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The beginning of the primary twelve-tone row and other eleven or ten-note rows.</li> <li>• The beginning of the trio's primary theme.</li> <li>• The beginning of the recitative answer in the scherzo section.</li> <li>• The primary interval used for the cluster chord in the scherzo section.</li> </ul>
<b>Third movement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning of the three rows in the beginning.</li> <li>• The Eb-Bb-Cb pitches taken from the trio theme.</li> <li>• The recitative recall in mm12-13.</li> <li>• The ic1 key-change transposition from Eb to D</li> </ul>
<b>Fourth movement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The melody outlining Russian modal theory, which in turn juxtaposes between major and minor modality.</li> <li>• The trio motif from the third as the primary accompaniment figure.</li> <li>• The end of the fourth movement (Bb-Cb) as both a recall of the trio motif and a 5th transposition of the transition motif from the first movement.</li> </ul>
<b>Fifth movement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first three harmonies outlining the Eb-Bb-Cb trio motif in the highest voice.</li> </ul>
<b>Sixth movement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prominent interval in the swirling figures.</li> <li>• Mm. 1-9 highlighting the Eb-Bb-Cb trio theme in the first violin.</li> <li>• The final interval used in the final appearance of the swirling figure in mm.83-84.</li> <li>• The transition motif in the first sounds in m.90, Eb-Fb.</li> </ul>

ic1 within the endings and beginnings and their dramatic indications. And the ic1 is not only significant in the beginnings and endings of the movements, the ic1 is significant throughout the movements that begin and/or end with the ic1. As mentioned before, the ending of the first movement begins its foreshadowing transition to the second movement by repeating the primary motif, but instead of sounding as a whole step, or ic2, Shostakovich changes it to a half step, ic1, to prepare the listener for the upcoming story.<sup>106</sup> As the transition ends on an Eb minor triad in m. 210, the first violin continues to hold the Bb with the *attacca* instruction. The *morendo* marking prepares for the pianississimo in the beginning of the second movement. The first violin then intensely crescendos to a *sforzando* and fortississimo. This crescendo lasts for a full measure then releasing on the downbeat of the proceeding measure. The second violin enters in m. 2 playing an A natural, creating an ic1 in the first two measures. The same treatment is then transferred between all four voices for the next twelve measures to spell out a complete type-1 twelve-tone row, which I will analyze further later on. This screaming quality specifically on the Bb is what Kuhn alludes to: “terrifying B flat that concluded the Thirteenth Quartet and serving as a graphic image of death.”<sup>107</sup> The significance here is that the Thirteenth Quartet, according to Kuhn, shares many musical gestures with the Fourteenth Symphony and is considered its companion.<sup>108</sup> If she is willing to compare musical and narrative elements to both quartets through musical gesture integration, than it would suffice to say that there will be comparisons between String Quartet no.15 and the Fourteenth Symphony. In fact, that is the case with the

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<sup>106</sup> Refer back to Example 3.1a

<sup>107</sup> Judith Kuhn, “The string quartets,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*, ed. Pauline Fairclough and David Fanning (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 69.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

opening ic1 of the first movement of the Fourteenth Symphony and the opening ic1 of the Serenade of String Quartet no.15. If we refer back to the Fourteenth Symphony, the very beginning of the work is a four note *Dies Irae* motif that begins on Bb and descends to an A natural and G natural. Not only are the pitches the same, the register is the same and the dynamics are almost the same, with *De Profundis* at pianissimo and Serenade at pianississimo. If this is indeed serving as an image of death, what perspective of death could it be? Whose death is he projecting? Since this can be considered his personal requiem, it can be logical that this initial ic1 of a screaming quality is Shostakovich himself. We are beginning the story with his agony over the realization of his own mortality, the reality that death is an entity slowly creeping up on him. And the interval that would perfectly indicate this is the ic1.

The form of this movement is a variation of a Scherzo and Trio. Mm.1-36 is the scherzo section, mm.37-85 is the trio section which is interrupted by another repeat of the scherzo section from mm. 86-107, then in mm.108-118 another trio section is repeated, and concludes with another interruption at fortissimo in m.119 consisting of scherzo material but not a full statement. The overall form is A-A-B-A-B-A', though the final A' prime is not a full restatement of the A section. It functions more as an interruption before transitioning to the third movement, committing the screaming twelve-tone row. The A section has three main themes that define the section—the screaming twelve-tone row, the cluster chords, and a recitative-like melody following the cluster chords. Throughout the second movement ic1 is prominent with these three main themes. Along with the twelve-tone rows and recitative-like melody, the cluster chords also include significant ic1 content. Between the second violin and the viola the notes that are being sounded are C,B,D, and A in the viola and G, Bb,Db, and E in the second violin. If the pitches

were grouped together in a pitch class set, the set would spell—G, A, Bb, B, C, Db, D, E. The six tones in the middle are all ic1 ranging a fourth interval A-D. After the cluster chords are sounded in m.13, the recitative-like melody enters in the cello, which begins with an F#-G, an ic1. The melody sounds as an eleven-note row withholding the Bb until m.18. The first A section has finished. The second A section begins with the screaming twelve-tone row, now an eleven-note row withholding D natural, beginning on a Cb, which ascends to a C natural, another ic1. However, the screaming row is interrupted by the 8th note with the same cluster chords in m.27. The row finishes with A-F-Bb at the tail end of m.27 and the beginning of m.28 in the style of the recitative. The recitative theme picks up in the viola and follows the first recitative thematic gestures from the first A section. The recitative theme in the viola begins with a Db-D, another ic1. The A section's main themes all begin with the ic1 or are consistently created from the ic1 as in the cluster chords. The recitative melody transfers to the cello on the third beat of m.33 which then prepares us for the trio section.

The trio section, whose content will be explored more in depth later on, is centered on its primary melodic theme. Example 3.3 shows the four appearances of the main theme. The theme begins in m.37 with an Eb descending to a D natural and ascends to a G natural in the first violin. The theme appears again in m.48 transposed down a fourth, resulting in the theme beginning on the dominant of Eb minor. This tonal relations will also be explored more in depth later on. The Bb in the first violin descends to an A natural, which is the opening ic1 class of the movement. In m.77 the theme is transferred to the cello with the first Eb-D ic1 descent and appears again in the second B section in m.108. The cello plays the theme again, this time starting on Bb and then a descent to A natural similar to the second iteration of the theme. The final appearance of this

**Example 3.3. ‘Trio’ melody from String Quartet no.15, ii, ‘Serenade’**

a) m.37



b) m.48



c) m.77



d) m.117



theme is in 117, though only the first four notes of the theme—Eb-D-G-Cb—appear as the cluster chords interrupt the theme. The main theme of the trio section all begin with the ic1. The first and third appearances of the theme can be viewed as a transposition of an ic5 or ic7, or a fourth and fifth, from the opening Bb. This shows a connection between the opening ic1 and the ic1 that begin the main theme of the trio section. Also significant is an element that I have yet to mention until now, which is the process of ic1 either ascending or descending. Though transposing Shostakovich’s interval classes is a normal process, we should pay attention the



direction the ic1 resolves.<sup>109</sup> It plays an important part in interpreting the narrative. For instance, the scraping twelve-tone row appears three times—mm. 1-12, 19-26, and 90-101. The first two is a type-1 twelve-tone row that has a descending ic1. However, the two other appearances are significantly different. The rows are not a full twelve-tone row, but are eleven-note rows. The significance between the twelve and eleven note rows is that twelve-tone rows, whether type 1, 2, 3, or 4 defined by Brown, are a legitimate serial function while the eleven-note rows function as the term that Yuri Kholopov created to describe Russian treatment of rows—"Twelve-toneness."<sup>110</sup> Also significant is that the remaining two appearances of the rows have an ascending ic1—from Cb-C and C-Db. This holds significance because of the trio theme, which begins with a descending ic1. What we can do with this information is to place a hierarchy of the narrative these musical elements create, meaning that the descending ic1 is a primary utterance of the image of death. The ascending ic1 is viewed as a continuation of this portrayal of death. An important detail of the ascending ic1 is that Shostakovich employs the function of "twelve-toneness" to keep this imagery moving forward while also using it as a callback of sorts to the original source of the image of death. If this is so, then the connection between the descending ic1 of the opening row and melodies of the trio section is the beginning of the thread. The opening screams of agony by Shostakovich occur again in the trio section, however, in a different manner. In fact, they are quite different in character.

Up until the trio section the movement has yet to sound what the title of Serenade suggests. Burke describes a Serenade as "often a love song, bringing with it images of youth and

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<sup>109</sup> See Brown's work I have cited previously

<sup>110</sup> Christopher Segall, "Yuri Kholopov and Twelve-Toneness," *Music & Politics* 14, no. 2 (2020): 1.

hope, or at least anticipation, and even suggestions of place, usually outdoors, and time, more than likely evening.”<sup>111</sup> Yet the movement has yet to portray any images of youth and hope, love song, or the outdoors in the evening time. There is a sliver of opportunity for these qualities to break through the bleakness of the scherzo section, however, we are quickly reminded that we are still listening to a story about death. The melody begins with three notes, Eb-D-G, that suggest we have changed from an Eb minor modality to an Eb major modality, another sliver of chance to juxtapose the bleak with hope. However, the melody ventures into the realm of twelve-toneness, which as previously mentioned in chapter 2 Shostakovich uses as a means to derive from a sense of tonality, and so any sense of peace. The melody is sung as if death herself is the one singing to Shostakovich, luring him into her arms. This is when the title of *Serenade* comes into effect, though not in the manner that Burke has suggested. If this is death singing her alluring speech to entice Shostakovich to surrender to her melody, as a sailor to the siren, then Shostakovich is treating death in song as is common in Russian tradition. The persuasive personification of death is not new, and again we find a connection between Mussorgsky’s *Song and Dances of Death* and Shostakovich’s works. The second and fourth movements of *Songs and Dances of Death* provide similar qualities that Shostakovich may have borrowed. Mussorgsky’s piece itself is a four-movement work portraying four perspectives of death. The second movement takes place in the bedroom of a young girl in the evening time. As the young girl has finished singing her woeful melody, death enters as a serenading lover in m.33.<sup>112</sup> The text presents the intentions of death by announcing that: “death sings a serenade.” Death persuades

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<sup>111</sup> Richard Burke, “The Moving Image: Time and Narrative in the Fifteenth Quartet,” in *A Shostakovich Companion*, ed. Michael Mishra (London: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 441.

<sup>112</sup> Jonathan Drury, “Traditionalism in Shostakovich’s Fifteenth String Quartet,” in *South African Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 10 (1990): 13.

the girl to let go by the use of a sweet tongue, even describing her beauty—“Your translucent face is shining, your cheeks are rosy, with a wavy plait, your figure is entwined, like a cloud. The blue radiance of your piercing eyes is brighter than flies and fire.” Finally with the claim “you have seduced me”, death finally declares that the time has come for his reward. Death finally states: “Oh, I’ll suffocate you in my strong embraces: listen to my seductive chatter!...be silent! You are mine!”. This seducing quality of death in Mussorgsky’s work is the quality we hear in the primary melody in the trio section. The screams of agony over the realization of his own mortality have morphed into death herself serenading Shostakovich to be “suffocated in her strong embraces”. What strengthens this connection even more is the elements that are similar between the two, besides the title and the above-mentioned text.

Up until death enters, there are no sharps or flats in the key signature, but when death enters, the key signature changes to Eb minor. The rest of the movement is a dialogue between the young girl and death debating whether she should surrender to the sweet words death is using. Therefore the key signature stays in Eb minor and even ends on an Eb minor triad as death declares “You are mine!”. The key of Eb minor is a musical representation of death, as a character in an opera, entering the scene. The key of Eb minor is a bleak key for the string section with no open strings in first position and few open strings for principal scale degrees in general. This quality makes the scale dark, so a piece in this key will naturally sound dark.<sup>113</sup> The choice of Eb minor scale is setting the stage for death to sing her seduction towards the young girl. It is no mystery why Shostakovich would choose the work, and in particular this movement, to be in Eb minor. It just so happens that the Serenade movement has the strongest sense of an Eb

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 12.

tonality, which I will discuss below. In Mussorgsky's fourth movement, "Field Marshall", Eb minor plays a key role in providing associations with death. From the beginning to m.40, Eb minor is used to provide the aesthetic of the text, which is describing the bloody scene of the battle that has taken place. However, when death enters in m.42, the key signature removes all flats and left with no key signature, the reverse treatment of the second movement. Eb minor this time is used as an association with the death and grim results of war, providing the listener with a grim aesthetic for death's arrival. Thus Eb minor, provided by Mussorgsky, is a scale used as an association with death, whether as a portrayal of death herself, foreshadowing her appearance, or describing the results of catastrophe resulting in death. Though one piece utilizing this scale in this way may not be enough evidence, Jonathan Drury states that three other pieces by Mussorgsky confirm Eb's associations with death—*Harper's Song* (1863), *Epitaph* and *Forgotten* (both in 1874).<sup>114</sup>

Another key factor is the use of the waltz. The change in meter for Mussorgsky is from a 2/4 to a 6/8 when death enters and from a 4/4 to 3/4 for Shostakovich. Whenever death enters we have been transported rhythmically and metrically into a dance, a type of dance that an audience would participate in the standard setting of a serenade—youth and hope, outdoors and in the evening time. Here it is used as a common Russian representation of death dancing seductively to persuade her prey. The 6/8 waltz in Mussorgsky's representation of death is utilized in Shostakovich's 3/4 representation of death. How then does the scale and the meter represent the death's serenade? The melody being sung in the trio section, with its twelve-toneness quality and eery seduction, along with the meter changing to a waltz are all used to set the stage for death to

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 13.

enter and seduce Shostakovich. However, these qualities are separate from the story if not for the significant connection of the opening ic1 in the trio melody with the opening ic1 in the beginning of the Serenade movement. The ic1 connection links the trio melody to the opening ic1 as a narrative continuation. Both provide an image of death, with the opening descending ic1 portraying Shostakovich's screams of agony while the trio ic1 portrays death herself singing to Shostakovich. The descending ic1 in the opening and trio is, as mentioned before, the beginnings of this thread that connects the progressions of the story, this narrative of death. This is the significance of the simple interval of ic1. We are able to, as I have stated before, combine both musicological and music-theory analysis to highlight the musical elements that portray the narrative. But this is only the beginning, as the ic1 is used to connect the second movement to the third, then to the fourth, and finally to finale of the story, the funeral march.

Before we move on to the third movement, I would like to go in-depth on the twelve-tone rows mentioned before. It is common to include the Serenade on the list of "twelve-tone compositions," yet it is usually limited to the opening row. There are quite a few elements that are left unsaid about the relations between the twelve-tone rows, and even the eleven-note or ten-note rows. Shostakovich scholars have added the eleven and ten note rows to the category of Kholopov's "twelve-toneness."<sup>115</sup> We begin with the statement of the opening row, the only true type-1 row where the row ends with stating all twelve pitches without any repeats nor added on notes afterwards. Table 3.3 shows the opening row and related rows. The bolded pitches represent the pitches that are excluded, creating eleven-note or ten-note rows. The first is a pure twelve-tone row, the second is an eleven note row with the E natural sounding in the upper voice

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<sup>115</sup> Christopher Segall, "Yuri Kholopov and Twelve-Toneness," *Music & Politics* 14, no. 2 (2020): 1.

**Table 3.3. Opening row from String Quartet no.15, ii, 'Serenade', with related twelve-tone rows**

a)

m.1	Bb	A	Eb	D	B	C	Db	F	Gb	Ab	G	E
m.19	Cb	C	Ab	G	Gb	Eb	D	Db	Bb	A	F	<b>E</b>
m.90	C	Db	Eb	Bb	Cb	D	E	Gb	F	G	Ab	<b>A</b>

b)

<b>m.13</b>	F#	G	C	Db	Fb	Eb	Cb	F	D	A	Ab	<b>Bb</b>
<b>m.28</b>	Db	D	G	Cb	Ab	A	Eb	C	F	Fb	Gb	Bb
<b>m.102</b>	B	C	Db	A	Bb	Eb	D	Ab	G	Fb	<b>F</b>	<b>F#</b>

of the cluster chord in m.27, and the third is an eleven note-row with the final A natural sounding in the bottom voice of the chord voicing in m.101. Right after the cluster chords in m.13, the recitative appears in the cello and sounds an eleven-note row, excluding Bb. 3.3b shows the recitative rows. The first is an eleven-note row with the Bb sounding in the preceding cluster chord, the second is a type-3 row, and the third is a ten-note row as the upper voices in the chords with F and F# sounding in the chord voicing in m.103. As is common with Shostakovich, the only connection between these rows is that they all start with an ic1. Table 3.4 shows a matrix built from the opening row. This is another link that the ic1 has in this movement. The matrix proves that there are no relations between the rows except for the ic1, which make up the majority of the scherzo section. An entire section has an element of rows all related by the ic1 alone.

Table 3.4. Matrix of the opening row from String Quartet no.15, ii, 'Serenade'

	I <sub>0</sub>	I <sub>11</sub>	I <sub>5</sub>	I <sub>4</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>2</sub>	I <sub>3</sub>	I <sub>7</sub>	I <sub>8</sub>	I <sub>10</sub>	I <sub>9</sub>	I <sub>6</sub>	
P <sub>0</sub>	B $\flat$	A	E $\flat$	D	B	C	D $\flat$	F	G $\flat$	A $\flat$	G	E	R <sub>0</sub>
P <sub>1</sub>	B	B $\flat$	E	E $\flat$	C	D $\flat$	D	G $\flat$	G	A	A $\flat$	F	R <sub>1</sub>
P <sub>7</sub>	F	E	B $\flat$	A	G $\flat$	G	A $\flat$	C	D $\flat$	E $\flat$	D	B	R <sub>7</sub>
P <sub>8</sub>	G $\flat$	F	B	B $\flat$	G	A $\flat$	A	D $\flat$	D	E	E $\flat$	C	R <sub>8</sub>
P <sub>11</sub>	A	A $\flat$	D	D $\flat$	B $\flat$	B	C	E	F	G	G $\flat$	E $\flat$	R <sub>11</sub>
P <sub>10</sub>	A $\flat$	G	D $\flat$	C	A	B $\flat$	B	E $\flat$	E	G $\flat$	F	D	R <sub>10</sub>
P <sub>9</sub>	G	G $\flat$	C	B	A $\flat$	A	B $\flat$	D	E $\flat$	F	E	D $\flat$	R <sub>9</sub>
P <sub>5</sub>	E $\flat$	D	A $\flat$	G	E	F	G $\flat$	B $\flat$	B	D $\flat$	C	A	R <sub>5</sub>
P <sub>4</sub>	D	D $\flat$	G	G $\flat$	E $\flat$	E	F	A	B $\flat$	C	B	A $\flat$	R <sub>4</sub>
P <sub>2</sub>	C	B	F	E	D $\flat$	D	E $\flat$	G	A $\flat$	B $\flat$	A	G $\flat$	R <sub>2</sub>
P <sub>3</sub>	D $\flat$	C	G $\flat$	F	D	E $\flat$	E	A $\flat$	A	B	B $\flat$	G	R <sub>3</sub>
P <sub>6</sub>	E	E $\flat$	A	A $\flat$	F	G $\flat$	G	B	C	D	D $\flat$	B $\flat$	R <sub>6</sub>
RI <sub>0</sub>	RI <sub>11</sub>	RI <sub>5</sub>	RI <sub>4</sub>	RI <sub>1</sub>	RI <sub>2</sub>	RI <sub>3</sub>	RI <sub>7</sub>	RI <sub>8</sub>	RI <sub>10</sub>	RI <sub>9</sub>	RI <sub>6</sub>		

However, in the trio section there is an unexpected link that stems further than a simple ic1. The trio's primary theme, as stated above, is a melody steeped in "twelve-toneness," although it is itself almost a twelve-tone row. The melody spells out ten pitches before any repeated notes appear: Eb and Cb repeat at the end of m.40. An eleventh tone appears, C natural in the beginning of m.41, with the row excluding an E natural. However, there is an E natural in the cello in m.41, sounding right after the eleventh tone C natural. So not quite a pure twelve-tone row, but all twelve pitches of the chromatic scale do make an appearance. Disappointingly, besides the ic1 in the beginning there are no relations to the opening row. These rows are not derived from procedures from the opening row matrix, rather they are related to each other by themselves. Table 3.5 shows the rows of the trio. And that happens to be the case. For his

**Table 3.5. Twelve-tone row graph of the ‘Trio’ melody from String Quartet no.15, ii, ‘Serenade’**

<b>m.37</b>	E <sub>b</sub>	D	G	C <sub>b</sub>	B <sub>b</sub>	A	A <sub>b</sub>	F	D <sub>b</sub>	G <sub>b</sub>	C	<b>E</b>	
<b>m.48</b>	B <sub>b</sub>	A	D	G <sub>b</sub>	F	E	E <sub>b</sub>	A <sub>b</sub>	<b>D<sub>b</sub></b>	<b>G</b>	<b>C<sub>b</sub></b>	<b>C</b>	
<b>m.77</b>	E <sub>b</sub>	D	G	C <sub>b</sub>	B <sub>b</sub>	A	A <sub>b</sub>	D <sub>b</sub>	C	G <sub>b</sub>	F	<b>E</b>	
<b>m.108</b>	B <sub>b</sub>	A	D	G <sub>b</sub>	F	E	E <sub>b</sub>	(C <sub>b</sub> )	A <sub>b</sub>	D <sub>b</sub>	G	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>

representation of death herself serenading him, Shostakovich creates an entirely new matrix shown in Table 3.6. Unlike the scherzo section, the trio section shows significant relations between the rows. First the first seven pitches of each row are the same, with the second and fourth row being a P7 transposition. However, after these seven pitches, the relations cease, except for rows 1 and 4. Row 4 seems to be a complete P7 transposition of row 1, but there is one major difference which disrupts the complete P7 transposition. The eighth pitch in the fourth row, C<sub>b</sub>, does not coincide with the eighth pitch of the first row, F natural. Regarding pitch relations to the central pitch, C<sub>b</sub> is an ic1 from B<sub>b</sub> in the fourth row, and F natural is an ic2 from E<sub>b</sub>. For the fourth row, the twelfth pitch missing, C natural, sounds in first violin in m.111. But something interesting happens between the first and fourth row. Except for the F natural and C<sub>b</sub> difference, the entire melodic content of the first row, from mm.37-44, is repeated by P7 transposition in the fourth row, mm.108-115. Table 3.7 shows the transposition. As you can see, every single pitch, except for the eighth pitches F and C<sub>b</sub>, is repeated by a P7 transposition in the fourth row. What this does, coincidentally, is create a hierarchy of the four rows themselves, with the first and fourth row establishes a bookend framework that the twelve-tone rows in the *Blok* cycle created. Row 1 is the primary row, with row 4 repeating with a P7 transposition, while



Table 3.6. Matrix of the ‘Trio’ melody from String Quartet no.15, ii, ‘Serenade’

	I <sub>0</sub>	I <sub>11</sub>	I <sub>4</sub>	I <sub>8</sub>	I <sub>7</sub>	I <sub>6</sub>	I <sub>5</sub>	I <sub>2</sub>	I <sub>10</sub>	I <sub>3</sub>	I <sub>9</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	
<b>P<sub>0</sub></b>	E $\flat$	D	G	B	B $\flat$	A	A $\flat$	F	D $\flat$	G $\flat$	C	E	<b>R<sub>0</sub></b>
<b>P<sub>1</sub></b>	E	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	C	B	B $\flat$	A	G $\flat$	D	G	D $\flat$	F	<b>R<sub>1</sub></b>
<b>P<sub>8</sub></b>	B	B $\flat$	E $\flat$	G	G $\flat$	F	E	D $\flat$	A	D	A $\flat$	C	<b>R<sub>8</sub></b>
<b>P<sub>4</sub></b>	G	G $\flat$	B	E $\flat$	D	D $\flat$	C	A	F	B $\flat$	E	A $\flat$	<b>R<sub>4</sub></b>
<b>P<sub>5</sub></b>	A $\flat$	G	C	E	E $\flat$	D	D $\flat$	B $\flat$	G $\flat$	B	F	A	<b>R<sub>5</sub></b>
<b>P<sub>6</sub></b>	A	A $\flat$	D $\flat$	F	E	E $\flat$	D	B	G	C	G $\flat$	B $\flat$	<b>R<sub>6</sub></b>
<b>P<sub>7</sub></b>	B $\flat$	A	D	G $\flat$	F	E	E $\flat$	C	A $\flat$	D $\flat$	G	B	<b>R<sub>7</sub></b>
<b>P<sub>10</sub></b>	D $\flat$	C	F	A	A $\flat$	G	G $\flat$	E $\flat$	B	E	B $\flat$	D	<b>R<sub>10</sub></b>
<b>P<sub>2</sub></b>	F	E	A	D $\flat$	C	B	B $\flat$	G	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	D	G $\flat$	<b>R<sub>2</sub></b>
<b>P<sub>9</sub></b>	C	B	E	A $\flat$	G	G $\flat$	F	D	B $\flat$	E $\flat$	A	D $\flat$	<b>R<sub>9</sub></b>
<b>P<sub>3</sub></b>	G $\flat$	F	B $\flat$	D	D $\flat$	C	B	A $\flat$	E	A	E $\flat$	G	<b>R<sub>3</sub></b>
<b>P<sub>11</sub></b>	D	D $\flat$	G $\flat$	B $\flat$	A	A $\flat$	G	E	C	F	B	E $\flat$	<b>R<sub>11</sub></b>
	<b>RI<sub>0</sub></b>	<b>RI<sub>11</sub></b>	<b>RI<sub>4</sub></b>	<b>RI<sub>8</sub></b>	<b>RI<sub>7</sub></b>	<b>RI<sub>6</sub></b>	<b>RI<sub>5</sub></b>	<b>RI<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>RI<sub>10</sub></b>	<b>RI<sub>3</sub></b>	<b>RI<sub>9</sub></b>	<b>RI<sub>1</sub></b>	

Table 3.7. Twelve-tone rows from the ‘Trio’ section of String Quartet no.15, ii, ‘Serenade’, mm.37-44 and mm.108-115

First Row, mm.37-44												
0	11	4	8	7	6	5	2	10	2	3	0	8
<b>E<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>D</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>C<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>B<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>A</b>	<b>A<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>F</b>	<b>D<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>E<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>C<math>\flat</math></b>
9	4	11	8	3	10	9	6	0	9	10	7	6
<b>C</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>C<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>G<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>D<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>E<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>B<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>A</b>
Fourth Row, mm.108-115												
0	11	4	8	7	6	5	1	10	1	3	0	8
<b>B<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>G<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>E<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>C<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>A<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>C<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>D<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>B<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>G<math>\flat</math></b>
9	4	11	8	3	10	9	6	0	9	10	7	6
<b>G</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>G<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>D<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>A<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>G</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>B<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>G</b>	<b>A<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>F</b>	<b>E</b>

the inner rows 2 and 3 only repeat the first 7 pitches of the primary row. The other similarity between the second and third rows is the repeated notes of second and third pitches which leads to the same eighth pitch, being an  $ic_{10}$ . So far, the repetition of seven notes from the primary row is unique unto this composition. I have yet to see this exact function in other compositions, although the concept of taking elements from the primary row and using them to create non-serial elements and other rows is not uncommon for Shostakovich.

What this shows is that the primary melody in the trio section has a specific quality, and this would also mean that there is a specific narrative element that he intended by the relations between the four trio rows. The repeated 7 pitches (perhaps a septa-tonic scale) can be seen as death beginning every seductive sentence the same way, a phrase that is used to pierce the argument that Shostakovich has against death's serenade since, as stated before, I have yet to see this specific septa-tonic function used to relate twelve-tone rows. It is quite possible that this quality is special to this work alone. In fact, we do not see this function again in any statements of proceeding rows. To be fair, twelve-tone rows only make an appearance in movements 2, 3, 5, and also in movement 6. So we do not have a bountiful amount of twelve-tone rows in this composition to draw from, compared to the twelve-tone rich String Quartet no.12 and the Fourteenth Symphony. No, the septa-tonic relations and P7 transposition between the trio rows is left specifically for death's speech, her serenade. If the narrative is indeed death, it would be logical that the element that Shostakovich used aptly to portray death would be the most detailed when death is speaking. These twelve-tone rows, along with the waltz meter and tonality, is when death enters as a character, similar to when death officially enters in the second movement of the Fourteenth Symphony. The trio section is when death makes her plea for Shostakovich's

life, to fall into her embrace as Mussorgsky portrayed. And after death has said her final words in m.118, the Intermezzo proceeds, a movement that interrupts Shostakovich's and death's conversation and prepares for the review in the Nocturne.

The third movement, Intermezzo, does what the title suggest in an operatic setting and serves as a small piece between acts of a play. There are elements of the second movement that are used in this movement that resemble the audiences recalling of what had just taken place to prepare for new development of the story. Towards the end of the movement we start to see some of the material for the proceeding movement, the Nocturne, to appear. This provides the listener with the function of a transition between two scenes, and in particular the two scenes are representations of two places in time of Shostakovich's progress with his own death. Burke relates this movement as a way to suspend the action of the narrative.<sup>116</sup> The Serenade representing his agony of his realization of his own mortality, death's seduction, and his fight and struggle to oppose death similar to his philosophy of the Fourteenth Symphony. The Nocturne, as we will see, represents Shostakovich's cold acceptance of his own death. The first musical element that aids in this transition between these two scenes is ironically the transition. The transition from the second movement to the third functions similarly as the first to the second. The low Eb in the cello is held and sustained through the *attacca* instruction to the opening of the third movement. This low Eb is sustained for the first fourteen measures until it breaks into melody in m.15. The third movement is filled with, as I stated above, musical elements that connect the second to the third movement. Firstly is the use of twelve-note rows. In the first measure, the first violin storms in at fortissimo on Bb, then proceeds to play through a type-3

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<sup>116</sup> Richard Burke, "The Moving Image: Time and Narrative in the Fifteenth Quartet," in *A Shostakovich Companion*, ed. Michael Mishra (London: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 442.

twelve-tone row from mm.2-3. As of now, no scholar has mentioned this row. The row begins with an ascending ic1, providing the continuing of the thread from the second movement.

Another row begins with another ic1 in m.5, however, this time only ten notes are sounded.<sup>117</sup>

This is similar to the treatment of in the second movement with the recitative theme and the second and third soundings of the screaming rows.

As a twelve-tone row sounds in the beginning, the proceeding themes are not a full sounding of the row but function in twelve-toneness to continue the narrative the opening row provides, shown in Example 3.4. In m.8 another row appears, this time as a type 4 row ending in m.11. In mm.12-13 the first violin plays a figure that represents the recitative figure from the scherzo section, with m.14 as another cluster chord, another element from the scherzo section. We finally reach m.15 as the cello breaks from its sustained Eb. Interestingly, it breaks into the first four notes of the trio melody, Eb-D-Cb-Bb. The same thing happens in mm.117-118 at the end of the second movement, which this four note motif from the trio section acts as a signifier of the beginning of the transition between movements, and it does so here in the third movement. Then in m.18 we end with the cello sounding between and Fb and Eb, the same ic1 motif from the end of the first movement. A new rhythmic figure sounds in the second violin and viola in mm.19-20. This new material acts, Drury mentions, as a foreshadowing of the rhythmic motif of the primary motif in the Funeral March.<sup>118</sup> This figure also functions as a repeat of the Fb-Eb motif previously stated in m.18, with Eb sounding in the second violin resolving up to the Fb in the bottom voice in m.19. The first violin sounds three notes from the trio motif in m.21, though

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<sup>117</sup> It can be argued that a twelve-tone row does appear with the Eb being provided by the cello and a C# by the strumming cluster chord in m.4.

<sup>118</sup> Jonathan Drury, "Traditionalism in Shostakovich's Fifteenth String Quartet," in *South African Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 10 (1990): 23.

**Example 3.4**  
**'Intermezzo'**  
mm. 1-11

The musical score for Example 3.4, 'Intermezzo' mm. 1-11, is presented in four systems. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The instruments are Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.).

**System 1 (mm. 1-4):** Vln. I plays a melodic line starting with a half note G3, followed by a sixteenth-note run. Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. are silent.

**System 2 (mm. 5-8):** Vln. I continues with a sixteenth-note run. Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. are silent.

**System 3 (mm. 9-11):** Vln. I plays a melodic line. Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. play sustained chords.

**System 4 (mm. 12-15):** Vln. I plays a sixteenth-note run. Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. are silent.

this time it is transposed up a half step—E, C, B. This leads to the second violin picking up the melody by playing an incomplete DSCH motive—B, D, Eb—and sustains a D natural preparing for the fourth movement. The cello in the last measure also sounds an Eb then a D natural, again preparing for the fourth movement.

Not everything I have mentioned above has been left unnoticed, and I have in fact left certain musical details out of my discussion that have already received scholarly attention. Burke mentions that fragments of the Serenade are played in the violin in mm.1-11.<sup>119</sup> While Kuhn doesn't mention the ic1 bookends, she does mention the tonic E-flat moves down a semitone to prepare for the fourth movement.<sup>120</sup> Drury, whose analysis of String Quartet no.15 is the most thorough to date, mentions the importance of the semitone melodic content and its permeation throughout the movement and the foreshadowing rhythmic motif of the fifth movement.<sup>121</sup> However, the failure to mention the twelve-tone rows, the four note motif from the trio theme in mm.15 and 21, and the ic1 beginning and ending the movement deprive us from having a full picture of the function of this movement. Coincidentally, the elements I have mentioned are all centered on ic1. The twelve-tone rows all begin with an ic1, the statement of the trio theme is an ic1, and the ending motif of the first movement, Eb-Fb, is an ic1.

Like the second movement, the third movement begins and ends with an ic1. The ending descending ic1 also adds a modality transposition down an ic1 from Eb minor to D minor. The entire movement is centered on the ic1, and even in ways that may not seem apparent upon

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 442.

<sup>120</sup> Judith Kuhn, "The string quartets," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*, ed. Pauline Fairclough and David Fanning (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 69.

<sup>121</sup> Jonathan Drury, "Traditionalism in Shostakovich's Fifteenth String Quartet," in *South African Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 10 (1990): 22-23.

listening. For instance, the recitative figure from m.12 to the beginning of 14. The notes used spell out—Ab, C, C, A, Gb, G, Cb, Ab. The first three notes play an Ab-C, then resolves descending by C-A, the ic1 being Ab to A natural. The next two notes are an ic1 played as an ic11, Gb to G natural. The figure ends with a Cb to Ab, resembling a mirror of the Ab-C motif but now playing a Cb, making the C natural to Cb another ic1. This entire figure is filled with ic1 treatment. Another place is the first four notes used in the first twelve-tone row—Bb, Cb, E, F. Bb to Cb is an ic1 and E to F is an ic1, which makes these four notes two pitch sets of ic1 separated by a tritone, or ic6. This resembles both the opening four notes of the twelve-tone row and the first four notes of the trio theme in the second movement. The first four notes of the opening row—Bb, A, Eb, D—are two pitch class sets of ic1 separated by a fourth, or ic5. We can view the four notes from the two in the third movement—Bb, Cb, E, F—as a remnant of the four notes from the second. These four note motifs find themselves again in the trio theme remnant in m.15 of the third movement—Eb, D, Cb, Bb—being again another pitch class set of ic1 separated by a minor 6th, or ic8. In the trio section, there is a G natural that sounds but is left out in m.15 to resemble more closely the first four notes of the third movement. And to mention one more spot, m.20 have a top voice of Bbb and a bottom voice of Ab, an ic1 transposed to an ic11, similar to the ic11-ic1 transposition in m.13 (Gb-G). Thus in obvious places and not so obvious places the ic1 is the thread that connects not only the second and third movement, but also the material within each movement. The Intermezzo is filled with references from the previous movement. All of the musical elements used in this movement are from either the first and second movement, a foreshadowing of the fifth movement, or a preparation for the proceeding fourth movement. None of the material is new in concept. What this movement does is present

the materials from these other movements and are composed in a way to represent the passing of time, as Burke claims this quartet portrays.<sup>122</sup> The musical elements of the second movement are presented but broken down as a stage crew would break down a set. The new material is either foreshadowed or presented as the crew finishes setting up the stage for the new act. This can be seen as the audience having a few moments to consider what the story will entail as they notice the intricacies of the new stage being built before their eyes. Then the lights turn on, the characters are in place inside the setting, and the story continues. The audience, the listener, is now ready for what the Nocturne has to say.

As the final measure of the Intermezzo ends, the Nocturne begins with an accompaniment figure yet unheard of in the previous material, although it is possible to view the melodic content of the first movement to foreshadow this accompaniment figure shown in Example 3.5. In m.53 of the first movement, the key signature changes to C major and the melody in the first violin plays arpeggiated figures resembling the arpeggiated accompaniment of the Nocturne. Whether one agrees with this foreshadowing technique, the accompaniment figures in the Nocturne do in fact integrate an element from a previous movement, the trio theme from the Serenade. The trio remnant from m.15 of the Intermezzo is repeated here as the foundational accompaniment figure in the Nocturne. The cello and second violin arpeggiate a D minor triad, excluding the third (for reasons I will explain below), in mm.1-2, back to the original Eb minor triad in m.3. The cello in mm.1-2 plays D, A, D, A, Bb, A, D, A, and in m.3 play Eb, Bb, Eb, Bb, Cb, Bb, Eb, and Bb. This is in fact the remnant figure of the trio melody in the Intermezzo. To give tonal descriptions, this remnant figure is playing the tonic, fifth, and minor sixth, with the minor sixth acting as a

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<sup>122</sup> Richard Burke, "The Moving Image: Time and Narrative in the Fifteenth Quartet," in *A Shostakovich Companion*, ed. Michael Mishra (London: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 443.





to a Gb. As the harmony changes to an Eb minor triad in m.3, the viola plays an Abb, or G natural, then back to Gb. Within just two measures the juxtaposition between major and minor modalities are in full force. With the accompaniment excluding the thirds of the triads, it is up to the soloist to deliver the quality of the harmonies. However, D major and minor switches in m.2 and Eb major and minor in m.3. It seems as though it could be a simple juxtaposition between major and minor tonality, a constant struggle between optimism and pessimism, or perhaps a simpler narrative of happy and sad—the constant back and forth could either represent indifference or the balance between expectance and denial. However, with modalities in twentieth-century Russia they had a specific quality that differed from the Western theory of modality.

Though I have cited some previous examples of modal interplay—The scherzo and trio’s tonal centers of Eb minor and Eb major—now is the time to connect modality in twentieth-century Russia. The mode, *lad*, in Russia has been expanded of its Western function, with no Western equivalent to rightly describe this new expansion.<sup>123</sup> This should come as no surprise, as terms such as Twelve-toneness have been created to rightly describe specific Russian qualities of common-era theoretical practices. In particular to Shostakovich, he commonly would create new modes out of existing modes (Dorian, Phrygian, Aeolian, etc) by altering certain scale degrees. He would either lower a scale degree or two, or raise a scale degree or two. For minor church modes, it is common for Shostakovich to lower the 4th or lower the 4th and 8th. For example, B-Phrygian with a lowered 4th results in B-C#-D-Eb-F#-G-A-B.<sup>124</sup> A doubly lowered B-Phrygian

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<sup>123</sup> Inessa Bazayev, "The Expansion of the Concept of Mode in Twentieth-Century Russian Music Theory," *Music Theory Online* 20, no. 3 (2014): 1.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

results in B-C#-D-Eb-F#-G-A-Bb with the lowered 4th and 8th. Compared with Western scales, it sounds like a minor scale has both a minor third-major third and a major seventh-dominant seventh. This modal quality does appear in parts of the Nocturne. In the second measure, though the harmony outlines either a D minor or major triad, the presumably major third, F#, is notated as a Gb, which is the lowered fourth, resembling the above mentioned lowered minor mode. In m.3, the G natural sounded to again portray either an Eb minor or major triad is notated as an Abb, another lowered fourth. We see this modal use of the lowered fourth numerous times: m.4 with the Fb resolving to an Eb, m.13 again with the Abb and Gb for an Eb triad, m.14 with Ebb resolving to a Db in a Bb triad. When the melody repeats again in m.16 the same thing happens between the harmonies and melody. We see in m.24 the function of the lowered 8th, resulting to our Western ears what sounds like a juxtaposition not between major or minor triads but major or dominant sevenths. However, this leads to another element of the movement which leads to Russian modal treatment—the accompaniment.

This modal treatment lends itself to the accompaniment figure of the Nocturne. As stated before, the accompaniment is sounding a tonic, fifths and minor sixth that outlines a triad of some sort—mm. 1-2 being Dm and m.3 Ebm.<sup>125</sup> The note that stands out is the minor sixth, however, in Russian modality this is a common alteration. The minor sixth is used as chromatic voice-leading that is used to enhance the tonality of either the mode or the chord being outlined. I have mentioned this before, but the cause that allows this function is the Russian concept of twelve-tone tonality. The use of this tonality lends an emphasis to chromatic voice-leading which

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<sup>125</sup> Though before I was hesitant to give them a major or minor quality, but after the entrance of Russian modal practices, that lowered fourth supported by the notation suggests the triads being used are in fact of minor quality.

increases attention to harmonies.<sup>126</sup> The minor sixth is viewed as chromatic voice-leading and represents the altered modes of Shostakovich. Using the notation as a clue, if the supposed major third is in fact a lowered fourth, then it may not be the function of a juxtaposition between major and minor modalities. However, I believe it is what Shostakovich was attempting to do. It is possible he is both aware of the Russian alterations of modes and the Western familiarity with Western modes, thus the use of the lowered fourth minor mode is a way to portray, in the Russian way, juxtaposition between major and minor associations. The proceeding movement, Funeral March, portrays possibly the most prominent juxtaposition between major and minor modalities yet.

In the Nocturne, as the melody is repeated in m.51, we eventually end up in the transition section starting in m.69 with the first and second violin foreshadowing the rhythmic figure from the fifth movement. The rhythmic figure becomes the prevalent rhythmic motif until the end in m.78, acting as a foreshadowing preparation for the next movement, shown in Example 3.6. And just how the ic1 was prevalent in the beginnings of this movement, so is its end, ending on a sounding Bb and Cb. This ic1 serves as a recall to two figures: the Bb-Cb interval from the trio melody, which in turn is used as a remnant figure in the third movement and a prominent figure from the accompaniment of the fourth movement. And serves as a fifth transition from the Eb-Fb transition motif from the first movement to the second. This small gesture in the transition serves as a major connection between the movements, connecting the transition from the first to the second movement, a remnant of death's serenade in the second movement, and connecting to the remnant figures used in the third and fourth movement's accompaniment. Again, we see the

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 1

Example 3.6. End of String Quartet no.15, iv, 'Nocturne', mm.68-78

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system covers measures 68 to 72. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The key signature is G minor (three flats) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 68 starts with a *pp* dynamic. Measures 69-72 include *mf* dynamics, *pizz.* (pizzicato) markings, and *senza sord.* (senza sordina) markings. A box containing the number '56' is placed above measure 71. The second system covers measures 73 to 78. Measure 73 is marked with a box containing '56' and 'rit.'. The time signature changes to 3/2. Measures 74-78 include *p* dynamics, *pizz. arco* markings, and an *attacca* marking at the end.

significance of the ic1. This ending rhythmic figure prepares the next movement, a function we have seen throughout this composition, and as a way to connect the previous material. In a narrative sense, this acts as a way to equally move the story forward while recalling the events previously taken place. And, with the Russian modality connections discussed above, everything has been centered on an ic1—the accompaniment with the minor six chromatic voice-leading resolves to a fifth, and the melody with the lowered 4th resolving to the minor third. All of these elements have one thing in common, the ic1. This connection, however, seems to lose its prevalence in the fifth movement, the Funeral March, which picks up new important elements of

its own. Yet in fact, the connection is not lost, because throughout movements 2, 3, and 4 musical elements have foreshadowed the content of the fifth movement.

The two elements that are prevalent within the fifth movement are the juxtaposition between modalities, like in the fourth movement, and the fourth or ic5 interval itself. Example 3.7 provides excerpts from the score. First I would like to cover the modal juxtaposition. We begin with the funeral march motif that has multiple times been foreshadowed to. The end has finally arrived. Mm.1-3 sounds this rhythmic motif on a Eb minor triad until the viola picks up the melody starting on beat 4 of the third measure. This rhythmic figure appears again in m.11 sounding an Ab minor triad and m.25 sounding a Bb dominant 7th chord. The harmonies portray

### Example 3.7

a.) Movement 5

'Funeral March' motif

mm.1-3

b.) Movement 5

'Funeral March'

mm.33-36

Cm                      BmAm   Gm Am Bbm   AbmGbm   Fm Gm Am   Fm A

a common tonal progression of a i-iv-V, suggesting an Eb minor modality, though this soon changes. In m.33 a sounding Cm enters, although the rhythm is varied and the proceeding material is quite different from any previous material. In mm.33-37 we progress through a flurry of chromatically related triads ending on an A-major triad on the third beat of m.36. This rattles our sense of stability, because the modal atmosphere had been entirely minor until the arrival of A Major. In m.45 we discover the reason why this flurry of chords took place. The funeral march motif sounds again, but this time on an Fm triad, and again in m.48 on a Gm triad, eventually ending with an Eb minor triad in m.54. An Eb minor triad appears, ending the same way we began. However, the harmonies used serves a specific function. The chords used, in order are— Ebm, Abm, Bb7, Cm, Fm, Gm, and Ebm. If we take all of the chord tones and set them in a scalar orientation, we are able to spell out both an Eb harmonic minor scale and an Eb major scale shown in Table 3.8. What this means is that the entire harmonic landscape is juxtaposed between a major and minor modality. We begin in minor, transition to major, and then end in the key of the quartet, Eb minor. The harmonic framework of the entire movement is the most prominent of the movements, save possibly the first movement with its change of key signatures Eb minor to C major.

**Table 3.8. Harmonic progression of the rhythmic figure from String Quartet no.15, v, ‘Funeral March’**

<b>Ebm (mm.1-3)</b>	<b>Abm (mm.11-13)</b>	<b>Bb7 (mm.25-27)</b>	<b>Cm (mm.33)</b>	<b>Fm (mm.44-47)</b>	<b>Gm (mm.48-52)</b>
Eb-Gb-Bb	Ab-Cb-Eb	Bb-D-F-Ab	C-Eb-G	F-Ab-C	G-Bb-D
Eb-F-Gb-Ab-Bb-Cb-D-Eb			Eb-F-G-Ab-Bb-C-D-Eb		

Not only is the juxtaposed modality significant, but when Shostakovich uses them. The harmonies are placed on the funeral march motif, the melodic signifier of the community walking or driving to the final spot to lay rest their beloved. The only spot where that does not take place is the Cm in m.33, however, the rhythms used within the flurry of chords are in fact rhythms derived from the funeral march. Since the rhythm is preserved, this Cm entrance acts as a change, being used to, as an analogy, to erase the board of the previous minor modality and to rewrite in the major modality. We end on a minor modality, reminding us that we are in fact proceeding in a funeral march. And as a side note, the melody in the first violin for the first three harmonies, Ebm, Abm, and Bb7, spell out Eb-Cb-Bb. If we are in Eb minor, that spells out the tonic, fifth, and minor sixth, which by now we have seen the prevalence of this motive. It is a small yet significant element that connects this movement, with its individual prevalent musical materials, to the previous movements. Again the thread is continued throughout the movement in some form or fashion, using previous elements to connect in some way, resembling an author, or speaker, telling of a story and masterfully connecting events to create a cohesive plot.

The second element, the fourth or ic5, finds a new prominence in this movement. As stated before, the type-3 twelve-tone row ends in m.7 with a repeat of an ic5—Ab-Db. In m.8 there is an ascending ic5, Gb-Cb, then a descending ic5, Gb-Db. The importance of the ic5 is strengthened by the following of a quartet rest, suggesting that this interval could be used as a type of significant phrase ending. Although the ic5 is prominent all through the piece, it is this combination of the ic5 and rests that draw our attention to its significance. We see this in m.7, 18, 20, 30, 38, 39, 42, 44, 48, and 49. And even though not followed by rests, mm.31 and 32 represent the function with its tied eighth notes. The function of these ic5 are not all the same. In



m.8 and 20, 30 and 31, 38 and 39 and 42, these measures sound a fourth, rest, and another fourth. The sound of these passages mimics a labored inhale and exhale, possibly the act of catching one's breath in between sobs. In mm.44 and 48 they serve as a transition back to the funeral march motif, and in 32 serves as the transition into the transition between modalities. The placement of these intervals is what strengthens the importance of this ic5. And to strengthen it even further is the foreshadowing in the fourth movement. Drury has stated that the rising fourth serves as another foreshadowing of the Funeral March.<sup>127</sup> Starting in m.34 we have a brief interruption of the main theme, which returns in m.51. In that time we are introduced to the function of the ic5 in the fifth movement. In the second violin, m.37 we have an Fb and Bbb followed by an eighth rest, and an Ab-Db followed by a quarter rest in m.38. In m.39, a D-G sounds followed by an eighth and quarter rest in the first violin, followed by a Bb-Eb in m.40 in the second violin. As an Eb minor triad sounds in m.41, the melody in the first violin sounds a Db-Gb in m.43 followed by a half rest and an Eb-Ab and back down to Eb in mm.46-47, which transitions back to the main theme in m.51.

What is the importance of the ic5? What is the significance of following these ic5s with rests? The result is twofold: with mm.7, 44, and 48 they act as significant melodic breaks that lead to important proceeding material. The difference between these three is that in m.7 the break serves as a midpoint break of the melody that leads us back to the sounding of the funeral march motif. This is so not only because this is the only rest in the melody, but also that Db in the ic5 serves as the climax of the contour, which begins to descend after the rest. The major difference of m.44 and m.48 is that these breaks in the melody function as a transition to the main theme.

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<sup>127</sup> Jonathan Drury, "Traditionalism in Shostakovich's Fifteenth String Quartet," in *South African Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 10 (1990): 26.

Though treated differently, these three measures serve the same purpose of leading us back to the primary motif. The other instances are a break in the melodic content to serve as the imitation of one breathing in between the crying, almost as if the one singing is a loved one bellowing a mournful tune as the funeral procession marches forward and they can't help but to fight back tears. Shostakovich has left the prominence of ic5 specifically for this movement. But we do see the foreshadowing of the ic5 in other places besides the fourth movement. In m.11 of the Intermezzo, the conclusion of the third twelve-tone row ends with a sounding Cb-Fb with an eighth rest proceeding, leading to the cello recitative recall. A very small hint of foreshadowing, but has a heightened importance after the realization of the foreshadowing in the fourth movement. So like movements 2-4, the fifth movement is in fact connected to the main section of the story, however, because of elements that are prominent only to itself, it serves as the function of the finality of the main story, leading to the final movement of the Epilogue which recalls the prominent material of the previous movements.

As Drury states, nearly all the material in the final movement is a recall of previous materials.<sup>128</sup> Since the Epilogue is a summary of the previous movements, determining which elements of the previous movements return will allow for a reading of this movement as a series of events alluded to earlier in the story. In a way, the last movement resembles the third movement in that the elements being recalled vary in detail.<sup>129</sup> For the third movement, however, this treatment serves the purpose of transitioning from scene to scene, or as Burke will describe it

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 29.

as a transition between two points in time.<sup>130</sup> The recalled materials are not necessarily stated in full. It seems that the recalling is therefore of the concept rather than of specific materials, again, similar to the third movement. And as I have already stated, the last material used in the Epilogue is the same as the transition material from the Elegy, giving this quartet a cyclical form. This last movement is actually a transition of sorts, acting as a summary while also breaking down the conceptual musical materials, and leading to a “new” movement. Of course, there is no new movement; instead the materials transition back to the beginning of the story. Such a conclusion fulfills the cyclical nature of the quartet that Lesser has identified. We can connect the concepts of the musical material recalled in the last movement to legitimize the narrative role these elements play.

Drury has addressed the recalls in the last movement at length, but I will focus on the elements that I have determined crucial for the development of the story. The movement begins with a sounding Eb minor triad, which Drury calls the “pillar chord.”<sup>131</sup> The first violin sounds the recitative-like swirls of 32nd notes reminiscent of the third movement. Moreover, the twelve-toneness of these swirling figures recalls the twelve-tone qualities of the third and second movements. From mm.2-6 an eleven-note row sounds, excluding C natural. Then in mm.6-7 it continues with another eleven-note row now excluding Eb. M.9 concludes with a sounding Bb and Cb. These recall-elements in the second, third, and fourth movement. Twelve-toneness was first introduced in the second movement, from which the Eb-Bb-Cb pitches also appeared, in the trio melody. The swirling figure begins with an Eb in m.2 and ends with Bb and Cb in m. 9.

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<sup>130</sup> Richard Burke, “The Moving Image: Time and Narrative in the Fifteenth Quartet,” in *A Shostakovich Companion*, ed. Michael Mishra (London: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 443.

<sup>131</sup> Jonathan Drury, “Traditionalism in Shostakovich’s Fifteenth String Quartet,” in *South African Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 10 (1990): 30.

When the swirling figure repeats in mm.24, 60, 76, 80, and 83-84 these two intervals make up the majority of the intervals used. There is a special treatment of ic1 within the swirling figure in mm.83-84. The notes sounding in the first violin revolve around a Bb, with Cb and A natural encircling it. The significance is a recall back to my comments on the importance of the ascending and descending ic1 that played a prominent role in the second movement. This is the last statement of this swirling figure, and it leads to the transition beginning in m.85 with the return of the Funeral March tempo marking of *Adagio molto*. The ic1 is the last element of the previous movements used before the transition begins. This transition alludes to the end yet ends not in the final statement of the piece but the final statement of the first movement, taking us back to the beginning of the story.

### **Conclusion**

The smallest interval available in the Western tuning system is the one element that is used as the primary element that ties all of this story together. By no means is ic1 the only significant musical material and the only one that conveys Shostakovich's story. The juxtaposition of the major and minor modality and the fifth movement shows that elements other than the ic1 do have prominent narrative associations. My argument, rather, is that the simple ic1 acts as a thread that leads to a multitude of musical materials that relate to each other. The table in Table 3.2 displays the elements I have previously stated that are related to the ic1. My hope is that my argument of ic1 acting as a thread that connects the entire composition is clear, and how the twelve-tone row at the beginning of the plot (second movement) provides important thematic material used at important features of the movements. Clearly, the interval ic1 plays a prominent

role in the beginnings of prominent thematic figures, such as the twelve-tone rows, the trio theme, and the transition motif from the first and last movement.

But additionally, the use of these elements in important locations prove that Shostakovich used the ic1 as the prominent interval to help connect the story. The imagery of death is magnified with the visual of the ic1 thread, as this interval is used to interconnect movements 2, 3, and 4. We are able to follow more accurately the development of the story, and in turn can possibly understand the plot of the story. According to Burke, this quartet portrays a plot with no story.<sup>132</sup> The reason he makes this statement is that because of the lack of a dedicatee, lack of comments by Shostakovich on this piece, minimal tellings of a possible narrative, and his comments on his philosophy of narrativity portrayal, there lacks a story. He in fact calls it a half-narrative.<sup>133</sup> However, as my thesis suggests, I do not agree with this finding. I believe, instead, that there can be enough musical evidence to outline a plot, to portray a story in the music itself. Burke alludes to this by stating that to fill in the plot would be easy, because Shostakovich's life of tragedy and struggle provides more than enough material to deliver a plot. However, according to Burke, this would ruin the effect by limiting the quartet to only Shostakovich himself.<sup>134</sup> A quality of this quartet suggested by some scholars is that this quartet is not only a type of Requiem, but that it acts as a mirror to the listeners. This piece includes us in the story, and thus it is timeless, constantly reflecting our own battle against our own mortality. Lesser summarizes this view of the quartet best by stating—

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<sup>132</sup> Richard Burke, "The Moving Image: Time and Narrative in the Fifteenth Quartet," in *A Shostakovich Companion*, ed. Michael Mishra (London: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 443.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 443.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 443.

So the quartet as a whole contains a strange reversal: at the beginning everything is all over, but by the end it is in a state of flux. This too makes it circular, for we feel the need, at the end, to go back to that more fixed state of endlessness, instead of the more tremulous, unbalanced state in which the quartet leaves us. And this means that the music is once again set in opposition to a human life, which goes from tremulous to permanently fixed and over. The quartet is pointing to itself as being unlike life. It is saying, This is what survives: not the body, not the spirit, not the individual, but these sounds, which can come alive over and over, for centuries. This self-referentiality, if one can call it that, is neither postmodern nor abstract, neither jovial nor careless, for the music knows about tragedy; it understands death, even though it cannot die. That is its final, most compelling contradiction, the paradox that makes it heartrending. The music of the Fifteenth Quartet mirrors us and, like our reflection, seems to belong to us personally, to be subject to our presence; and yet it turns out not to be so dependent on us after all. Like a mirror, it remains when we are gone—all of us, including its maker and its players and each generation of its listeners.<sup>135</sup>

This inclusiveness is a quality of this quartet that scholars cherish, and a quality that I also believe is a valid analysis of the piece. It is possible that Shostakovich left the dedication unspecified so that whoever listens to or performs the piece can relate to Shostakovich's struggles with his mortality. This piece can be both a requiem and a mirror to comfort us whenever our end becomes near.

However, this returns me to an issue that I brought up in the beginnings of this chapter: can purely musical elements provide enough evidence to support an unspoken narrative? For Shostakovich scholars, this has been the case for String Quartet no.15. As I have stated before, scholars have combined musicological and music-theoretical methods to support evidence for the narrative of this piece; I have argued that the music-theoretical approaches have been lagged

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<sup>135</sup> Wendy Lesser, *Music for Silenced Voices: Shostakovich and His Fifteen Quartets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 267.

behind the musicological ones. Of course that does not mean no purely musical analysis has been done. Drury's work has given insight into its purely musical elements, along with Kuhn, Lesser, and Burke. But as Shostakovich himself claimed, he considered that musical elements provided the clearest picture of a narrative. My analysis, along with that of the scholars I have cited, proves that the music does in fact convey narrative qualities. We have learned that Shostakovich's music in general—including symphonies, string quartets, and other genres he composed in—tends to convey narrative qualities. It seems difficult to deny a narrative to String Quartet no.15. Burke, for example, contends that: “narrative devices do not in themselves suggest narratives.”<sup>136</sup> He argues that String Quartet no.15 possesses a number of factors that suggests a narrative, such as “dissolve transitions” and “the unity of tempo and tonality.” Finally, he adds a narrative interpretation, claiming that the Serenade through Funeral March movements are chronological, representing the plot.<sup>137</sup> Though chronology is another narrative element and not in itself determinant of narrative. Lesser, by asserting that this quartet is a mirror to the listener in accordance with the narrative of death and Shostakovich's personal requiem, also views these musical figures as suggesting a narrative.<sup>138</sup> Kuhn, too, names multiple qualities of the whole collection of Shostakovich's quartets that convey recurring images, aiding in the conclusive narrative that Shostakovich portrays.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Richard Burke, “The Moving Image: Time and Narrative in the Fifteenth Quartet,” in *A Shostakovich Companion*, ed. Michael Mishra (London: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 441.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.

<sup>138</sup> Wendy Lesser, *Music for Silenced Voices: Shostakovich and His Fifteen Quartets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 263-269.

<sup>139</sup> Judith Kuhn, “The string quartets,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*, ed. Pauline Fairclough and David Fanning (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 69.

Scholars outside of Shostakovich studies have also attempted to theorize music's ability to narrate autonomously. Byron Almèn focused on the issue of musical narrative design by analyzing an example from Chopin's Prelude in G major, op.28, no.3. He argues that: "a new consensus is developing about musical narrative that is aware of both of the limitations of musical expression and of the rich potential of music as a narrative medium."<sup>140</sup> Although his processes differ from the specific approaches scholars have brought to Shostakovich's work, the concept is the same, using musical material to broaden our definitions of narrative design. In chapter 2 of his book, he states that scholars tend to disagree about the nature, properties, and range of applications to musical narrative.<sup>141</sup> Some consider that only programmatic music is narrative, while some suggest that certain absolute music contains a narrative.

However, discussions about musical narrative, like many musical elements such as modal theory and serialism, must be approached differently when it comes to Russian composers. Even more so for Shostakovich, his approach is unique. Though to relate writings for String Quartet no.15 to contemporary discussions on meaning, I would claim that Lesser's description of the quality of this quartet falls under Koopman and Davies' category of "Meaning-for-the-Subject." They describe this category as the listener's experience of the piece and how it relates to their individual lives, how it relates to their perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and desires.<sup>142</sup> Lesser claims that the strongest quality that this quartet portrays is the ability to be mirror for the listener, in that Shostakovich's telling of his story of his experiences with death can be related to

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<sup>140</sup> Byron Almèn, *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>142</sup> Constantijn Koopman and Stephen Davies, "Musical Meaning in a Broader Perspective," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59, no. 3 (2001): 268.



the listener aptly. Thus this quartet does have meaning in accordance with Koopman and Davies. However, Shostakovich literature has not always incorporated scholar's works such as these when speaking on musical narrative for String Quartet no.15. The combination of the Stalin regime and the Thaw which clamored to destalinize the Soviet Union created the exclusive Russian qualities of musical theory, and Shostakovich is one of the composers caught in the middle. This exclusivity has characterized scholarship on Shostakovich's music up to this point but that could absolutely change as an increasing number of Western scholars are studying his music.

Yet there is still enough evidence in hermeneutical knowledge and in-depth analysis of the music itself to be able to interpret a clear image of the story. The fact is that Shostakovich scholars are in agreement with the general emotive realm of the work—the subject is death, and that this piece acts as his requiem. Where the disagreement enters is how freely we should be able to assign a narrative to this work. The previously mentioned scholars believe there is a clear narrative, yet others are hesitant in defining it. McCreless states that this work is “universally interpreted as one of the most profound twentieth-century musical meditations on death.”<sup>143</sup> Yet he states later that: “the strange, laconic quartet begs for interpretation, yet at the same time resists it.”<sup>144</sup> He states that any “any depth would lead quickly into a world of intriguing musical relationships and hermeneutic enigmas where this brief chapter dare not go.”<sup>145</sup> The in-depth analysis for String Quartet no.15 is considered as a daunting task, needing to combine both

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<sup>143</sup> Patrick McCreless, “Dmitri Shostakovich: The String Quartets,” in *Intimate Voices: The String Quartet in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2, ed. Evan Jones (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 34.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 34

theoretical and hermeneutical approaches to fully capture the meditations of death. McCreless does not state that it is impossible to interpret the musical narrative of String Quartet no.15, but rather a difficult task that many will decline to attempt. It will in fact take all Shostakovich scholarly attempts to provide a full interpretation of this composition, and my hope is that this paper provides a clear understanding of how the musical elements provide the narrative associations to the story.

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