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‘A COMPOSER OF EXQUISITE CHAMBER MUSIC’.
DISPELLING THE ENIGMA OF JÓZEF KOFFLER’S
STRING QUARTET, OP. 19

ABSTRACT This article documents the discovery of Józef Koffler’s *String Quartet*, Op. 19, at London’s Royal College of Music Library. The study examines both the manuscript and correspondence revealing Koffler’s efforts to have the quartet performed. Through musical analysis, it explores the work’s twelve-tone technique and its connection to his *Fourth Symphony*, Op. 26, from six years later, highlighting Schoenberg’s influence. The findings lead to a reassessment of both works’ importance in Koffler’s compositional output.

KEYWORDS Józef Koffler, manuscript, *String Quartet* Op. 19, *Fourth Symphony* Op. 26, twelve-tone technique, music analysis

ABSTRAKT „Kompozytor wykwiintnej muzyki kameralnej”. Ku rozwikłaniu zagadki *Kwartetu smyczkowego op. 19* Józefa Kofflera. Niniejszy artykuł dokumentuje odnalezienie *Kwartetu smyczkowego op. 19* Józefa Kofflera w Royal College of Music w Londynie. Studium obejmuje analizę manuskryptu oraz korespondencji, które obrazują zabiegi kompozytora o wykonanie dzieła. Przeprowadzona analiza eksploruje zastosowaną technikę dodekafoniczną oraz związki *Kwartetu* z powstałą sześć lat później *IV Symfonią*, uwypuklając wpływy Schönberga. Poczynione ustalenia skłaniają do reinterpretacji znaczenia obu kompozycji w dorobku twórczym Kofflera.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE Józef Koffler, rękopis, *Kwartet smyczkowy op. 19*, *IV Symfonia op. 26*, technika dwunastotonowa, analiza muzyczna

The String Quartet by Józef Koffler, alternatively identified as Op. 20 or Op. 18, long remained one of the most enigmatic compositions in his catalogue. Musicological literature has highlighted it as one of the most significant chamber works by the ‘first Polish dodecaphonist’, and its disappearance was regarded as a considerable loss.¹ However, the situation changed fundamentally in early 2024, when my online search led to the discovery of the manuscript score and instrumental parts of this quartet in the Royal College of Music Library in London, where it was listed among the collection’s ‘additional manuscripts’.²

This finding carries significant and complex consequences. First, it entails the need to try to reconstruct the genesis and fate of the String Quartet. This reconstruction will focus especially on its dating and assigned opus number (Op. 19), as well as the trajectory of the manuscript’s transfer from interwar Poland (Lviv) to London. Secondly, the newly uncovered musical material bears considerable importance for the periodization of Koffler’s artistic development. As analysis will elucidate, the material was adapted by him in 1940 to create a large symphonic form – the Fourth Symphony, Op. 26, discovered over four decades ago by Leszek Mazepa.³ Koffler’s adaptation establishes an unexpected connection, hitherto unrecognized in scholarship, between the composer’s late compositional output and his explorations of Schoenbergian technique, which characterized his mid-1930s creative period.

Concurrently, the discovery of Koffler’s String Quartet situates the discourse surrounding it within the broader context of challenges faced when writing about twentieth-century music history. It is worth emphasizing that, in contrast to the typical problems associated with an abundance of sources, Koffler’s researchers grapple with their scarcity. This deficiency extends not only to some of his compositions but also to numerous other types of documents, which were likely irretrievably lost when the composer had to leave his Lviv apartment while escaping the Holocaust. Nevertheless, the quest for answers regarding the String Quartet has led to the unearthing of highly intriguing epistolary documents,⁴ which at least partially shed light on these issues. These sources illuminate the network of personal

1 See Maciej Gołąb, *Józef Koffler: Compositional Style and Source Documents*, transl. Maksymilian Kapelański, Marek Żebrowski, and Linda Schubert, Los Angeles 2004, pp. 249–250.

2 The material is publicly accessible at the Royal College of Music Library, <https://rcm.koha-ptfs.co.uk/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=375247>, accessed 21 January 2025.

3 Mazepa reported his discovery in the article ‘Okres radziecki w życiu i twórczości Józefa Kofflera’ [The Soviet period in the life and work of Józef Koffler], *Muzyka* 28 (1983) no. 1, pp. 67–100.

4 Previous studies on Koffler have not extensively utilized this type of material. Maciej Gołąb has highlighted the challenges in locating correspondence sent by Koffler to various recipients, see idem, ‘Documenta Koffleriana: Przegląd materiału źródłowego i perspektywy dalszych badań’ [Documents relating to Józef Koffler: a review of source material and perspectives for further research], *Muzyka* 41 (1996) no. 2, pp. 136–37. However, the advent of the digital age has facilitated access to some previously elusive letters.

and professional relationships among composers in interwar Central and Eastern Europe. They reveal the strategies composers adopted for promoting their music and methods for navigating the institutional structures of the time, with particular emphasis on the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM).

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

Prior to embarking on a detailed examination of these issues, it is worth first considering several preliminary questions. As the discovered manuscript is undated, the actual time of composition of the String Quartet remains uncertain. While Koffler himself, in a partially handwritten list of his compositions compiled c.1935,⁵ indicated the year 1934, there exist references suggesting that the work may have been composed at an earlier date. In 1933, Alfred Plohn mentioned a work of this genre that appeared in Koffler's oeuvre alongside the *8 kleine Klavierstücke* intended for study purposes and the Violin Concerto in three movements (Toccata, Variations on a Polish Folk Song, Finale).⁶ Plohn's text was written after the ISCM Festival in Amsterdam, and its purpose was likely to familiarize a wider international audience with the work of Koffler, as the composer of *15 Variationen über eine Zwölftonreihe für Streichorchester*, Op. 9(a), which was performed there. Plohn wrote a similar article about Koffler two years earlier, after the ISCO Festival in Oxford, and published it in the Polish-Jewish newspaper *Chwila*.⁷ In both cases, Plohn's articles contained information about Koffler's latest creative achievements, as well as something akin to 'current news from the studio' that he could only have obtained directly from the composer. It can therefore be assumed that the author was well informed on these matters. Meanwhile, the composer himself strategically planned which elements of his work to bring to light and when, aiming to introduce them into the concert domain.

The questions regarding how the score of Koffler's String Quartet made its way to London, specifically to the Royal College of Music, as well as whether it was performed during the composer's lifetime, also remain enigmatic. The key point, however, is that c.1935 Koffler mentioned in his list of compositions that the piece was in the repertoire of the 'Warsaw Quartet' and 'Brosa's ensemble' from London (see Fig. 1).⁸ Exploring these leads produces intriguing results, although the first trace can be somewhat

5 Józef Koffler, 'List of Compositions' (two pages), c.1935, Warsaw, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Gabinet Zbiorów Muzycznych, Archiwum Stowarzyszenia Młodych Muzyków Polaków w Paryżu, file 'Dane o kompozytorach', D-SMMP/10-5. This partially tabular list includes handwritten annotations and was compiled in response to a letter sent in March 1935 by the president of the Association, Zygmunt Mycielski. The letter urged composers to complete the enclosed form intended for the creation of the Catalogue of Contemporary Polish Music (see Warsaw, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, K-LXVIII.217).

6 Alfred Plohn, 'Josef Koffler: Ein junger polnischer Komponist', *Signale für die musikalische Welt* 91 (5 June 1933) nos. 23/24, p. 439.

7 Alfred Plohn, 'Józef Koffler', *Chwila* (27 September 1931) no. 4492, p. 9.

8 J. Koffler, 'List of Compositions', p. 2.

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misleading, because there is no comprehensive archive collection documenting the activities of the Warsaw Quartet.⁹ While it is known that the ensemble included new and rarely performed compositions on its concert programmes – such as Louis Gruenberg's *4 Indiscretions*, which was described by the press as a 'spicy novelty'¹⁰ – there is no evidence to suggest that it performed any works by Koffler.

9 The members of the ensemble were as follows: Józef Kamiński – first violin, Mieczysław Thursz – second violin, Jan Gornowski – viola, and Marian Neuteich – cello (around 1935, Thursz was replaced by Zygmunt Lederman).

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both as a soloist and as the leader of the Brosa String Quartet, founded in 1925.¹¹ As early as 1928, this ensemble represented England at the ISCM Festival in Siena, delivering a performance of Frank Bridge’s Third String Quartet. Its repertoire included string quartets by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Paul Hindemith, Francesco Malipiero, Arthur Honegger and Michael Tippett.¹² While there is no evidence that Koffler personally knew Brosa, it is plausible that he could have sent his score to him by mail or through intermediaries, hoping to capture the interest of this esteemed ensemble.

However, it is necessary to express a certain reservation at this point. The manuscript held in the Royal College of Music is not marked as belonging to the Brosa Quartet Donation.¹³ Instead, it originates ‘from the collection of the Delmé Quartet’ – a defunct ensemble founded in London in 1962.¹⁴ This ensemble gained recognition for its collaboration with contemporary British composers and performances on recordings with The Beatles. Given the paucity of available data, it is unfeasible at present to determine exactly how the autograph of Koffler’s quartet came to be in the Delmé Quartet Collection. Nevertheless, its current attribution does not preclude the possibility that it originated from the Brosa Quartet Donation, from which it may have become separated for some reason.¹⁵ One might also consider the possibility that Brosa himself gave Koffler’s handwritten score to one of the members of the Delmé Quartet.

NAVIGATING NETWORKS: KOFFLER’S STRING QUARTET AND THE QUEST FOR PERFORMANCE

Although the exact trajectory to the transfer of the manuscript of Koffler’s String Quartet, Op. 19 to London cannot be definitively established – an issue to which I shall return – it appears that this matter is closely intertwined with the composer’s search for opportunities to have the work performed. By having his composition included in the repertoire of well-known ensembles, Koffler could have significantly increased his chances of having his music heard and appreciated by a wider audience. Interesting, albeit incomplete, information on this matter can be found in his correspondence. The earliest reference to the String Quartet by Koffler can be traced to May 1936. During that time, Koffler’s friend Slavko Osterc, a renowned composer from Slovenia (then part of Yugoslavia), was elected as a jury member for the upcoming ISCM festival in Paris. Osterc joined on the panel other notable figures such as Edward Clark, Robert

11 The ensemble was completed by Matthew Greenbaum on violin, Leonard Rubens on viola and Anthony Pini on cello.

12 Daniel Blanch, ‘Antoni Brosa’, *Interpretscatalanshistorics*, <https://www.interpretscatalanshistorics.com/cat/ver-Antoni-Brosa-24>, accessed 14 May 2024.

13 In April 1954, Brosa was appointed a professor of the Royal College of Music, see *ibid*.

14 It consisted of violinists Granville Delmé Jones and Jürgen Hess, violist John Underwood and cellist Joy Hall.

15 During my email correspondence with Robert Foster, Assistant Librarian at the Royal College of Music, on 24 March 2024, such a possibility was not completely ruled out.

Gerhard, Jacques Ibert and Gunnar Jeanson. Koffler, formerly engaged in promoting the interests of the Polish section of the ISCM,¹⁶ for some time maintained a regular written correspondence with Osterc,¹⁷ who was known for his association with Alois Hába's circle and his unwavering support for the new facets of contemporary music.

It should be noted, however, that in 1936 Koffler was no longer actively involved in the domestic structures of this association. The ISCM Festival in Prague in 1935 marked a turning point, as it led to a noticeable decline in mutual relations. The exact reasons behind this deterioration remain uncertain and require further and separate analysis, as does Koffler's overall involvement in the ISCM. Nevertheless, the composer remained interested in the performances of his works on this international forum, and in May he wrote to Osterc:

Dear friend, [...] Thank you very much for your kind offer regarding a work for Paris. However, I must point out that I have no intention of submitting through Warsaw. If you take it upon yourself to offer a work to the jury (which you are allowed to do by the statutes, and I have also proposed and had accepted for Prague Schoenberg's Variations and Berg's Lulu Suite), I would be very grateful. You can count on full support from Clark. I am sending you a string quartet of mine by the same post; take a look at it [the slow movement is a combination of fugue and passacaglia]. Perhaps this one? Or my second symphony (which Scherchen is taking to his publishing house). I am afraid of difficulties with the performance (who will pay for the quartet? Warsaw probably won't. I am writing to Kolisch, perhaps he will perform it?) Write me your opinion about it. When is the jury meeting and when is the festival? So please write soon. Best regards and warm greetings from your friend Koffler (all translations into English by I.L., unless otherwise indicated).¹⁸

- 16 On 28 February 1930, a branch of the Polish Society for Contemporary Music was established in Lviv, with Koffler assuming the position of a board member (see *Muzyka* 7 (1930) no. 3, p. 202). On 5 April 1934, during a meeting of the ISCM Council in Florence, in the absence of a representative from the Polish Section (a letter of protest was sent regarding the exclusion of Polish music from the festival programme), Koffler was elected to the jury for the year 1935 (Aksel Agerby, 'Det internationale selskab for ny musik. Referat af det 13. Delegeretmøde' [The International Society for Contemporary Music: Minutes of the 13th Meeting of Delegates], *Dansk Musik Tidsskrift* 9 (1934) no. 7, pp. 151–153, Seismograf, <https://seismograf.org/dmt/9/07/det-internationale-selskab-ny-musik-referat-af-det-13-delegeretmoede>, accessed 10 May 2024).
- 17 The earliest of Koffler's letters to Osterc, preserved in the Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica v Ljubljani, Glasbena zbirka, dates from 19 February 1935. For more information on Osterc's correspondence, see Dragotin Cvetko's article 'Iz korespondence Slavku Ostercu' [From the correspondence to Slavko Osterc], *Muzikološki zbornik* 11 (1975), pp. 82–92, as well as Vlasta Reittererová and Hubert Reitterer's 'Alois Hába – Slavko Osterc: Briefwechsel 1931–1940', 2003, https://www.gkr.uni-leipzig.de/fileadmin/Fakultät_GKR/Musikwissenschaft/2.2-Forschung/Musikerbriefe/14_ReittererEd.pdf, accessed 10 January 2022; for the later version of the article excluding the edition of the letters, see *Musikgeschichte in Mittel- und Osteuropa* 10 (2005), pp. 160–172.
- 18 'Lieber Freund, [...] Ich dank dir sehr für dein liebenswürdiges Angebot bezüglich eines Werks für Paris. Aber ich muss dich aufmerksam machen, dass ich keine Absicht habe über Warschau einzureichen. Wenn du es auf dich nimmst von dir aus der Jury ein Werk anzubieten (das darfst du statutenmässig und ich habe auch so für Prag Schönbergs *Variationen* und Bergs *Lulusuite* vorgeschlagen und durchgesetzt) so wäre ich dir sehr dankbar. Du kannst auf vollste Unterstützung von Clark rechnen. Ich schicke Dir mit gleicher Post ein Streichquartett von mir; schau es dir an [der langsame Satz eine Mischung von Fuge u. Passacaglia]. Vielleicht das? oder meine 2te Symphonie (die Scherchen in seinen Verlag nimmt).

On the same day, Koffler wrote to Rudolph Kolisch, leader of an ensemble formed in 1927,¹⁹ politely asking:

Since my relationship with the Polish Section is very relaxed and at the same time tense (a curious paradox), I have to take care of the performance on my own. And of course, this needs to happen before the jury meeting. Therefore, please let me know if you would be willing to perform this piece in Paris at the festival. I kindly ask you to inform me of your decision as soon as possible, regardless of the outcome.²⁰

We do not know what Kolisch wrote to Koffler, but it is highly likely that the response was negative. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Polish composer's quartet was not included for consideration by the jury. From the correspondence between Osterc and Hába, it is evident that prior to the meeting they meticulously established a strategy on how to proceed, aiming to secure a proper place for Czechoslovakian and Yugoslavian music on the programme of the Paris festival.²¹ After the jury meeting, Osterc shared with Hába the disappointing outcome of their attempt to promote the works of František Bartoš, Vladimír Polívka and Koffler. However, he expressed his delight in the successful promotion of Karel Reiner's composition, accompanied by an emotive and somewhat ironic remark: 'That's a modern jury!!! That's why Koffler failed – precisely because he writes modernly'.²² This signals the whole gamut of tensions that arose within the juries that decided each year which compositions to select for the upcoming ISCM festival.

However, as it turns out, it was not the String Quartet that emerged as the 'loser' among Koffler's works at that time, but rather the 'French Songs', namely, the *Quatre Poèmes*, Op. 22 for soprano and piano,²³ which the composer ultimately decided

Ich fürchte mir Schwierigkeiten mit der Aufführung (wer wird das Quartett bezahlen? Warschau wohl nicht. Ich schreibe eben an Kolisch vielleicht spielt er es?) Schreibe mir deine Meinung darüber. Wann ist Jurysitzung und wann das Festspiel? Also schreibe bald. Sei nur bestens und herzlichst gegrüsst von deinem Freunde Koffler', see Józef Koffler's letter to Slavko Osterc, 20 May 1936, Ljubljana, Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Glasbena zbirka, M rkp Osterc, S., Kronika, Korespondenca.

19 The other musicians in the Kolisch Quartet at that time were Felix Khuner (violin), Eugene Lehner (viola) and Benar Heifetz (cello). The ensemble achieved international fame, especially through their performances of contemporary compositions, including works by members of the Second Viennese School and Béla Bartók.

20 'Da mein Verhältnis zur polnischen Sektion sehr gelockert und zugleich gespannt (ein nettes Paradox) ist, muss ich mich allein um die Aufführung kümmern. Und das selbstverständlich noch vor der Jurysitzung. Wollen Sie also mir gütigst antworten, ob sie gewillt wären dieses Werk in Paris beim Festspiel zu spielen? Ich bitte Sie sehr mir Ihren Entschluss-gleichgültig, wie er ausfallen wird – so bald wie möglich mitzuteilen', see Józef Koffler, Letter to Rudolf Kolisch, 20 May 1936, Harvard University, Houghton Library, Rudolf Kolisch Papers, MS Mus 195, Box 18: 428.

21 Alois Hába's letters to Slavko Osterc from 22 November 1936 and 3 December 1936, see V. Reittererová and H. Reitterer, 'Alois Hába – Slavko Osterc', pp. 39–41 (online version).

22 Slavko Osterc's letter to Alois Hába, 25 December 1936 ('das ist moderne Jury!!!, so ist Koffler durchgefallen – eben, weil er modern schreibt'), see *ibid.*, p. 42.

23 This composition was published in 1936 in Paris by Maurice Senart.

to send to Paris. It is not known why he chose to withdraw the submission of the quartet. In his letter to Osterc dated 2 December 1936, he only wrote:

Dear friend, [...] Here I am sending you a copy of the four *French Songs*, and I hope that with Clark's assistance, you will be able to include them. However, I am concerned that Dent will oppose them, as he struggles to digest my new statutes. If it is completely impossible to include my songs, which would be a great blow to me, I ask you to pay attention to my student Jakob Mund among the submitted Polish works; not yet fully developed, but more modern than the other Poles. I eagerly await good news from you and send you warm greetings. Yours, Koffler.²⁴

The matter of the String Quartet was revived the following year, when Alois Hába, also a friend of Koffler, joined the jury of the ISCM festival. In September 1937, Koffler urgently requested Osterc to 'redirect' his quartet to Hába. He once again mentioned the challenges he faced in communicating with the local 'headquarters', which compelled him to seek opportunities for performances of his works through private connections:

Dear Slavko, [...] Please send my quartet to Hába immediately; it is very important and urgent. If you would like to write a few warm words on your own (to Hába), as you can and as Scherchen has told me, I would be particularly grateful to you. The point is that Hába should present this quartet to the international jury, because, as you know, I cannot proceed through my central office. And I would like to be performed once again at the music festival in my presence. Because in the future it may not be possible anymore, since I want to emigrate to South America [...]. I embrace you warmly. Yours, JKoffler.²⁵

24 'Lieber Freund, [...] Hier schicke ich dir ein Exemplar der 4 *franz. Lieder* und hoffe, dass es dir mit Clarcks Hilfe gelingen wird sie hineinzubringen. Nur fürchte ich, dass Dent opponieren wird, denn er kann meine neuen Statuten nicht gut verdauen. Sollte es ganz unmöglich sein meine Lieder hineinzubringen, was für mich ein grosser Schlag wäre, so bitte ich dich von den eingesandten polnischen Sachen ein Augenmerk auf meinen Schüler Jakob Mund zu werfen; noch nicht vollkommen ausgereift, aber moderner wie die anderen Polen. Ich erwarte von dir eine günstige Nachricht und Grüsse dich herzlichst. Dein Koffler', see Koffler's letter to Slavko Osterc, 2 December 1936, Ljubljana, Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Glasbena zbirka, M rkp Osterc, S., Kronika, Korespondenca.

25 'Lieber Slavko, [...] Schicke gleich an Hába mein Quartett, sehr wichtig und sehr dringend. Wenn Du von Dir aus einige warme Worte schreiben willst (an Hába), wie Du es kannst und wie es mir Scherchen erzählt hat, wäre ich Dir ganz besonders dankbar. Es handelt sich darum, dass Hába dies Quartett der int. Jury vorlegt, denn wie Du weisst durch meine Zentrale komme ich nicht durch. Und ich möchte doch noch einmal beim Musikfest in meiner Anwesenheit aufgeführt werden. Denn in Zukunft wird es schon vielleicht nicht möglich sein, nachdem ich nach Südamerika auswandern will [...]. Ich umarme Dich herzlichst. Dein JKoffler', see Koffler's postcard to Slavko Osterc, 27 September 1937, Ljubljana, Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Glasbena zbirka, M rkp Osterc, S., Kronika, Korespondenca. In the library catalogue, this postcard is mistakenly dated to the year 1936.

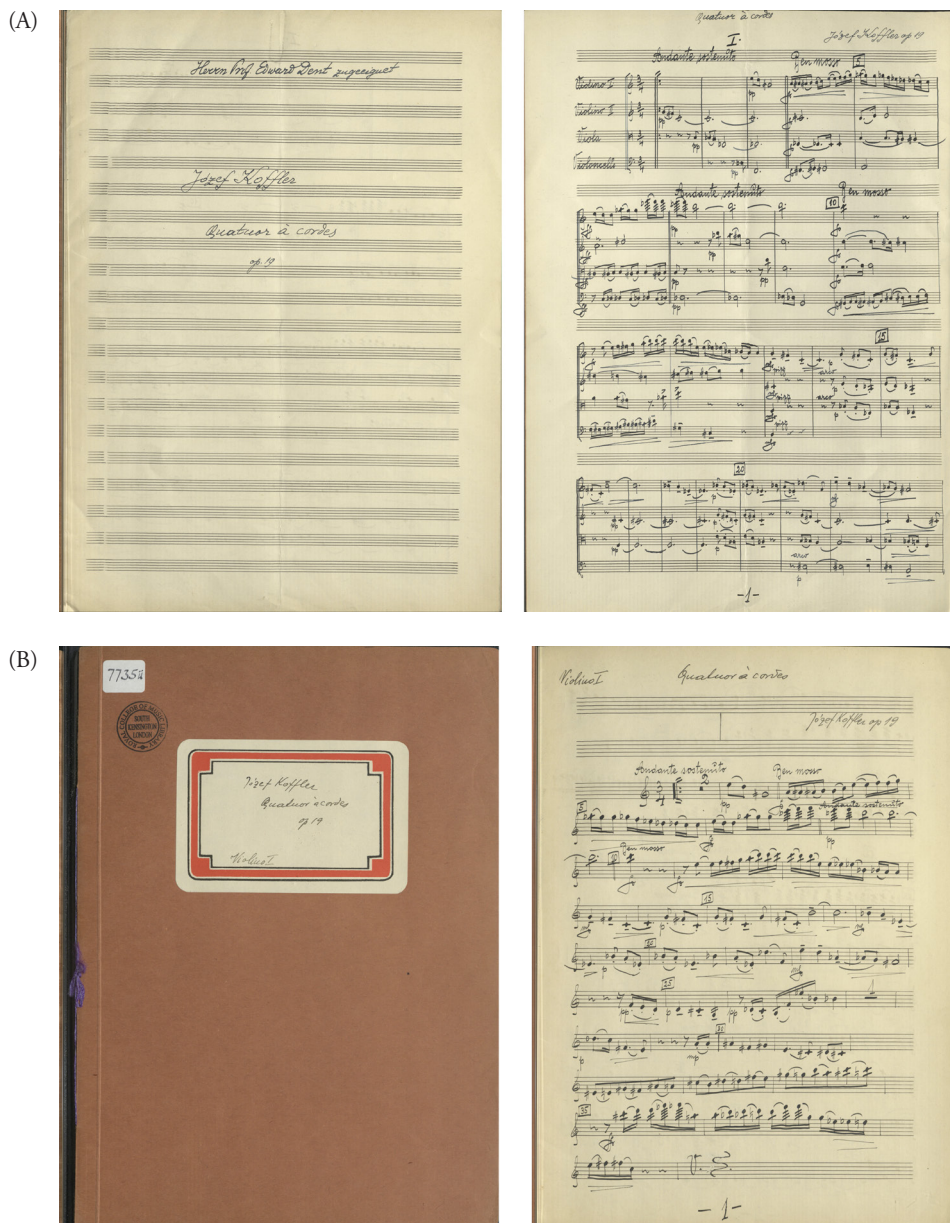


Fig. 2. Józef Koffler, *Quatuor à cordes*, Op. 19, title page and the first page of the score (A); the cover and the first page of the violin I part (B), London, Royal College of Music Library, RCM MS 7735²⁶

26 Source: https://rcm.koha-ptfs.co.uk/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=375247&query_desc=Koffler%20string, accessed 21 January 2025.

What is crucial is that, on Hába's advice, the London jury ultimately received not so much a string quartet, but rather – into the hands Dorothy Wadham (ISCM secretary) – the score of the Third Symphony, Op. 21.²⁷ The Czech composer successfully ensured its inclusion on the festival programme (furthermore, as the only composition from Poland²⁸). What, then, became of the score of Koffler's String Quartet that Osterc sent to Hába? Is it the same copy that is now archived at the Royal College of Music? The answer is not straightforward. After all, Koffler did send Osterc a score. However, the material found at the Royal College of Music Library (RCM MS 7735, see Fig. 2) consists of both the score and the individual instrument parts. The score spans 21 of 23 pages on paper measuring 34.5 x 44 cm. The parts for Violin I, Violin II and Viola each contain 11 written pages out of 12, while the Cello part has 10 out of 12. This comprehensive collection suggests Koffler may have been preparing the quartet for potential performance, not just study.

On the label of the brown cover of the score, the title reads: *Józef Koffler / quatuor à cordes / op. 19*. The title page, apart from repeating the title, includes a dedication in German: 'Herrn Prof. Edward Dent zugeeignet'. The score and instrument parts are written in black ink on 20-stave manuscript paper, without any markings that would allow for closer identification. Each of the parts has its own identical cover with a label. The cover of the score, as well as its inner pages, exhibits traces of bending along the Y-axis. However, neither the score nor the parts contain any annotations that could indicate a performance of the composition. Furthermore, the covers of the parts are immaculate – as if they were never used. The nature of the writing convincingly suggests that we are dealing with an autograph manuscript. And only small additions/corrections were made to the score and voices in Koffler's own hand.²⁹

Koffler's preparation of the manuscript score can be approximately dated from his exchange of letters with Osterc. Koffler anticipated Edward Dent's opposition to including his *Quatre poèmes* in the 1937 ISCM Festival in Paris, which indicates that the String Quartet predates that tension. It is reasonable to assume that the score was prepared no later than 1935, before Koffler's relationship with the ISCM president deteriorated.

Dent's disapproval of Koffler stemmed from the latter's proposal for new statutes for the society, which he drafted shortly after the Prague festival. In early 1936,

27 See Koffler's letter to Alois Hába, 12 December 1937, Prague, Národní muzeum – České muzeum hudební, Ms 4230.

28 The bulletin of the Polish Society of Contemporary Music (*Muzyka Współczesna* 3 (January 15 1938) no. 1, p. 6) stated succinctly: 'The jury of the International Festival in London has selected for performance at the festival Józef Koffler's Symphony No. 3, which was submitted directly to the jury, bypassing the qualifying committee of the PSCM' ('Jury Międzynarodowego Festiwalu w Londynie zakwalifikowało do wykonania na Festiwalu "III Symfonię" Józefa Kofflera, nadesłaną Jury bezpośrednio, z pominięciem komisji kwalifikacyjnej P.T.M.W.'). The jury also selected the Third String Quartet, Op. 41 by Karol Rathaus, who was residing in the United Kingdom at the time.

29 On page 10 of the score, above the part for the second violin, in bar 27, there is a correction specifying the pitch in German notation as 'as' (Ab). Similarly, on page 9, in the viola part, in bar 97, there is a corrected notation for three pitches with the following annotation above them: '?g ?g ?fis' (G G F#).

Koffler sent Dent a comprehensive document containing over 70 paragraphs. This unexpected proposal was received by Dent with surprise and criticism, but it also catalysed a broader effort to implement a revised ISCM constitution better suited to the challenges of the era. The revision process involved numerous prominent composers, including Alois Hába and Hanns Eisler. During the April 1936 delegates’ assembly in Barcelona, a special subcommittee was formed under Hába’s leadership. That group, which included Sten Broman, Edward Clark, Jacques Ibert, Hába and Ernst Křenek, was tasked with analysing the submitted proposals (including a memorandum from Hermann Scherchen) and drawing conclusions. Despite those efforts, the document presented and accepted at the General Assembly in Paris differed only slightly from the old statutes.³⁰ As previously mentioned, Koffler did not officially participate in those proceedings. Furthermore, it seems probable that his proposed statutory reforms encountered resistance not only from the ISCM’s central leadership but also from within the Polish section of the organization.

Returning to the provenance of the score of the String Quartet, Op. 19 currently held at the Royal College of Music, if this was the material sent by Osterc to Hába in November 1937, it must have arrived in London only in December of that year, coinciding with the meeting of the international ISCM jury of which the Czech composer was a member. However, Koffler’s own annotation regarding the inclusion of the work ‘in the repertoire of Brosa’s ensemble’ suggests that the score and associated performance materials must have been transferred at least two years prior. It cannot be excluded that Koffler personally handed his score directly to Dent, who subsequently passed it on to Brosa. It is known that Koffler and Dent crossed paths in December 1934, when they both served on the international jury for the Karlsbad (now Karlovy Vary) festival.³¹ Alternatively, the possibility remains that there were two copies of the quartet score – one that remained with Brosa, the other sent by Osterc to Hába, which eventually went missing.³²

30 Giles Masters provides a comprehensive account of the politics surrounding the ISCM, including the history of the new statutes, in his doctoral dissertation, see idem, *New-Music Internationalism: The ISCM Festival, 1922–1939*, King’s College, London 2021 (PhD dissertation), https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/156634738/2021_Masters_Giles_1101346_ethesis.pdf, accessed 14 October 2021 (especially Chapter 4: ‘A “Musical League of Nations”: Musician-Diplomats in Times of Crisis’). See also Vlasta Reittererová and Hubert Reitterer, ‘Musik und Politik – Musikpolitik: Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik im Spiegel des brieflichen Nachlasses von Alois Hába 1931–1938’, *Miscellanea Musicologica* 36 (1999), pp. 129–310, and Anne C. Shreffler, ‘The International Society for Contemporary Music and its Political Context (Prague, 1935)’, in: *Music and International History in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, New York 2015, pp. 58–90.

31 Koffler, alongside Dent, was captured in a photograph of the jury (which also included Edward Clark, Désiré Defauw, Hermann Scherchen and Václav Talich) published in the Austrian newspaper *Die Stunde*, see: ‘Die Jury des Internationalen Musikfestes in Karlsbad’, photograph, *Die Stunde* 18 (6 January 1935) no. 3545, p. 5.

32 Inquiries made to the archives preserving the legacy of Hába and Osterc yielded a response indicating that they did not possess any manuscripts by Koffler.

The matter of the opus number for the String Quartet also needs further explanation, as there are inconsistencies in the primary sources, and the number is different in Koffler's authorized catalogues and the manuscript of the score itself. Let us return to Koffler's list of compositions, which he submitted in 1935 to the Association of Young Polish Musicians in Paris, designating the String Quartet as Op. 18 and the Piano Sonata as Op. 19. This raises the question as to why he would have allocated to the manuscript of the quartet an opus number which had already been assigned to another work.

One possible explanation is that the archival 'List of compositions' was a work in progress, subject to ongoing revisions. Additionally, Koffler's correspondence suggests that he held the String Quartet in higher esteem than the Piano Sonata. He attached to the list a kind of recommendation sent by 'S cretariat [*sic*] J zef Koffler',³³ on which the *Quatuor   cordes* appears on a par with the first two symphonies (composed in 1930 and 1933 respectively), 15 Variations, Op. 9a (1931), String Trio, Op. 10 (1928), Piano Concerto, Op. 13 (1932), cantata *Die Liebe*, Op. 14 (1931) and *Morceaux pour piano* (likely the *40 Polish Folk Songs*, Op. 6 for piano). Notably, the Sonata was not mentioned in this context.

Furthermore, the reassignment of the opus number for the String Quartet may have been influenced by the composing of the Capriccio for violin and piano, which Koffler designated as Op. 18. It is plausible that both works were completed around the same period. The manuscript covers and labels for the Capriccio and the String Quartet exhibit similar characteristics, and neither manuscript bears a date in Koffler's handwriting.³⁴ Considering the subsequent composition lists where Koffler's String Quartet is indicated as Op. 20,³⁵ it is pertinent to highlight the absence of the Piano Sonata from these records. Opus number 19 was assigned instead to the *Little Pieces* for piano. These are most likely the same compositions that Koffler, in a letter to H ba, mentioned with the following words: 'Let me dedicate these "easy" piano pieces to your daughter; I am only afraid that you will not like them'.³⁶

33 'Sir, I would like to draw your attention to the following compositions: ' (Monsieur, je me permets d'appeler votre attention sur des compositions suivantes:'), see S cretariat J zef Koffler, Letter to Zygmunt Mycielski, 1935, Warsaw, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Gabinet Zbior w Muzycznych, Archiwum Stowarzyszenia M dych Muzyk w Polak w w Paryżu, file 'Dane o kompozytorach', D-SMMP/10-5.

34 Warsaw, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Gabinet Zbior w Muzycznych, Mus. VIII rps 2, Zofia Lissa donation, available online: <https://crispa.uw.edu.pl/object/files/751403/display/Default>, accessed 22 January 2025. According to Maciej Go b, the Capriccio (dated by him to c.1936) may have been written as a side effect of Koffler's work on the Violin Concerto, see idem, *J zef Koffler*, p. 128.

35 There are two pertinent sources in this regard: 'J zef Koffler', a brochure written in English [14 pages], dated 1938/1939 and preserved in the private collection of Maciej Go b, and *Almanach i leksykon Żydostwa polskiego* [Almanac and lexicon of Polish Jewry], vol. 2, ed. Roman Goldberger, Lviv 1938, pp. 722–724, <http://www.sbc.org.pl/Content/21139/PDF/21139.pdf>, accessed 1 July 2023.

36 'Du erlaubst, dass ich deiner Tochter diese "leichten", Klavierst cke widme; ich f rchte nur, dass sie Ihr missfallen werden', see: J zef Koffler, Letter to Alois H ba, 7 April 1936, Prague, N rodní muzeum –  esk  muzeum hudby, Ms 4226.

THE HIDDEN SYMPHONY: DECODING KOFFLER'S STRING QUARTET

As previously noted, evidence suggests that Koffler's String Quartet, Op. 19, was never performed during his lifetime, despite claims to the contrary. Leszek Mazepa made two assertions about its performance: first, that it was performed in Kyiv on 24 November 1940, during a concert to celebrate the 4th Decade of Soviet Music and Variety;³⁷ secondly, that it was performed earlier that year during the travelling Plenum of the Organizational Committee of the Soviet Composers' Union in Kyiv (28 March to 4 April 1940).³⁸ However, Mazepa provided no sources for the first claim, and archival evidence contradicts the second.

Contemporary documentation from *Sovetskaya Muzyka* indicates that it was actually 'Koffler's III or IV Symphony' that was scheduled for the Decade of Soviet Music beginning 16 November 1940.³⁹ Additionally, other archival materials suggest that the work performed at the Kyiv plenum was Koffler's Fourth Symphony, not his quartet. This is substantiated by a document discovered by Igor Savchuk,⁴⁰ namely, a report written by Boris Lyatoshynsky, chairman of the Union of Soviet Composers of Ukraine, for the Second Congress of the Union (20–24 April 1941), just two months before the outbreak of war between the USSR and Germany. During that congress, Lyatoshynsky defended Polish composers whose works had been performed in Kyiv the previous year, while facing accusations of so-called formalism himself. Despite these challenges, he remained steadfast in advocating for artistic freedom:

[...] certainly, it is not possible to equate formalism with atonality. Similarly, polytonality does not mean that a composer using such methods is a formalist [...]. My review of Koffler's Fourth Symphony must be understood in the light of my recognition of the right of atonality to exist; I do not consider this work to be easily understandable, but I believe that the composer was certainly sincere in it. This is his language, his style. If we demand a sudden change of course from him, we will only deprive his works of sincerity and achieve the opposite result: they will become formalistic.⁴¹

37 L. Mazepa, 'Okres radziecki', p. 99.

38 See: Leszek Mazepa, *Storinky muzychnoho mynuloho L'vova (z neopublikovanoho)* [Pages of Lviv's musical past (from unpublished sources)], Lviv 2001, p. 24. Koffler participated in this plenum as a representative of Lviv-based composers. As noted by Mazepa and Gołab, during that event, on 28 March 1940, Koffler's Second Symphony was performed, see: L. Mazepa, 'Okres radziecki', p. 92; M. Gołab, *Józef Koffler*, p. 233.

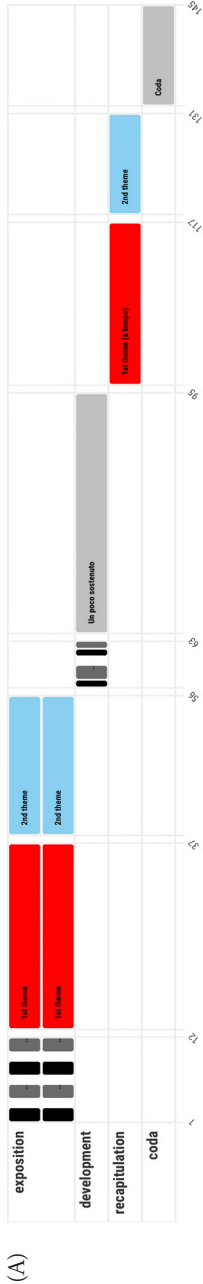
39 'Dekada soverskoy muzyki na periferii' [A decade of Soviet music on the periphery], *Sovetskaya Muzyka* 84 (1940) no. 11, p. 83.

40 Igor Savchuk, 'Borys Lyatoshyn's'kyi i pol's'ka kul'tura: typolohichni osoblyvosti' [Borys Lyatoshynsky and Polish culture: typological peculiarities], *Naukovyi visnyk Natsional'noyi muzychnoyi akademii Ukrainy imeni P.I. Chaykovskoho* [Scientific Bulletin of the Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine] (2006) no. 114, pp. 16–49.

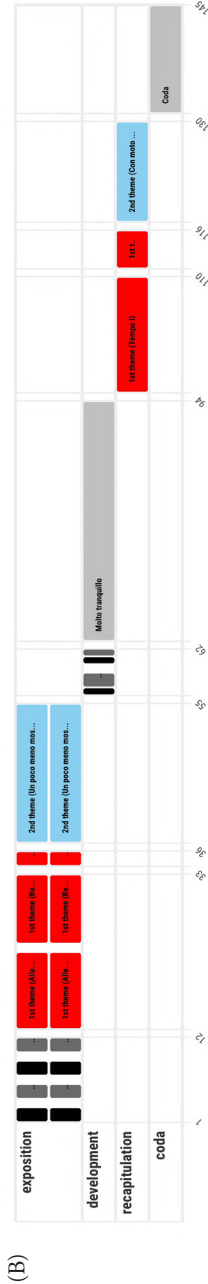
41 '[...] між формалізмом і атоналізмом знака рівності поставити, звичайно, не можна. Так само і політоналізм зовсім не вказує на те, що композитор, який застосовує такі методи, є формалістом [...] У світлі визнання мною заатоналізмом права на життя і треба розуміти мою рецензію на Четверту симфонію композитора Коффлера; я не вважаю її твір легко

Mvt. I

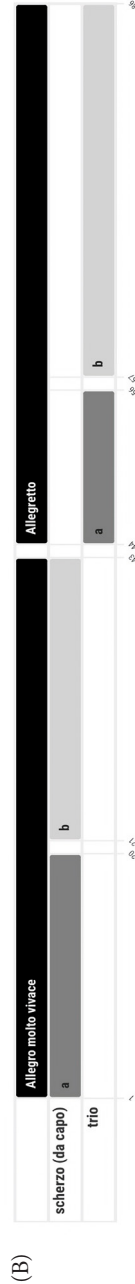
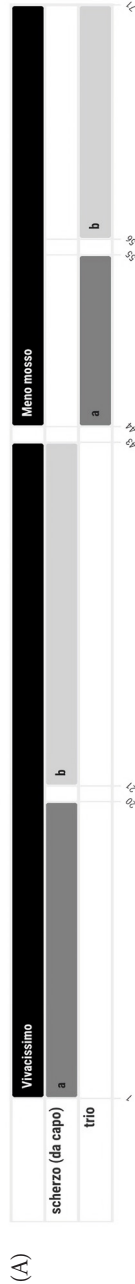
■ Andante sostenuto ■ Ben mosso ■ 1st theme ■ 2nd theme ■ Un poco sostenuto ■ 1st theme (a tempo) ■ Coda



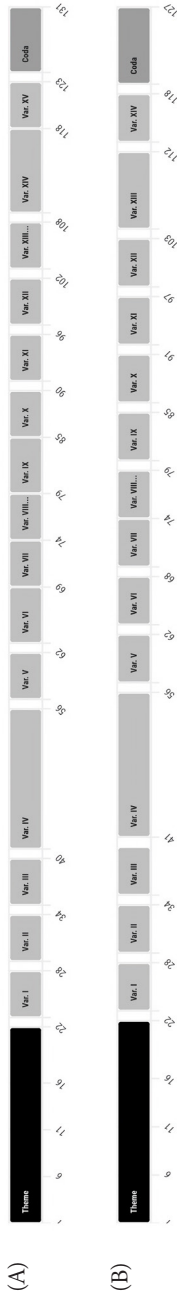
■ Adagio ■ Allegro ben mosso ■ 1st theme (Allegro moderato ma deciso) ■ 1st theme (Ben mosso) ■ 1st theme (Con passione)
■ 2nd theme (Un poco meno mosso e tranquillo) ■ Molto tranquillo ■ 1st theme (Tempo I) ■ 1st theme (Meno mosso moderato e tranquillo)
■ 2nd theme (Con moto e passione) ■ Coda



Mvt. II

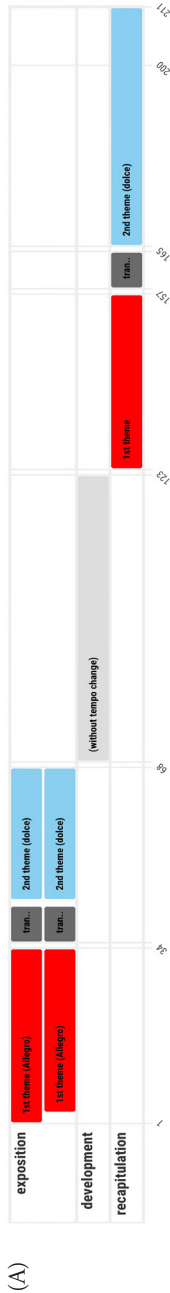


Mvt. III



Mvt. IV

■ 1st theme (Allegro) ■ transition ■ 2nd theme (dolce)



■ 1st theme (Allegro giocoso) ■ transition (Tempo I) ■ 2nd theme (Meno mosso) ■ A tempo ■ 1st theme ■ transition ■ 2nd theme (Tempo I) ■ Coda

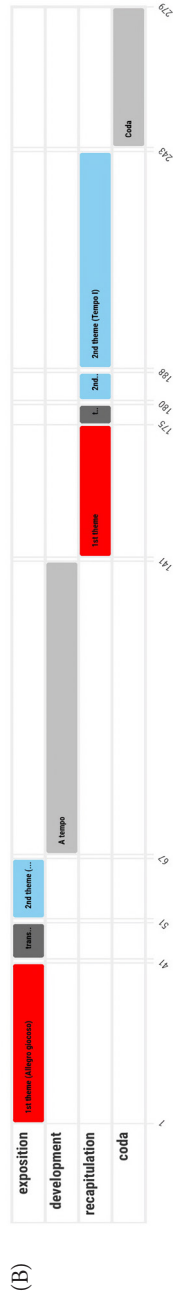


Fig. 3. Formal sections of Koffler's String Quarter (A) and the Fourth Symphony (B)

The appearance of the Fourth Symphony⁴² in Koffler's compositional output – derived, as previously indicated, from the material of the String Quartet – assigns exceptional significance to this latter work. The following analysis aims to reveal the subtle interconnections between the original chamber composition and its symphonic counterpart. As a point of departure, the existing scholarly findings regarding the structure and form of the Fourth Symphony, which remain valid, will be considered. Nevertheless, in light of current knowledge about the String Quartet, Op. 19, the musical language of this composition requires renewed analytical evaluation. Moreover, this study will situate both works within the broader context of Koffler's compositional legacy.

Let us begin by examining the overall structure of both works (see Fig. 3). The Fourth Symphony is, in essence, a meticulous and masterful orchestration of the original four-part string texture, executed with great expertise and sensitivity. There are some variations in the length of individual sections, but they are generally minor and adhere to the author's concept of instrumentation, which utilizes the resources of a large symphony orchestra. It is worth noting that while the score of the String Quartet is quite sparingly furnished with tempo and expression markings, the notation of the Fourth Symphony is significantly richer in this regard. Koffler further clarifies and expands on the original markings, leading to a noticeable diversification of the musical narrative's character. However, certain differences between the two scores carry more significant implications. The original 'pure' quartet texture, in fact, hindered the composer's ability to fully develop certain structural ideas. For this purpose, let us look at the finale of both works. In the String Quartet, the section corresponding to the second theme in the recapitulation spans 45 bars (166–211), while the equivalent section in the Fourth Symphony is 63 bars long (181–243). In these bars, the composer develops his idea in a new way, followed by a coda (bars 244–279) that is absent from the String Quartet. The coda (*Meno mosso* – *Tempo Imo*) begins with rhythmically altered repeats of the three-note cell (G–F#–C) in the harp part. Next, the string instruments provide a fourfold repeat of the first six pitches of the basic series (G–F#–C–B–Bb–A), while the repeated motifs of the wind and brass complete the Po series with pitches

дохідливим та зрозумілим, але вважаю, щокомполізатор у ньому був безумовно щирим. Це його мова, його стиль. Якщо ми вимагатимемо, щоб він різко змінив курс, то зробимо тільки те, що позбавимого твори щирості, чим отримаємо зворотний результат: вони стануть формалістичними'. Borys Lyatoshynsky, 'Zvit golovi SRKU B. M. Lyatoshins'kogo [pidgotovl. i progol. na II Z'izdi SRKU]. [kviten' 1941 roku]' [Report of the Chairman of the Central Revolutionary Committee of Ukraine, B. M. Lyatoshynsky (prepared and delivered at the 2nd Congress of the Central Revolutionary Committee of Ukraine). (April 1941)], p. 10, Arkhiv Kabinetu-muzeyu B.M. Lyatoshins'kogo, cited in I. Savchuk, *ibid.*

42 The copy of Koffler's Fourth Symphony is held in: Kyiv, Natsional'na biblioteka Ukrayiny imeni V.I. Vernads'koho, call number I 35970.

E \flat , D \flat F, E, D and A \flat . In this manner, Koffler establishes a thematic relationship between the opening section of the composition and its main theme – a structural nuance that was absent from the quartet.

On a more detailed level, let us look at the third movement, with the most intricate contrapuntal structure found in variations 10 and 11 (see Ex. 1). In the quartet, these variations (bars 85–96) are unified through the augmentation of the rhythmic structure of the theme played by the viola (P $_2$). Simultaneously, in the cello, the theme appears twice as P $_0$, while the first and second violins play rhythmically diminished counterpoints based respectively on the series I $_5$, P $_5$, P $_4$ and I $_4$.⁴³ This intriguing structure is also present in the Fourth Symphony, albeit in a modified and expanded form, serving as the culmination of the entire section. It occupies bars 80–91, which, as in the quartet, contain the P $_2$ theme, performed by the violas and two French horns. The thematic material (as P $_0$) appears twice at this point in the cellos and double basses, while the second clarinet and second violins present the theme based on the I $_3$ series in a rhythmic diminution four times (marked in soft red boxes). The material of the first violin and flute parts, along with the oboes, belongs to the well-known sequence of series I $_5$, P $_5$, P $_4$ and I $_4$, as found in the original version of the composition.⁴⁴ This enrichment of the contrapuntal structure was made possible through changes in the instrumentation. Additionally, in this section of the symphony, the texture is enhanced by short motifs played by flutes, clarinets and cor anglais. However, its fundamental framework remains unchanged in relation to the String Quartet composed six years earlier.

It is important to note that the twelve-tone row (P $_0$: G–F \sharp –C–B–A \sharp –A–D \sharp –C \sharp –F–E–D–G \sharp) which forms the basis of the quartet possesses distinctive characteristics. It contains three three-note cells composed of the interval classes 1 and 6, or 2 and 6. Consequently, elements 1–3 and 5–7 form the pitch-class sets 016 (3–5), while elements 10–12 form the pitch-class set 026 (3–8). The remaining components of the series, specifically elements 4, 8 and 9, constitute a set (B, C \sharp , F) that belongs to the 026 (3–8) class, which is the same as the final trichord of the series (see Ex. 2). This allowed the composer to achieve a unique sense of unity to the sound of the composition through a constant fluctuation of tritones and seconds.

⁴³ The series labels follow the convention in which P $_0$ is assigned to the first form of the row.

⁴⁴ See on this subject: Iwona Lindstedt, ‘Dodekafonia w symfoniach Józefa Kofflera’ [Dodecaphony in the symphonies of Józef Koffler], *Muzyka* 41 (1996) no. 2, pp. 68–70.

Ex. 1. Józef Koffler, String Quartet, Op. 19, third movement, bars 85–96 (A); the Fourth Symphony, third movement, bars 80–91 (B)

(A)

85

Vn I I5 DIM

Vn II P5 DIM

VI P2 AUG

Vc P0

mf

91

Vn I

Vn II P4 DIM

VI

Vc P0

mf

I4 DIM

(B)

80

Vn I I5 DIM

Vn II I3 DIM

Fl/Ct

Cb

VI P2 AUG

Vc P0

FG

mf

86

Vn I P4 DIM

Vn II I3 DIM

Fl/Ct

Cb

VI

Vc P0

FG

mf

I4 DIM

I3 DIM

Ex. 2. Józef Koffler, String Quartet, Op. 19, first movement, bars 1–12

Both the series structure and the refined manner in which the thematic material is developed in the aforementioned sections of the third movement of the String Quartet (and the Fourth Symphony) can be seen as evidence against the claim made by Maciej Gołąb that Koffler's last symphony simplifies the norms of serial dodecaphony. Gołąb's argument contends, for example, that the main theme in the first movement of this composition 'does not articulate a *Grundgestalt* succession of twelve pitches. Instead, it arises from the opening motive, presented sequentially at various levels of transposition'.⁴⁵ Similarly, Mazepa asserted that 'the composition contains [...] twelve-tone series, yet their further elaboration bears no relation to serialism (there are no permutations typical of twelve-tone technique), although within specific sections of 1–2 bars they do form twelve-tone constellations vertically and horizontally'.⁴⁶ What is more, given that the main thematic ideas of the String Quartet have undeniably been transferred to the Fourth Symphony – something that Gołąb could not have known – it is also impossible to support this author's assertion that Koffler's last surviving symphonic work aligns with a broader 'reductive' stylistic

⁴⁵ See: M. Gołąb, *Józef Koffler*, p. 77.

⁴⁶ 'w utworze występują [...] szeregi 12-dźwiękowe, których dalsze opracowanie nie ma jednak z seryjnością nic wspólnego (nie występują tu permutacje właściwe technice dodekafonicznej), choć w poszczególnych odcinkach 1-2-taktowych tworzą one konstelacje 12-dźwiękowe w pionie i w poziomie', see: L. Mazepa, 'Okres radziecki', p. 79.

tendency, evident since 1935.⁴⁷ In fact, the quartet was composed shortly after Koffler's Second Symphony, Op. 17 (1933), which is arguably the purest example of neoclassicism in Koffler's oeuvre, representing the pinnacle of his twelve-tone experimentations.⁴⁸ As a chamber work, this composition naturally draws parallels with the Trio, Op. 10, a work somewhat related (at least through the fugue subject used in the second movement) to Koffler's early String Quartet, Op. 5, which the composer later destroyed.⁴⁹ This Trio, which graced the 1931 ISCM Festival in Oxford, marked the beginning of Koffler's international recognition. It can be argued that Koffler himself was aware of the interconnectedness of his chamber compositions. Indeed, he sanctioned the inclusion of the following passage in an English-language promotional brochure from the late 1930s:

Koffler appears, first and foremost, as a composer of exquisite chamber music. The Trio and Quartet must be regarded as some of his finest work. It is here that Koffler's peculiar creative genius has found its truest expression. Here the exceptionally rare purity and transparency of his phrasing combined with a high degree of intensity in treatment is heard to fullest advantage. For wealth of contents and mastery in treatment one has to study slow movements carefully.⁵⁰

Both the Trio and the Second Symphony seem to have provided Koffler with the artistic foundation necessary to approach the quartet genre – a medium revered for its unique place in the Western musical canon, and in the twentieth century maintaining its paramount status through the works of Arnold Schoenberg, among others. Furthermore, in terms of form, Koffler's String Quartet can be said to synthesize, in a way, the characteristics of his earlier symphonic and chamber works. Among its four movements, the first, as in the Second Symphony and Trio, takes the form of a sonata, the second, as in the Second Symphony, presents a scherzo da capo, while the third movement demonstrates the polyphonic writing characteristic of the Trio's slow movement. The finale, on the other hand, is once again structured as a sonata form, albeit a highly non-schematic one.

When considering potential influences on Koffler's quartet, Schoenberg's Third String Quartet (1927) emerges as a likely candidate. This work, composed using the twelve-tone technique, features subsequent sections that reference 'catalogued' forms but modify their coefficients in accordance with the concept of 'developing

47 M. Gołąb, *Józef Koffler*, p. 76.

48 See: *ibid.*, pp. 152 and 169. The period 1928–34 is considered by Gołąb as the second stage in the evolution of Koffler's twelve-tone technique, characterized by 'a loosening and reduction of Schoenberg's twelve-tone serialism and concentration on thematic serialism', *ibid.*, p. 152.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

50 The author of the text was presumably Jerzy Frejheiter, cf. M. Gołąb, *Józef Koffler*, p. 246.

variation’.⁵¹ One can hardly doubt that Koffler, after discovering the Wind Quintet and Piano Suite,⁵² diligently acquainted himself with the recently published scores of the Viennese master.⁵³ Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that he was familiar with the Third Quartet, Rudolf Kolisch’s analysis of which drew the following comment from Schoenberg: ‘I cannot say it often enough: my works are twelve-tone *compositions*, not *twelve-tone* compositions’.⁵⁴ As a passionate admirer of Schoenberg’s music and a dedicated musicologist, Koffler likely shared the view that the composition itself, rather than any specific technique, was of primary importance.⁵⁵ This perspective is evident in his approach to learning dodecaphony, which he mastered through the study of actual musical works rather than theoretical texts. The way the twelve-tone series is employed in the quartet further reinforces this impression.

Koffler’s twelve-tone writing in this piece is not significantly different from that which characterized his earlier compositions from the 1930s. His series always had a meticulously designed interval structure, which, when appropriately rhythmized, served to shape the thematic and motivic layer of a composition. ‘Twelve-tone technique is primarily a form-building tool, allowing for an unparalleled unity of composition and cycles through the preservation of the basic series’, wrote Koffler in 1936.⁵⁶ As already observed, a notable feature of the String Quartet is the separation of syntactic particles from thematic material, resulting in sequentially changing twelve-tone complexes. However, this technique is not an isolated phenomenon in Koffler’s oeuvre. Similar approaches are evident in other works, including the Second Symphony, Piano Concerto and String Trio, where comparable methods are employed to manipulate twelve-tone series.⁵⁷ Moreover, a closer examination of Koffler’s preceding works reveals sections where the connection between thematic and motivic shapes and the underlying serial order is obscure. Conversely, these works also exhibit formal sections that allude to tonal tradition, incorporating tertian chords that arise from the permutation and verticalization of series elements.

51 See: Arnold Schoenberg, ‘Program Notes for the Juilliard String Quartet Performance of the Four String Quartets, End of December 1949 or Early January 1950’, in: *Schoenberg’s Program Notes and Musical Analyses*, ed. J. Daniel Jenkins, New York 2016 (= Schoenberg in Words 5), pp. 378–387.

52 Józef Koffler, ‘Drei Begegnungen’ [Three Encounters], in: *Arnold Schönberg zum 60. Geburtstag*, Vienna 1934, pp. 36–38.

53 He is known, for example, to have contributed to the inclusion of Schoenberg’s Variations, Op. 31 on the programme of the ISCM Festival in Prague. See n. 17.

54 Arnold Schoenberg, ‘Excerpt from a letter to Rudolf Kolisch, July 27, 1932’, in: *Schoenberg’s Program Notes and Musical Analyses*, ed. J. Daniel Jenkins, New York 2016 (= Schoenberg in Words 5), pp. 287–288.

55 He wrote in ‘Drei Begegnungen’: ‘It doesn’t matter whether the twelve-tone technique is externally justifiable (which it is), as long as we believe in it internally’. (‘Es kommt eben gar nicht drauf an, ob die Zwölftontechnik äußerlich begründbar ist (sie ist es), so lange wir innerlich an sie glauben’).

56 Józef Koffler, ‘12 tonów’ [Twelve tones], *Wiadomości Literackie* 13 (1936) no. 10, p. 6.

57 Cf. Iwona Lindstedt, *Dodekafonia i serializm w twórczości kompozytorów polskich XX wieku* [Dodecaphony and serialism in the works of Polish composers of the twentieth century], Lublin 2001, pp. 32–54.

In the first movement of the Trio, Op. 10 (bars 59–64), Lukas Haselböck revealed, for example, complete quasi-tonal chord sequences resulting from the application of a permutation pattern to a succession of inversionsal and primary series forms.⁵⁸

The basic series of the String Quartet greatly facilitates the construction of quasi-tonal harmonies, as the above-mentioned vertically arranged tritone-second cells create the succession of triads E° D Ab. Koffler not only employs these chords incidentally (e.g. bars 14–15, 19–20), but also forms an entire tonal segment based on them in the coda section of the first movement of the quartet (bars 132–145). Indeed, it can be argued that the tritone-second cells that permeate the thematic layer of the composition, particularly in the first movement, may initially seem to operate as autonomous entities, freely integrated into twelve-tone complexes. However, a more nuanced analysis reveals that these cells are, in fact, inextricably linked to the basic series. Although the composer does involve the distribution and permutation of series elements among the parts, it is important to recognize that the series is also shaped linearly and frequently subjected to imitative treatment within the quartet (e.g. movt I, bars 35–37; movt II, bars 31–35; movt IV, bars 107–111).

The configuration of musical elements from the beginning of the quartet proves to be a source of thematic material for the entire first movement, recurring in various forms and on various levels. It may be interpreted as a *Grundgestalt*, although not necessarily in the sense of an equivalent to a basic series, but rather in the way that Joseph Rufer explained in a letter to Humphrey Searle:

Everything else is derived from this – in music of all kinds, not only twelve-note music; and it is not derived merely from the basic series which is contained in the basic shape, but also from all the elements contained in the basic shape – that is to say, those elements which, together with the series as the melodic element, give it its actual shape, i.e. rhythm, phrasing, harmony, subsidiary parts, etc.⁵⁹

Let us now examine the opening bars (1–12) of the quartet (see Ex. 2). In the repeated ‘question’ and ‘answer’ sections (*Andante sostenuto* and *Ben mosso*⁶⁰) lies the melodic, rhythmic, contrapuntal and textural potential of the composition – repeated, developed and modified over subsequent formal sections. These bars foreshadow the techniques of distributing the series as fragments among several voices

58 Lukas Haselböck, ‘Józef Koffler: ein vergessener Pionier der Zwölftonmusik’, in: *Musik und kulturelle Identität*, eds. Detlef Altenburg and Rainer Bayreuther, Kassel 2012 (= Freie Referate und Forschungen 3), pp. 555–562.

59 Joseph Rufer, *Composition with Twelve Notes Related Only to One Another*, transl. Humphrey Searle, New York 1954, p. vi.

60 In the Fourth Symphony, the respective sections are marked *Adagio* and *Allegro ben mosso*. Their quasi-rhetorical character was noted by L. Mazepa (‘Okres radziecki’, pp. 79–80), and more broadly interpreted by M. Gołąb (Józef Koffler, p. 77).

and swapping parts between voices (invertible counterpoint). The latter technique is used by Koffler as a means of distinguishing the presentation of themes in the exposition and recapitulation of the first and last movements. During the repetition of the *Ben mosso* section, a permutation is applied, introducing intervals of the third and fifth class (marked in red square brackets) that were absent from the basic series. This approach establishes a foundation for the introduction of new motivic elements in the composition, where the ordering of pitches does not necessarily align with the predetermined structure of the series. Maciej Gołąb accurately observed that the primary method employed in constructing the musical narrative of the Fourth Symphony is evolutionism (understood as a way of shaping form through the continuous development of its elements). This observation naturally applies to the String Quartet as well, but cannot be interpreted in its context as ‘one of the most essential features of Koffler’s late style’.⁶¹ Hence, for the clarification of Koffler’s evolutionism, perhaps another reference would be more suitable. It appears that the compositional *modus operandi* follows ideas present in Schoenberg’s theoretical works from *Harmonielehre* (1911) onwards. It is there that Schoenberg wrote about two contrasting human instincts: the need for diversity and change, and the need for the repetition of certain pleasurable stimuli. Both of these he pointed to as conditions for the ‘planning of good phrases’, as the former brings about diversity, while the latter ‘gives the former coherence, sense, system’.⁶² Let us recall that the reading of this very book by Schoenberg had an impact on Koffler’s chosen path in life, captivating the young man with ‘profound philosophical, aesthetic and universal human ideas’. Schoenberg himself, on the other hand, constantly linked the concepts of repetition and variation through processes of development and transformation in his subsequent writings.⁶³ It appears that the ideas from *Harmonielehre* were consistently close to Koffler, while the adoption of the twelve-tone technique provided him with an answer to the question of ‘the validity of inner laws’ and opened up a world of ‘organic richness of harmony and counterpoint, arrangement and voice leading, sound and colour’, as he wrote in ‘Drei Begegnungen’.⁶⁴ The String Quartet, Op. 19 was, in this context, one of his highly original attempts to utilize this richness for his own artistic purposes, due to the form-building potential of twelve-tone technique.

61 M. Gołąb, *Józef Koffler*, p. 102.

62 Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, transl. Roy E. Carter, Berkeley 1983, pp. 48 and 122.

63 See e.g. Arnold Schoenberg, ‘For a Treatise on Composition’ (1931), in: *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, transl. Leo Black, London 1975, p. 266.

64 J. Koffler, ‘Drei Begegnungen’, pp. 36–37.

CONCLUSIONS

One can wonder about the influence that the decision to compose the Fourth Symphony had on the fact that Koffler's String Quartet Op. 19 was not performed in the 1930s. Did Koffler wish to preserve his work from oblivion because he valued it highly, or did he simply seize the opportunity presented by the cultural policies in Soviet Ukraine to premiere a large-scale symphonic composition, which was not easy in 'lordly Poland', to use the rhetoric of communist propaganda?⁶⁵ Or perhaps both? Let us note that, while composing a new piece, he did not give up twelve-tone technique, contrary to the ideological tendencies and pressures 'hanging in the air'. Scholars rightly perceive that the musical language of the Fourth Symphony somehow belongs to Koffler's 'pre-war' aesthetics and is not very characteristic of the 'socialist realist style transformation'.⁶⁶

It is plausible that the composer commenced the orchestration of the String Quartet prior to 1939, as the final years of his career in the Second Polish Republic remain somewhat enigmatic. Koffler's public and journalistic work dwindled, and there was a notable absence of significant original compositions in his catalogue after the *Polish Suite*, Op. 24. Instead, between 1936 and 1940, he focused primarily on arranging works by other composers.⁶⁷

Adding to the complexity, it is known that by the mid-1930s Koffler faced health issues that necessitated sanatorium treatment, as he mentioned in letters to his Slavic friends.⁶⁸ He persistently entertained the possibility of emigration, as evidenced by a letter to Jacobo Ficher in Buenos Aires, in which he introduced himself and inquired about the prospects of joining the local music community.⁶⁹ Yet, in a 1938 letter to the World Centre for Jewish Music in Palestine, he politely declined to take on organizational tasks and expressed his determination to concentrate on compositional work, because 'I probably won't have much time for that in my life'.⁷⁰

65 See e.g.: 'Slavna richnitsya' [A glorious anniversary], *Radyans'ka Muzika* 8 (1940) no. 5, p. 4.

66 M. Gołąb, *Józef Koffler*, p. 169.

67 Around 1937, a lost *Little Suite* was composed, based on J.S. Bach's *Klavierbüchlein für Anna Magdalena Bach*. Before 1938, there was also an arrangement of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* for a small orchestra, see: 'Chronological Catalogue of Koffler's Compositions', in: M. Gołąb, *Józef Koffler*, pp. 245–278.

68 See Józef Koffler's letter to Slavko Osterc, 4 July 1935 (Ljubljana, Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Glasbena zbirka, M rkp Osterc, S., Kronika, Korespondenca) and his letter to Alois Hába, 26 September 1937 (Prague, Národní muzeum – České muzeum hudby, Ms 4229).

69 See Koffler's letter to Jacobo Ficher, 16 August 1937, Washington, D.C., Library of Congress, Music Division, Jacobo Ficher collection, BOX-FOLDER 58/85.

70 'My state of health doesn't allow me to have many "distractions". And I also have to compose quite diligently, because I probably won't have much time for that in my life'. ('Mein Gesundheitszustand erlaubt mir nicht auf vielseitige "Zerstreuung". Und ausserdem muss ich recht fleissig komponieren, denn viel Zeit dazu bleibt mir schon wahrscheinlich nicht in meinem Leben'), see Józef Koffler, Letter to the World Centre for Jewish Music in Palestine, 13 February 1938, Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel, Archive of the World Centre for Jewish Music in Palestine, Series A: Correspondence, Mus 0033 A464.

Finally, let us also draw attention to the fact that Koffler did not provide a generic title for his last opus, *Ukrainian Sketches* (*Ukrayins'ki eskizy*), Op. 27, which is recognized by Maciej Gołąb as 'the only "pure" example of Koffler's new social realist style'.⁷¹ Despite being intended 'for a string quartet ensemble'.⁷² Koffler did not label it as a 'string quartet'. He did not bestow on this composition, which is grounded in Ukrainian folklore and employs a tonal language infused with modalism, an equal status to his Op. 19. In this context, the return to this work six years after its composition and the orchestral reworking of its main musical ideas holds profound symbolic significance; it reaffirms the continuity and organic nature of Koffler's aesthetics, regardless of the episodic elements that might seem to disguise it.

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71 M. Gołąb, *Józef Koffler*, p. 169.

72 The composition was published by Mystetstvo (Мистецтво) in Kyiv in 1941 under the title *Ukrains'ki yeskizi* (*Ukrainische Skizzen*) *dlya strunnogo kvartetu*.

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„KOMPOZYTOR WYKWINTNEJ MUZYKI KAMERALNEJ”.

KU ROZWIKŁANIU ZAGADKI KWARTETU SMYCKOWEGO OP. 19 JÓZEFA KOFFLERA

Artykuł ujawnia odkrycie uznawanego wcześniej za zaginiony *Kwartetu smyczkowego* op. 19 Józefa Kofflera w Royal College of Music Library w Londynie. Na istniejących listach dzieł Kofflera kompozycja ta jest oznaczona jako op. 18 lub 20. W wykazie stworzonym przez samego Kofflera ok. 1935 r., kwartet został ponadto powiązany z „zespołem Brosa” z Londynu. Jest to poszlaka, która wskazuje na możliwą drogę dedykowanej Edwardowi Dentowi partytury do miejsca jej obecnego przechowywania. Przy próbie odtworzenia historii kompozycji, autorka wskazuje także na inne tropy oraz odwołuje się do korespondencji Kofflera. Ujawnia ona fakty związane ze staraniami kompozytora o wykonanie tego kwartetu, zwłaszcza poprzez kontakty ze Slavko Ostercem i Aloisem Hábą. Wydaje się

jednak, że pomimo podejmowanych przez Kofflera prób promowania swoich utworów na arenie międzynarodowej, na forum ISCM, *Kwartet smyczkowy* nie został wykonany za jego życia. Wskazuje na to również najwyraźniej nieużywany rękopis z Londynu, składający się z partytury i poszczególnych partii instrumentalnych. Styl kwartetu odzwierciedla dojrzałe eksperymenty Kofflera z techniką dwunastotonową, podobne do tych, które cechowały jego wcześniejsze utwory z lat trzydziestych XX wieku. Co najważniejsze, kwartet posłużył jako podstawa dla *IV Symfonii* Kofflera, ukończonej w 1940 roku. Analiza wykazuje strukturalne podobieństwa między obydwoma dziełami, przy czym symfonia uwypukla kontrapunktyczne zawłości oryginalnego kwartetu. Dwunastodźwiękowa seria wykorzystana w kwartecie wykazuje ciekawe właściwości strukturalne, umożliwiając kompozytorowi wykorzystanie komórek trzydźwiękowych składających się z trytonów i sekund, co istotnie wpływa na brzmienie kompozycji. Sposób wykorzystania metody dwunastotonowej wydaje się pozostawać pod wpływem idei Schönberga dotyczących repetycji i wariacji, a także procesów rozwoju i transformacji. Powiązanie *Kwartetu smyczkowego* z *IV Symfonią* skłania do ponownej oceny znaczenia obydwu dzieł w twórczości Kofflera.

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