

CONTENT AND MUSICAL LANGUAGE IN THE *PIANO SONATA* OF SOFIA  
GUBAIDULINA, AND THREE RECITALS WITH WORKS BY BACH,  
BEETHOVEN, MOZART, CHOPIN, SCHUMANN,  
DEBUSSY, AND RACHMANINOV

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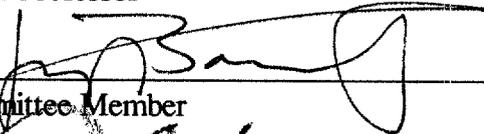
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CONTENT AND MUSICAL LANGUAGE IN THE *PIANO SONATA* OF SOFIA  
GUBAIDULINA, AND THREE RECITALS WITH WORKS BY BACH,  
BEETHOVEN, MOZART, CHOPIN, SCHUMANN,  
DEBUSSY, AND RACHMANINOV

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the  
University of North Texas in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

By

Ivana Cojbasic, B. Mus., M.M.

Denton, Texas

December, 1998

Cojbasic, Ivana, Content and musical language in the *Piano Sonata* of Sofia Gubaidulina, and three recitals with works by Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, Schumann, Debussy, and Rachmaninov. Doctor of Musical Arts (Performance), December, 1998, 103 pp., 1 table, 60 examples, 46 titles.

Sofia Gubaidulina is one of the leading composers in the contemporary music world. Her compositional interests have been stimulated by the exploration of and improvisation with rare folk and ritual instruments, and by a deep-rooted belief in the mystical properties of music. Gubaidulina is the author of orchestral and choral works, compositions for solo instruments, chamber music, as well as electronic music.

Gubaidulina's *Piano Sonata* sums up the composer's thinking within her piano music, and at the same time projects the development of her spiritual vision within other genres that are to come. The analytical approach in this paper is based on the correlation between each of the elements of the musical material (form, rhythm, sound, etc.) and its contextual meaning in terms of musical dramaturgy. Set-theory is applied to the analysis of motivic components of the work.

The traditional form is just the basis for the original intonational structure within a modern musical idiom. Varieties of rhythmic patterns, as well as an unconventional sound production, make this work breath with an impetuous power. The examination of the Sonata's musical language and content should give some insight not only into Gubaidulina's piano music, but also into a consequent development of her compositional thinking.

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University of North Texas

College of Music

presents

A Graduate Recital

IVANA COJBASIC, *piano*

Monday, April 11, 1994

6:15 pm

Recital Hall

*Partita No. 2 in c minor, BWV 826* ..... J. S. Bach

*Sinfonia*  
*Allemande*  
*Courante*  
*Sarabande*  
*Rondeaux*  
*Capriccio*

*Kreisleriana, Fantasien, Opus 16* ..... R. Schumann

1. *Ausserst bewegt*  
2. *Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch*  
    *Intermezzo I (Sehr lebhaft) - Erstes Tempo*  
    *Intermezzo II (Etwas bewegter) - Langsamer*  
3. *Sehr aufgereg*  
4. *Sehr langsam*  
5. *Sehr lebhaft*  
6. *Sehr langsam*  
7. *Sehr rasch*  
8. *Schnell und spielend*

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A Graduate Recital

IVANA ČOJBAŠIĆ, *piano*

Monday, April 24, 1995

8:15 pm

Concert Hall

*Sonata in A Minor, K. 310* ..... Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
*Allegro maestoso*  
*Andante cantabile*  
*Presto*

*Estampes* ..... Claude Debussy  
I. *Pagodes*  
II. *La soiree dans Grenade*  
III. *Jardins sous la pluie*

- Intermission -

*Sonata, No. 3 in B Minor, Opus 58* ..... Frédéric Chopin  
*Allegro maestoso*  
*Scherzo: Molto vivace*  
*Largo*  
*Finale: Presto non tanto*

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University of North Texas  
College of Music

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A Graduate Piano Recital

IVANA ČOJBAŠIĆ

Monday, September 22, 1997                      8:00 pm                      Concert Hall

*Prelude and Fugue in C-sharp Major, DWK II* ..... J. S. Bach  
*Prelude and Fugue in C-sharp minor, DWK II*

*Sonata in C Major, Opus 2, No. 3* ..... Ludwig van Beethoven  
*Allegro con brio*  
*Adagio*  
*Scherzo: Allegro — Trio — Scherzo — Coda*  
*Allegro assai*

*Funérailles* ..... Franz Liszt

*Moments Musicaux, Opus 16* ..... Sergei Rachmaninov  
*No. 1 in B-flat minor*  
*No. 4 in E minor*  
*No. 3 in B minor*

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Doctor of Musical Arts

University of North Texas  
*College of Music*

*presents*

A Doctoral Lecture Recital

IVANA ČOJBAŠIĆ, *piano*

Friday, October 2, 1998

6:30 pm

Recital Hall

CONTENT AND MUSICAL LANGUAGE IN THE  
*PIANO SONATA OF SOFIA GUBAIDULINA*

*Piano Sonata* ..... Sofia Gubaidulina  
I. *Allegro* (b. 1931)  
II. *Adagio*  
III. *Allegretto*

Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts

The Steinway piano is the instrument of choice for College of Music concerts.

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## CHAPTER I

### LIFE AND WORK OF SOFIA GUBAIDULINA

#### Biography

Sofia Gubaidulina has established a strong presence in the contemporary music world. She is a woman of fiercely independent spirit, and something of a mystic. From her early creative period in Moscow in the 50's and 60's when she was known only among her colleagues but not officially recognized, Gubaidulina has come a long way toward achieving a worldwide recognition today.

The musical journey began one day while Gubaidulina was still a child in Chistopol, a town on the river Kama, a tributary of Volga in the Tartar Republic of the Soviet Union. The little girl went out into the fields and on her knees prayed: "Lord, make me a composer and I will endure whatever you might want me to suffer."<sup>1</sup> The circumstances of her birth and upbringing have had a great impact on her musical development. Born on October 24, 1931, she is of mixed background, her father being pure Tartar and her mother of Russian, Polish and Jewish blood. Even though her parents were not religious, Gubaidulina was introduced to the mixture of faiths of her ancestors through her grandparents. Gubaidulina's Tartar forebears were Muslims, and her grandfather was a mullah. Her immediate Russian ancestors

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<sup>1</sup>Gerard McBurney, "Encountering Gubaidulina," *Musical Times*, Vol. 129 (March 1988), 120.

were Orthodox Christians, and further back one finds Judaism and Roman Catholicism. She comments: "I am the place where East and West meet."<sup>2</sup> During the course of her life, Gubaidulina became a devout Orthodox Christian, and Christian images and topics would inspire many of her compositions.

Gubaidulina was five years old when she began piano lessons, and around the same time she started composing on her own. Composing was for her "an inner necessity."<sup>3</sup> From 1946 to 1949 she studied theory under Nazib Zhiganov and piano under Maria Piatnitskaya at the Kazan Music Academy. She continued her studies at the Kazan Conservatory (1949-1954), where her piano teachers were Leopold Lukomsky and Grigory Kogan, and her composition teacher was Albert Leman. From 1954 to 1963, Gubaidulina attended the Moscow Conservatory, studying composition under Shostakovich's student Nikolai Peiko and then with Vissarion Shebalin.<sup>4</sup> From 1963 to 1964 she was an accompanist at the Moscow Theater Institute. Gubaidulina has never taught, even though a teaching position would have helped her to survive those years when her music was neither performed nor published. She preferred to take commissions for film scores; and that is how she made her living at the time. "Her life has been shaped by creative goals: early wake-up, physical

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<sup>2</sup>McBurney, "Encountering Gubaidulina," 120.

<sup>3</sup>Albrecht Dümling, "Auf dem Weg nach innen: Die sowjetische Komponistin Sofia Gubaidulina im Gespräch," *Musik Texte Zeitschrift für Neue Musik*, Vol. 21 (October 1987), 8.

<sup>4</sup>Aaron I. Cohen, "Gubaidulina, Sofia Asgatovna," *International Encyclopedia of Women Composers*. (New York & London: R.R. Bowker Company, 1981), 197.

exercise, no phone calls (her telephone is turned on for a minute a day), and long hours of work, often without a break for food.”<sup>5</sup>

Along with Alfred Schnittke, Edison Denisov and Valentin Silvestrov, Gubaidulina is acknowledged as one of the leading representatives of contemporary music in the former Soviet Union. The wide interest in her music is reflected in numerous commissions from the Berlin, Helsinki, and Holland Festivals, the Library of Congress, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and other organizations and ensembles.<sup>6</sup> Festivals celebrating Gubaidulina’s music have been held throughout Europe, in Russia and Japan. Her music is now represented generously on compact disc.

Sofia Gubaidulina is a member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin and of the Freie Akademie der Künste in Hamburg. She has been the recipient of the Prix de Monaco (1987), the Koussevitsky International Record Award (1989; 1994), the Premio Franco Abbiato (1991), the Heidelberger Künstlerinnenpreis (1991), the Russian State Prize (1992), the Spohr Preis (1995), and Praemium Imperiale Prize in Japan (1998). In 1992 Gubaidulina moved to Germany, and now lives near Hamburg.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Maya Pritsker, “Gubaidulina: Stimmen ... Verstummen,” program notes for the New York premier of Gubaidulina’s Symphony at the BAM Opera House, October 31 and November 1, 1997.

<sup>6</sup>\_\_\_\_\_. *Sofia Gubaydulina Catalogue*. (Hamburg: Musikverlag Hans Sikorski, 1994), 4.

<sup>7</sup>\_\_\_\_\_. *Sofia Gubaydulina Catalogue*, 4.

### Aesthetics and musical realization

Sofia Gubaidulina's work embraces everything from the carefully crafted to the improvised, in conventional and electronic media. Some of her compositions have employed traditional Central Asian instruments. She has written music within a variety of genres. There are orchestral works with or without solo instrument, vocal symphonic works, compositions for solo instruments, chamber music, works for choir or with choir, as well as electronic music.

Asked about her development as a composer, Gubaidulina says:

"I really can't say that any radical shift has taken place in my work, or any unexpected change in my way of thinking. Twenty years ago, for example, I wrote the work "Die Nacht in Memphis" to the text of old Egypt lyrics and translation by Ana Achmatova. Today I look at this work and see that I am still doing exactly the same. In other words, I didn't have such a change in my style, as I can see in some of my colleagues... It seems to me that I have been traveling through my soul the whole time, in a definite direction, always further and further... On the one hand it's always the same, and on the other - always new leaves, so to speak, as in the [sic] nature. I see no really great difference between a work composed in 1968 and one composed in 1983, for instance... I think it is one and same. Yet, it must be said that the technique is quite different... Today my work is concerned with rhythm and form, while at that time it concentrated on tonal color and pitch. So, you can see some sort of technical development, but the conceptual line has always remained the same."<sup>8</sup>

Even though Gubaidulina stresses a definite difference between her early and later works in terms of technique, it should be mentioned that color and pitch as well as rhythm are important aspects in all of her works. The difference is in the actual level on which the specific elements are used. For example, in her early piano works (which will be discussed in the next

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<sup>8</sup>Dorothea Redepenning, "...reingewaschen durch die Musik..." *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 151, No. 1 (January 1990), 17-18.

chapter), the rhythm is exposed in the foreground of the music, while in the later compositions (for instance, her Symphony *Stimmen...verstummen*) rhythm is involved in the deeper structural levels of the piece.<sup>9</sup> Gubaidulina also points out that since the late 1950s technical matters have become secondary for her and that the technical issues of any given piece flow from the underlying inspiration for that score.<sup>10</sup>

Gubaidulina's works seem to be strongly unified by a singular vision and a deep-rooted belief in God. The mystical properties of Gubaidulina's music release this vision even in the works with no program, although the most prominent feature of her work is the almost total absence of "absolute" music. Her interest in religion is evident from the very titles of her works—*Introitus*, *Offertorium*, *De Profundis*, *In Croce*, *The Seven Words*. As the true task of religion is that of reunification or reconnection (from Latin "rilegare") of heaven and earth, of men and God, in a similar way, music has for Gubaidulina a spiritual aim of communicating our forgotten, heavenly nature.<sup>11</sup> Given that composition is an intuitive, meditative type of existence, and music itself is a spiritual art form, Gubaidulina believes music is of significant importance in today's world.

"The whole world is threatened by spiritual passivity, an entropy [sic] of the soul, a transition from more complex energy to a simpler form... amorphousness. What

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<sup>9</sup>The characteristic rhythmic patterns in the foreground can be heard within smaller parts of the structure, while on a deeper level they affect the overall architecture of the work.

<sup>10</sup>John Rockwell, "A Soviet Composer Awaiting Discovery," *The New York Times* (January 24, 1988), sec. 2, 21.

<sup>11</sup>Discussion with Sofia Gubaidulina at Brookline Academy of Music, New York, October 31, 1997.

puts the brakes on that process is the human spirit, and in part, art, and that is a matter for serious music.”<sup>12</sup>

To Gubaidulina “transformation is what we desire most in the creative process... because this transfiguration into something completely different is what unites us with our creator.”<sup>13</sup>

When Gubaidulina refers to herself as “the place where East and West meet,” she is speaking of her Central Asian and European ancestry as well as her music. From the East come her extraordinary imagination and inventiveness in timbre and rhythm; from the West, her capacity for logical structure and also her sense of dialectical drama. “All my life I have been interested in the confrontation of absolute opposites and in the point where these opposites meet.”<sup>14</sup> The idea of unity pervades all of her works. Nothing is more important than creating a unity of disparate things.

Gubaidulina finds musically contrasting ideas very interesting, pitting opposites against one another, “*arco* versus *pizzicato*, *con sordino* over *senza sordino*, *sul ponticello* followed by *sul tasto*, diatonics against microtonality.”<sup>15</sup> The *Ten Preludes* for violoncello solo (1974) are based on these kinds of contrasts. Another example is the climax of Gubaidulina’s *Third String Quartet* (1987), which is achieved at the point of change from *pizzicato* to *arco*. The

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<sup>12</sup>Karen Campbell, “A Russian Composer’s Path to Freedom,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (August 27, 1997), 13.

<sup>13</sup>Dorothy Ker, “The Russians Have Come,” *Music in New Zealand*, No. 15 (Summer 1991-1992), 24.

<sup>14</sup>Maya Pritsker, “Gubaidulina: Stimmen... verstummen.”

<sup>15</sup>Claire Polin, “New Music in Moscow,” *Ovation*, Vol. 5, No. 9 (October 1984), 20.

whole of the first part of the work is played without bows, using only pizzicato or the tips of the fingers. When the players finally do use the bows, the effect is one of sudden transport into a new dimension. In the sonata *Rejoice!* for violin and cello (1981) Gubaidulina uses the sounds of harmonics “as a metaphor for the transition into an ‘other’ reality through the juxtaposition of normal sound with that of harmonics.”<sup>16</sup> Of basic concern to Gubaidulina are “proportions, coherence between order and freedom and finding a viable point between the two.”<sup>17</sup>

Several of Gubaidulina’s major works of the late 1960s and early 1970s were inspired by the ensemble of the Russian percussionist Mark Pekarsky, who has collected rare Russian, Caucasian, and Asian folk and ritual instruments. These works include *Music for Harpsichord and Instruments from the Collection of Mark Pekarsky* (1972), *Jubilatio* (1979) (written for his ensemble) and *Percussio per Pekarsky* (1976), for percussion, mezzo-soprano and large orchestra on the text by Marina Tsvetayeva from the cycle “Hour of the Soul.” Soviet authorities required that this work be known by the Tsvetayeva text (“Hour of the Soul”).

In the mid-1970s Gubaidulina, together with two other composers, Victor Suslin and Viacheslav Artiomov, founded an improvisation group, “Astreia.” They gave occasional concerts, and did much improvisation as a private experiment, which helped them expand the imagery and language of their own music. This experience led Gubaidulina to produce the

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<sup>16</sup>Laurel Fay, Program notes for C.B.S. Records Inc., New York, 1989.

<sup>17</sup>Claire Polin, “Interviews with Soviet Composers,” *Tempo*, No. 151 (December 1984), 16.

violin concerto *Offertorium* (1980-1986), dedicated to Gidon Kremer, which was her first work to gather an international public.

Gubaidulina's improvisational skills helped in creating a violin part of astonishing virtuosity and exuberance with no trace of traditional gestures of violin writing. The treatment of the orchestra is also very individual, and often very evocative of the gongs and bell sounds that form so large a part of Pekarsky's collection. On the other hand, Gubaidulina makes a link with tradition by using a theme from J.S.Bach's *Musical Offering*. She comments: "Art, in an emphasized way, is like an offering or sacrifice, almost in a religious sense. That's why it is called *Offertorium*."<sup>18</sup>

Another major work to achieve international recognition was the symphony *Stimmen...verstumen* ("Voices...grow silent"), one of the most powerful realizations of Gubaidulina's style and beliefs. The work was commissioned by the Berlin Festival and first performed in 1986 by the Orchestra of the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Culture under Gennady Rozhdestvensky (to whom it is dedicated). Performances followed in Moscow, Western Europe, and U.S.A. The author of this paper witnessed the New York premier of the Symphony at Brooklyn Academy of Music under Robert Spano (October 31, 1997), and was fascinated, as was the rest of the audience, by the originality and intense emotion of the music.

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<sup>18</sup>Lutz Lesle, "Eine Art Gottesdienst: Die religiöse Semantik in der Musik Sofia Gubaidulinas," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 153, No. 1 (January 1992), 32.

The idea of the Symphony stems from Gubaidulina's previous composition *Perception* (composed in 1981, and revised in 1983 and 1986) for two voices and seven string instruments on poems by Francisco Tanzer and excerpts from the Psalms. The subject was silence impregnated with symbols and mysteries. In the Symphony such meaningful silence becomes a key image, the center of a philosophical drama in twelve continuous movements.

The Symphony is very much a narrative piece, representing a series of subductive and expansive states of being. There are two types of music, which are confronted within the first eight movements. One is harmonious and consonant, bringing the images of light, joy and heaven (in odd-numbered movements). Another is chromatic, with a characteristic motive of a slurred octave leap, and evokes struggle, chaos, and darkness (in even-numbered movements). Every time the first type of music comes back it is shorter, and every time the second type of music comes back it is longer. This second type of music, which is increasingly prolonged, drives the Symphony to a kind of crisis (the eighth movement). The climax of the piece is reached within the silent meditation of the ninth movement, which is a solo for the conductor. This solo was the most substantial part of Gubaidulina's idea of the Symphony. The silence is rhythmicized by gestures of the conductor. The rhythm of the conductor's solo is reflected in the structure of the whole composition. This aspect was visually apparent at the New York premiere of the work.

Another fascinating aspect of this piece is the notion of sound and timbre. Many effects came from the unusual setting of the instruments on the stage. The strings are arranged in parallel arcs, balanced from the center of the stage, so that the sides are divided

into two equal parts, and they respond to each other. A special effect of reverberation is created by playing *col legno ricochet* on the strings.<sup>19</sup>

This confrontation of opposites and their meeting point, which Gubaidulina describes as “the cross,” is obviously the central theme of her work. The idea of the cross is evoked in *Seven Words* (1982) for cello, bayan and strings. There are octave-leap motives, which appear many times, making up a cross figure. *In Croce* (1979) for violoncello and organ carries the clear symbolism of the cross at the intersection between different registers of the organ and violoncello.<sup>20</sup>

Asked where this calmness and consistency in sacrificing, this composing as an offering to God, came from in the struggle and humiliation of everyday life in Soviet Russia, Gubaidulina answers by remembering her youth and her father. He was great at keeping silent. “But our souls were very close to each other, and I felt every single thought of his.”<sup>21</sup> Even when her father would meet with friends or acquaintances, the men would first exchange a long, deep silence before they respectfully asked each other how they were. And

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<sup>19</sup>

Discussion with Sofia Gubaidulina at B.A.M., New York, October 31, 1997.

<sup>20</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. *Gubajdulina*. Autori vari/ a cura di Enzo Restagno. (Torino: E.D.T. Edizioni di Torino, 1991), 206.

<sup>21</sup>Lutz Lesle, “Eine Art Gottesdienst: Die religiöse Semantic in der Musik Sofia Gubaidulinas,” 34.

after thinking for a long time, they would give an answer that was as short as it was important.<sup>22</sup> These memories from her youth may be the key to Gubaidulina's music.

### Influences

The composers who influenced Gubaidulina's work the most are Dmitry Shostakovich, Anton Webern, and J.S.Bach. She says that she "was and is constantly learning from Bach."<sup>23</sup> It is not surprising that Gubaidulina mentions Shostakovich, since he is considered a spiritual father of many Russian composers. On the other hand, a development of serial compositional technique in the early 1960s continued from the point where Anton Webern left off, and this tendency was mirrored in the works of some of the Soviet composers. However, it was the spiritual content of Webern's music rather than the particular techniques used that influenced Gubaidulina. About Shostakovich and Webern, Gubaidulina says that they taught her "the most important lesson of all: to be myself."<sup>24</sup>

Dmitry Shostakovich stands as a great figure in the history of Soviet music, not only as a composer, but also as a man who was able to survive the long years of suffering under Soviet authorities, and to preserve his artistic integrity in spite the enormous pressure under which he was exposed. There is in his mature music that "eternal theme" of Russian art which

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<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>23</sup>Dorothea Redepenning, "...reingewaschen durch die Musik..." 17.

<sup>24</sup>Bernard Holland, "A Soviet Composer's Works Speak as to a Friend," *The New York Times* (April 24, 1989), C 14.

brings him close to Tchaikovsky and Dostoyevsky: a passionate rebellion against every kind of death and decay, whether physical or spiritual. It is in this quality of his music that Gubaidulina may have found an inspiration. She remembers the encouragement that came from Shostakovich in her student years. He was invited to evaluate the young students' compositions, and on that occasion he defended Gubaidulina, who was often criticized by other professors. He told her always to follow her "mistaken path."<sup>25</sup>

Gubaidulina's mentioning of Bach is not so surprising as it might seem at first. There are some aspects of her works which point to a very thorough examination of Bach's music. These are a balance of form, clear proportions, a very well developed sense of musical architecture, a sense of timing, the relationship between musical ideas and their development, the relationship between development and building of contrasts, and not least, beauty of sound.<sup>26</sup>

The salient feature of Webern's music is a high concentration of musical expression. Within a short span of time, he is able to spin out a novel, and with a minimum of material, to create a cathedral. It is this concentrated human thought which strives for something indefinable that is a link with Gubaidulina's world. Concern with technical material has as its background spiritually charged ideas. Although Gubaidulina used a 12-tone series in some

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<sup>25</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ . *Gubaidulina/ autori vari*, 12.

<sup>26</sup>Dorthea Redepenning, "...reingewaschen durch die Musik...", 17.

instances in her early compositions, this sort of connection to Webern's art is only superficial, and is not consistent.

Therefore, it is understandable why Gubaidulina refers to "human qualities" of these composers as her main source of inspiration.<sup>27</sup> Knowledge of their life and work (the work being a reflection of their lives), helped Gubaidulina find her own path as an artist and human being.

#### Gubaidulina and the contemporary music world

Composing with the goal of making a connection to God has been out of fashion in most Western composers' works since the days of Bach and Haydn. In spite of that, there have been artists, even in the twentieth century, for whom music would have no meaning if there was not a unity of spiritual and musical goals. Gubaidulina certainly belongs to this group of "chosen ones."

One of the major figures in twentieth-century music, Olivier Messiaen, speaks about artistic freedom in a manner which resembles Gubaidulina's philosophy:

"Freedom is a necessity for an artist. By choosing its future, freedom creates a new past, and that's what builds us up [sic]. It's that, too, which determines the style of the artist... his signature... The freedom about which I am speaking has nothing to do with fantasy, disorder, revolt, or indifference. It is a constructive freedom, which is arrived at through self-control, respect of others, a sense of wonder of that

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<sup>27</sup>Letter to the author from Ms. Laurel Fay, Sofia Gubaidulina's representative in the U.S.A., April 8, 1998.

which is created, meditation on the mystery, and the search for Truth. This wonderful freedom is like a foretaste of the freedom of Heaven.”<sup>28</sup>

Although Gubaidulina’s musical aesthetic is quite different from that of Messiaen, in her own way she experiments with a variety of tonal color and timbre, as well as with the idea of rhythmic unease, so prominent in Messiaen’s music. His interest in the fluctuations of rhythm and the relation of color to sound led him to explore oriental rhythms and bird songs. Gubaidulina indulged herself in improvisation with folk and ritual instruments, as well as in the transfiguration of sound on traditional instruments. In their individual ways, they were both motivated by the desire to connect heaven and earth through their art.

In Russia and Eastern Europe there is a sense of spirituality as a recognized musical direction. This is an important feature of the work of some of Gubaidulina’s colleagues and compatriots from the former Soviet Union. The names of Alfred Schnittke, Arvo Pärt, Valentin Silvestrov and Edison Denisov are often associated with Sofia Gubaidulina. At this point, the basic musical characteristics of the first two composers will be discussed.

The music of Alfred Schnittke is charged with an emotional intensity and expressiveness on a different level than that found in Gubaidulina’s music. In a very different way, Gubaidulina and Schnittke talk about struggle and serenity, about the powers of good and evil. While Gubaidulina makes a clear distinction between light and dark, seeking for freedom, Schnittke seems to be exploring more of the darker side of the anguished human

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<sup>28</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ . *Composers on Music: Eight Centuries of Writings*, ed. Josiah Fisk, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1977), 367.

soul. His “*Faust Cantata*” is based not on Goethe, but on an anonymous original text published in 1587, which offers no redemption. Schnittke’s writing is characterized by a synthesis of styles, a juxtaposition of different elements forming an individual and highly original expression. Gubaidulina has found her individual voice by developing many different techniques and having any of them at her disposal as a starting point for her original ideas.

While Gubaidulina’s conceptual line has always been the same, some of her colleagues, like Arvo Pärt, experienced major changes in their styles of writing. After years of dodecaphonic writing, Pärt simplified his style and turned for inspiration to medievalism with religious connotations, exemplified by works like *Missa*, *Fratres* or *Cantate domino canticum novum*. Musically, it was a style of simple lyricism with chant-like melodies. Western critics often link the style of Sofia Gubaidulina to that of Arvo Pärt in the context of mystical Minimalism.<sup>29</sup> While the first word of this designation is correct (meditative quality and transfiguration of liturgical chant are certainly mystical properties), the latter one cannot be applied to Gubaidulina’s music. The structure of her scores, built on densely layered dissonances and intense colors of sound, have no common ground with the reductive principles of Minimalism.

Gubaidulina points out that she shares this spiritual direction with a number of colleagues from other countries as well. She feels “a deep spiritual affinity” with composers

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<sup>29</sup>Robert K. Schwarz, “From a Land of Equal Opportunity, and Misery,” *The New York Times* (February 13, 1994), sec.2, 27.

such as György Kurtag, Helmut Lachenmann and the late Luigi Nono.<sup>30</sup> Nono visited the Soviet Union in 1962 and made a strong impression on several Soviet composers, Gubaidulina and Schnittke included.

Today, Sofia Gubaidulina enjoys a recognition greater than any women composer has received before. There is a deep meaning in the words of her friend and colleague Alfred Schnittke, even if said half-seriously, half-jokingly: "Sofia is a turning point in the history of humankind."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Andrew Ford. *Composer to Composer: conversations about contemporary music*. (St. Leonards, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd, 1993), 124-125.

<sup>31</sup>Maya Pritsker, "Gubaidulina: Stimmen...verstummen."

## CHAPTER II

### WORKS FOR THE PIANO

#### Historical background

With the exception of *Chaconne* written in 1962, the piano works by Sofia Gubaidulina were written in the period of time following her studies at the Moscow Conservatory, that is, after 1963. During the years of Gubaidulina's studies (1954-1963), there was an apparent liberalization in Soviet society. The Twentieth Communist Party Congress, held in Moscow in February 1956, signified a turning point in Soviet policy. The most important development was the destruction of the Stalin legend and the decision to end the "cult of personality."

In the field of music, the Second All-Union Congress of Composers was held in March, 1957. The Congress was guided by Dimitry Shepilov, a Party official, assisted by Tikhon Khrennikov, a secretary of the Composers' Union. The opening speech was given by Khrennikov, whose task was to preserve the principles of Socialist Realism in artistic issues, even though the general direction in society was towards destruction of Stalinism.<sup>1</sup> It soon became obvious that the principles established by the Central Committee of the Communist Party resolution of 1948 were still present. At the time, this resolution

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<sup>1</sup>Boris Schwartz. *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917-1981*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 299.

condemned antinational and formalist<sup>2</sup> tendencies in Soviet music, and called upon Soviet composers to compose realistic music in accordance with the Soviet ideology. Another “sin” was “cosmopolitanism,” as the alienation of musical content from “real Soviet life.”<sup>3</sup> Composers were urged to write music which would use Russian national themes and melodies. From 1957 on these rules were still present, although their application became less rigid. The Party’s Central Committee adopted a resolution in 1958 admitting injustices toward Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Shebalin, Popov, Miaskovsky, and others, whose works at times were charged with having the “wrong” tendencies (formalist, anti-populist trend).

The Twenty-second Party Congress, held in October 1961, brought to a completion the de-Stalinization begun in 1956. The resolution speaks of Stalin’s misuse of power and many evil acts during the “cult of personality.”<sup>4</sup> At the Third Composers’ Congress of 1962, presided over by Tikhon Khrennikov, there were many guests from western countries. During this period of time, a more intense cultural exchange between the Soviet Union and various countries provided an opportunity for musicians to share their knowledge, experiences and traditions. Performing virtuosi were winning international competitions, and Soviet artists were having triumphant successes around the world. Such composers as

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<sup>2</sup>“Formalist tendencies” in music denote the artisanship of musical construction independent of content.

<sup>3</sup>The Soviet composers who would apply the Western avant-garde techniques to their music were charged with “cosmopolitanism,” because that kind of music could not express the positive aspects of “real Soviet life” (as defined by the Party officials).

<sup>4</sup>Boris Schwarz. *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917-1981*, 344.

Hindemith, Bartók, Stravinsky, Britten, Honegger, Poulenc, Milhaud, Orff and others were now accepted in Soviet Union. Schoenberg and his school, as well as the other serialists, were not yet recognized by the officials, but some young composers were very interested in serial technique. In the 1960s, there were only isolated attempts to treat Schoenberg as a “historical” figure within the twentieth century.

Sofia Gubaidulina recalls difficult times during her studies in Moscow (1954-1963).<sup>5</sup> The totalitarian regime created many difficulties for the creative efforts of an individual, and ideological pressure was enormous. Also, there was a lack of information about the musical world abroad, and it was very difficult to find scores by Western composers. On the other hand, this “informational hunger” created some advantages, because when the information finally became available, the perception and assimilation of it was very intense. The information was not taken for granted, and the recipients were grateful to have it.<sup>6</sup> Gubaidulina was able to get to know modern Western music, such as works by Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Webern, that used to be banned before the period of de-Stalinization. Also, teachers at the Moscow Conservatory created a good environment for young composers by transmitting a comprehensive knowledge about various traditional musical styles.

After the period of liberalization under Khrushchev, a collective leadership marked the period from 1964 until 1970. The two leading men were Alexander Kosygin, who became chairman of the Council of Ministers, and Leonid Brezhnev, the new first secretary of the Party. The attitude of the Party was now “to defend the artist’s freedom to choose theme

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<sup>5</sup>Discussion with Sofia Gubaidulina at B.A.M., New York, October 31, 1997.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

and subject, style and manner of execution.”<sup>7</sup> Visiting performers from the West felt free to include in their programs pieces by Schoenberg, Webern, Berg and Boulez, as well as other twentieth-century composers. Dodecaphonic music and related techniques were discussed with more freedom than before. Musical life was very rich in 1965 and the following years. Music festivals were established in Moscow, Leningrad (today St. Petersburg), and other cities of the U.S.S.R. Cultural exchange with other countries was becoming more frequent.

In 1968 there was still a discrimination against some composers, particularly those with avant-garde tendencies (E. Denisov, A. Schnittke, A. Volkovsky).<sup>8</sup> The same year, at the Fourth All-Union Congress of Soviet Composers, Khrennikov attacked some of the avant-garde practices which, he said, resemble “circus stunts rather than works of music,” as for example, in the works of John Cage. On the other hand, there was some tolerance of new expressive means in music. On the surface, musical life was going on as usual, but essentially there was little change in the rather strict control in the arts and music. Socialist Realism was reaffirmed periodically as the artistic law of the country. Before the appearance of Michail Gorbachev in 1985, composers had three options: to write State-commissioned (and State-approved) music; to appear to do so but (like Shostakovich) to cover it with irony; to do neither and to experience official neglect.<sup>9</sup> Sofia Gubaidulina chose this final option.

During the 1970s, performances of Gubaidulina’s works were officially forbidden. She would find good performers who were very interested in her works, but at the last

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<sup>7</sup>Boris Schwarz. *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917-1981*, 443.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 476.

<sup>9</sup>Andrew Ford. *Composer to Composer: conversations about contemporary music*, 124.

moment the officials would not let her music be performed. In such a situation, the most important thing for Gubaidulina was to preserve her inner freedom, “a free soul, which is as important for us (composers) as for pianists is to have free hands in order to make a good sound.”<sup>10</sup> But it was the music created by the composer of “free soul” that represented an undesirable kind of liberation—of internal personal freedom. This independence was perceived as offensive and unacceptable. Being a woman was never an issue, because the situation was equally difficult for both men and women composers. Gubaidulina persisted in going down her “mistaken path,” never neglecting her soul and always writing the music she believed in. This path brought her to the point of being one of the major figures in the contemporary music world.

### Musical language

Only a few of the many works of Sofia Gubaidulina are written in the traditional genres of the classical European music, namely the *Piano Sonata*, the *String Quartets*, or the *Symphony*. The *Piano Sonata* of 1965 sums up Gubaidulina’s thinking within her piano music. As a major topic of this paper, the Sonata will be discussed in the next chapter. In addition to the Sonata, the following works for solo piano can be found in Gubaidulina’s Catalogue: *Chaconne* (1962), *Musical Toys* (1969), *Toccata-Troncata* (1971) and *Invention* (1974). The Piano Concerto *Introitus* (1978) belongs to a group of works that are known as a cycle of instrumental masses without words. The *Introitus* is the first in the cycle and is followed by the Violin Concerto *Offertorium*. The *Stufen* for symphony orchestra takes the

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<sup>10</sup>Discussion with Sofia Gubaidulina at B.A.M.

place of the Gradual, and *Detto II* for violoncello and chamber orchestra represents Communion. As the very titles of the solo piano works show (except the *Musical Toys*), Gubaidulina wanted to experiment with old genres. Each of these pieces reveals an inventive usage of musical material, having the old forms as a point of departure.

*Chaconne* was written in 1962 in response to a commission from the pianist Marina Mdivani, whose performances of the work gave a significant boost to the as-yet-unknown composer. In keeping with the tradition of the old genre, the work represents a series of variations on an eight-bar chordal theme. It begins in the spirit of its traditional model, with a powerful theme in a quiet, stately tempo (Ex. 1).

Example 1. *Chaconne*, measures 1-9.

Andante maestoso  $\text{♩} = 40$

**Chaconne**  
(1962)

Sofia GUBAIDULINA

The following variations dissolve this theme, step by step, into ever smaller note values and figurations of baroque diminution technique. The first two variations still relate to the theme harmonically and melodically, with the strongly articulated chordal texture and dotted rhythms evoking a baroque sense of majestic motion. In the following variations up to m. 160, the musical material breaks out of the strict eight-bar structure, undergoing a free, improvisatory development. The toccata-like variation at mm. 49-76, resembles similar aspects of Prokofiev's music with driving rhythm and obsessively repeated notes (Ex. 2).

Example 2. *Chaconne*, measures 49-57.

The musical score for Example 2, *Chaconne*, measures 49-57, is presented in five systems. Each system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). The first system (measures 49-50) is marked "Poco più mosso (21=3)" and "p". The second system (measures 51-52) is marked "simile". The third system (measures 53-54) is marked "mf" and "p". The fourth system (measures 55-56) is marked "mf". The fifth system (measures 57-58) is marked "f". The score shows a progression of rhythmic diminution and increasing complexity in the right hand, while the left hand maintains a steady accompaniment pattern.

Another variation brings a lyric, “dolente” mood, with a chromatic, legato melody in the left hand, accompanied by the ostinato in the right hand (Ex. 3). These lines are then spread out into extreme ranges of the keyboard, along with the progressive rhythmic diminution of the ostinato figure (Ex. 4 a and b).

Example 3. *Chaconne*, measures 177-184.

Example 4 a. *Chaconne*, measures 196-199.

Example 4 b. *Chaconne*, measures 208-209.

The middle of the piece is marked by a two-voice fugato variation. As the final part of this variation, the two voices present the theme (not the original Chaconne theme) in strict canon, the bass unfolding a mirror image of the upper voice (Ex. 5) one-half bar later. This fugato may be considered Gubaidulina's homage to J.S.Bach. The incessant musical drive, as well as the inventive play with the material, recalls the great master Gubaidulina always referred to as the ideal.

Example 5. *Chaconne*, measures 131-142.

The original harmonic progression of the theme comes back in m. 160, representing the top of the huge wave which was built from the beginning of the piece. The release of energy at this point creates at the same time a ground for another rising wave up to the final statement of the theme in m. 211 (Ex. 6).

Example 6. *Chaconne*, measures 210-218.

The Coda confirms a tonal center “B” by repeating the B-minor chord in the right hand, while the left hand plays an almost dodecaphonic ostinato in octaves. With such a plain

juxtaposition of diatonicism and chromaticism, the Coda summarizes a tonal image of the piece, which has previously combined these contrasting areas in a variety of ways.

In the *Toccata-Troncata* and *Invention* Gubaidulina combines the old contrapuntal techniques with modern musical idiom, searching for effects beyond the traditional concept of form and sound production. The musical material and structure of *Toccata-Troncata* illustrates the literal translation from the Italian term, which is Touching-Breaking. The powerful, staccato-articulated eighth-notes alternate with sustained, silently depressed tones under the fermata (Ex. 7).

Example 7. *Toccata-Troncata*, measures 1-5.

The musical score for Example 7, measures 1-5 of *Toccata-Troncata*, is presented in three systems. The first system is marked 'Vivo ♩ = 80' and 'ff'. The second system is marked '(2a)'. The third system is marked '(a tempo)' and 'ff'. The music features staccato eighth notes and sustained tones with fermatas.

At these moments of resting or “breaking” in the calmness after the “touching” impetuosity of the previous measure, the strings still vibrate due to the usage of the sustaining pedal. The

alternation of vigorous drive and tranquillity happens in two more sequences, after which it gives way to a new texture. The sustained note in the high register is counterbalanced by the staccato-notes in interrupted or “broken” line in the bass register (Ex. 8). The long high note is followed by the “tranquillo” motion of quarter and half-notes. There is, again, an alternation of different pacing: Tranquillo-Vivo, as well as a meter change: 12/8, 4/4, 12/8, 6/4 .

Example 8. *Toccata-Troncata*, measures 9-18.

The musical score for Example 8, measures 9-18, is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 9-11) is marked *Tranquillo* with a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 92$  and *Vivo* with a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 80$ . The piano part features a sustained high note in the right hand and staccato notes in the left hand. The second system (measures 12-14) is marked *Tranquillo* with a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 92$  and includes a *poco rit.* marking. The piano part continues with a sustained high note and staccato notes. The third system (measures 15-18) is marked *Vivo* with a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 80$  and *Tranquillo*, also including a *poco rit.* marking. The piano part features a sustained high note and staccato notes. Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte).

This section dissolves into the section marked *Rubato*, which leads to the concluding part of the piece (Ex. 9). *Tranquillo-Vivo-Tranquillo* is a pacing frame for the subtle ending. A chromatic ascent leads to the “*troncata*” line, supported by sustained quartal harmony, which subtly concludes the piece.

Example 9. *Toccata-Troncata*, measures 26-40.

*Invention* recalls J.S. Bach's set of short keyboard pieces written strictly in two parts, which were probably designed as technical studies. Gubaidulina's piece is a charming play-around with the contrapuntal lines, and reveals Gubaidulina's characteristic long-breathed rhythmic drive and willful, energetic striving for the end. A consistent sixteenth-note motion with "martelato" articulation is given a sense of unexpected rhythmic impetus and linear unfolding by the frequent changes of meter (Ex. 10).

Example 10. *Invention*, measures 1-18.

Vivo  $\text{♩} = 69 (\approx 60)$  *martellato sim.* Sofia GUBAIDULINA

© 1974 by Muzika Publishers, Leningrad

The example above shows the theme presented at first in the top voice (mm. 1-8) and then in the bottom voice (mm. 8-17). The motives from the theme are used in the following middle section in an interesting manner by the switching of the sixteenth-note lines and long, sustained notes between the two hands. These cross-points are often marked by the sharp sound of minor seconds, which, even if not long lasting, create points of rising intensity within the piece (Ex. 11). The sustained notes support a long breath within the incessant drive of sixteenth-notes.

Example 11. *Invention*, measures 19-38.

The image displays five systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of two staves, a treble clef on the top and a bass clef on the bottom. The music is written in a single system with a common time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and phrasing slurs. The first system is marked with a circled '19' at the beginning. The second system is marked with a circled '21'. The third system is marked with a circled '27'. The fourth system is marked with a circled '31'. The fifth system is marked with a circled '35'. The music concludes with a final cadence in the fifth system.

The music is led to a conclusion by a hectic motion in both hands, which dissolves to a single line, shared between the hands (Ex. 12 a). This line gradually descends, making a very effective ending on the accented note in the lowest range of the keyboard (Ex. 12 b).

Even in such a short span of time, Gubaidulina manages to build a high energy level within the music. An inventive unfolding of the material, as well as a free tonality with a high degree of chromaticism contribute to this sense of psychological power.

Example 12 a. *Invention*, measures 39-50.

Example 12 b. *Invention*, measures 59-63.

*Musical Toys* is a cycle of fourteen scenes that Sofia Gubaidulina wrote for her daughter in 1969.<sup>11</sup> Even though the subtitle is “a collection of piano pieces for children,” this music deserves to be included in the “adult” concert repertoire. Varied musical characterizations of each piece, as well as an ingenious synthesis of the pieces into a coherent whole, create a challenging task for the performer.

The contrasting character of these pieces is achieved by varying the texture (Ex. 13 a, b); by using diatonicism versus chromaticism (Ex. 14 a, b); and by creating contrasting

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<sup>11</sup>Dorothea Redepenning, Program notes for the recording of Gubaidulina’s Piano Music, Sony Classical, 1993.

rhythmic and melodic figurations (Ex. 15 a, b). Also, the changes of tempo from one piece to another help create a different character for each of them.

Example 13 a. *Musical Toys*, No. 1, measures 16-18.



Example 13 b. *Musical Toys*, No. 2, measures 1-5.



Example 14 a. *Musical Toys*, No. 6, measures 1-4.



Example 14 b. *Musical Toys*, No. 7, measures 1-2.



Example 15 a. *Musical Toys*, No. 9, measures 1-5.

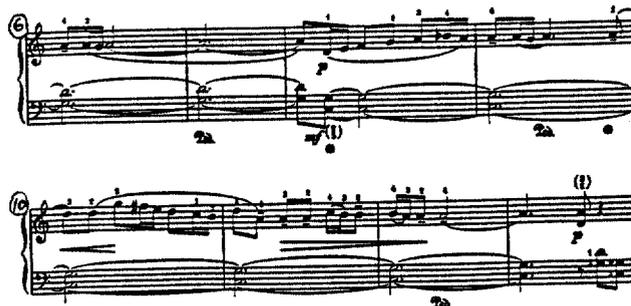


Example 15 b. *Musical Toys*, No. 10, measures 16-19.



The pieces can be grouped into three sections, the first group covering the numbers from “Mechanical Accordion” (No.1) to “April Day” (No.5). The beginning of the second part is marked by the “Song of the Fisherman” (No.6), with a cantabile melody in the right hand supported by sustained perfect-fifth intervals (Ex. 16).

Example 16. *Musical Toys*, No. 6, measures 6-13.



The third section begins with “The Elk Clearing” (No.10). The first and the last phrase of this expressive piece reminds the listener of the theme from Brahms’ *Third Symphony* (Poco

Allegretto). Even the implied key of C-minor at the beginning of Gubaidulina's piece corresponds to the key of Brahms' theme (Ex. 17 a, b, c).

Example 17 a. *Musical Toys*, No. 10, measures 1-4.



Example 17 b. *Musical Toys*, No. 10, measures 21-24.



Example 17 c. Brahms: *Third Symphony*, Poco Allegretto, measures 1-5.

**Poco Allegretto**

2 Flöten  
2 Oboen  
2 Klarinetten in B  
2 Fagotte  
2 Hörner in C  
1. Violine  
2. Violine  
Bratsche  
Violoncell →  
Kontrabaß

**Poco Allegretto**

In another piece of the set, “A Bear Playing the Double Bass and the Black Woman” (No.8), Gubaidulina uses a jazz idiom. A steady, walking-bass in quarter-notes (marked staccato) establishes a foundation for a jazz-like melody, articulated with off-beat tenuto-notes, as well as by off-beat chords.

The term “free tonality” may be applied to this collection of pieces, as well as to other pieces mentioned before, since Gubaidulina creates some tonal centers, yet without strict definition (Ex. 18 a, b, c, d).

Example 18 a. *Musical Toys*, No. 1, measures 1-5.

Allegretto  $\text{♩} = 92$

Example 18 b. *Musical Toys*, No. 2, measures 31-35.

Example 18 c. *Musical Toys*, No. 6, measures 22-32.

Example 18 d. *Musical Toys*, No. 13, measures 47-49.

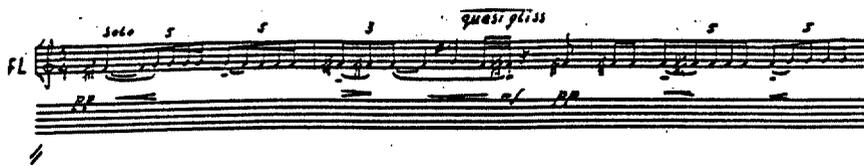
The Piano Concerto *Introitus*, dedicated to the pianist Alexander Bakhchiyev, uses tonal color and pitch as the basis for shaping space and time. The old idea of *concertare*—a competition between soloist and orchestra—is not applied to this work. Rather, the piano, the three woodwinds (flute, oboe and bassoon), and the strings present three layers of tonal color which, whether blending or contrasting, relate to each other on a basis of complete equality.

The title refers to the first part of the Catholic mass—the ingress into the church. Thus *Introitus* is also a symbolic entry into religious contemplation. This is accomplished in three phases.<sup>12</sup> Each begins with a half-tone interval which, through repetitions, trills and

<sup>12</sup>Dorothea Redepenning, Program notes for the recording of Gubaidulina's Piano Music.

glissandi, is formed into a vibrant “microlevel” before gradually spreading and intensifying into a broad tonal surface (Ex. 19 a, b, c, d, e).

Example 19 a. *Introitus*, measures 1-3.



Example 19 b. *Introitus*, rehearsal # 12.



Example 19 c. *Introitus*, rehearsal # 25.

Musical score for Example 19 c, rehearsal # 25. The score includes parts for Flute (Flg), Piano (piano), and Cello/Double Bass (C. & D.). The Flute part starts with a circled rehearsal mark '25'. The Piano part is marked 'piano' and 'pizz'. The Cello/Double Bass part is marked 'p'.

Example 19 d. *Introitus*, rehearsal # 18.

Musical score for Example 19 d, rehearsal # 18. The score includes parts for Flute (Flg), Piano (piano), and Cello/Double Bass (C. & D.). The Flute part starts with a circled rehearsal mark '18'. The Piano part is marked 'piano' and 'pizz'. The Cello/Double Bass part is marked 'p'.

Example 19 e. *Introitus*, rehearsal # 19.

This surface narrows, settling in the deep register, followed by the piano's tranquil psalmodizing in the deepest bass (Ex. 20). In the third and the last phase, cantabile melodic lines develop out of this psalmodizing (Ex. 21). One of these lines, a simple scale figure, is taken up canonically by the orchestra in a passage reminiscent of the antiphonal responses of priest and congregation, or of the resonant acoustics of a large cathedral (Ex. 22). The introduction, or "introit" in the strict sense of the word, is brought to a close when the psalmodic motif changes into the lower strings (Ex. 23).

Example 20. *Introitus*, rehearsal # 22.

This musical score for Example 20, rehearsal # 22, is arranged in two systems. The top system includes a grand staff with a piano part on the left and a violin part on the right. The piano part is marked *Solo* and *pp* (pianissimo), with a tempo marking of *rit.* (ritardando). The violin part is marked *Violini I*. The bottom system continues the piano part, which is marked *piano*. The score consists of several measures of music with various rhythmic values and articulations.

Example 21. *Introitus*, rehearsal # 33.

This musical score for Example 21, rehearsal # 33, is arranged in two systems. The top system includes a grand staff with a piano part on the left and a violin part on the right. The piano part is marked *pp* (pianissimo) and features a circled rehearsal mark. The violin part is marked *Violini I*. The bottom system continues the piano part, which is marked *piano*. The score consists of several measures of music with various rhythmic values and articulations.

Example 22. *Introitus*, rehearsal # 35.

Fl.  
Ob.  
piano  
V-ni Solo

Example 23. *Introitus*, rehearsal # 36.

piano  
V-ni Solo  
Cello  
Cello

In the long middle section, the virtuoso figurations in the piano unfold above the tonal surfaces of the strings (Ex. 24).

Example 24. *Introitus*, rehearsal # 43, measure 4.

The image shows a musical score for Example 24, rehearsal # 43, measure 4. The score is written for piano and strings. The piano part is the most prominent, featuring a complex, rapid, and virtuosic figuration that unfolds above the tonal surfaces of the strings. The string parts, including Violini I, Violini II, Violenze, and Violoncello, provide a harmonic and tonal foundation for the piano's virtuoso display. The piano part is marked with a forte dynamic (f) and a tempo marking of 'Allegro'. The string parts are marked with a piano dynamic (p) and a tempo marking of 'Andante'.

The piano opens the third section with a quasi-cadenza in which the scale figures of the first section are transformed into a circular movement (Ex. 25).

Example 25. *Introitus*, rehearsal # 62.

The image shows a musical score for Example 25, rehearsal # 62. The score is written for piano and strings. The piano part is the most prominent, featuring a quasi-cadenza in which the scale figures of the first section are transformed into a circular movement. The string parts, including Violini I, Violini II, Violenze, and Violoncello, provide a harmonic and tonal foundation for the piano's quasi-cadenza. The piano part is marked with a piano dynamic (p) and a tempo marking of 'Andante'. The string parts are marked with a piano dynamic (p) and a tempo marking of 'Andante'.

The tonal surfaces, based initially on diatonic material, are gradually chromaticized (Ex. 26), and the work ends on the vibrant half-tone interval, this time in the highest register (Ex. 27).

Example 26. *Introitus*, rehearsal # 75.

The image displays a page of a musical score for rehearsal number 75. The score is written on multiple staves, including a grand staff at the top and several individual staves below. The notation is dense and complex, featuring many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. There are various dynamic markings such as *pp*, *mf*, and *molto vivo*. The score includes a variety of musical symbols, including slurs, accents, and articulation marks. The overall appearance is that of a highly technical and expressive musical composition.

Example 27. *Introitus*, rehearsal # 78.

The image shows a page of musical notation for rehearsal # 78 of the *Introitus*. The score is arranged in a system with the following parts from top to bottom:   
1. Piano: A single staff with a circled rehearsal mark '78' at the beginning.   
2. Violini I: A group of four staves.   
3. Violini II: A group of four staves.   
4. Viole: A group of four staves.   
5. Violin Solo: A single staff at the bottom, labeled 'Violin solo'.   
The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, beams, and dynamic markings like 'dim' and 'dimia'. The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of chords. The string parts have more complex melodic and harmonic lines.

This overview of Gubaidulina’s piano music, including the Piano Concerto, shows the composer’s inventive usage of musical material, as well as her original manner of relating a

musical thought to the physical aspect of its sound. This feature of Gubaidulina's works is revealed in her particular treatment of the instrument.

### Treatment of the instrument

The piano is an instrument with the unique property of combining the characteristics of different families of instruments. The keyboard, strings and percussion sounds are characteristic features of the expressive range of the piano. Gubaidulina uses these properties in a way that always directly relates them to specific musical ideas. The sound, along with other parameters of musical language, fully embodies a musical thought. It is never created for a mere acoustical effect.

In her piano works, Gubaidulina combines various techniques of sound production. For example, "martelato" articulation in *Invention* creates a percussive quality of sound throughout the piece (see Ex. 10). In the *Piano Sonata*, the composer uses a variety of unconventional techniques, the most striking being a direct contact of the finger with the strings. These and other aspects of the sound production in the Sonata will be discussed in the next chapter.

The technique of silently depressed keys is applied in *Toccata-Troncata* and *Musical Toys*. The tones produced by depressing the keys silently are notated as  $\uparrow^*$  in *Toccata-Troncata* (see Ex. 7), and as  $x \downarrow$  in "The Echo," No. 12 from *Musical Toys* (Ex. 28, mm.1-9). In both examples these tones are sustained—in *Toccata-Troncata* as long as possible, and in "The Echo" they are measured by whole and half notes. Each example relates to the corresponding musical idea. In *Toccata-Troncata* this long lasting vibration of the strings evokes a

corresponding section in the traditional toccata, which was supposed to contrast a preceding motoric section. Even if this sustained sound appears to be static, there is something magical about it (partially coming from the overtones), that makes it move within the waves. This is a natural, physical property of the sound. Gubaidulina might have been aware that strong staccato-articulation within fortissimo dynamics and sustained pedal would create a powerful acoustical ground for the following sound emerging from silently depressed keys. Only after these keys are depressed is the pedal changed in order to allow the sustained notes to sound.

Example 28. *Musical Toys*, No. 12, “The Echo,” measures 1-9.



The very title of “The Echo” refers to the reflection of sound waves. Simultaneous strong articulation of the bass notes and silently depressed keys make the phrase fluctuate, thanks to the effect of vibrating strings (see Ex. 28). By using this technique, Gubaidulina shows that the acoustical effect can be very delicate. While in *Toccatà-Troncata* this technique is used to create a sense of fading away, in this piece it plays an active role in unfolding the phrase. This concept is emphasized even more in the concluding section of the piece, where

the circular, interrupted motion of the staccato notes in the left hand rearticulates the vibrating sound of the sustained, silently depressed cluster of notes in the right hand (Ex. 29).

Example 29. *Musical Toys*, No. 12, "The Echo," measures 25-37.

There is another interesting point in *Toccata-Troncata*, where a chromatic ascent from f1 to d-sharp2 is colored by silently depressed minor seconds at the distance of a half-step from ordinary sounding notes (see Ex. 9, mm. 30-33). The effect is a fluctuation of sound with microtonal inflexions. The preceding Rubato-section prepares this special atmosphere by layering the sound from denser to thinner (see Ex. 9, mm. 26-29).

After having a variety of musical images coming from an unconventional sound production in Gubaidulina's piano music, all other ordinary articulation and dynamic directions suddenly deliver more significant information than before. One realizes that the strong accents in fortissimo dynamics, the staccato accented notes, or tenutos followed by staccatos, as well as the passages with various gradations of dynamics all come from the deepest silence as an

powerful source of musical ideas. Of course, this statement may be applied to all the great works of music literature, but it is to Gubaidulina's credit that she rearticulates this truth in her own, individual voice.

### Springboard for developing compositional technique

Some features of Gubaidulina's piano music are reflected in her later works on various levels. The experiments with sound, different tonal areas, formal structure and proportions still continue to play an important role in Gubaidulina's creative work. Her search for a variety of tonal colors and unconventional sound images will be reflected in her preference for the chamber music medium, as well as in the usage of non-traditional instruments or unconventional combinations of instruments (for instance, violoncello, bayan and strings in *Seven Words*; saxophone quartet and six percussionists in *In Anticipation*; domra and piano in *On Tatar Folk Themes*; Japanese stringed kotos in *...Early In the Morning, Right Before Waking...*). Confrontation of different tonal areas (diatonic, chromatic, microtonal and pentatonic), as exemplified in some of the above mentioned piano works, will be of continuing interest for the composer. Gubaidulina's exploration of the borders of sound and silence results in using silence as an important structural element in her works, most apparently in the Symphony *Stimmen...verstummen* (refer to the chapter I, page 9), where silence is the central point of the work.

Rhythm has had an increasing importance in Gubaidulina's work. In her piano music, it is exposed on the very surface of the music, contributing to the sharp, black-and-white graphics of musical design. In the later works, rhythm penetrates into a deeper structural

level, and becomes the major element of the overall construction of the piece. The *Symphony* is a very good example of this aspect of Gubaidulina's music (refer to chapter I, page 9).

The most striking feature of Gubaidulina's compositions remains her truthfulness to her own, original voice. An overview of her works confirms that there was some technical development, but at the same time Gubaidulina never deviated from her unique aesthetic and spiritual ideas.

## CHAPTER III

### CONTENT AND MUSICAL LANGUAGE IN THE PIANO SONATA OF SOFIA GUBAIDULINA

#### Form and content

The *Piano Sonata* was written in 1965, two years after Gubaidulina completed her studies at the Moscow Conservatory. It is dedicated to Henrietta Mirvis, a pianist whose artistry Gubaidulina greatly admired. It was in homage to that artistry that she dedicated the *Piano Sonata*. This work, imbued with an apocalyptic vision and given a modern musical idiom, was a rather brave endeavor in the Soviet Union at the time, even if the official attitude toward composers was somewhat more relaxed than before. Gubaidulina regards her other work, *Five Studies for Harp, Contrabass and Percussion* (written in the same year as the Sonata), as her “opus one,” the work with which she was “born as a composer.”<sup>1</sup> The Sonata could be considered the “opus one” with equal justification. The musical language and content of the work reveal a composer capable of giving an original contribution to the great tradition of the piano sonata.

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<sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ . Gubaidulina / autori vari, 33.

The work is structured as a traditional three-movement cycle, Allegro, Adagio, Allegretto. Like in her Chaconne, Toccata-Troncata, and Invention, Gubaidulina uses a traditional form as a starting point for developing musical ideas within a modern idiom.

### The first movement

The form of the first movement is the well-known Sonata allegro, as shown in the formal outline.

#### Formal outline of the first movement

sections:	Introduction		Exposition	
	transitional passage		first thematic complex	
			"swing" theme	chord-progression theme
measures:	1	23	28	68
sections:		Development	Recapitulation	
	second theme		intro. material	second theme
measures:	82	144	226	242
sections:				
	intro. material	second theme	intro. material	
measures:	248	249	252	
sections:			Coda	
	first thematic complex			
	"swing" theme		chord-progression theme	
measures:	265	279	324	

The general character of the main themes also parallels traditional choice: an active main theme and a lyric, more tranquil secondary theme. However, the whole intonational<sup>2</sup> structure, which is the most expressive aspect of the work, is of a modern idiom, and is announced at the very beginning (Ex. 30).

Example 30. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 1-7.

A three-note cluster at the opening of the introduction is a cell from which the whole piece develops. This small motive is charged with a dramatic invocation, revealed through the piercing vibration of the minor second cluster. In set-theory terms, the prime form<sup>3</sup> of this set is [0,1,2], but musically it often appears with some octave displacement.

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<sup>2</sup>Russian composer and music critic Boris Asafiev related musical intonations to basic aspects of human intoning in speech as a manifestation of thought. Music, like speech intonations possesses expressive, meaningful and characteristic functions revealed in similarities of musical components such as pitch, meter, rhythm, timbre and dynamics.

<sup>3</sup>For further explanation, refer to Allen Forte's book *The Structure of Atonal Music* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), pages 1-5.

This set articulates the musical material of the Introduction, both harmonically and melodically (see the circled sets in Ex. 30).

A transitional passage leads to the first theme, or thematic complex, comprising a rhythmically accentuated “swing” theme,<sup>4</sup> and a chord-progression motive (Ex. 31 a, b).

Example 31 a. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 28-37.

The image shows a musical score for measures 28-37 of the first movement of a Piano Sonata. The score is divided into three systems, each with a circled measure number (26, 30, 34) in the top left corner. The notation includes treble and bass staves with various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and chords. Handwritten annotations in black ink are present throughout the score, including circled sets of notes and chords, and labels such as '0136 D\*↑', '013 E↑', '0127 C\*↓', '0136 B\*↓', '012 C\*↑', '013 A\*↓', '0127 D\*↓', '0127 F↓', '0127 G\*↓', '0136 F↓', '0136 A↑', and '0136 A\*↓'. The score also includes dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f sub.', and a section marker '2' above the second system. The annotations highlight specific harmonic and melodic elements within the music.

<sup>4</sup>A subjective term “swing” is given because of characteristic syncopations and dotted rhythms within the theme. The tradition of similar themes—syncopated, with impulsive short motives—goes back in the Russian piano literature, obviously to the “Prestissimo volando” of the *Fourth Piano Sonata* by Scriabin.

Example 31 b. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 68-74.

Besides the [0,1,2] set, a few other sets are introduced which will have major roles in creating a musical dramaturgy for the entire Sonata. These are: [0,1,3], and the supersets [0,1,2,7] and [0,1,3,6] (see Ex. 31). [0,1,2] and [0,1,3] have the closest relationship of two like sized but dissimilar sets. Their interval vectors<sup>5</sup> have four corresponding entries:

prime form:	interval vector:
[0,1,2]	[210000]
[0,1,3]	[111000]

Consequently, [0,1,2] is R2 related to [0,1,3], meaning that there is a second-level maximum similarity between two sets with respect to interval class<sup>6</sup> (R1 would represent first-level maximum similarity). These sets also have a maximum similarity with respect to pitch class,

<sup>5</sup>Refer to Allen Forte's book *The Structure of Atonal Music*, pages 13-15.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 46-60.

designated by Forte as Rp.<sup>7</sup> The sets [0,1,2,7] and [0,1,3,6] are also two like sized but dissimilar sets, which are Rp related.

The set [0,1,2], which is the generator of energy throughout the piece, is given the name “spring” for performance practice purposes. [0,1,3], with its close relationship potential to [0,1,2], has a more soothing effect, given the range interval of a minor third. Because of this soothing quality of a minor third, the term “consolation” may be associated with this set. The remaining two sets evoke the striving of a human being for the spiritual fulfillment. The interval content of the set [0,1,2,7] creates tension as a consequence of the simultaneity of such intervals as adjacent minor seconds, perfect fourth, perfect and diminished fifth. Given the juxtaposition of dissonance and consonance, this set reveals a condensed feeling of the “struggle.” The [0,1,3,6] contains a diminished triad together with a resolution pitch. The pain (diminished triad) is balanced by the hope (resolution), which makes the “faith.”

These names are given only as an aid for performance practice purposes. They might be conceived differently by different performers. In this paper, they will help in the understanding of the musical structure, as well as of a dramaturgical concept of the piece.

The set [0,1,2] elevates the energy of the “swing” part of the first theme by consistently bringing the phrases to a higher register (Ex. 32 a, b, c). The tension reaches a point of culmination when the material from the introduction suddenly breaks in, articulated by the motive from the previously shown part of the first theme (Ex. 33). After a brief reminiscence of the “swing” theme, the second part of the first thematic complex is introduced—a chord progression motive. The chant-like chords in the right hand, based on

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<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

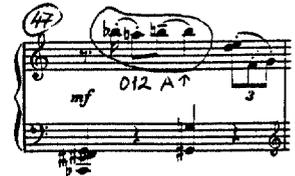
[0,1,3] set (“consolation”), move steadily over an ostinato line in the left hand (see again Ex. 31 b). The short “swing” phrase in the higher register provides the contrast. This part of the first theme recalls the vocal style which is characteristic of Russia and Eastern European countries (for instance, the famous Bulgarian Women Choir), where the juxtaposed minor and major seconds are an important part of the musical material. Béla Bartók also found much inspiration in this kind of sound.

Example 32. *Piano Sonata*, first movement.

a. measure 30

b. measure 40

c. measure 47



Example 33. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 52-55.

A smooth transition to the second theme is made by the long sustained notes in the right hand, as well as by the dissolving ostinato pattern in the left hand in measures 80-81. The second thematic complex is a dialogue between a new ostinato motive and a cantabile figure in a slower tempo. The sets [0,1,2], [0,1,3], [0,1,3,6], and [0,1,2,7] are now put in the new context of sustained and expressive sound, contrasted by brief phrases, which have the role of pushing the time forward by either articulating the rhythm of the single note (percussive effect), or by introducing a phrase with emphasized chromaticism (Ex. 34).

Example 34. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 98-117.

The musical score for Example 34, *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 98-117, is presented in five systems. The notation includes circled annotations for specific rhythmic or pitch sets and directions. The tempo markings are  $J=63$  and  $J=92$ . The dynamics include *con sord.*, *mf*, and *cresc.*. The score is divided into measures 98, 102, 106, 110, and 114.

The material of the second theme leads directly to the development section, which handles both thematic complexes according to the traditional model of sonata development. Secco reiterated chords in the low bass register create a threatening percussive effect. This effect was used (in a different form) in the accompaniment of the “swing” theme of the first thematic complex (see again Ex. 31), as well as in the second thematic complex (see again Ex. 34, the rhythmically articulated single note, measures 101 and 110-112). The secco chords set the stage for the reappearance of the material from the first theme in the Development (Ex. 35).

Example 35. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 144-160.

The musical score for Example 35, Piano Sonata, first movement, measures 144-160, is presented in five systems. The score is in G major, 3/4 time, and consists of piano accompaniment. Handwritten annotations include measure numbers (144, 148, 152, 155, 158) and chord symbols (e.g., 013 B<sup>b</sup>, 012 B<sup>b</sup>, 0136 B<sup>b</sup>, 0136 D<sup>#</sup>F, 013 B<sup>b</sup>, 012 B<sup>b</sup>, 013 C<sup>#</sup>, 012 E<sup>b</sup>, 013 C<sup>#</sup>, 0136 G<sup>#</sup>F) circled in red. The first system is marked 'p secco' and '8va'. The fifth system is marked 'f sub.'

The melodic setting of that material is now modified by frequent and longer interruptions of the line. The rhythmic and metrical devices build up tension, which was initiated in the Exposition through the reiteration of a steady pulse. These devices will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The sets [0,1,2,7] and [0,1,3,6] are used consistently as melodic material, and the subsets [0,1,2] and [0,1,3] occasionally articulate the phrases. Here are shown two instances where [0,1,2,7] and [0,1,3,6] build the phrases in a particular manner, creating a so-called “constellation” of sets (Ex. 36 a, b).

Example 36 a. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 173-181.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for measures 173, 176, and 179. Each system consists of a treble and bass staff. Handwritten annotations in circles and boxes highlight specific melodic phrases and their corresponding set-theoretic labels:

- Measure 173:** The treble staff contains a melodic line. Annotations include a circled '173', a circled '0127 G<sup>b</sup>↑' above a phrase, a circled '0136 A' below a phrase, and a circled '0136 E↓' above a phrase. The bass staff is marked '(8va)'.
- Measure 176:** The treble staff contains a melodic line. Annotations include a circled '176', a circled '14' above a measure, a circled '0127 F<sup>#</sup>↑' above a phrase, a circled '0136 F↓' below a phrase, and a circled '0136 A↑' above a phrase. The bass staff is marked '(8va)'.
- Measure 179:** The treble staff contains a melodic line. Annotations include a circled '179', a circled '0136 A↑' above a phrase. The bass staff is marked '(8va)'. Dynamics markings 'mf' and 'ff' are present.

Example 36 b. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 205-211.

The first begins with [0,1,2,7] reading up from G-flat, followed by [0,1,3,6] up from A, and finally moving to [0,1,3,6] inverted down from F (measures 174-175). The next phrase brings the same sets in slightly different order: beginning again with [0,1,2,7] up from F-sharp (=G-flat); then [0,1,3,6] down from F; and finally [0,1,3,6] up from A.<sup>8</sup> The relation between these two phrases can be represented in the following manner:

sets:	[0,1,2,7]	[0,1,3,6]	[0,1,3,6]
mm. 174-175	G-flat↑	A↑	F↓
mm. 177-178:	F-sharp↑	F↓	A↑

The prime form identifying pitches of two sets [0,1,2,7] are identical (G-flat=F-sharp), and

<sup>8</sup>The pitch designation for each set is the first note of the prime form, not the first pitch in musical order.

the arrow-reading show that the other elements of the sets are identical as well. The identifying pitches, as well as the other elements of the sets [0,1,3,6] are cross-corresponding.

Another instance shows a consistent grouping and transposition of the sets, which create high tension in the part of the Development section preceding the Recapitulation (see again Ex. 36 b). These are represented in the following outline:

sets:	[0,1,3,6]	[0,1,3,6]	[0,1,2,7]
mm. 205-206:	D-sharp↑	B↓	C↑
mm. 206-207:	D↑	B-flat↓	B↑
mm. 207-208:	C-sharp↑	A↓	B-flat↑
mm. 208-209:	C↑	A-flat↓	A↑
mm. 209-210:	F↑	D-flat↓	D↑
m. 210:	E↑	C↓	C-sharp↑

Each group of the three sets is ordered internally by the same sequence of intervals (major third down; minor second up), and each successive group is transposed down by half-step, except the group in measures 209-210, which is transposed up by a fourth (C-F). This sequence results in a highly chromatic sound, which corresponds to the dramaturgical building of tension.<sup>9</sup>

There is another point in the development which contributes to the same dramatic concept. That is a reiteration of the [0,1,2,7] set, specified earlier as the “struggle”

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<sup>9</sup>Notice that the significance in the set relationships is obvious when the first note of the prime form is used to identify the set placement. However, this is not apparent within the musical context as this identifier is not necessarily the first or the last note in the musical usage of the set. This method of identification will be used throughout the discussion of this work.

motive. There are two striking phrases that use the same set, although with different pitch content, rhythm and octave displacement. The first uses [0,1,2,7] down from B-flat, and the second one uses [0,1,2,7] down from F-sharp (Ex. 37 a, b).

Example 37 a. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 188-190.

Example 37 b. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 222-224.

The second phrase dissolves into a hectic motion through different ranges of the keyboard, finally reaching the chord in the extreme range in measure 226 (e4 is the top note in the right hand; C, in the counter-octave, is the lowest note in the left hand).

This triple forte chord marks the beginning of the recapitulation, which brings back material of the introduction in measures 226-237, 248, 252-264 and the cantabile second theme in measures 242-247, 249-251 (Ex. 38).

Example 38. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 226-249.

226  $\text{♩} = 104$   
800.1  
*ff* introduction material

229

232

235

238 19 *ff* *espr.*

241 2nd Theme motive

244 *sim.*

247 introduction material

A chromatic, sequential ascent in the right hand leads to a single reiterated b-flat2 (see again Ex. 38, measures 238-240), which becomes a pedal point through the span of 25 measures. This tone accompanies the second theme. The repetition of a single note will become the main feature of the second movement.

The introduction material appears again within the second theme, and consequently, leads to the next section of the Recapitulation. This part clearly refers to the “swing” theme of the first thematic complex, again having the sets [0,1,2,7] and [0,1,3,6] as the main components of the musical material (Ex. 39).

Example 39. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 265-273.

8va

262

mf secco

265

0127 D#4

0136 E4

0127 B<sup>b</sup>4

8va.

268

0136 C4

0127 F4

0136 F4

0127 E4

0136 C4

0136 E4

0127 G<sup>b</sup>4

8va.

271

0136 F4

0136 A4

0136 E4

0136 A4

8va.

The chordal texture of this part of the first theme is more prominent in the Recapitulation, while the original statement of the theme in the Exposition is given a predominantly linear design (compare Ex. 39, measures 265-273 and Ex. 31 a, measures 28-37).

The chord-progression motive of the first thematic complex follows, with chords of the characteristic set [0,1,3] above the four-note ostinato. This motive is sequentially elaborated in such a way that the phrases are gradually brought to a higher register, up to  $d_{flat}^3$  (Ex. 40 a, b, c, d). This aspect of the gradual elevation of the register has an important role within the concept of music having vertical and linear parameters, which will be discussed in one of the following sections of this chapter.

Example 40 a. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 287-290.

Example 40 b. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 295-298.

Example 40 c. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 305-308.



Example 40 d. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 317-323.

The Coda settles in this high register, with the cantabile figure of the second theme transformed into a melody that broadens gradually above a free sequence of triads (Ex. 41). After sustaining the pitch e4 for a long time, the melody rises up to a5, having its counterpart now in the lowest bass register on the C-sharp Major triad (Ex. 42). If one recalls the Introduction, and the set [0,1,2] centered around the C-sharp, there is a possibility to consider the C-sharp as a tonal center of the first movement. Since this is not confirmed anywhere else on the course of the movement, the C-sharp can be perceived as the beginning and the end of the circle, within which there is free tonality. Among gubaidulina's other piano works, the aspect of a tonal center with free tonality appears most obviously in the *Chaconne* and in some numbers of *Musical Toys* (see chapter II, pages 26-27 and 36-37).

Example 41. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 324-339.

Musical score for Example 41, measures 324-339. The score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).  
- The first system (measures 324-329) includes a key signature change to one flat (B-flat) and a time signature change to 3/4. It features a *pp* dynamic, a *pizz.* marking, and a circled annotation '(013) ↓'.  
- The second system (measures 330-335) includes a *pp* dynamic, a *pizz.* marking, and circled annotations '(013) ↓' and '(013) ↓'.  
- The third system (measures 336-339) includes a *pp* dynamic and circled annotations '(0136) ↓' and '(012) ↓'.  
- Above the first system, there is a separate musical fragment for measures 324-325, marked *pp* and *espr.*, with a circled annotation '(013) ↓'.

Example 42. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 360-376.

Musical score for Example 42, measures 360-376. The score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).  
- The first system (measures 360-365) includes a *pp* dynamic.  
- The second system (measures 366-371) includes a *pp* dynamic, a *dim.* marking, and circled annotations '(012) ↓' and '(012) ↓'.  
- The third system (measures 372-376) includes a *pp* dynamic, a *pp* dynamic marking, and circled annotations '(012) ↓', '(012) ↓', and '(012) ↓'.  
- Above the second system, there is a separate musical fragment for measures 366-371, marked *pp* and *dim.*, with circled annotations '(012) ↓' and '(012) ↓'.

In the Coda, there is no direct relation to the previously exposed sets, although some references to [0,1,2], [0,1,3], and [0,1,3,6] are found (see again Exs. 41 and 42, circled sets). It seems that the last part of the Recapitulation and the Coda both work for a gradual dissolution of the previous material. At the same time, they prepare for the second movement, which, as a central point of the whole Sonata, introduces a new dimension of musical expression.

### The second movement

According to Gubaidulina, the second movement, Adagio, is a meditation.<sup>10</sup> After the turmoil of the first movement, the second one brings the peace and wonder about a newly discovered light. It is a real reflection upon the experience of the first movement, with a bright look into the future.

The form of the second movement is a simple ternary:

section:	A	B	Cadenza	A'
measures:	1	20	30	31

The bass register combines varying figurations from the deepest range into a diffused, rather percussive design, while the melodic line illuminates the expressive force of a single pitch through gentle ornamentation and changing tonal colors (Ex. 43). The same sets found in the previous movement are here again, as a symbol of what was happening earlier. But at this point nothing can disturb the peace and the power of the single pitch e-flat<sup>2</sup>, repeated throughout the second movement.

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<sup>10</sup>Conversation with the composer at the B.A.M., New York, October 31, 1997.

Example 43. *Piano Sonata*, second movement, measures 4-12.

There is an interesting sequence of sets within the thirty-second note figurations in the left hand. It is shown in the following outline:

set-groups:	prime form identifier:	measure numbers
[0,1,3,6], [0,1,3], [01,2.7]	C—E—E-flat	5
[0,1,2,7], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6]	E—F—D-flat	7
[0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,2,7]	D—F-sharp—F	8
[0,1,2,7], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6]	G-flat—E-flat—G	9

[0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,2,7]	G-sharp—E—G	11
[0,1,2,7], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6]	F-sharp—F—A	13
[0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,2,7]	G-flat—B-flat—G	16
[0,1,2,7], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6]	A-flat—B—G	17
[0,1,3,6],[0,1,3,6], [0,1,2,7]	A-flat—C—A	18

The outline clearly shows that the set-groups alternate in such a way that every other set-group has the set [0,1,2,7] placed either at the beginning or at the end of the group (see Ex. 43). The sets within each group are also ordered at consistent sequences of intervals. The adjacent [0,1,3,6] sets are always related at the interval of major third, while the adjacent [0,1,2,7] and [0,1,3,6] sets are at distance of either a minor second or a minor third. Also, the [0,1,3,6] sets of the adjacent groups are consistently related by the interval of a minor second, along the steps of an ascending chromatic scale (C—D-flat—D—E-flat—E—F—G-flat—G—A-flat; E—F—F-sharp—G—G-sharp—A—B-flat—B—C). In this way, the whole A-section of the second movement reveals the coexistence of released tension of highly chromatic figurations in the left hand, and of the utmost peace of the reiterated single pitch in the right hand. This section relates to the part of the Development in the first movement, where the same sets build similar “constelations” of sets above rhythmic repetition of a single chord (see again Ex. 36 a and b; and refer to the outlines on pages 61-62 in this chapter).

Section B brings some unusual sound effects. The well-known sets are still present within the musical material, although the acoustical setting is very different (Ex. 44).

Example 44. *Piano Sonata*, second movement, measures 20-30.

Handwritten musical score for measures 20-30 of a Piano Sonata, second movement. The score is written on a grand staff with piano and left-hand parts. It includes various performance instructions such as 'pizz.', 'con sord.', 'mf', 'ord.', 'col unghia', and 'sim.'. Handwritten annotations in red and blue ink highlight specific notes and chords, including '012 E#4', '0136 E#4', '0136 G#4', '0127 G#4', '0136 F#4', '0127 G#4', '0127 C#4', '0136 A#4', '0136 C#4', '0136 D#4', '0136 B#4', and '0127 D#4'. Measure numbers 20, 21, 24, 27, 29, and 30 are circled in red. The score concludes with a 'Cadenza \*\*)' section.

The sound of the thirty-second note figurations in the left hand is now muted (“con sordino”), and leads to the Cadenza, which could be partially or freely improvised (the aspect of improvisation and the role of the performer are discussed later in this chapter). Section B reveals the imagery of secret places in the soul—places reserved for a deep reflection. This

is achieved by means of rhythm and acoustics, which includes a significant role of silence. These aspects are discussed in greater detail in the following sections of this chapter.

The final part of the second movement, A', quietly brings back the finest thread of the single pitch e-flat2, ornamented by surrounding pitches in the same manner as in the original A section (Ex. 45).

Example 45. *Piano Sonata*, second movement, measures 33-37.

The movement ends in a similar way as did the first movement—through the elevation of the soprano register from e-flat2 up to d-flat4 (Ex. 46). Symbolically, here we find the final appearance of the “faith” and “struggle” sets in the same intervallic order as in the A section, but in a completely different melodic setting. The psychological subtext is that of transformation from the turbulence of the first movement, through releasing tension within the second movement, to achieving the peace at the end of the second movement.

Example 46. *Piano Sonata*, second movement, measures 43-48.

### The third movement

The third movement, *Allegretto*, has a straightforward direction toward the end of the Sonata. The peaceful meditation of the second movement gathered the immense power, which is now released within an incessant drive to complete liberation at the very end. This breathless striving for the end recalls a similar pacing, although in different context, in *Chaconne* and *Invention*.<sup>11</sup> The third movement may be conceived as consisting of seven episodes, which are varied in texture:

episodes:	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
measures:	1-17	18-48	18-58	59-75	76-89	90-123	124-133

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<sup>11</sup>In *Chaconne*, the huge wave is built from the first statement of the theme to about two thirds into the piece, and then rises again into the final appearance of the theme (refer to chapter II, page 26). In *Invention*, the long-breath rhythmic drive is never interrupted until the end (refer to chapter II, pages 29-30).

The first episode ominously announces the thunder that is to come, having a thinner texture, and staying mostly within the low and middle register. The main sets are, again. The familiar ones from the first and the second movement. (Ex. 47).

Example 47. *Piano Sonata*, third movement, measures 1-15.

III

Allegretto

The musical score consists of four systems of two staves each. The first system (measures 1-4) begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and features a circled set of notes [0,1,2] C# in the first measure. The second system (measures 5-8) starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a circled set [0,1,3] F# in the first measure. The third system (measures 9-11) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and contains two circled sets: [0,1,3] A# in the first measure and [0,1,3] E# in the second measure. The fourth system (measures 12-15) starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and contains four circled sets: [0,1,2,7] D# in the first measure, [0,1,3,6] A# in the second measure, [0,1,3,6] B# in the third measure, and [0,1,3,6] D# in the fourth measure. The score also includes staccato markings and accents throughout.

At this point, the sets obviously carry the element of cyclicism in this work. This is particularly striking if the opening set [0,1,2] of the first movement (see Ex 30, m. 1) is compared to the three notes in the first measure of the third movement. This is the same set, centered around C-sharp. In the first episode of the third movement, this set becomes an

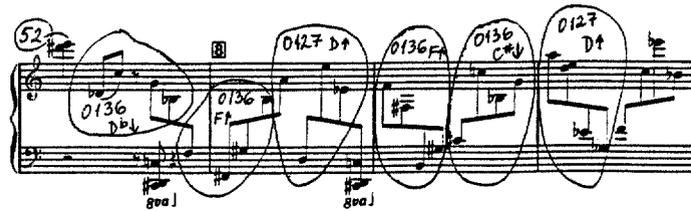
interrupted ostinato in the low register. Later, [0,1,2] appears frequently in most of the episodes.

The supersets [0,1,2,7] and [0,1,3,6] are grouped together at several points in this movement in a manner that recalls the similar settings of the same sets in previous movements. Two instances are in the second episode, and another one is in the third episode (Ex. 48 a, b, c).

Example 48 a. *Piano Sonata*, third movement, measures 33-36.

Example 48 b. *Piano Sonata*, third movement, measures 44-48.

Example 48 c. *Piano Sonata*, third movement, measures 52-55.



The following outline shows the similarity in ordering the sets, as given in Ex. 48:

set-groups:	prime form identifiers:	measures:
a. [0,1,2,7], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6]	A—C—A-flat	33-35
[0,1,2,7], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6]	C—E-flat—B	35-36
b. [0,1,2,7], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6]	F-sharp—G—D-sharp	44-46
[0,1,2,7], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6]	F-sharp—D—F	46-48
c. [0,1,2,7], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6]	D-flat—F—D	52-53
[0,1,2,7], [0,1,3,6], [0,1,3,6]	F—C-sharp—D	54-55

The fourth episode is based on the pedal note a-flat<sub>2</sub> (Ex. 49), which reminds one of a similar part in the first movement, where the repeated note was b-flat (see Ex. 38, m. 240). There is an obvious difference in the treatment of the repeated note between the two movements. While in the first movement the range within which the note appears gradually changes from a higher to a lower one, in the last movement it stays on the same pitch. This fact adds to the psychological concept of the third movement as striving for the final resolution, while the first movement deals with periodicity and recurrences of the themes.

The pedal-point section in the first movement leads to reappearance of the main theme (see Ex. 39, m. 262), while the corresponding section in the last movement creates an effect of forward motion, which will not be interrupted until the end.

Example 49. *Piano Sonata*, third movement, measures 59-75.

Another significant aspect of this episode is a variation of measures 1-3 from the first movement (see Ex. 49, mm. 59-63). The accented cluster (set [0,1,2]), followed by the eighth-note figuration (augmented sixteenth-note figuration from the introduction of the first

movement), creates a pattern which is repeated several times above the single pitch in the left hand. This builds an enormous energy, which is carried into the next episode.

This energetic level is only briefly subdued for a few measures before the sixth episode, allowing the softly walking bass-notes to present all the major sets of the work for the last time (Ex. 50).

Example 50. *Piano Sonata*, third movement, measures 84-89.

From the sixth episode on, the liberation of energy never ceases. After a circular motion within a wide range of the keyboard, the texture breaks into a strongly articulated chordal structure, which reaches thick cluster sonorities (Ex. 51). The last five measures are the exaltation of absolute freedom. The extreme registers are juxtaposed, while the repetitive pattern in both hands celebrates the liberation of the soul.

The psychological subtext of the Sonata reveals a journey through different conditions of the human soul. The opening “spring” set [0,1,2], which appears as a striking call for the spiritual realization, works together with sets [0,1,2,7], [0,1,3], and [0,1,3,6] (“struggle,”

“consolation,” and “faith”) toward complete liberation. The formal structure unfolds accordingly, at first by dialectic procedures in the first movement, and then by finding a single direction, which in the last movement has the shape of a single wave of dynamic and registral ascent that reaches its top in the last bars.

Example 51. *Piano Sonata*, third movement, measures 118-133.

The musical score for Example 51, Piano Sonata, third movement, measures 118-133, is presented in five systems. Each system begins with a circled measure number: 118, 122, 125, 128, and 131. The notation includes treble and bass staves with various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'cresc.' and 'ff'. The piece concludes with a final chord in measure 133.

The intonational structure within free tonality in the Sonata relates to Gubaidulina’s other piano works discussed in the previous chapter. All of these pieces show a high degree

of chromaticism. The [0,1,2] and [0,1,3] sets are important motives in the melodic and harmonic structure of the *Chaconne* (see again Ex. 1, mm. 2,4,6,8,9; Ex. 3, mm. 177-180; Ex 4, mm. 194-195, 196-197, 198, 199, 208). Some numbers from *Musical Toys* also disclose cluster-like sonorities, such as No. 1, “Mechanical Accordion” (see again Ex. 18 a). The half-tone interval is a cell of the musical material in *Introitus* (refer to chapter II, pages 37-45). The minor seconds have an important role in the structure of *Invention* (refer to chapter II, pages 30-31), as well as in *Toccata-Troncata* (see again Ex. 9, mm. 26-33). Highly chromatic musical language is a prominent feature of Gubaidulina’s piano works.

#### Rhythm: unity of multiple varieties

Gubaidulina’s concept of rhythm makes the Sonata breathe with an impetuous power. Multiple varieties of rhythmic patterns and the way they are transformed and unified within the piece are witnesses to the composer’s creative impulse.

The rhythmic structure of the Sonata supports the formal design with consistent forward motion. The very first phrase of the Introduction sets the stage for the unfolding rhythmic drive. The off-beat articulation, along with the change of the meter, pushes the phrase straight into the accented staccato eighth-notes (see Ex. 30). These eighth-notes are later transformed into the ostinato motive of the second theme in the first movement (Ex. 52; see also Ex. 34, mm. 110-112). They can also be related to the reiteration of the single pitch in the second movement, and its rhythmic articulation in triplets (see Ex. 43).

The rests are the energizers, which create the momentum for every following line throughout the introduction of the first movement (see Ex. 30). In the first episode of the

third movement, these silent interruptions are placed within the phrases, so that a higher level of rhythmic urgency is built (see Ex. 47).

Example 52. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 82-86.

The figure from the beginning of the Introduction appears in the Recapitulation in different meter (the original 4/8 becomes 6/4, and is also rhythmically augmented) as sixteenth-notes become eighth-notes (compare Ex. 30, mm. 2-3 with Ex. 38, m. 248). Another line from the Introduction is transformed in the Recapitulation by the same procedure (Ex. 53 a and b).<sup>12</sup> Here, a series of off-beat accents in the Introduction in the right-hand line (see Ex. 53), are later reflected in the development section within different textures (Ex. 54, mm. 184-185, 188-190).

Comparison of one part of the Introduction with a segment of the last episode of the third movement shows a similar rhythmic arrangement, as well as usage of a wide keyboard range (Ex. 55 a, b). The cluster B-sharp—C-sharp—D from the first example is transformed into G—D-flat—A-flat (joined intervals of diminished and perfect fifths in the left hand) in

<sup>12</sup>The augmentation in the Sonata recalls the corresponding technique of diminution in *Chaconne*, although in the latter piece diminution is applied on much larger scale than the augmentation in the Sonata (refer to chapter II, pages 23-24).

the second example. They both fall on the off-beats (except that the achieved energetic level and the absence of the rests in the second example allows the articulation on the downbeat, as well).

Example 53 a. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 9-16.

Musical score for Example 53 a, measures 9-16. The score is written for piano and consists of three systems of staves. The first system starts at measure 9, the second at measure 12, and the third at measure 15. The music is in a minor key and features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes. A dynamic marking of *pp* is present at the beginning of the first system. A copyright notice at the bottom reads: © 1974 by Sovetsky Kompozitor Publiser, Moscow.

Example 53 b. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 256-260.

Musical score for Example 53 b, measures 256-260. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems of staves. The first system starts at measure 256 and the second at measure 259. The music is in a minor key and features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes. A dynamic marking of *p* is present at the beginning of the first system. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Example 54. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 183-190.

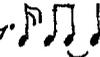
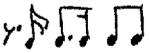
Musical score for Example 54, measures 183-190. The score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). Measure numbers 183, 185, and 188 are circled at the beginning of their respective systems. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and dynamic markings such as *ff* and *pp*. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

Example 55 a. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 17-22.

Musical score for Example 55 a, measures 17-22. The score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff. Measure numbers 17, 19, and 22 are circled at the beginning of their respective systems. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and dynamic markings such as *pp* and *ff*. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

Example 55 b. *Piano Sonata*, third movement, measures 125-127.

Musical score for Example 55 b, measures 125-127. The score is presented in one system with a grand staff. Measure number 125 is circled at the beginning of the system. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and dynamic markings such as *pp* and *ff*. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

The first theme of the first movement brings the characteristic rhythms of syncopations and dotted notes (see Ex. 31). They are supported by steady beats of the staccato quarter notes in the left hand—very much like a jazz idiom. The motive  is changed into  (Ex. 56), and later appears with the chord-progression motive of the first theme (see Ex. 31 b).

Example 56. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 47-48.



The syncopations are carried on in the second theme, and they give a particular sense of yearning to the cantabile figures (see Ex. 34). The dotted rhythm becomes a leading force of the Development (see Ex. 36 b). The dramaturgical concept of the struggle here reaches its culminating point. This is also revealed through the accompanying patterns of the chords in the left hand, with sharply contrasting strong beats and off-beats, as well as changes of meter: C, 3/4, C, 2/4, 3/4, C, 2/4, 5/4, 6/4 (see Ex. 35).<sup>13</sup>

In measure 226, the Recapitulation comes in a torrent of long lines, and is barely interrupted by the angularity of the “swing” theme (see Ex. 39). This is due to the fact that the recapitulation of this part of the first theme is shorter than the original in the Exposition,

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<sup>13</sup>The changes of the meter are salient feature of all Gubaidulina’s piano works, for example, in *Toccata-Troncata* (refer to chapter II, page 28) and *Invention* (see chapter II, pages 29-30).

and is followed by the recapitulation of the chord-progression motive of the first theme, now substantially prolonged by sequential procedure (see Ex. 40).

The tranquility of the Coda is only slightly interrupted by an occasional articulation of the characteristic figure of the second theme: . In between, the steady motion of the chords in the left hand supports the veil of colors released through these sonorities (see Ex. 41). As the register moves toward the highest tone, there is an augmentation of the triplet motive, which contributes to the sense of reaching the final point of repose in the first movement (see Ex. 42, mm. 363, 366-367).

The second movement reveals three different aspects of timing. One is sustained time, with the aid of the fermatas (see Ex. 43). Another is the articulation of the single pitch, with the characteristic triplet figure. The relation of this figure to the motive from the Introduction was explained above; also, its rhythm relates to the characteristic motive of the second theme in the first movement (Ex. 57).

Example 57. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 84-86.



The last aspect is the arrangement of small note values into groups having a varied number of notes, 11 and 10 being the most consistent (see Ex. 43).

The angularity of the grouped thirty-second notes in the bass stands in contrast to the fermatas and single-note triplet motives in the soprano. It seems that these isolated groups of tones tend to recall the turbulence of the first movement, which also agrees with the particular usage of the major sets at these points. But the balance of the triplet motive and sustained tones wins over, especially after subdued acoustical experimentation in the Cadenza. The second movement ends, symbolically, with the rhythmic augmentation of the thirty-second note group figure to quarter-notes which rise into the high register (see Ex. 46).

As it was mentioned above, the third movement brings back a vital pulsation of the rhythms of the first movement, now with much more perseverance and straightforward direction toward the end. Besides the rests, the changes of the meter in the first episode provide the momentum to unfold the third movement: C, 6/4, 5/4, C, 6/4, 4/4, 6/4, C (see Ex. 47). The rhythmic figures  $\gamma$  , and  $\gamma$   are important parts of the texture throughout this movement. In the first episode, they are more isolated, but later give impetus to longer phrases (Ex. 58 a, b).

Example 58 a. *Piano Sonata*, third movement, measures 28-34.



Example 58 b. *Piano Sonata*, third movement, measures 49-55.



These figures could also be seen as rhythmic transformations of the characteristic figure of the primary theme from the first movement:  $\gamma$  . By taking away the dotted rhythm, the composer creates a straightforward direction of time.

In contrast to the painful awareness of the opposing worlds in the first movement, in the last one we are assured that the right way is found. The outcry of the Introduction of the first movement is carried through different stages within the Sonata. From confrontation of fears and beliefs of the first movement, through meditation of the second movement, this outcry is transformed into a pure, bright power, which is brought to a level of exaltation (the last episode of the third movement) by means of an enormous rhythmic urgency.

### The mysticism of sound

The rich sonority of the instrument is one of the important means for achieving musical expression in this work. The combinations of pitches within the sets, discussed in the first section of this chapter, and their consistent usage in the Sonata, create a particular aura

that permeates this work. They musically represent a psychological saturation, which is almost impossible in real life. This conciseness, revealed in the system of leading sets, is a result of intonational concreteness. The sets [0,1,2], [0,1,2,7], [0,1,3], and [0,1,3,6] are the musical images of different conditions of a human soul. Together, they embody significant thoughts and feelings about human life (refer to subjective terms of “spring,” “struggle,” “consolation,” and “faith” on page 56). The wide range of the keyboard, often confronting the lowest bass range with the high soprano, also contributes to the psychological saturation of the musical expression (see Exs. 42 and 51).

An interesting sound color is created by the chord-progression motive in the first movement (see Ex. 31 b, mm.68-69). The six tones of the left hand and the right hand put together are from the octatonic scale: E-flat—F—G-flat—A-flat—A—B. The exoticism of the resulting sound is an important feature of this section of the first theme, especially when it is sequentially repeated in the Recapitulation, using the same transposition of the scale (see Ex. 40 a, b, c).

Besides the traditional sound production, Gubaidulina uses unconventional means to create sonorities to enhance her musical images. The score contains instructions that a bamboo stick should be used at salient points, which is the earliest manifestation of Gubaidulina’s desire to hear the metaphorical and ritualistic nature of musical events. It is also the first appearance in her work of exotic percussion technique as a means to achieving that goal.<sup>14</sup> In the very first bar, the bamboo stick is used to perform glissando on piano pegs at the same time as a cluster of three notes (the familiar set [0,1,2]) is depressed on the

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<sup>14</sup>Gerard McBurney, “Encountering Gubaidulina,” 122.

keyboard (see Ex. 30). This cluster, with staccato articulation and an accent within fortissimo dynamics, contains both percussive and coloristic qualities. The first quality is achieved by the manner of attack (staccato-accent), and the latter one by keeping the sustaining pedal depressed. The pedal allows the strings to vibrate, initiated by the bamboo stick on one hand, and by the hammers on the other. The outcome is a rich vibration of sound, which at the same time has a strong focus. This agrees with the nature of the [0,1,2] set, and its piercing quality.

The beginning of the second movement is also marked by a glissando on the piano pegs with a bamboo stick, but this time above the sustained C-sharp Major chord from the previous movement. Since there is no ordinary attack of the keys at the same time with glissando, the listener perceives a floating vibration without the kind of focus heard at the beginning of the first movement. This may be a point of musical dramaturgy, setting the stage for a new act of meditation. In the next instance, the bamboo stick is placed on the vibrating strings (see Ex. 43, m. 5). Here, the sound is transformed by the bamboo stick, while at the beginning of the first and second movements the sonority was created by it. This transformation happens at an important structural point of the second movement, just one measure away from the introduction of the e-flat<sup>2</sup>, the pitch that is reiterated throughout. The effect of placing the bamboo stick on already vibrating strings is reversal from the one created by the glissando. Here, the ringing sound fades away quickly, allowing the silence to give birth to a new dimension of musical expression. The glissando over the strings opens up a space for lasting vibrations, and in the first movement it also sets the stage for the turmoil of sound to come.

Other unconventional ways of sound production in this work are: plucking the strings, striking the strings with the fingers, glissando using the fingernail along the strings, and touching the piano strings to create a muted effect. The pizzicato (plucking the strings with the fingertips) is used in the Coda of the first movement only twice, in order to slightly color the steady sonorities of the major triads (see Ex. 41, mm. 327, 332). In the second movement, the pizzicato has a similar role as in the *Toccata-Troncata* (see again Ex. 9, mm. 30-33), creating the microtonal inflections within the regularly produced sound of the same tones (see Ex. 44, mm. 19, 23, 25, 27).

The sound in the Coda of the first movement is also enhanced by striking the strings in the low register with the fingers. The position on the staff does not indicate the actual pitch: if the symbol is on the top line, the string to be plucked will be from the upper section within the frame; if it is on the middle line, the string will be from the middle section, etc.<sup>15</sup> (Ex. 59).

Example 59. *Piano Sonata*, first movement, measures 345-348.

<sup>15</sup>Aki Takahashi, Editor's notes on the *Piano Sonata* by Sofia Gubaidulina.

The usage of this technique in the Coda of the first movement announces the sonorities of the second movement, where striking the strings has a substantial role in creating the work's musical images.

Diversity of timbral hues is a salient feature of the second movement. Here, the keyboard sings and speaks with the "human" voices in the soprano register, and the bass (with its open and muted strings) roars, rings and anxiously knocks in response—like the voices of nature. The whole second movement is based on this impressionistic, beautifully picturesque dialogue.

The ringing sound of the open strings in measures 4 and 6 (see Ex. 43) may suggest the improvisation found in the Cadenza, and will be used as an important element in the final A' section of the second movement (see Ex. 45, left hand in mm. 31-33, 35, 37). The keyboard is used with the muted strings at the points marked "con sordino." The performer's fingers touch the strings in order to create a muted effect (see Ex. 44). The resulting "knocking" sound is also suggested for the performance of the Cadenza (Ex. 60).

Example 60. *Piano Sonata*, second movement, measure 30.

The image shows a musical score for measure 30 of the second movement of a Piano Sonata. The score is presented in two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. Above the treble staff, the word "Cadenza\*\*)" is written. The treble staff contains a melodic line with several notes, including a circled "con sord." instruction. Below the treble staff, there is a handwritten note "012.FY". The bass staff contains a rhythmic accompaniment with a circled "con sord." instruction. The score is written in a standard musical notation style.

Another element which contributes to the rich sonority of the B section, is glissando “col unghia” (=with fingernails) over the strings, which makes a contrast to the following reappearance of the “con sordino” effect, now in the thirty-second note figures in the bass register (see Ex. 44, m. 27).

In the last few bars of the second movement, the composer applies the technique of “quasi flagioletta,” meaning “with a thin, clear sound.” This agrees with the change of the texture and slower pace of the ending measures (see Ex. 46).

In the third movement there are no markings that would indicate a particular treatment of the strings, as was the case in the first and the second movement, and the bamboo stick is not used anymore. Full attention is given to the sound of the piano as it is produced by standard usage of the keyboard. It resembles the sonorous range of the first movement, but here it is more focused, and the sound becomes very dense, to the point of using palm clusters few measures before the end (see Ex. 51, m. 128).

The performance of purely string-effects on the piano adds to the liveliness and naturalness of rich vibration in this work. By combining these effects with ordinary sound production, the piano substitutes for the ensemble of piano, harp, strings and percussion.

#### Vertical and linear parameters: spiritual dimension

The spiritual aspect of Gubaidulina’s work is present even in the pieces with no programmatic titles, which are indeed, rare in her output. On the one hand, the *Piano Sonata* does not carry any actual symbolism, which is an important feature of some of Gubaidulina’s later works (for example, *Seven Words* and *In Croce*; refer to chapter I, page 10). On the

other hand, there are some aspects of this work, which might not be obvious at the surface of the piece, but could be justified in an abstract level of musical perception.

The two aspects of the Sonata—a driving force and a reflective, meditative condition—are confronted and unified in such a manner that they evoke an image of the cross. In the Christian tradition, the horizontal line symbolizes human experience in this life, while the vertical line represents men's striving for the full realization in God. The meeting point of these lines is crucial, for it is there that a human being undergoes the transformation.

The turbulent articulation of the musical material in the first movement is mostly related to the horizontal line. The expressive, sustained sound of the second theme announces the vertical aspect, which will be fully realized in the second movement. The reiteration of the single pitch, which was used in the Recapitulation in the first movement (see Ex. 38, mm. 24-249), becomes a leading force of the second movement. It also appears in the third movement to add a momentum for the complete liberation of sound (see Ex. 49).

The repeated note evokes the reciting tone, which is still an essential part of Christian Orthodox liturgy. For instance, the readings from the scripture are done by reciting the text on the single pitch, only with occasional deviations when the articulation and meaning of the text require it. This repetition of a single pitch adds to an elevation of spiritual energy.

The transformation happens within the second movement, and is at first embodied in a confrontation of the reiterated note in the soprano with the thirty-second note figures in the bass (see Ex. 43). The figures in the bass recall the horizontal aspect of the cross, but in the B section they are subdued by the muted effect, which is the point at which the Cadenza commences. After the cadenza, the A' section brings in the purified sound of the single pitch,

with only an occasional articulation of the open strings in the bass (see Ex. 45). Finally, the e-flat<sup>2</sup> dissolves into the line of pitches which peacefully elevate the register (see Ex. 46). The elevation of register at the end of the second movement brings to a completion a meditative, vertical aspect of the work. In the Coda of the first movement, there is also a gradual elevation of phrases into a higher register, which sets the stage for the reflective character of the second movement (refer to page 67, and see again Ex. 40).

If the proportion of movements is considered, it may seem to be unbalanced: the first movement is much larger than the second and the third. However, the above analysis of the Sonata shows that an external disproportion in the form conceals a narrative logic full of intense musical expression. The second movement surpasses its own quantitative aspect and works for an ideal psychological balance in the Sonata as a whole. It is within this movement that the crucial meeting of the horizontal and vertical lines happens. The third movement carries on the transformation from the second movement in a manner that celebrates a newly obtained freedom of the spirit. The conciseness and straightforwardness of rhythmic and melodic material, along with an enhancing of the density of sound toward the end, make the third movement function as a perfectly logical and complete release of energy.

#### Improvisation and the role of the performer

The concept of improvisation in Gubaidulina's *Piano Sonata* refers to the cadenza in the second movement, which may be partially or freely improvised. The performer may follow Gubaidulina's directions, and improvise within the given framework.<sup>16</sup> This framework

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<sup>16</sup>Conversation with Sofia Gubaidulina at B.A.M.

consists of the alternation of two elements. One is the open-sounding strings, stroked with the fingers, with no pitch determination. Another is a muted articulation of three adjacent pitches, the [0,1,2] set, in the bass register (see Ex. 60). In between, there are fermatas.

This is a very simple context, which allows many possibilities for the improvisation. The performer should consider the aura of the whole piece when making choices. There are a few questions that could be asked in the following manner: 1) How does the placement of the Cadenza within the second movement affect the choices for improvisation? 2) Should the sound be produced only by direct contact with the strings, or in the usual way as well? 3) What would be the best rhythmic solution? 4) How long should the fermatas (if any) be?

The Cadenza is placed in the second movement at the crucial point of transformation of the musical material. This happens within various acoustical effects in the B section. The frame of the Cadenza, given by the composer, implies that this section should go deeper into the secrets of sound. Unconventional treatment of the instrument agrees with this concept. The vibrating open strings (under the sustained pedal) create the sound that, if held for a longer time, may be construed as a harmony of human voices heard from far away. The performer may experiment with this effect by choosing various combinations of registers. On the one hand, fermatas may be used as a prolongation of sound. On the other hand, they may mean actual rests, into which sound dissolves, than reappears. This would change the articulation of the beginnings and the endings of the sounding lines.

The silence becomes, in this case, a very important element of improvisation. The length of the fermatas should not be strictly determined, but should instead follow the natural vibration or fading of the sound. The muted effect, as a percussive quality, could be very

effective as an articulation of the silence. The ordinary production of sound could have a place in this Cadenza, as well. It would require a very sensitive touch from the performer, given the overall setting of the second movement.

The rhythm should be felt as a natural articulation of time—like a heartbeat pulsation. Within this timing, the sounds could be articulated in asymmetrical ways by grouping various numbers of notes, with randomly placed accents. The length of specific notes would vary.

The concept of improvisation in this work refers also to the achievement of a natural expression within the rhythmic drive throughout the Sonata, and to melodic intonation and architectural coherence of the work. Thus, the role of the interpreter is substantial not only in terms of communication, but also in the process of creation.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

The music of Sofia Gubaidulina carries a universal message, which brings up crucial questions about today's world. It is an apocalyptic vision, but at the same time, this message reveals a deep rooted belief that humanity still has a chance to fight against spiritual passivity and direct its own destiny toward a brighter future. The exaltation of human spirit is the focal point in Gubaidulina's art. No matter how difficult conditions may seem, mankind can still reach what might seem unreachable. Between light and dark, Gubaidulina chooses the light; but in order to make that point, she first creates a strong confrontation of these absolute opposites.

This aesthetic is the basis for the majority of Gubaidulina's works, and is reflected in various levels of musical form and language, as well as in the choice of particular instruments and genres. It is the composer's inventiveness in selecting and shaping the musical material, as well as a deeply spiritual motivation for her work, that makes Gubaidulina's art highly appreciated in the contemporary music world.

An overview of her works shows that Gubaidulina's main interest with respect to musical genre lies in chamber music ensembles, which allow many possibilities for sound production, as well as for various rhythmic and intonational structures. This focus on the subtleties of sound, rhythm and juxtaposition of different parts is also present in Gubaidulina's

works for solo instruments. The *Piano Sonata* is an example of these subtleties. Among Gubaidulina's solo piano pieces, it stands out through the inventiveness of its musical language.

This work sums up the composer's thinking within her piano music, and at the same time projects the development of her vision to other genres to come. Even though it belongs to so-called "absolute" music with no program specified, its musical content seems to be related to Gubaidulina's apocalyptic vision and her faith. This idea is realized through an inventive intonational structure, a powerful rhythmic drive, a balanced asymmetry in the distribution of the material, and a strong sense of organic coherence. The traditional form is only a starting point for developing original ideas within a modern musical idiom.

The performance practice issues are most effectively perceived if technical aspects of the composition and its execution are related to the content and dramaturgy of the piece. In the analysis of the Sonata, subjective terms are used to express the psychological background of the musical events. The particulars of musical language in this work create an image of the utmost striving of a human soul for spiritual realization.

This is a leading idea in Gubaidulina's art in general, which is articulated in such a manner that it finds an immediate response in musical audiences worldwide. It is the message that awakens both heart and mind, and encourages an active, optimistic outlook on human life.

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