

Life, Work and the Individual Classical Performer

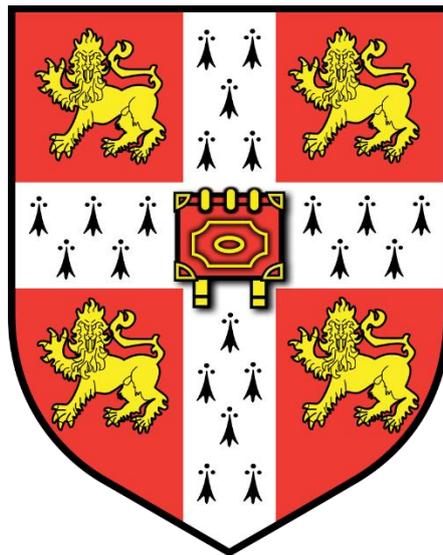
Maria Yudina's Artistic Practice and Imagination, 1947–70

Volume I

Adam Behan

Peterhouse

Faculty of Music



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Doctor of Philosophy.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or is being concurrently submitted, for a degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other university or similar institution except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or is being concurrently submitted, for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other university of similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. This thesis does not exceed the prescribed word limit set by the Degree Committee of the Faculty of Music.

Abstract

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Adam Behan

The detailed study of individual classical performers has traditionally been restricted to the genre of music biography, one which is rich in contextualisation but light on direct engagement with the performer's abilities as captured in recordings. More recent approaches to performance use empirical techniques to quantify and discuss what is termed performer 'style', but often without embedding that style within the context of said performer's life or cultural surroundings. In other words, there is a methodological rift of sorts between biographical and empirical approaches to performers, one which creates a sharp divide between life and work. In this thesis, I attempt to integrate them through a study of the twentieth-century Russian pianist Maria Veniaminovna Yudina (1899–1970), a neglected but enormously significant musician in the Soviet Union.

I consider these issues and introduce Yudina in Chapters 1–2. I then undertake several case studies based around Yudina's discography. In Chapters 3–4, I explore Yudina's romantic and baroque repertoire by comparing her performances in live concerts with studio recordings, framing the differences and their significance in terms of recent theories of liveness. The concert hall emerges as a key venue for Yudina's artistic practice in which she experimented and took risks that are not found in her studio recordings, pointing to the importance of performance setting as a contextualising factor in studies of recordings. In Chapter 5, I analyse her recordings of contemporary repertoire in the context of her place within 1960s Soviet *mye* culture and her 'new' music ideals. In Chapters 6–7, I discuss two of her last sets of recordings in relation to detailed essays that she wrote to accompany them. I argue that her interpretation of Musorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* constitutes a performance of Russian national identity, one geared toward community building underpinned by a Russian Orthodox faith. I approach her last set of recordings for solo piano—six Brahms intermezzos—as an act of autobiographical making based around themes of loss, mortality and nostalgia, all of which I conceptualise in terms of the idea of lateness.

I conclude with two main points. First, I draw out the implications of Yudina's varying performing strategies across baroque, romantic and contemporary repertoire, arguing for a move away from style and towards a framework of craft. Second, I assess the prospects (and perils) of integrative approaches to a performer's artistry for performance studies and musicology more generally.

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I moved to Cambridge in the colourful autumn of 2017, and Peterhouse very quickly became my home for over four years. I made so many friends who made my postgraduate years special. They are too numerous to name individually, but Ben Webb and Rachel Maton in particular, both kindred creative spirits, kept me grounded, cheerful and inspired both before and during the pandemic. Most importantly, I have Peterhouse to thank for funding my postgraduate studies through a Graduate Studentship, and for awarding me several grants and bursaries throughout the years which allowed me to present at conferences and share my research.

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AB
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My attempt to know another woman has found its
ending not in the satisfaction of neat discovery,
but in the persistence of mystery.

——Doireann Ní Ghríofa, *A Ghost in the Throat*

Introduction

When we talk about art ... we inevitably come up against the limits of intelligence and the poverty of language. Yes, we are truly disarmed when it comes to describing such incredible riches! But despite it all, we continue to discuss them (and some, like me, even write about them), because we maintain hope of coming closer to understanding the absolute laws of art and, if possible, bringing others together. Such understanding is not to be sought only in the artwork, but also in the reflections upon and judgements made about the work. We are inevitably confronted, as I have already said, with the poverty of our own intellect, but this should neither discourage us nor hold us back, because the intensity of our reflection can compensate for it. Critical judgement, if it arises from the thoughtful, humble and modest desire to aid our understanding, must be expressed.¹

———Maria Yudina, September 1970

In its simplest formulation, this is a musicological study of an individual classical performer. That renders it immediately political, because in the academic hierarchy that has traditionally existed between musicologists and performers, the former have always occupied the more privileged position. In the words of Jonathan Impett, ‘the practising musician served as the object of research while research itself was carried out by historians, music theorists and analysts, sociologists, psychologists, or philosophers, however musically expert’.² Nowhere has this hierarchy become more obvious than in the relatively young field of musical performance studies: Mine Doğantan-Dack once noted that the ‘dominant disciplinary ideology and protocols in Performance Studies have by convention failed to assign performers themselves any authority over the mechanisms of knowledge production, representation and dissemination. The most serious charge to emerge from such a situation is that Performance Studies has been explaining musical performance without performers, and without any representation of the insider’s expert view.’³

Impett and Doğantan-Dack are both exponents of artistic research—a form of practice-based research guided by artistic goals and, usually, an autoethnographic methodology, which is to say one that centres their personal musical experiences and expertise. Increasingly, artistic

¹ Maria Yudina, ‘Réflexions sur l’interprétation musicale [Mysli o myzikal'nom ispolnitel'stve]’, Jean-Pierre Collot (ed.), *Maria Yudina, Pierre Souvtchinsky: Correspondence et documents (1959–1970)* (Geneva: Contrechamps Éditions, 2020), 692–7 (692).

² Jonathan Impett (ed.), *Artistic Research in Music: Discipline and Resistance* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2017), 9.

³ Mine Doğantan-Dack, ‘Practice-as-Research in Music Performance’, Richard Andrews, Stephen Boyd-David, Myrrh Domingo, Jude England and Erik Borg (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Digital Dissertations and Theses* (London: Sage, 2012), 259–275 (263).

researchers are distancing themselves from musicology and performance studies. Paulo de Assis highlights artistic research not simply as a refuge for disillusioned performers, but as a way forward for new philosophical understandings that are beyond the reach of musicology:

the concrete, creative practice of music is generating philosophical insights that ‘pure’ philosophy or applied musicology are not delivering. In this sense, it seems to me that the necessary renewal of the ontological discourse will not come from music philosophers, nor from musicologists, but precisely from this new kind of performer, trained and oriented towards artistic research.⁴

Speaking of his major project, MusicExperiment21 (2013–18), he explicitly breaks away from musicology and the techniques of performance studies, arguing that his work ‘operates on a totally different level, aiming not at analysis or comparison of data (be it scores, recordings, or performances), but at the generation of new and unprecedented sonic events’.⁵

What does the continuing sense of dislocation and disillusion felt by performers say about how musicologists write about them? I do not hope to answer, let alone resolve, such an important question in this thesis, but it has served as a fundamental point of departure for my research since I became a postgraduate student in 2017. For it is one thing to write about one’s own performances or interpretative approaches, but it is an entirely different prospect to write about another performer. As a musicologist interested in twentieth-century performance and performers, this vexed issue has led me to reflect deeply on the ways in which performers have been treated historically and conceptually by musicologists, and to ponder not only how such treatments might be undertaken responsibly and with care, but in ways that do justice to the artistic and cultural significance of the musicians in question. No doubt there are many possible ways of striving for this, and elsewhere I have sought to take seriously the idea of care in particular by situating my work in terms of an ethics of care.⁶ Though this does not come into play directly in my thesis, I am sure that its influence will come through in various ways.

⁴ Paulo de Assis (ed.), *Virtual Works—Actual Things: Essays in Music Ontology* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018), 17.

⁵ Paulo de Assis, *Logic of Experimentation: Reshaping Music Performance in and through Artistic Research* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018), 13. Lucia D’Errico echoes this: ‘crucially departing from both applied musicology and performance studies, MusicExperiment21 situates itself within the field of artistic research’, in Lucia D’Errico, *Powers of Divergence: An Experimental Approach to Music Performance* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018), 14.

⁶ See Adam Behan, ‘Glenn Gould in Six Scenes: Performance as Self-Care’, *Quodlibet* 76 (2021), 54–84. This article more directly pursues an ethics of care in writing about performers. In doing so, it takes its lead especially from the work of William Cheng. See William Cheng, *Just Vibrations: The Purpose of Sounding Good* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016) and *Loving Music Till It Hurts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019). See also, Adam Behan, ‘Joni Mitchell’s Urges for Going, 1965–67: Coffeehouses, Counterculture and Care’, *Journal of the Society for American Music* 17/1 (Forthcoming; February 2023).

My reflections on these matters have, in the first instance, led me to identify a methodological rift between two chief musicological ways of studying individual classical performers. Put very simply, the first of these is the longstanding tradition of popular biography, and the second, more recent approach makes use of empirical techniques for analysing recordings. The issue, as I see it, has been the tendency for biographers to omit recordings as documents of scholarly scrutiny from their studies, whereas scholars who analyse recordings tend to do the opposite: they tend to limit themselves to performance style as captured in recordings, often without further historical or sociocultural contextualisation. I have much more to say about the emergence and evolution of this state of play in Chapter 1, and on the back of it I propose that a profitable forward direction is to attempt to align the rigour of what are by now well-established techniques of performance analysis with the emphasis on biography, circumstance and context routinely found in historical research (broadly construed). It is, in other words, an effort towards integration. As I point out in Chapter 1, I am very much taking my cue from Nicholas Cook's arguments in favour of a rapprochement between interdisciplinary performance studies and empirical approaches to recordings, and applying them to the study of individual performers.⁷

Over the course of five chapters, I attempt to do this by joining empirical techniques with three different modes of contextualisation in the study of a single classical performer, the twentieth-century Russian pianist Maria Veniaminovna Yudina (1899–1970). I will come back to these three modes of contextualisation, but first I should offer some initial justification for choosing Yudina as my research focus. There are obvious and straightforward reasons: for instance, the fact that her life and recordings are a source of personal fascination, and that she is a hugely significant and yet unjustly neglected musician. Interestingly, that neglect has been accompanied—at least in the anglosphere—by a curious mythologisation of her life on the basis of apocryphal biographical snippets, and I spend some time unpicking the ways in which her life has been exaggerated in the first half of Chapter 2. But beyond these reasons, I choose Yudina for this study because of her renowned artistic individuality (something I also discuss in detail in the first half of Chapter 2). This renders her particularly appropriate because the notion of individuality is the common denominator in the rift between biographical and empirical studies that I have described. Biographies, by design, place their focus on an individual's life, achievements, failures and general significance. Those using empirical approaches often do something similar in their conceptualisation of performing 'style', especially in the notion that

⁷ Nicholas Cook, 'Bridging the Unbridgeable? Empirical Musicology and Interdisciplinary Performance Studies', *Taking It to the Bridge: Music as Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 70–85.

each performer has their own personal set of interpretative traits which mark them out from others.

In relation to the notion of performing style in particular, there are two further reasons why Yudina is an especially useful candidate for this study. As I discuss in the second half of Chapter 2, all studies of performing style share the need to exercise selectivity: it is simply impossible in the space of a journal article—or even in a book, if multiple performers are considered—to discuss a wide-ranging and thorough corpus of a single performer’s recorded output. Detailed performance analysis is verbose and often results in demanding reading. It is usually not viable even to attempt to be exhaustive with a performer’s discography, and this is particularly the case if a study attempts to furnish results by comparing multiple performances of the same piece of music by different performers, something which is arguably the *modus operandi* of much performance-analytical work. This means that a wider study of a single performer’s discography is overdue, and a doctoral dissertation offers the space to undertake exactly the sort of wide-ranging, singularly focused study of a performer. Yudina has an eclectic and varied discography that dates predominantly from the final two decades of her life and lends itself to multiple angles of investigation.⁸

That is the first reason why Yudina is especially useful. The second, related reason has to do with the conceptual issue that arises from conceiving of performing style as a singular entity on the basis of a relatively small-scale analysis of a performer’s work. Very soon after delving into Yudina’s recordings, it became apparent to me that conceptualising the individuality and idiosyncrasy of Yudina’s playing in terms of one performing style would considerably oversimplify the range and nuances of her pianism. As such, working across several case studies of Yudina’s recordings of baroque, romantic and contemporary repertoire allows me to rethink the notion of performing style and discuss how her interpretative approaches vary across repertoire and performance setting. It is tempting to speak instead of a performer’s ‘styles’, but this too carries problems. First, to do so would risk reifying Yudina’s pianism by hermetically grouping certain performing habits with particular repertoires or composers instead of conceiving of these things in much more fluid terms. And second, such conclusions would elide the fact that my study, though it analyses a large corpus of recordings, is nevertheless also selective. The number of recordings I consider in this thesis is still dwarfed by the amount of performances Yudina gave in her lifetime, and her discography provides only a snapshot of that lifetime of performing. (I have more to say about this in Chapters 3 and 4.) Rather, I speak of

⁸ Testament should be paid, however, to Kevin Bazzana’s work on Glenn Gould, which I discuss briefly in Chapter 1. See Kevin Bazzana, *Glenn Gould: The Performer in the Work* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

specific performing approaches and expressive strategies that I detect as significant in Yudina's playing without attempting to posit them as definitive, lasting 'styles'. I accumulate these over Chapters 3–7 and take stock of them in the conclusion. I propose a theoretical alternative to style, one which draws considerably on craft studies and builds on the work of Emily Payne.

What I have described can be condensed into three main research aims as follows:

- 1) to align empirical approaches to recordings with three chief means of sociocultural contextualisation;
- 2) to interrogate the notion of individual performing 'style', investigating how consistent such a thing is across different repertoire and performance settings;
- 3) to shed further light on Maria Yudina by exploring how her pianism was animated by her circumstances and aesthetic thought in the final two decades of her life.

After introducing the figure of Yudina, I use the second half of Chapter 2 to explain her discography and justify my focus on certain recordings. I also discuss the available written historical sources pertaining to Yudina, introduce the performance-analytical techniques I draw upon throughout the thesis, and reflect on the notion of shape, one upon which I base the language I use to describe performance. These, in short, amount to several important methodological considerations in how I conducted my research.

I then pursue my proposed research aims in an interlocking fashion in Chapters 3–7: these chapters are designed to facilitate three different means of contextualisation and to cover a broad range of the music Yudina recorded. Chapter 3 opens by considering Yudina's recordings of romantic music, especially that of Franz Schubert, but touching as well on her recordings of Ludwig van Beethoven and Robert Schumann. Chapter 4 moves to her baroque repertoire, of which the sole (but major) example is the keyboard music of J. S. Bach. In Chapter 5, I consider Yudina's recordings of contemporary music, focusing especially on her interpretations of the piano music of Igor Stravinsky, Dmitri Shostakovich, Yuri Shaporin, Andrei Volkonsky, Paul Hindemith and Anton Webern. Chapters 6 and 7 add to this picture with some of her recordings of music of the late-nineteenth century by Modest Musorgsky and Johannes Brahms. In this way, Chapters 3–7 cover a broad spectrum of Yudina's repertoire; this allows, even in a selective study, for a wide picture of her interpretative approaches to different composers and musical eras to emerge. It also showcases the variety of her musical interests and pays testament to the breadth of her technical abilities.

Alongside these are the three modes of contextualisation, which are performance setting, social milieu and aesthetic thought. The first of these is the most basic to the performer's

activity: what is the significance of the type of venue in which the performer is playing in terms of their practice? Yudina's Schubert and Bach recordings are especially helpful for investigating this question, because she made multiple recordings of many of their compositions in both live and studio settings. There are remarkable differences between her interpretations in front of an audience in concert halls and those forged in recording studios with sound engineers and music producers. These differences suggest that the specific affordances of a particular space—not simply in terms of acoustics, but in how the respective senses of intimacy, expectation, risk, comfort and so on make the performer feel—can serve as important contextualising factors in understanding the performances that are made there. I discuss these in Chapters 3 and 4—which function as a pair—in relation to recent, listener-oriented theories of liveness. Towards the end of Chapter 4 (which serves as a conclusion to both Chapters 3 and 4) I suggest that, while I believe the perceptual model of liveness to be correct, it could be widened to better accommodate the perspective of performers, for whom performance setting continues to matter significantly. I finish by drawing out the implications of my analysis for histories of performance style in general, arguing that the significant differences that Yudina's live recordings capture indicate that studio recordings can tell us only a relatively small—if hugely important—part of the story of twentieth-century classical performance.

Chapter 5 aligns Yudina's contemporary compositions with my second category of contextualisation, which is her social milieu. I situate Yudina's musical activity in the years 1959–66 in terms of the unofficial musical circles that Peter J. Schmelz has described as part of Soviet *mye* culture, and explore Yudina's correspondence with important, predominantly European figures in the post-war new music scene. In particular, I investigate how her avant-garde values were negotiated in these letters and, in turn, inflected her pianism. Especially important in this respect are her exchanges with the Russian émigré Pierre Souvtchinsky, with whom Yudina built up a significant correspondence in the last decade of her life. 1959 is the key year here, in which Yudina both sent her first letter to Souvtchinsky and began recording significantly more contemporary music than previously. My analytical discussion starts by tracing Yudina's rich correspondence with Stravinsky in 1960–63 and considering her declared 'rigorous way' of interpreting the composer's music in relation to her recording of his Piano Sonata (1924). She professed to strive for rigour and inflexibility in her playing of contemporary music in general, and I use this as a jumping off point for a consideration of her other recordings of contemporary composers (listed above) around the same period. Her recordings, however, do not relate to her expressed interpretative ideas in a straightforward fashion, and what emerges is the sense of a struggle within her artistic practice, a tension between her professed, seemingly avant-garde

values and the more liberal, individualistic flair for which she was so renowned. Even more than emphasising the intertwinement of discourse and performance, Yudina's contemporary musical imagination suggests their inseparability, the precarity of trying to understand one without the other.

Chapters 6 and 7 move into the realm of Yudina's aesthetic thought, my final mode of contextualisation. These chapters analyse two of her final sets of recordings in connection with reflective, quasi-philosophical essays that she wrote about the pieces in question.⁹ Chapter 6 takes Yudina's performance of and essay on Musorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. I begin by exploring Yudina's understanding of the work as a cycle rather than a suite, but I go further in drawing out the cultural significance of her hearing of the recurring 'Promenade' theme as an echo of *znamenny* chant, the monophonic singing tradition central to the Russian Orthodox Church. I show how her essay, alongside its discussion of the artistic history of cyclic form, continuously foregrounds two main themes: Christian faith on the one hand, and a sense of Russian nationalist identity on the other. This permeates her discussion of the individual movements of *Pictures*: I demonstrate how Yudina builds a discursive narrative centred around the redemptive powers of the *znamenny* chant, and link this narrative to three chief expressive strategies that she employs in her performance. Ultimately, I argue that Yudina's interpretation of *Pictures* constitutes not only a performance of identity—specifically a brand of Russian national identity wedded to a strong Christian faith—but also a musico-political intervention, one which attempts to forge what Kay Kaufman Shelemay calls a musical community.

Chapter 7 proceeds in a similar fashion, taking Yudina's final set of recordings for solo piano—of six Brahms intermezzos from Opp. 116–119—and analysing them in relation to the essay that she wrote about them. Where Yudina's discussion of Musorgsky's *Pictures* revolves around the idea of the cycle in art, here she conceptualises Brahms's intermezzos as musical elegies. I draw out the prevalent themes of mortality, loss and sorrow from Yudina's wide discussion of the elegy in literature, music and art, and situate her reflection on Brahms's intermezzos in terms of the idea of lateness as expounded by Edward Said and resisted by the likes of Laura Tunbridge, Gordon McMullan and Sam Smiles. I use lateness not as a grand, transcending outlook, but as a particular subjective mode through which music becomes a reflective, self-interpretative act, drawing on Ross Cole's work on the 'poetics of experience' in popular song. I then interpret how all of this plays out in Yudina's commentaries on and

⁹ The original Russian essays upon which these translations are based appear in A. M. Kuznetsov and S. V. Aksyuk (eds), *Marija Veniaminovna Yudina* (Moscow, 1978), 277–99 as 'Šest' intermecco Iogannesa Bramsa [Six intermezzos by Johannes Brahms]' and 'Musorgskij Modest Petrovič: Kartinki s vystavki [Modest Petrovich Musorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition]'. See page 203 for more information.

performances of each of the intermezzos. Her commentaries enact an interplay between the themes of fate and memory, and I connect these to her expressive strategies (in particular her use of what I call tempo ruptures in the three ‘Fate’ intermezzos). I suggest that Yudina forges a unified, three-part shape out of the six intermezzos, in which the opening and closing sections foreground the theme of ‘Fate’ and enclose a middle section on the theme of ‘Memory’. I conclude by drawing out the implications of this structure for her more general aesthetic understanding of the elegy as a form, and speculate that her conception of this collection of Brahms intermezzos is a response to the untimely death of her fiancé, Kirill Saltykov, in 1939.

I conclude the thesis by taking stock of Yudina’s artistic practice based on what my analyses in Chapters 3–7 furnish, both in terms of the different expressive tendencies in her various interpretations across repertoire and setting and in terms of the meanings and significances these take on in my three different modes of contextualisation. As mentioned above, I suggest a framework of craft as an alternative to performing ‘style’. I move from there to assess the generalisability of the integrative framework that I have put forward in my thesis, emphasising what I believe to be its three core principles but also acknowledging its perils and potential dangers. In particular, I reflect on the well-worn and justly criticised tendency for musicology to highlight and value individuality over the collective and social aspects of music-making. My project participates in that tendency, and I point both to the importance of not losing sight of the irreducibly social nature of musical practice while also clarifying the continuing need to rethink how we conceive of individuality alongside it.

I have structured my thesis so as to reflect the kind of integration between context and practice that I argue for in Chapter 1. While the discussions of empiricism and the ‘extra-musical’ in that chapter accomplish the principal foundational work upon which the rest of the thesis is built, each case study—as my chapter summary indicates—introduces and interweaves new elements of musicological discussion and literature with performance analysis. Schubert and Bach are interspersed with the issue of liveness and histories of performance style; twentieth-century compositions are combined with Russian music history and the notion of *umye*; Musorgsky is conjoined with musical identity and community; and Brahms is framed in terms of lateness. In other words, as well as arguing for the merger of currently separated theoretical approaches, I practise a form of integrative scholarship in how I write. There is also the question of balance between empiricism and context: what is the ‘right’ amount of data to include in an argument about performance style? what, too, is the ‘right’ amount of ‘extra-musical’ detail? My chapters employ varying degrees of data and context. This is by design: empirical analysis is crucial for undergirding a large-scale study like this, but the more one incorporates quantitative

details in the text, the less musically meaningful the discussion can become. While the contents of Chapters 3–4 will no doubt prove to be challenging reading at times, the analytical depth into which I go in describing tempo and dynamics is necessary to support the conclusions I ultimately draw. Chapters 5–7, however, move increasingly away from quantitative analysis and towards a more interpretative, imaginative form of criticism. In this way, my thesis follows a particular trajectory: as it progresses, it sheds the potentially alienating language of empirical discussion but maintains the robustness of empirical approaches in a supporting role. Yet I do not intend for my synergistic approach to replace wholesale more focused biographical or empirical approaches to individual performers: such studies will always contribute valuable intellectual insights in their own right. I am simply arguing that there should be considerable space for pursuing approaches which bring their various techniques and perspectives together. John Rink has suggested that

musical performance studies will always, necessarily, be a ‘fragmentary scene’. I see no alternative to eclecticism in this field: there are too many angles to be taken on musical performance of all types, and consequently too many constituencies and sub-domains, for unanimity of outlook, judgement, and approach to be achieved. But that need not be a problem, provided that the fragmentation in question does not result from a politics of antagonism and exclusion. On the contrary, *purposeful* eclecticism, underpinned by more or less widely shared aims—most notably a desire to gain greater insight into what performance is, what it signifies, and how we do or might do it—seems essential if a community is to flourish and if less highly charged attitudes are to be taken towards difference.¹⁰

In the end, I wish for my contributions in this thesis to participate in this spirit of purposeful eclecticism, while offering some new insights and potential theoretical models for performance studies and musicology along the way. This wish, however, does not erase the power dynamic between musicologist and performer that artistic researchers continue to point out. In proceeding into such fraught territory, I follow Yudina’s advice in my epigraphic quote. What she says about art in general—that our understanding of it is inseparable from our reflections on and judgements of it—might be specified in terms of how musicologists write about performers, and in this respect the qualities of humility and modesty that she upholds are just as important. It seems lofty to say that my own reflections ‘must be expressed’, but I hope they are at least worth expressing.

¹⁰ John Rink, ‘Between Practice and Theory: Performance Studies and/as Artistic Research’, Ananay Aguilar, Ross Cole, Matthew Pritchard, and Eric Clarke (eds), *Remixing Music Studies: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Cook* (London: Routledge, 2020), 76–90 (80).

The Historiography of the Twentieth-Century Classical Performer¹

‘Musical biography’, write Christopher Wiley and Paul Watt, ‘has historically held something of a problematized or, to borrow Philip Olleson’s words, an “untidy” place within music history’.² Aimed for the most part towards a public rather than specialist readership, it is a genre that has ‘long stood outside the musicological arena’. That Wiley and Watt acknowledged this complication in 2019—thirty-seven years after Maynard Solomon’s probing reflection on the musicologically critical position that he felt biography should occupy—is an indication that the biographical genre remains in some ways the black sheep of the music history family.³

Emerging as it did in 1982, Solomon’s article came at a time of radical change in musicology, which saw a seismic shift in emphasis towards musical context—essentially, towards what are often dubbed ‘extra-musical’ factors—and away from positivism.⁴ Targeting the ‘analogy of artistic to divine creation’ and the notion that ‘the artist is a more or less passive medium through whom speaks some incarnation of an ideal’, Solomon’s argument was not so much that prior biographical knowledge of musicians is essential to understand their music, but rather that we ‘approach every work of art with a more or less extensive set of preliminary assumptions’:

there is no such thing as an unconditioned apprehension of an artwork ... We hear every musical composition as a member of its genre, as one segment of the oeuvre of its composer, as a product of its historical period, as symbolic action whose meanings are filtered through the judgements of prior generations—and as an emanation of the (presumed) personality of its composer.⁵

Instead of seeing this as in some way threatening to or distracting from the musical ‘ideal’, Solomon’s point was that this kind of knowledge should be explicitly considered valuable to our aesthetic and scholarly discourses.

¹ A version of this chapter has been published as Adam Behan, ‘The Historiography of the Twentieth-Century Classical Performer: Life, Work, Artistry’, *Twentieth-Century Music* 18/2 (June 2021), 161–84.

² Christopher Wiley and Paul Watt, ‘Musical Biography in the Musicological Arena’, *Journal of Musicological Research* 38/3–4 (2019), 187–92 (187).

³ Maynard Solomon, ‘Thoughts on Biography’, *19th-Century Music* 5/3 (1982), 268–76.

⁴ Three years later, Joseph Kerman would publish *Musicology* and unfold a much wider critique of positivism in musicology. See Joseph Kerman, *Musicology* (London: Fontana Press/Collins, 1985).

⁵ Solomon, ‘Thoughts on Biography’, 275.

The fingerprints of the ‘new’ musicology are evident in Solomon’s work, and a certain amount of historical distance has since put the issues at stake into much clearer relief. Jolanta T. Pekacz’s diagnosis is that the ‘assumption of the autonomy and self-referentiality of music implied that musical works must be approached and understood through the analysis of their inner structures, exclusive of extra musical factors’, and that this ‘effectively relegated the genre of biography to the margins of the discipline of musicology’.⁶ One task for more recent musical biographers has centred on revisiting the very foundations of the biographical traditions that we have inherited, which—as Wiley points out—owe much to the ‘hagiographical climate of the later nineteenth-century’.⁷ A larger issue which has re-emerged with all kinds of musicological implications, however, is ‘the difficulty of incorporating such biographical knowledge into music analysis and criticism’.⁸ Indeed, Solomon has suggested that ‘the primary area of dispute about the value of biography appears to centre on the vexed question of how—or whether—the pathways between life and art can be mapped, whether a ‘personal’ factor in creativity can be identified’.⁹ How, in other words, are we to interrelate a musician’s life and work convincingly?

My aim here is not so much to answer this question as to bring it to bear on the treatment of the classical performer as a historical subject in musicology. Transferring the above historiographical perspectives to the literature on twentieth-century classical performers reveals a musicological domain that compartmentalises the lives and work of performers quite considerably. Before the emergence of performance studies as a field of musical inquiry in its own right, the detailed study of individual performers was for the most part restricted to the genre of popular biography, one which is rich in contextualisation but light on rigorous engagement with the performer’s abilities as captured, for instance, in recordings. With the rise of performance studies, the use of empirical methods to quantify and discuss what is termed performer ‘style’ has become prevalent, but often without concerted effort to embed that style within the context of said performer’s life or cultural surroundings. In short, the literature on performers exhibits the kind of sharp divide between life and work that has persistently been questioned by the likes of Solomon, Pekacz, and Wiley. What all of this amounts to is a

⁶ Jolanta T. Pekacz (ed.), *Musical Biography: Towards New Paradigms* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 3.

⁷ Christopher Wiley, ‘Biography and Life-Writing’, Paul Watt, Sarah Collins, and Michael Allis (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Intellectual Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 77–102 (78).

⁸ Jolanta T. Pekacz, ‘Musical Biography—Further Thoughts’, Zdravko Blažeković and Barbara Dobbs MacKenzie (eds), *Music’s Intellectual History: Founders, Followers & Fads* (New York: RILM, 2009), 843–52 (846). Pekacz similarly notes that ‘our present-day perception of the lives of prominent composers and performers of the past has been largely formed by cultural and political assumptions of nineteenth-century biographers and their twentieth-century followers’. See Pekacz, *Musical Biography*, 5.

⁹ Maynard Solomon, ‘Biography’, *Grove Music Online* (2001: <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000041156?rskey=0AYRHt>, accessed 12/06/2020).

historiographical problem in the writings of histories and biographies of performers, one which is particular to the twentieth century at least in part due to the varying treatment of the special heritage of recordings that we have which documents what and how performers played. In what follows, I demonstrate the entrenchment of this divide. First, I examine the relatively neglected strand of music biography that focuses on performers before assessing the values and alternatives offered by empirical approaches to recordings. I conclude by asking how the opposing positions taken in these bodies of literature might usefully be brought together, drawing on perspectives from artistic research and popular music studies in doing so.

*

Nicholas Cook writes that most ‘so-called histories of music are really histories of composition, or even compositional innovation’.¹⁰ He is most likely speaking of general historical surveys and standard textbooks, from the likes of which Daniel Barolsky has observed that performers are ‘almost entirely absent’.¹¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, the thrust of the foregoing critical reflections on biography overwhelmingly focuses on composers. Pekacz’s book features essays on the biographical legacies of J. S. Bach, G. F. Handel, Fryderyk Chopin, Maurice Ravel, Franz Liszt, Fanny Mendelssohn, and Giuseppe Verdi; Wiley and Watt’s special issue in *The Journal of Musicological Research* includes several more obscure composers (such as Otakar Ostrčil, Mordecai Seter, and Peadar Kearney) and one performer—the nineteenth-century tenor Sims Reeves.¹² That composers have larger reputations, longer legacies, and in most cases much more biographical undergrowth to be worked through is one explanation for this state of affairs. It is also relevant that the evidence of compositional handiwork is documented in ways that musicologists are well-trained, theoretically and analytically, to handle. The fact that what twentieth-century performers do (and, admittedly, preserved in a relatively impoverished form) is captured in sound recordings has created quite significant obstacles for research analogous to the analysis of composers’ scores. It is only relatively recently that tools sophisticated enough to allow such analysis have been developed.¹³

Naturally, none of this has stopped biographers writing about performers. Many biographies of this kind exist, are relatively recent, and—if we are to accept Solomon’s and

¹⁰ Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

¹¹ Daniel Barolsky, ‘Performers and Performances as Music History: Moving Away from the Margins’, Matthew C. Balensuela (ed.), *Norton Guide to Teaching Music History* (New York: Norton, 2019), 159–71 (159).

¹² Pekacz, *Musical Biography*; Christopher Wiley and Paul Watt (eds), ‘Musical Biography: Myth, Ideology, and Narrative’, *Journal of Musicological Research* 38/3–4 (2019), 187–361.

¹³ Sonic Visualiser—on which more later—is an important example of such a development (see <https://www.sonicvisualiser.org/>, accessed 8 June 2020).

Pekacz's reasoning—significantly shape our understandings not only of performers' lives but also of their musical legacies. In that sense, music biography is one of the few areas of musical inquiry to have traditionally taken classical performers seriously, and examples can be found which examine the vast majority of the twentieth century's most well-known conductors and instrumentalists. To keep things manageable, I focus here on monographs of solo pianists, for three reasons: first, this strand of performer biography is particularly well represented; second, its traits and characteristics are typical of the biographical literature more generally; and third, my focus in this thesis is on a solo pianist.

What is interesting about many of the earlier biographies under consideration here is that the 'problem' of discussing the performer's output and life appears not to have been much of a problem at all. Often, they were simply shunted into different chapters or sections. Harvey Sachs, in his biography of Arthur Rubinstein, makes the case that '[h]ealthiness and generosity were the quintessential qualities of his music-making, and these qualities did not exist in a void: they were a manifestation of elements in his character, which was much richer and more complicated than his memoirs revealed.' Yet the fact that his explicit research aim was 'to compare Arthur Rubinstein's official self-portrait with the unofficial portrait that his papers, the people close to him, and outside observers have created, cumulatively' suggests a study which is more life-focused than anything else.¹⁴ So it is not surprising that it features two sections, 'Part I: The Life' and 'Part II: The Recorded Legacy'. It is in Part II that Sachs deals with the recordings in what he admits is a 'highly personal' survey, one which moves broadly chronologically, by composer, and in a manner typical of music criticism.¹⁵ Harold C. Schonberg offers the reader of his monograph of Vladimir Horowitz not one but four appendices detailing the Russian pianist's recordings, arranged chronologically (Appendix I: 1926–53; Appendix II: LP and Stereo; Appendix III 1965–82; and Appendix IV: 1985–89), a kind of history within a history.¹⁶ It is unquestionably relevant that these authors were often prominent music critics who had spent long hours listening to and reviewing recordings of classical music.

Jeremy Nicholas's biography of Leopold Godowsky reveals that there is something potentially more problematic to be teased out in this 'appendicisation' of performance. Nicholas notes that 'it has been my prime aim in writing this story of Godowsky's life to excite the interest of pianists, piano-lovers, music promoters and publishers into re-examining his legacy for themselves'.¹⁷ Godowsky was known as a composer as well as a pianist, and in fact Nicholas is

¹⁴ Harvey Sachs, *Arthur Rubinstein: A Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1996), x.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 411.

¹⁶ Harold Schonberg, *Horowitz: His Life and Music* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

¹⁷ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky, The Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky* (Hexham: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989), xxiv.

speaking of Godowsky's compositional legacy here rather than his performances. Yet while Nicholas is careful to acknowledge that he has purposefully avoided engaging with Godowsky's compositions—'this book contains no musical illustrations and no critical study or analysis of Godowsky's music'—on the basis that it would have required 'a further book in itself' and 'would have inevitably led to a subjective view of a personal selection', no analogous obstacle prevented him from discussing Godowsky's recordings in detail in a separate appendix, just like Sachs and Schonberg.¹⁸ This might seem relatively innocuous, but there is an implicit valuing not only of compositions over performances, but also of the respective relevance of a musician's life to their performances in comparison to their compositions.

Sachs, Schonberg and Nicholas all substitute their historian hats for their reviewer ones in these discographic postludes, and in doing so they move away from painstaking historical construction of their subjects' lives and adopt a more flexible and reflective tone that allows them to exercise a different kind of musical expertise. On the face of it, then, there is a tendency to distinguish quite rigidly between biography and recordings in a way which manifests itself stylistically as well as structurally. In practice, such a clean distinction between historical writing and music criticism does not exist—Cook, for one, has shown just how blurry this boundary is with respect to the critical reception of Beethoven's *Wellington's Victory*, Op. 91—but the apparent enactment of such a distinction is a feature of early biographical writing.¹⁹ The important point in this respect concerns the implicit value attributed to recordings as a type of historical document: it is significant that recordings are treated quite differently from the many other historical sources (letters, diaries, reminiscences, essays, memoirs, and so on) that are routinely drawn upon in the writing of biography.

Of course, the late 1980s and early 1990s were years when recordings were generally not taken very seriously as objects of historical or analytical scrutiny by traditional musicologists, and with that in mind it is not so much the work of these authors that I wish to critique as it is the biographical tradition of which they form an important early part.²⁰ My point here—my first main point in this section—is that, if nothing else, this kind of partitionist approach demonstrates the marginalisation of what I would call the *work* of the performer, or more specifically, the documents we have that record their work. The treatment of recordings as review material rather than as the basis of serious historical evaluation says something about the

¹⁸ Ibid., xxiii.

¹⁹ Nicholas Cook, 'The Other Beethoven: Heroism, the Canon, and the Works of 1813–14', *19th-Century Music* 27/1 (2003), 3–24.

²⁰ Two important early milestones for performance studies were reached in the early 1990s, however. See John Rink, 'Review of *Musical Structure and Performance* by Wallace Berry', *Music Analysis* 9/3 (1990), 319–39 and Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

value that recordings are deemed to have and diminishes the profile of the performer in question. I mentioned that the more advanced tools for analysing and comparing recordings that are available today did not exist at this stage, but it is also the case that this question of separation is a methodological problem that remains unresolved. There is a lingering feeling, for instance, that something quite major is missing from Stephen Lehmann and Marion Faber's study of Rudolf Serkin when they reveal that their seemingly exhaustive list of primary sources—'Serkin's correspondence (from his own papers and numerous other archival collections), unpublished accounts by relatives, programs, reviews, and memoirs of associates'—does not include recordings. This is the case despite the authors' position that 'the essential core of Serkin's life was music, and it is in his music making that his life's deepest truths are expressed'.²¹

Faced with the complicated prospect of dealing with familiar types of sources that they were very capable of handling on the one hand, and another kind (recordings) for which no equivalent methods existed on the other, other biographers have often opted to omit the latter. In the introduction to her biography of Dame Myra Hess from 1976, Marian C. McKenna humbly acknowledges that the purpose of her book is 'purely historical':

It is the result of my training as an historian and of my life-long appreciation of music. Future writers interested in the Hess phenomenon may attempt more in the way of explanation and assessment of her art. I can assist them only by presenting facts which hitherto have not been generally known, and by providing what will, I hope, be a clear and truthful account of the character and personal development of one of the most beloved artists of the twentieth century.²²

McKenna's use of the word 'art' is crucial here. It is left purposefully ambiguous, but we can assume that the kind of assessment she suggests would at least partly involve recollections or recordings of Hess's playing. Though not always acknowledged so explicitly, this principle more or less underpins most biographical studies of performers to this day. This leads to my second main point in this section, which is that just as the study of a performer's art without proper consideration of their work seems incomplete, so too would a study of a performer's art which entirely omitted their subject's life. Seen in this light, McKenna's biography becomes not just an account of Hess's life, but a crucial part of the story of her artistry. When McKenna illustrates the emergence of the National Gallery Concerts in London during World War II—which Hess

²¹ Stephen Lehmann and Marion Faber, *Rudolf Serkin: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5–7. As in the earlier biographies by Sachs, Schonberg, and Nicholas, Serkin's recordings make an appearance in the book's appendices. The book also includes an accompanying CD which is unreferenced in the main text, something which is perhaps a manifestation of the biography/recordings divide peculiar to the noughties.

²² Marian C. McKenna, *Myra Hess: A Portrait* (London: Hamilton, 1976), xi.

not only performed consistently at between 1939 and 1946 but also founded—and argues, for instance, that the ‘successive performances Myra gave of Beethoven’s “Appassionata” Sonata were, in a sense, acts of defiance against the forces of evil unleashed in the world’, she is inadvertently making a case for the importance of ‘extra-musical’ contexts.²³ The same belief underlies Stuart Isacoff’s account of the Texan pianist Van Cliburn’s spectacular triumph at the First International Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in 1958 in the throes of ratcheting Cold War tension. Isacoff describes ‘Van’s art’ as representing ‘the face of freedom’ for many in the audience: ‘[p]erforming under the auspices of a repressive regime and before an intimidating jury of some of the world’s greatest musicians, he seemed to answer to no authority other than the shifting tides of his own soul. The mere act of hearing him became liberating.’²⁴

If Hess’s wartime heroics—what McKenna calls ‘Myra’s musical patriotism’—and Van Cliburn’s moment of international stardom seem like exceptional examples, that is only because of the historical significance of the performances in question. The point stands on a personal level, too. The importance of the year 1973 in the career and deteriorating mental health of John Ogdon is one such case: in a Belfast hotel after a performance with the Ulster Orchestra, he carved crosses onto his temples and cut his hands, something which Charles Beauclerk speculates could have ‘reflected John’s growing sense that he was destined to bear the cross of his father’s madness’.²⁵ Once known, it seems impossible to separate these giant cut hands, the ones he used in earth-shattering performances of Kaikhosru Sorabji’s *Opus clavicembalisticum*, from those same hands with which he physically assaulted his wife, Brenda.²⁶ At the very least, that he then suffered a mental breakdown, was eventually diagnosed with ‘a bipolar disorder that was paranoid and psychotic in nature’, and spent time in several psychiatric hospitals while his already troubled marriage began to disintegrate further implies that we cannot treat his performances in the last fifteen years of his life in the same way as those, say, from his early career.²⁷ Even in the case of more specifically *musical* beliefs that might not seem particularly distinct, there is much to learn. For example, Serkin’s commitment to *Werktreue* and the composer’s intentions—his dogged ‘determination to track down the original version to get at the composer’s intent, before and beyond the interpretations and distortions made by any editor, even the most revered’—can also tell us something about what his performing style meant to him, and what he imagined he was doing when he worked through a score.²⁸ It is not so much about uniqueness (i.e. that each

²³ Ibid., 164.

²⁴ Stuart Isacoff, *When the World Stopped to Listen: Van Cliburn’s Cold War Triumph, and its Aftermath* (New York: Knopf, 2017), 8.

²⁵ Charles Beauclerk, *Piano Man: A Life of John Ogdon* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 225.

²⁶ Ibid., 370.

²⁷ Ibid., 227; 289.

²⁸ Lehmann and Faber, *Rudolf Serkin*, 137.

performer's context engendered a distinct performing style) as it is about meaning, either personal or more broadly cultural.

Glenn Gould is often if not always the first name that comes to mind in any discussion of twentieth-century pianists that concerns performing style. Though Gould has been the subject of several biographies, Kevin Bazzana noted in 1997 that only one German book had attempted at that stage to deal with Gould's playing in any purposeful way, the rest falling safely into the biographical category.²⁹ His book, *Glenn Gould: The Performer in the Work*, pursues what Bazzana calls the 'Gould aesthetic', and his attempt to dovetail Gould's playing with his performing ideology sets it apart from the other biographical efforts I have considered: he writes that Gould's 'aesthetic premisses are sometimes stated, more often strongly implied, in his writings and interviews, but can be inferred most reliably from his musical practices'.³⁰ In pinpointing Gould's musical idealism (including his internalist obsession with formal properties and structures, and his relative indifference to historical context) and placing him in a tradition of Schoenbergian thinking, Bazzana outlines a philosophy of music which was not abstract, but in fact had direct implications for what and how Gould performed. This philosophy revolved around the contrapuntally idealist Bach and shaped a performing style which (as Bazzana shows) was chiefly characterised by a geometrical approach to rhythm, a commitment to proportional tempos, and a preference for terraced dynamics and a non-legato style.³¹ It is largely Gould's sense of personal conviction in his 'bridging of his theories and his practices' to which Bazzana attributes his success:

In his best performances, even where highly idiosyncratic, there is a real sense of unity between idea and practice, between thought and sound. The extreme tempos, the upside-down textures, the absurd ornaments—Gould could make such eccentricities sound convincing in performance because *he* was convinced by them, because they were such honest reflections of his aesthetic ideas, and also, of course, because he had the keyboard technique to render them in an engaging manner...³²

What is particularly attractive about this observation is that it does not rely on the idiosyncrasy of Gould's style as the ultimate arbiter of his pianism. Rather, the significance lies at least in part in the conviction that he had in his own playing and how this related to his wider aesthetic

²⁹ Kevin Bazzana, *Glenn Gould: The Performer in the Work* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), viii; Bazzana himself would make his own more firmly biographical contribution to Gould literature some years later. See Kevin Bazzana, *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2003).

³⁰ Bazzana, *The Performer in the Work*, 11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 259.

³² *Ibid.*, 257.

thinking—that his performances were ‘not just readings of pieces of music but documents of his world view’.³³

Another way of putting it is to speak of a performer’s ‘subjectivity’. This is what Maria Razumovskaya does with Heinrich Neuhaus, arguing that his subjectivity ‘pervaded everything he did in a way that becomes integral to understanding him both as a person and an artist’; thus she commits herself to uncovering ‘how Neuhaus’s personal circumstances may have translated into his artistic decisions and tastes’.³⁴ In one incident, Neuhaus urged his pupil Anatoly Vedernikov to sense the ‘image of cypresses’ in Bach’s Prelude and Fugue in E flat minor from the first book of the Well-Tempered Clavier, a request to which an exasperated Vedernikov responded by storming out.³⁵ For Vedernikov, it was the needless romanticisation of Bach’s music that provoked his outrage. But Razumovskaya shows this particular image to be grounded firmly in Neuhaus’s own life experience, namely his discovery of the piece during his youth while steeped in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and living in Italy. Italy was a ‘spiritual home’ for Neuhaus, of which he recalled associating ‘the austere and straight cypress trees’ with the ‘magisterial stillness of the Italian cemetery’. His cypresses are an example in miniature of Neuhaus’s larger idea of ‘autopsychography’—the notion that every ‘autobiographic occurrence that has left its distinct mark on the interpreter’s soul ... is a possible ingredient’ for artistic practice. A simpler way of putting this is to assert that ‘art only becomes great if it contains direct traces of the artist’s life experiences’.³⁶ This was, at least for Neuhaus, ‘the difference between a “pianist” and an “artist”’.

This neatly leads back to the life/work question, but without resolving it. Razumovskaya rules out referring to Neuhaus’s recordings on the basis that they capture only a physically weakening Neuhaus who himself asked for them to be destroyed.³⁷ Bazzana’s study does engage with Gould’s recordings, and while his study came at a stage when theoretical and systematic approaches to studying recordings were in their infancy, his direct engagement with Gould’s performing style seems to be the exception that proves the rule (and, in that sense, a very valuable precedent).³⁸ Razumovskaya’s navigation around Neuhaus’s recordings—though insightful as an account of its subject—seems like a missed opportunity of sorts.³⁹ Part of this

³³ Bazzana, *Wondrous Strange*, 12.

³⁴ Maria Razumovskaya, *Heinrich Neuhaus: A Life Beyond Music* (La Vergne: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), 10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 11–14.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 13–14.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, *Heinrich Neuhaus*, 16–17

³⁸ Bazzana, *The Work in the Performer*, xiv.

³⁹ Neuhaus’s dissatisfaction with his own recordings by no means renders them of no value to an understanding of his pianism; he was not the first nor the last musician not to like what he heard when his recordings were played back to him.

comes down to protectivity: Razumovskaya avoids Neuhaus's recordings in much the same way as Nicholas apologises for Godowsky's, which he assures 'only rarely betray evidence of the superhuman powers with which his contemporaries credited him.'⁴⁰ Even in cases where it is unidirectional, the relationship between writer and subject fosters a special intimacy, and it is no revelation that biographers usually seek to portray their musicians in a light that is life-affirming. But there is also a sense in which scholars protect themselves by avoiding the (admittedly complicated) methodological issues tangled up in incorporating recordings more fully into biographical work.

Nevertheless, that this division persists is only the smaller point that I have tried to make in this discussion. I hope first and foremost to have demonstrated the relevance of life, context and the 'extra-musical' to the study of performers and specifically how these things have the potential to shape the meaning of the music they make. The argument in favour of contextually grounded research in musicology is not new, but its reiteration—thirty-eight years after Solomon made it in relation to biography—is a necessary prologue to the discussion of the performer's work that follows.

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The missing piece of the biographical puzzles—musical recordings, the traces of performers in action—has, separately from the literature on pianists that I have just surveyed, become a mainstream area of musicological research in the past three decades. The emergence of performance studies as a subfield within musicology during that time reached an important landmark with the establishment of the AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM) in 2004, and during this centre's five-year lifespan a huge amount of work was put into developing methodological and theoretical approaches to recordings which continue to inform the ways in which musicologists handle them to the present day.⁴¹ Perhaps what characterised CHARM more than anything else was the adoption and advocacy by its directors of the computer program Sonic Visualiser. This software, developed at Queen Mary, University of London, allows for the extraction of empirical data from recordings which can then be scrutinised and enlisted to musicological ends. As Cook (who directed CHARM) has written, Sonic Visualiser provides 'a working environment for studying recordings that replicates much of the functionality we take for granted in conventional music analysis, where you flick

⁴⁰ Nicholas, *Godowsky*, xvi.

⁴¹ See the CHARM website (<https://charm.rhul.ac.uk/about/about.html>, accessed 12 June 2020).

backwards and forwards to compare passages in a score, or compare parallel passages in different scores'.⁴² All of this meant that musicologists now had the resources to discuss the details of performers' playing in a tangible way—exactly what biographers of performers had traditionally lacked. I will have more to say about these resources in Chapter 2.

These details, including such parameters as tempo, dynamics, timbre and articulation, have been broadly conceptualised as the essential components of performance style, and many examples of performance studies based their investigations around them (for instance, Cook's project on the evolution of phrase-arching, and John Rink, Neta Spiro, and Nicolas Gold's study of 'performance motives', both taking Chopin mazurkas as case studies).⁴³ But it is Daniel Leech-Wilkinson who has given the most sustained attention to the issue of performance style, which he describes as being 'very like composition style' and operating on 'a number of different levels'. All performers, he writes, 'have a slightly different collection of habits, which we can call their "personal style"', and personal styles can be contextualised more broadly within period styles, national styles, and other potential groupings.⁴⁴ With respect to writing wider histories of performing styles, his suggestion is to take a bottom-up approach. He argues that to 'make progress we really need now to undertake many detailed studies of local and especially of personal styles, and only then, using that detail as a secure base, will we be able to build up new and better pictures of general period or national style'.⁴⁵

Leech-Wilkinson elaborated on this in his monograph on musical performance, in which he modelled performance style in terms of 'expressive gestures'. He defined an expressive gesture as 'an irregularity in one or more of the principal acoustic dimensions (pitch, amplitude, duration), introduced in order to give emphasis to a note or chord—usually the start of a note or chord', essentially involving 'sounding notes for longer or shorter, or louder or softer, or in some other way different compared to the local average'.⁴⁶ A performance style, in turn, 'is a set of expressive gestures characteristic of an individual performer that taken together constitute their "personal style"; or a set characteristic of a period ("period style"), or a group (for example, national style)'.⁴⁷ Leech-Wilkinson provided a prototypical example of what he meant in a later

⁴² Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 145–6.

⁴³ Cook *Beyond the Score*, 176–223; John Rink, Neta Spiro, and Nicolas Gold, 'Motive, Gesture and the Analysis of Performance', Anthony Gritten and Elaine King (eds), *New Perspectives on Music and Gesture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 267–292.

⁴⁴ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'Recordings and Histories of Performance Style', Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, and John Rink (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 248.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁴⁶ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performances* (London: CHARM, 2009), ch. 8 par. 15 (<https://charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap8.html#par15>, accessed 12 June 2020).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 8 par. 18 (<https://charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap8.html#par18>, accessed 12 June 2020).

article on the personal style of German singer Elena Gerhardt in which he explored her gestures in the realm of timbre, vibrato, scoops, portamento, tuning, and rubato.⁴⁸

All of this is somewhat subsidiary, however, to Leech-Wilkinson's basic point—the thread that runs through his many CHARM-era publications—which is that performing style changes quite radically (if slowly) over time and that this has implications both for the historical performance movement and for any attempt to study musical meaning through scores alone.⁴⁹ And musical meaning is exactly what Leech-Wilkinson has in his sights in an earlier article on recordings of Franz Schubert's lied setting of 'Die junge Nonne', in which he tries 'to show how different performances and different performance styles facilitate the emergence of particular meanings'.⁵⁰ On the basis of the text and Schubert's piano accompaniment, he identifies 'at least three possibilities for a singer': that the girl in question 'may genuinely be excited about entering the convent'; that she 'may be disturbed by sexual emotion confused with her approaching "marriage" to God'; and that she 'may be delirious and close to death'.⁵¹

We cannot hear early recordings with early ears, and specifying meaning exactly in these circumstances is very difficult: '[t]ranslating across the decades is very hard without a great deal of contextualisation,' Leech-Wilkinson writes, 'the research basis for which does not yet exist. Without it we can speak with confidence only of modern responses.'⁵² And returning to the model of expressive gestures, Leech-Wilkinson invokes this caveat too:

the precise signification of an expressive gesture must depend on its context to a very significant degree, and this is another reason to be wary of any kind of dictionary of performance gestures that seeks to fix meanings: it is essential to be sensitive to the local and period context in assigning any kind of meaning to a gesture, and to localise that meaning within a particular performance.⁵³

This is presumably what he meant when he said of his work on Gerhardt that his aim was 'not so much understanding as simply observation and characterisation of style'—in other words, that this was the preliminary work that would perhaps underpin a more culturally contextualised

⁴⁸ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'Performance Style in Elena Gerhardt's Schubert Song Recordings', *Musicae Scientiae* 14/2 (2010), 57–84.

⁴⁹ Leech-Wilkinson, 'Recordings and Histories of Performance Style', 247–8.

⁵⁰ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'Sound and Meaning in Recordings of Schubert's "Die Junge Nonne"', *Musicae Scientiae* 11/2 (2007), 210.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 225.

⁵³ Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music*, ch. 8 par. 18

(<https://charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap8.html#par18>, accessed 12 June 2020).

approach.⁵⁴ Indeed, his study of Alfred Cortot (1877–1962) points towards this: the conclusion he reaches with Cortot’s unexpectedly hyper-controlled interpretative approach is that this makes perfect sense ‘when we think of the other Cortot, not the dreamy pianist we encounter in his books and on film, but rather the highly competent administrator, the founder and director of the *École Normale de Musique*, the Vichy minister managing professional musical life in wartime France’.⁵⁵ The big question here is what exactly context means in understanding performance style, and this is something to which I will return.

I have given so much attention to Leech-Wilkinson’s research because his theorisation of performance style and broader use of empirical approaches to recordings have significantly influenced subsequent studies of recorded performances.⁵⁶ When Leech-Wilkinson says that, conceptually, ‘performance style is very like composition style’, he is laying the foundations for future work by pointing to two obviously significant elements of musical practice which have received staggeringly different levels of scholarly attention.⁵⁷ Unsurprisingly, then, several musicologists have taken up the mantle to do for performers what has long been done for composers. For example, Dorottya Fabian and Eitan Ornoy complain that analytical musicologists ‘have methods to explain the characteristic features of compositions,’ but that ‘there is precious little beyond the journalistic that attempts to explain the uniqueness of performances and performers’. They argue that ‘[i]f performance is as significant as the notated work and performers have played a decisive role in the reception and canonization of pieces, musicologists must be able to show what identifies a particularly famous interpreter just as they can state what characterizes the works of a prominent composer.’⁵⁸

Fabian believes that if we wish to be ‘serious about putting the performer centre stage and claiming for her or him a pivotal role in the identity and reception of western classical compositions ... we must undertake the painstaking data gathering and analytical tasks that were typically applied to written texts/scores until the 1980s’.⁵⁹ Dario Sarlo, too, proposes that we should ‘investigate individual performer styles much in the way musical analysts such as Heinrich

⁵⁴ Leech Wilkinson, ‘Performance Style in Elena Gerhardt’s Schubert Song Recordings’, 59.

⁵⁵ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, ‘Making Music with Alfred Cortot: Ontology, Data, Analysis’, Heinz Loesch and Stefan Weinzierl (eds), *Gemessene Interpretation: Computergestützte Aufführungsanalyse im Kreuzverhör der Disziplinen* (Mainz: Schott, 2011), 129–44 (138).

⁵⁶ In their edited volume, Dorottya Fabian, Renee Timmers and Emery Schubert largely base their model of musical expressiveness on Leech-Wilkinson’s ‘appealing’ definition of expressive gestures, and it is this model which they suggested to the contributing authors as a working definition. See Fabian, Timmers and Schubert (eds), *Expressiveness in Music Performance: Empirical Approaches across Styles and Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), xxi–xxiv.

⁵⁷ Leech-Wilkinson, ‘Recordings and Histories of Performance Style’, 248.

⁵⁸ Dorottya Fabian and Eitan Ornoy, ‘Identity in Violin Playing on Records: Interpretation Profiles in Recordings of Solo Bach by Early Twentieth-Century Violinists’, *Performance Practice Review* 14/1 (2009), 2.

⁵⁹ Dorottya Fabian, *A Musicology of Performance: Theory and Method Based on Bach’s Solos for Violin* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015), 16–17.

Schenker, Donald Tovey, and countless others study the styles and output of prominent historical composers'.⁶⁰ 'Why,' asks Sarlo, 'should we not place Toscanini, Heifetz, and Gould on the same elevated platform as Beethoven, Mozart, and Bach?'⁶¹

There is an understandable grievance here—the cultural significance long attributed to composers has gone side-by-side with analytical investigation into their compositions—but there are also questionable stances. The first is whether or not the business of canon formation should be a priority or even desirable for performance studies. The second is that there is quite a lot packed into Fabian and Ornoy's use of the word 'journalistic', and we can only assume that the biographical literature on performers—often, as we have seen, penned by writers who were also music critics—is encompassed in what they are talking about (they cite Bazzana's study of Gould as an exception). Their frustration with the inability of these kinds of biographical approaches to engage rigorously with recordings in fact goes somewhat further in its disavowal of biography, with wide-ranging implications for the relevance of context to empirical approaches.

In an important book on musical expression, Fabian, Renee Timmers, and Emery Schubert used the term 'expressiveness' to refer to 'the effect of auditory parameters of music performance'; in other words, expression is defined in terms of music's sound.⁶² This leaves a question mark over where the non-auditory parameters of performance come into play, including not only other forms of sensory input but also the knowledge and assumptions brought to any given performance context—the kind that Solomon spoke of. Cook obliquely references this in the opening to his contribution to the volume, in which he writes that the 'term "express" and its multiple derivatives have a peculiarly checkered history in the study of music'. In doing so, he cites Eduard Hanslick's claim that 'aesthetics should be centered on the purely musical' and the implications that this has since had for the 'distinction between the "musical" and the "extra-musical"' which has remained embedded within musicology to this day.⁶³ Here Cook is writing specifically about scores, but the point equally applies to the study of performances. Mine Doğantan-Dack demonstrates this when referencing the 'touching image of the octogenarian American pianist Charles Rosen (1927–2012), who "tottered on stage with the help of a walking stick" towards the grand piano to play his last London concert on 15 May

⁶⁰ Dario Sarlo, *The Performance Style of Jascha Heifetz* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 1.

⁶¹ Sarlo, *Jascha Heifetz*, 1.

⁶² Fabian, Timmers and Schubert, *Expressiveness in Music Performance*, xxi.

⁶³ Nicholas Cook, 'Implications for Music Studies', Dorotyya Fabian, Renee Timmers and Emery Schubert (eds), *Expressiveness in Music Performance: Empirical Approaches across Styles and Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 331–4 (331).

2011'. She then asks, 'was this not part of the singular expressiveness that audiences heard in the *sounds* of his performance?'⁶⁴

Getting away from a hard distinction between the musical and the extra-musical has been one of Cook's central messages in his formulation of music as performance, maintaining that in the 'absence of firm contextualization, the grounding of data in experience, empirical approaches all too easily lose purchase on the issues of social and cultural meaning that form the core focus of musicology'.⁶⁵ He goes so far as to suggest that 'the concept of the extra-musical is simply inapplicable to performance'.⁶⁶ Indeed, his most fundamental critique of empirical approaches is that they can give 'a new lease on life to musicological textualism: recordings are taken out of context and analyzed as self-sufficient objects rather than as traces of human actions in specific social and cultural situations'.⁶⁷ Ultimately, however, he is an advocate of these techniques, and all of this comes as part of a general reconciliation that Cook tries to achieve between interdisciplinary performance studies—which have been strong in terms of widening the scope of what counts as valuable in a performance event—and empirical approaches which, as he notes, help 'to avoid the danger of critical circularity' and which give definition to descriptive accounts of performance.⁶⁸ The importance of this, as Cook puts it, 'is because, in performance, everything counts'.⁶⁹

I reiterate Cook's points here because they are relevant to much of the empirical work on recordings that has been undertaken since he made them. Another way of putting his fear of a new kind of 'musicological textualism' is to say that empirical approaches risk equating performance with sound and drawing the line there. Leech-Wilkinson never goes this far, but there is an extent to which this kind of interchangeability bubbles under the surface of some of his work:

Recordings show us that music we think we know intimately sounded quite different in the past. When music sounds different it *is* different, because music's meaning depends to a very important extent on its sound. Even if you sit at home and read an orchestral score... the sounds you imagine are those made by a modern orchestra playing as orchestras play today. So however

⁶⁴ Mine Doğan-tan-Dack, 'Philosophical Reflections on Expressive Music Performance', Dorottya Fabian, Renee Timmers, and Emery Schubert (eds), *Expressiveness in Music Performance: Empirical Approaches across Styles and Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3–21 (4).

⁶⁵ Nicholas Cook, 'Bridging the Unbridgeable? Empirical Musicology and Interdisciplinary Performance Studies', in *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, ed. Richard Pettengill and Nicholas Cook (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 70–85 (84).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁶⁹ Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 336.

you hear it, there's no experiencing music except through the way it's performed: when the performance changes, the music changes.⁷⁰

There is a potential slippage here in the distinction between performance and sound: 'when music sounds different it *is* different', and 'however you hear it... when the performance changes, the music changes'. But the two are collapsed together in Fabian's monograph on performance:

Normative thinking regarding how Beethoven, or Bach, or any other composer's music 'should go' was challenged, eventually leading to Nicholas Cook's call for a re-evaluation of the framing of musicological investigations to be not music as text (scores, compositions), but music as performance. Or how I prefer to think about it: music as sound.⁷¹

It is unclear whether Fabian thinks of this alternative definition as liberalising rather than narrowing. To speak of music as sound instead of music as performance is at the very least to sharpen the divide between the 'musical' and the 'extra-musical'. But Fabian's approach goes much further than that: she describes her method as a 'comprehensive approach to the study of music performance', one which 'starts tapping into the holistic experience'.⁷² To formulate a 'comprehensive' model of studying music along the lines of sound alone is an entirely different proposition: by 'keeping music performance in the aural domain'—as the title of one of her subsections commits to doing—and asserting that 'most ... musical traditions do not use notation but pass on everything purely aurally', Fabian is at once opening up and then immediately closing down the scope for empirical approaches to performance.⁷³

One of the justifications that she offers for this position is that 'we need much more detailed empirical data before an evidence-based narrative of the historical-cultural evolution of performance styles can be written'.⁷⁴ Yet it is by no means clear that the unrelenting accumulation of recording data is necessary before any kind of meaningful cultural work can be done. And with this in mind, it is worth quoting Fabian's call to 'undertake the painstaking data gathering and analytical tasks that were typically applied to written texts/scores until the 1980s', because there is more than a trivial resemblance of these issues with empirical approaches to recordings to the positivistic music historical and theoretical literature that Joseph Kerman took

⁷⁰ Leech-Wilkinson, 'Recordings and Histories of Performance Style', 246.

⁷¹ Fabian, *A Musicology of Performance*, 7.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 6; 22.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 69–71.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

aim at in 1985.⁷⁵ The positivism that Kerman saw led him to quote R. G. Collingwood on German positivistic historiography in the nineteenth century, pointing out how closely the latter's words fitted 'the musical situation seventy-five years later':

Historians set to work to ascertain all the facts they could. The result was a vast increase of detailed historical knowledge based to an unprecedented degree on accurate and critical examination of evidence. This was the age which enriched history by the compilation of vast masses of carefully sifted material, like the calendars of close and patent rolls, the corpus of Latin inscriptions, new editions of historical texts... But all through this period there was a certain uneasiness about the ultimate purpose of this detailed research. It had been undertaken in obedience to the spirit of positivism according to which the ascertaining of facts was only the first stage of a process whose second stage was the discovery of laws. Thus historians themselves were for the most part quite happy going on ascertaining new facts; the field for discovery was inexhaustible and they asked nothing better than to explore it. But philosophers who understood the positivist programme looked on at this enthusiasm with misgiving. When, they asked, were the historians going to embark on the second stage?⁷⁶

Of analysts, Kerman wrote elsewhere that it was only 'in more recent times [in other words, until the 1980s] that analysts have avoided value judgements and adapted their work to a format of strictly corrigible propositions, mathematical equations, set-theory formulations, and the like—all this, apparently, in an effort to achieve the objective status and hence the authority of scientific inquiry'.⁷⁷ Kerman describes this situation as a kind of 'intellectual time warp'—one in which we would appear to find ourselves once more with the at times staggering data sets that empirical musicologists of performance provide.⁷⁸ Edward T. Cone made a similar observation with respect to analysis and performance long ago, arguing that 'there are alternatives to the rapt admiration of bloodless formulas and jejune diagrams to which our lust for structures sometimes leads'.⁷⁹ Cook argues that 'the problem with much musicological writing that adopts empirical methods is that it stops where the data stops, rather than using the data as a jumping-off point for the more informal and listening-based critical or historical interpretation that gives musicology its *raison d'être*'.⁸⁰ No wonder, then, that Rink has noted his own 'reservations about

⁷⁵ Ibid., 16–17.

⁷⁶ Kerman, *Musicology*, 43–4. The block quotation is originally from R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 127.

⁷⁷ Joseph Kerman, 'How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out', *Critical Inquiry* 7/2 (1980), 311–31 (313).

⁷⁸ Kerman, *Musicology*, 43.

⁷⁹ Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance* (New York: Norton, 1968), 98.

⁸⁰ Nicholas Cook, 'The Ghost in the Machine: Towards a Musicology of Recordings', *Musicae Scientiae* 14/2 (2010), 12.

the aims and outcomes of much of the recent performance-analytical work’, pointing out that ‘some studies in this vein seem more intent on generating data for its own sake rather than using data to reach musically meaningful conclusions’.⁸¹

What this has led to—and this is my culminating point in this section—is a situation where musicologists writing about individual performers have reversed the approaches used by the biographers surveyed in the previous section. Where music biographers have for the most part written about everything to do with the musician in question *other* than the development and characteristics of their performing style, empirical musicologists are now doing only that. For example, Sarlo’s recent monograph on the violinist Jascha Heifetz aims to construct ‘a systematic set of criteria for investigating performance, building a comparative framework by which other similar studies may follow’.⁸² He writes that ‘[s]uch studies have the potential to construct an empirical basis for making claims about performance trends over the last century. This will provide a way of gauging what is unique about performers and will help trace the sources of particular styles and approaches.’ In other words, the study of a performer’s style ‘should ultimately identify those “artistic habits” that are unique to them, and which have influenced others, distinguished them from broader trends in performance practice. Mirroring general studies into composition style, [Sarlo’s] study will look for broader patterns and trends that belong to particular eras, teachers, regions and cultures’.⁸³

Once music is defined in terms of sound, it is not too large a step to take to define a performer’s individuality in the same way. This is what Danny Zhou (accompanied by Fabian) does:

Research shows that performers often differ from each other in their use of such parameters as tempo... and other aspects of timing, ... dynamic variation, ... timbre, ... ornamentation, ... articulation, ... pitch control ... and many instrument-specific aspects such as violin vibrato and bowing, as well as piano pedaling. ... We refer to performers’ distinctive ways of manipulating these parameters as ‘performers’ individuality,’ which research has shown to be recognizable not only by performers themselves ... but also by most listeners...⁸⁴

Zhou and Fabian nevertheless speak quite broadly of ‘*individual differences*’ as ‘the variance between people on the one hand—that is, how people are different—and the central tendency of

⁸¹ John Rink, ‘The (F)utility of Performance Analysis’, in *Artistic Practice as Research in Music*, ed. Mine Doğantan-Dack (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 128.

⁸² Sarlo, *Jascha Heifetz*, 2.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁴ Danny Quan Zhou and Dorottya Fabian, ‘A Three-Dimensional Model for Evaluating Individual Differences in Tempo and Tempo Variation in Musical Performance’, *Musicae Scientiae* 25/2 (June 2021), 252–67 (253).

a person on the other—that is, how a person can best be described in terms of an overall within-person average’. What all of this means is that the basic definition of individuality is exclusively wrapped up in auditory parameters, and it is suggested that these parameters are the means by which ‘performers are distinguished and valued’. This allows them to develop a three-dimensional model ‘whereby six variables’—all pertaining to tempo, though they suggest that this could be widened to other auditory parameters—‘can be measured, assessed, and combined so that individual differences both among performances as well as among performers can be evaluated’.⁸⁵

The point is not so much that there is anything methodologically faulty or inconsistent about this approach; it is more a question of what is lost in defining a performer’s individuality without reference to their life. At what cost do we gather data and compare performance styles in a way that resembles a kind of performance-analytical equivalent of studying the ‘music itself’? Indeed, the complete absence from this discussion of ‘extra-musical’ features (the importance of which, when framed in these terms, is certainly undermined) and the assertion that we ‘should also have a more scientific, evidence-based way of describing the individual artistry of specific performers’ leads me to wonder whether this kind of approach is more committed to its own methodology than it is to its purported object of study.⁸⁶ I do not mean to suggest that such work is without value; on the contrary, that is why I have dedicated so much space to discussing it. And in this respect, it is important that Fabian’s goal is quite specific. Her interest in the evolution of performance styles points toward a broader history of style as the ultimate goal, a kind of history in which ‘personal styles’ could be related to each other and made sense of within a ‘period style’ (to use Leech-Wilkinson’s terms), all of which could be determined or at least informed by the use of data extracted from sound recordings.

I said that I would return to the question of context. Fabian’s goal involves a very specific orientation of context: here, the historical context refers to the *sound world* at play for any given recording, how one performer’s ‘expressive gestures’ (to use Leech-Wilkinson’s term) might relate to others during the same period, for instance. This kind of sound context, or interpretative history, is quite different from that which Leech-Wilkinson gives us in his example of Cortot in Vichy France, i.e. that Cortot’s personal life, public engagement and sociocultural surroundings might help us understand his playing. Likewise, it is different from Bazzana’s construction of the Gould ‘aesthetic’. A more elaborate example in this vein would have much less to do with style comparison than with thick cultural description, and in this sense it also has

⁸⁵ Ibid., 253–4.

⁸⁶ Zhou and Fabian, ‘Three-Dimensional Model’, 263.

more to do with Cook's all-encompassing understanding of music as performance. Alternatively, when Sarlo speaks of his own 'new method' which will ensure that 'performances can be assessed in historical and interpretative context'⁸⁷—more particularly, when he claims that his study of Heifetz's performances of Bach Preludes in their 'historical and interpretative context will reveal both what he shares with other musicians, and what is distinct, or unique to him'⁸⁷—it is the sound world context that he has in mind.⁸⁷ It is also what Zhou means when he speaks of the performance 'norm' as a situating context, that 'to study individual differences in performance style is to study whether a performer plays more similarly to him/herself over time and across repertoire than he/she does to others, and whether the variation within the performances of a particular performer over time and across repertoire is less than that between performers in general'.⁸⁸

Perhaps the most charitable way to characterise this state of affairs, then, is to say that different scholars have different kinds of context in mind. As with Kerman's diagnosis of positivism before, there are resonances here with the division that Philip Auslander has identified between musicology and performance studies: he writes that musicology is 'the discipline that explicates music per se [by which he means "the music itself"]', while performance studies is the discipline that can tell us about the social meanings music generates in performance'.⁸⁹ This, in many ways, captures how biographers and musicologists have written about the individual performer, too. But while the sound world context might suffice for metanarratives of performance style throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—the kind that Fabian has in mind when she speaks of mainstream and HIP styles—an account of individual performers (and a definition of individuality) that fails to go beyond this serves only to dehumanise the musical performances that such metanarratives are built upon. The kind of biographical contexts highlighted in the previous section go some way to supporting just how much there is to lose. To argue for the centralisation of these contexts is effectively to take Cook's broader point about the need to view recordings as 'the traces of human actions in specific social and cultural situations' and to apply it more narrowly to the literature on the individual performer.⁹⁰ More immediately, however, I have tried to show something of the slippery slope down which empirical approaches to recordings have slid since CHARM: although initially conceptualised by Leech-Wilkinson in

⁸⁷ Sarlo, *Jascha Heifetz*, 5.

⁸⁸ Danny Quan Zhou, 'Evaluating Individual Differences in Musical Performance Style: An Empirical Study of Tempo and Timing Variation in Contemporary Recorded Performances of the Solo Piano Music of Chopin and Liszt' (Doctoral Thesis, University of New South Wales, 2018), 59–60.

⁸⁹ Philip Auslander, 'Afterword. Music as Performance: The Disciplinary Dilemma Revisited', Richard Pettengill and Nicholas Cook (eds), *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 349–57 (352).

⁹⁰ Cook, 'Bridging the Unbridgeable', 76.

terms of performance style awaiting further contextualisation, auditory parameters—the sound of music—have since come to define musical expressiveness first of all, and more recently have been used to define not just performance but the very notion of musical individuality. Towards the conclusion of his 1982 article, Solomon pithily summarised a state of affairs which mirrors the present discussion: ‘Art achieves a virgin birth: life is thrown overboard.’⁹¹

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Earlier, I paraphrased Cook’s call to bridge the gap between interdisciplinary performance studies and empirical approaches to recordings. I hope to have made clear that an analogous gap exists between the latter and biographical approaches to studying individual performers, but that it is one with a long legacy and in which a sharp divide between the ‘musical’ and the ‘extra-musical’ has effectively been disciplinarily consolidated. Even with the advent of sophisticated tools for analysing recordings, the practice of performer biography remains committed to its traditional methods of historical research—no doubt in part due to its ostracisation from the ‘musicological arena’, as Wiley and Watt put it. Empirical approaches to recordings have increasingly exhibited a tendency to bypass the kind of contextually grounded explanations of performer individuality typical of biographies in favour of the purely aural dimensions of what performers do. None of this is to say that valuable insights cannot be gained from these kinds of studies in isolation, but to break down the scholarly boundaries between these two categories and to synergise their various approaches could offer us new prospects for the historical study of performers.

There are many directions in which we could run with this, and I would like briefly to consider two by way of concluding this chapter. The first draws not on the work of a historian or a musicologist (in the traditional sense), but on that of an artistic researcher. For artistic researchers, the tacit, embodied, and experiential knowledge to which performers have access is crucial to understanding music, but has been routinely stifled in musicology because the entire discipline ‘was set up around the idea of music as writing rather than music as performance’.⁹² Those are in fact Cook’s words—i.e. those of a musicologist rather than a performer—but as I mentioned in my introduction, for many practice-led researchers it seems more attractive to

⁹¹ Solomon, ‘Thoughts on Biography’, 276.

⁹² Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 1.

carve out their own intellectual space instead of slowly recuperating a form of music studies that has been set up to exclude them.⁹³

In an essay from 2008, Mine Doğantan-Dack attempted to map a kind of ‘pianistic phenomenology’, which she explored in the second movement of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13 (*Pathétique*).⁹⁴ Her point of departure was the physical constraint placed on the performer’s hand when playing the main theme. As she writes, the wrist is not ‘free to “breathe” as in normative pianistic *cantabile* practice’ (the score is marked *Adagio cantabile*). But with the arrival of the fourth and fifth iterations of the main theme, the physical distribution of the musical texture changes and ‘the accompaniment, now in triplets, allows the “singing” fingers playing the melody more elasticity’, the experience of which resembles ‘a progression from restraint to more freedom to sing’. What matters is how the performer integrates this feature into a specific interpretation and with what aesthetic convictions: ‘should the relative pianistic freedom gained by the melody in bar 51 of the second movement of the *Pathétique* be interpreted as a goal, and expressed through the creation of a sense of direction towards bar 51,’ asks Doğantan-Dack, ‘or should it be understood more as an event that just comes to pass?’

Doğantan-Dack chooses the first option over the second, but I am interested less in this choice than in the basic point that she is indirectly making about artistic decision-making. She defers to the interpretations of both Artur Schnabel—asking what his ‘aesthetic assumptions’ were ‘when he introduced long drawn-out lines, and waves of dynamic changes’ in his 1934 performance—and Claudio Arrau, likewise wondering what ‘aesthetic preferences’ drove him ‘to create a quasi stasis, a feeling of labouring’ with his exceptionally slow tempo in his 1963 recording. All of this is to say that pianistic choices relate in some way to a form of aesthetic thinking—in other words, that the performer’s manipulation of tempo, dynamics, and other auditory parameters might make up the musical fingerprints of a wider artistic idea or vision. Doğantan-Dack’s own decision might best be understood in terms of narrativity, given her conceptualisation of bar 51 as a figurative destination, but other decisions could well be explored

⁹³ For some of the most trenchant critiques of musicology and performance studies, see: John Rink, ‘The State of Play in Performance Studies’, Jane W. Davidson (ed.), *The Music Practitioner: Research for the Music Performer, Teacher and Listener* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 37–52; Mine Doğantan-Dack, ‘Recording the Performer’s Voice’, Mine Doğantan-Dack (ed.), *Recorded Music: Philosophical and Critical Reflections* (London: Middlesex University Press, 2008), 292–313 (294); Mine Doğantan-Dack, ‘Practice-as-research in Music Performance’, Richard Andrews, Stephen Boyd-David, Myrrh Domingo, Jude England, and Erik Borg (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Digital Dissertations and Theses* (London: Sage, 2012), 259–75 (263); Jonathan Impett (ed.), *Artistic Research in Music: Discipline and Resistance* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2017), 9; Paulo de Assis (ed.), *Virtual Works—Actual Things: Essays in Music Ontology* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018), 17; Paulo de Assis, *Logic of Experimentation: Reshaping Music Performance in and through Artistic Research* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018), 13; Lucia D’Errico, *Powers of Divergence: An Experimental Approach to Music Performance* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018), 14.

⁹⁴ Doğantan-Dack, ‘Recording the Performer’s Voice’, 306–8.

more usefully in programmatic thinking.⁹⁵ An example of the latter might be Neuhaus's cypresses in Bach's Prelude and Fugue which was considered above. And although the idea was only expressed much later by Doğantan-Dack, her notion of a 'personal artistic voice'—what she calls 'the highest aspiration for any performer who desires to express and communicate an artistic experience, understanding, vision or truth through music-making'—is more or less an elaboration of her idea of 'aesthetic preferences'.⁹⁶

By focusing on classical musicians I have so far avoided engaging with popular music studies, which is where, as Georgina Born notes, 'the origins of academic research on recording and music media lie'.⁹⁷ The fact that, for popular musics of many kinds, 'the recorded musical text *is* the primary text' meant that recordings were never going to be treated as an optional extra to the field of popular music studies in the way that they arguably have been for so long for biographical studies of classical performers. Born writes that '[i]n most genres of twentieth-century popular music, musical interest resides not so much in harmonic, melodic or formal complexity or development, as it does in Western art music, but in timbral and rhythmic nuance and subtlety within fairly fixed and repetitive structures'.⁹⁸

It is in fact in relation to timbre that Nina Sun Eidsheim undertakes her analysis of the jazz singer Jimmy Scott. Scott was born with Kallman syndrome, a hormonal condition that prevented his voice from changing at puberty, meaning that it remained throughout his life 'higher in tessitura than that of a man who had gone through the hormonally induced vocal changes that typically take place during puberty' (a classical music parallel to the resulting sound is the castrato).⁹⁹ Scott worked in relative obscurity for most of his career, achieving celebrity status only late on, and Eidsheim pinpoints the reason for this to the incommensurability of Scott's artistry with the hypermasculinity that came to be associated with contemporary jazz figures like Miles Davis and John Coltrane, what Eidsheim calls a 'culturally and historically

⁹⁵ A case for bringing concepts of narrativity more fully into performance studies is made by John Rink in 'The Work of the Performer', in *Virtual Works—Actual Things*, ed. Paulo de Assis (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018), 89–114.

⁹⁶ Mine Doğantan-Dack, 'Insight: Expressive Freedom in Classical Performance: Insights from a Pianist-Researcher', John Rink, Helena Gaunt, and Aaron Williamon (eds), *Musicians in the Making: Pathways to Creative Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 131–6 (131). This is a sentiment which is echoed by many other performer-researchers including Jane Manning, 'Insight: The Creative Voice in Artistic Performance', 126–30; Carlos Lopez-Real, 'Insight: Musical Artistry and Identity in Balance', 241–4; Helen Reid, 'Making Connections', 248–50; Frances-Marie Uitti, 'Beyond Convention: Listening to One's Inner Voice', 344–6; all are in the same volume (John Rink, Helena Gaunt, and Aaron Williamon (eds), *Musicians in the Making: Pathways to Creative Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).)

⁹⁷ Georgina Born, 'Recording: From Reproduction to Representation to Remediation', in *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke, Daniel-Leech-Wilkinson, and John Rink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 286–304 (290).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 296.

⁹⁹ Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 93.

situated idea of the African American male jazz artist'.¹⁰⁰ Crucially, this incommensurability shaped how his music was imagined more broadly from an early stage and was engineered and perpetuated by record labels who, for instance, effaced his identity from some of his records (his 1969 album *The Source* tellingly features a female model on the cover instead of Scott). But it was also prompted by the timbre of his voice.¹⁰¹ A particular timbral quality which characterised this contemporary hypermasculinity was falsetto, a registral shift that was missing from Scott's smoothly connected vocal range. Eidsheim writes that 'Scott was othered not because of his higher voice, but because of his consistent timbre, evidencing his inability or unwillingness to delineate a so-called real masculine vocal range from its so-called false upper extension'.¹⁰² The point is that Eidsheim's account benefits from the interaction of her close analysis of the specifically sonic qualities of Scott's singing with the attention she pays to the biography, reception and context of Scott the cultural figure.

The examples of Doğantan-Dack and Eidsheim are simply two directions forward. My general point is more to do with the seemingly entrenched separation of different approaches to and perspectives on individual musicians—approaches which could very well be deployed together or brought into dialogue. In the chapters that follow, I proceed in ways that aim to encompass the element of performance style that empirical approaches can illuminate as well as the sense of individuality that both goes beyond an empirical understanding of 'style' and is contextually supplemented by performance settings, biographical circumstances and aesthetic thought. Cook suggested that there should be no distinction between the musical and the extra-musical when it comes to performance. The argument I am making is that this is true of the performer's artistry, too—however we choose to construct it.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 92; 101.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 97–8.

¹⁰² Ibid., 109–10.

An Introduction to Maria Yudina and Some Methodological Notes

The setting is a lavish, high-ceilinged, wood-panelled study in a Russian dacha near the town of Kuntsevo, close to Moscow. Evening has fallen, and a moustachioed man in black knee-high boots and a large grey overcoat removes a freshly pressed record from its paper sleeve. He opens his record player, sets his new disc in motion, and the opening bars of W. A. Mozart's Piano Concert No. 23 in A major, K. 488 begin to sound. With a relaxed smile, he starts unbuttoning his overcoat, but quickly notices something unusual on the rug: a hand-written note, addressed to him, had unexpectedly slipped out of the record sleeve. Leaning on his desk for support, he bends to retrieve it. Straightening himself, he reads: 'Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, you have betrayed our nation and destroyed its people. I pray for your end and ask the Lord to forgive you. Tyrant.' Stalin bursts out laughing, but soon his laughter turns to panic. His eyes widen and his hand clutches the desk in desperation. Gasping for air, he collapses face-first onto the floor of his study and dies of a brain haemorrhage, while his two bodyguards stand motionlessly outside, too fearful for their own lives to investigate the sudden bang.

This is the story of how Maria Yudina inadvertently killed Joseph Stalin. It was her piano playing that accompanied his demise, and it was she who penned the note lambasting his dictatorship. It is a scene taken not from the history books, but from Armando Iannucci's 2017 lampooning black comedy, *The Death of Stalin*.¹ As a fictional film, it makes no claims to complete historical accuracy, and Yudina's role in the affairs leading up to and following Stalin's death are grossly exaggerated: in the film, Yudina's father and brother have been killed under Stalin's regime; she is on personal terms with Nikita Khrushchev; she plays at Stalin's funeral; and her note becomes wrapped up in the political machinations and manipulations that ensue in the power vacuum left by the dictator's death. All of these plot points, and the idea that Yudina had any role in Stalin's death, have no basis in actual historical evidence.

Yet in Yudina's legacy, the separation of fact from fiction has never been clean. Iannucci's portrayal of Yudina is a case in point: it is based on a story attributed to Dmitri Shostakovich. Shostakovich recounts how, one night in 1944, Stalin heard a performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 on the radio.² He was so moved that he asked for a copy of the recording, of which none existed because it was a live broadcast. Yudina was the performer and,

¹ The clip in question can be watched on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MwgC9ew-vU>, accessed 22/10/2021).

² Solomon Volkov, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*, Antonina W. Bouis (trans.) (London: H. Hamilton, 1979), 193–95.

fearing the potential repercussions of bringing Stalin the bad news, officials awoke her in the middle of the night, assembled an orchestra, and gathered the musicians in a studio to record the concerto and press a single copy. A delighted Stalin awarded Yudina twenty thousand roubles for the recording, but in an act of rebellion she replied by offering to pray for Stalin's sins:

I thank you, Iosif Vissarionovich, for your aid. I will pray for you day and night and ask the Lord to forgive your great sins before the people and the country. The Lord is merciful and He'll forgive you. I gave the money to the church that I attend.

Shostakovich called it a 'suicidal letter', but so beloved of Stalin was Yudina's pianism that he allowed her to live where any other citizen would have perished.

The credibility of this apocryphal story is extremely thin not only because it is otherwise unsubstantiated—all references to it inevitably loop back to 'Shostakovich'—but because the source in question is highly dubious. *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* was edited and compiled by Solomon Volkov on the basis of a series of interviews with the composer and published only after Shostakovich's death. It sparked furious debate between musicologists in what became known as the 'Shostakovich Wars' in the 1980s and 1990s, chiefly with respect to the depiction of Shostakovich as a clandestine dissident within the Soviet regime; it is now widely discredited as a faithful representation of Shostakovich's political leanings.³ This does not necessarily implicate how Volkov related Shostakovich's views on Yudina, but it is significant that this is the original source of a story which indirectly bolsters the narrative of Shostakovich's dissidence (since he is the one telling it). In other words, Shostakovich's 'recounting' of a remarkable anti-Stalinist tale in a book whose credibility has been seriously questioned on those very grounds deserves to be treated with suspicion.

The Stalin tale is certainly the most far-fetched of those surrounding Yudina's life, but it is not the only example. Sviatoslav Richter remembers Yudina 'an outrageous figure, a sort of Clytemnestra', and claims that she used to 'wander around with a revolver, which she would show to all and sundry':

It really was a bit much. She used to say: 'Hold this thing for me, but be careful, it's loaded.'

³ Laurel Fay, 'Shostakovich Versus Volkov: Whose Testimony?', *The Russian Review* 39/4 (1980), 484–493; Ian MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich* (London: Fourth Estate, 1990); Richard Taruskin, 'Public Lies and Unspeakable Truth: Interpreting Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony', David Fanning (ed.) *Shostakovich Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 17–56; Allan B. Ho and Dmitry Feofanov, *Shostakovich Reconsidered* (London: Toccata, 1998); Malcolm H. Brown (ed.), *A Shostakovich Casebook* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

One day she developed a crush on someone who didn't return her advances. One can understand the poor man; he must have been terrified of her. And so she challenged him to a duel.⁴

He also claims that her final public appearances on stage were rendered 'all the more appalling in that she no longer had any teeth'.⁵ The paucity of scholarly attention that Yudina has received (at least in the anglosphere) has meant that stories like these have grown deep roots in popular configurations of the pianist. Iannucci's film is an obvious creative example of that, but broadcasters and journalists regularly renew the mythologies surrounding Yudina. They serve conveniently as internet clickbait, or titbits for introducing her records on daytime radio.⁶ The most 'liked' comments on YouTube uploads of her recordings are frequently those which make reference to Stalin.⁷

The first half of this chapter attempts to construct a more accurate, or at least careful, picture of Yudina. It is by no means a complete biography, something which exceeds both the scope and the purpose of this thesis.⁸ What I offer instead is a succinct overview of Yudina's life which takes stock of existing literature on her and draws on interviews of those who were close to her. In particular, I explore the various layers of discourse surrounding Yudina's individuality as a pianist, focusing on the testimonies of those who knew her, the critical reception of her recordings, and the individuality she professed to strive for and value as a musician. In the second half of this chapter, I discuss some important methodological aspects of my thesis, including the notion of performing style, Yudina's discography, performance-analytical techniques and written historical sources.

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⁴ Bruno Monsaingeon, *Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations*, Stewart Spencer (trans.) (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), 51.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See, for instance, the short biography of Yudina on *Bach Cantatas Website* (<https://www.bach-cantatas.com/Bio/Yudina-Maria.htm>, accessed 25/10/2021) and 'One amazing pianist dared to criticise Joseph Stalin – and remarkably lived to tell the tale', *Classic FM*, 23 August 2016 (<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/latest/maria-yudina-stalin/>, accessed 25/10/2021). Even in more recent journalistic examples which try to debunk the exaggerations of Yudina's life, the editorial temptation to play on the Stalin tale remains strong. I wrote a short essay to that effect on Yudina to mark the fiftieth anniversary of her death in November 2020, and perhaps should not have been surprised to discover the title it was assigned: 'The Pianist Who Killed Stalin: Remembering The Life of Maria Yudina, 50 Years After Her Death', *VAN Magazine* 189 (November 2020) (<https://van-magazine.com/mag/maria-yudina/>, accessed 25/10/2021).

⁷ Her recording of Mozart's Piano Concert No. 23 is the obvious place to look for these, though they crop up on many YouTube videos. A YouTuber with the account username 'Kudeyr' recycles the Yudina/Stalin story from *Testimony* for the benefit of other listeners, while another YouTuber (named 'Gerard Bollardt') proclaims: 'She loved GOD more than Stalin' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGZoKplBhfo&t=595s>, accessed 25/10/2021).

⁸ At the time of writing, Elizabeth Wilson is in the final stages of the first such monograph on Yudina in English—due for publication in February 2022 at the earliest—and will offer much more than I can here. The timings of its publication and the completion of my thesis are unfortunate. See Elizabeth Wilson, *Playing with Fire: The Story of Maria Yudina, Pianist in Stalin's Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, Forthcoming 2022).

Maria Veniaminovna Yudina was born on 10 September 1899 in Nevel', part of what was then the Russian Empire, into the large Jewish family of the highly-regarded physician Veniamin Gavrilovich Yudin (1864–1943). She began her piano lessons in 1906 and entered the Saint Petersburg Conservatory (later the Petrograd Conservatory) in 1912. There, she was instructed by several teachers, including Anna Esipova, Vladimir Drozdov, Felix Blumenfeld and Leonid Nikolayev, and received a rich musical education: along with her primary focus on the piano, she studied the organ, counterpoint, percussion and conducting. She attended the Petrograd Conservatory alongside Shostakovich and Vladimir Sofronitsky, graduating (alongside Sofronitsky) with the Anton Rubinstein Prize and Gold Medal in 1921. For the next fifty years, Yudina remained based in the Soviet Union, concertised extensively, released many recordings and taught at several conservatories and music academies. She became professor at the Petrograd Conservatory in 1922 and taught at the Tbilisi Conservatory in the early 1930s, but she later settled in Moscow, becoming a professor first at the Moscow Conservatory in 1936 and later at the Gnessin Institute in 1944.⁹ Despite being one of the most significant and well-known pianists in the Soviet Union during her time—Maria Razumovskaya describes her as ‘already within her lifetime a legendary figure’—Yudina remains a neglected figure in the western world with very little published on her life in English.¹⁰

The philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin moved to Nevel' in 1919 and became acquainted with Yudina through his friend Lev Pumpyansky, who had been based there for his military service and became close with Yudina during that time. Bakhtin taught a brief philosophy course there and remembers Yudina at that stage as ‘a girl, still very young, rather big, I must say... dressed all in black. Her look back then was rather ... monastic, in sharp contrast to her young face and eyes. Yes... She used to dress like a nun, or, if not like a nun, exactly, very similar to that.’¹¹ This nun-like appearance left a lasting impression on those around her and is captured in many of the photos of her that exist. Marina Lobanova notes that this persisted into her later years and that ‘at a ripe age, she appeared in tennis shoes, an old black dress resembling a nun’s robe, and a

⁹ The details of this opening paragraph are drawn from three short reference entries which are the only existing scholarly publications in English that take Yudina as their central focus. These entries are: Maria Razumovskaya, ‘Yudina, Maria (Veniaminovna)’, *Grove Music Online* (2016: <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000030738>, accessed 25/10/2021); Marina Lobanova, ‘Maria Judina’, David Babcock (trans.), *Musik und Gender im Internet* (https://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/en/Artikel/Maria_Judina.html, accessed 25/10/2021); and Daniel Jaffé, ‘Yudina, Maria (Mariya) Venyaminovna (Veniaminovna)’, *Historical Dictionary of Russian Music* (Lanham, MD.: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 305. Even here, there are problems with the latter two sources: for instance, Lobanova uncritically cites Volkov’s *Testimony* and the story of Yudina’s Mozart piano concerto recording, and Jaffé mistakenly designates Yudina’s birth year as 1889.

¹⁰ Razumovskaya, ‘Yudina, Maria (Veniaminovna)’.

¹¹ Slav N. Gratchev and Margarita Marinova (eds), *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Duvakin Interviews, 1973* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 2019), 214.

large cross on her chest’, an observation possibly gleaned from Richter, who recalled her as ‘always dressed in black and wearing sports shoes for her concerts’.¹² This attire was a constant source of incredulity to her contemporaries: Valentina Friedman, one of her former students, recalled that ‘the very appearance of Maria Veniaminovna was a sharp contrast to anyone else’s. They kept asking, why does she always dress up like a nun? But it wasn’t a nun’s dress, this dress was chosen on purpose to conceal shall we say her rather portly stature. And it’s how she was always dressed for the stage. With the only difference—a white collar’.¹³

Yudina’s intellectual interests grew far beyond music from an early stage. She quickly developed a close friendship with Bakhtin and a strong interest in philosophy, attending the course Bakhtin gave in Nevel’ and, later, lectures at the historical-philological department at the Petrograd University in the 1920s.¹⁴ As Bakhtin puts it, ‘it became obvious that she had the rare gift of philosophical thinking. As you know there aren’t many true philosophers in the world ... And as it happened, she was one of the few who could have been the real thing.’¹⁵ She also developed a strong interest in theology, and a defining moment of her young life was her decision to convert to Russian Orthodoxy at the age of 19.¹⁶ She remained staunchly religious for the rest of her life, and strove to live according to Christian ideals of charity and service. According to Fr Nicolas Vedernikov, ‘her mercy toward the needy was truly boundless. She got others involved in deeds of Christian mercy, she always tried to sacrifice anything she could to help anyone in need, to borrow money for the needy’; Yudina ‘saw the sense of life in self-denyingly serving God and people, and [that] to serve people was to serve God’.¹⁷ This is echoed by Lobanova, who writes that Yudina ‘regarded her task as an ascetic service and self-sacrifice to God, music and humanity, especially suffering people and those in the greatest need’.¹⁸ Olga Tabatadze notes that Bakhtin and the theologian Fr Pavel Florensky were especially important in

¹² Lobanova, ‘Maria Judina’; Monsaingeon, *Richter*, 48.

¹³ Valentina Friedman, quoted in Yakov Nazorov (dir.), *Maria Yudina: Portrait of the Legendary Pianist* (2000) (<https://youtu.be/zF03KVIsrns?t=400>, 06:40–07:00; accessed 26/10/2021). Nazorov is Yudina’s nephew: he has been commissioned by BBC Wales to produce several documentaries on Russian music (see <https://www.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/4ce2bca148c8f>, accessed 6/5/2020), but he has also directed many other documentaries, including this one on Yudina. The version I reference here, with English subtitles by Vladislav Lomanov and Ray Wildrew, is available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zF03KVIsrns&t=1675s>, accessed 26/10/2021). I am very grateful to Lomanov (personal correspondence) for providing me with this very important information on the background to and translation of this documentary. In subsequent citations, I provide the YouTube link which is time-specific to the quotation in question.

¹⁴ Gratchev and Marinova, *Bakhtin*, 214; Razumovskaya, ‘Yudina, Maria (Veniaminovna)’.

¹⁵ Gratchev and Marinova, *Bakhtin*, 219.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 215–6.

¹⁷ Fr. Nicolas Vedernikov, quoted in Nazorov, *Maria Yudina: Portrait of the Legendary Pianist* (<https://youtu.be/zF03KVIsrns?t=911>, 15:13–15:42; accessed 26/10/2021).

¹⁸ Lobanova, ‘Maria Judina’.

Yudina's spiritual guidance.¹⁹ Tabatadze singles out Yudina for consideration as one of the few 'who, despite all the difficulties, remained faithful to the tradition of the Church and to their religious experience' during Soviet regimes in which attempts to dislodge religious practice as a prevalent part of society were persistent and methodical.

Her charitable instinct dovetailed with the frugal lifestyle she maintained. Her sister, Vera Yudina, recalled:

No money, no money, no money – all the same, all the time. When she died there was 14,000 of debt left (a price for a couple of cottages near Moscow, to draw a comparison). I was making calls trying to explain, 'of course I'm the heiress, but I can't raise such a sum to pay you back'. And every time there was only one answer—"we never expected our money back, we just wanted to do something for a genius". That's the Christian notion she had—to be a redistributor of money. She was taking it from one party and giving it away to the other.²⁰

The academic Nikolay Bolkhovitinov remembered visiting Yudina once with his wife and bringing her a bouquet of flowers:

She said, 'Nikolay Nikolaevich, how childish of you indeed, tell me how much did you pay for this bouquet?' I mentioned I don't remember what sum. 'But you were supposed to bring me that money instead! Look here, I've nothing but my piano which in its turn I plan to put on sale. Don't you know about this position of mine?'²¹

Also in the 1920s, Yudina became a passionate advocate of new music and performed the works of Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Paul Hindemith, Ernst Krenek and most likely several others, both Russian and western European.²² In the cultural thaw that followed Stalin's death, she strenuously sought out new music and championed various compositions of Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Andrei Volkonsky, Béla Bartók, Krenek, Alban Berg, Anton

¹⁹ Olga Tabatadze, 'The Polyphonic Conception of Culture as Counterculture: Fr. Pavel Florensky, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Maria Yudina', Artur Mrowczynski-Van Allen, Teresa Obolevitch, and Pawel Rojek (eds), *Apology of Culture: Religion and Culture in Russian Thought* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 53–62 (61).

²⁰ Lobanova, 'Maria Yudina'; Vera Yudina, quoted in Nazorov, *Maria Yudina: Portrait of the Legendary Pianist* (<https://youtu.be/zF03KVIsrns?t=1875>, 31:15–31:45; accessed 26/10/2021).

²¹ Nikolay Bolkhovitinov, quoted in Nazorov, *Maria Yudina: Portrait of the Legendary Pianist* (<https://youtu.be/zF03KVIsrns?t=1815>, 30:15–30:45; accessed 26/10/2021).

²² Jean-Pierre Collot has pieced together several recital programmes that Yudina gave in the 1920s. No doubt these tell only a partial version of the story of Yudina's concertising during this time, but she performed, for instance, Krenek's Piano Concert No. 1, Op. 18; the premiere of Stravinsky's *Les Noces* (with Shostakovich) on 12 December 1926; Schoenberg's Six Little Piano Pieces, Op. 19 on 19 October 1929; and various works by Schoenberg and Hindemith on 23 November 1929. See Jean-Pierre Collot (ed.), *Maria Yudina, Pierre Souvchinsky: Correspondance et documents (1959–1970)* (Geneva: Contrechamps Éditions, 2020), 756–8.

Webern, Pierre Boulez, Hindemith, Olivier Messiaen and Karlheinz Stockhausen. In Chapter 5, I discuss Yudina's promotion of new and avant-garde music in the 1960s in greater detail, but it is worth pointing out that this dedication went back to her earliest years as a professional musician. As Peter J. Schmelz notes, by the 1960s 'Yudina's interest in new music was predicated on the fact that for her much of it was not new at all; she had heard and performed most of it in the 1920s' and 'served as a crucial bridge across the chasm of the Stalinist 1930s and 1940s'.²³

Her uncompromising advocacy of Russian Orthodoxy and new western music came at great personal cost in an atheistic state where 'formalism' in contemporary music was treated with official disapproval. She was dismissed from the Petrograd Conservatory in 1930 following accusations of being an 'exponent of religious mysticism'; although officially she was accused of absenteeism, the real reason was due to her religious beliefs.²⁴ She lost her position at the Moscow Conservatory in 1951 and was forced to leave the Gnessin Institute in 1960.²⁵ Of the Gnessin Institute, Schmelz writes that this particular dismissal was due to her attraction to new music, and notes that she was later 'prevented by the Union of Composers from concertizing or making recordings until "the desire to play 'old' music returned to her"'.²⁶ Due especially to her provocative performances of Volkonsky's *Musica Stricta* in 1961, her tendency to recite unofficially banned literature by Boris Pasternak, Nikolai Zabolotsky and Bella Akhmadulina at her concerts, and her denunciation by the Khabarovsk School of Music in 1963, Yudina was subjected to multiple concertising bans throughout the 1960s. The notion that she was awarded the Stalin Prize is, as Marina Frolova-Walker has shown, a myth: 'there was simply no point in nominating a performer who lived a shadowy existence at the margins of Soviet musical life, such as the pianist Maria Yudina'.²⁷

Her dedication to new music also resulted in restrictions on her ability to travel. Christine Jolivet-Erlh traces correspondence between Yudina and the French composer André Jolivet, who in 1960 invited Yudina to Paris to play his Piano Concerto. She happily accepted, but 'the project was thwarted before it even got going as Maria Yudina had been denied permission to travel abroad'.²⁸ Her correspondence with Stravinsky later indicates that the Russian composer had hoped to meet her in Helsinki 'if they let her leave', but this too did not come to fruition: 'And they *did not give* Yudina a passport so she could travel to Helsinki to see me,' wrote

²³ Peter J. Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 90.

²⁴ Lobanova, 'Maria Yudina'; Tabatadze, 'The Polyphonic Conception', 61; Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 758.

²⁵ Razumovskaya, 'Yudina, Maria (Veniaminovna)'.

²⁶ Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 89.

²⁷ Marina Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 221

²⁸ Christine Jolivet-Erlh, 'Jolivet and the USSR', Caroline Rae (ed.), *André Jolivet: Music, Art and Literature* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 217–51 (224).

Stravinsky to Pierre Souvtchinsky on 10 December 1961.²⁹ In fact, these restrictions appear to have long predated 1961: the art critic and her friend Anatoly Kuznetsov remembers that it was ‘forbidden for Maria to go abroad. With huge effort she managed to go abroad twice: in 1950 on the 200th anniversary of Bach’s death, [and] four years later she [went] to Poland to Warsaw to a series of events for Soviet-Polish friendship’.³⁰ The former of these trips was to Germany, where she visited and performed as part of the Bach Festival in Leipzig and East Berlin.³¹ The veracity of Stalin-related stories notwithstanding, Yudina unquestionably pursued a path of non-conformity in the Soviet Union: by maintaining a position at the forefront of contemporary (often avant-garde) ‘unofficial’ music and literature, and unashamedly broadcasting her religious fervour in an atheistic state, Yudina was subjected to regular concertising bans, precarious employment and restricted freedom of movement.

This portrait of Yudina as a cultural outlier strongly resonates with contemporaneous views of her pianism, which was considered to be remarkably individual and idiosyncratic. For this, her performances were met with varying levels of praise and dismay. Razumovskaya notes that ‘her strong individuality caused some objection to the liberties she allowed herself to take with the score’.³² Lobanova echoes this: ‘Maria Yudina’s art of interpretation was characterised by a special originality that was occasionally also felt to be arbitrariness. This special quality, however, corresponded to Maria Yudina’s most profound convictions’.³³ Shostakovich’s judgement of Yudina (at least, as relayed by Volkov) is a sexist and typically disparaging one. He was positive about her interpretations of Liszt, whom she ‘played like no one else’, and Beethoven, of whom ‘she had a marvellous understanding’, but his overall judgement was much more negative:

It was thought that Yudina had a special, profoundly philosophical approach to what she played. I don’t know, I never noticed that. On the contrary, I always thought that much of her playing depended on her mood—the way it is with every woman.

²⁹ Tamara Levitz, Philipp Penka and Alexandra Grabarchuk, ‘Stravinsky’s Cold War: Letters About the Composer’s Return to Russia, 1960–1963’, Tamara Levitz (ed.), *Stravinsky and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 273–317 (285–6). In a letter to Pierre Souvtchinsky, Yudina chided, ‘dear Pyotr Petrovich!! Did you truly think that going to Helsinki—is a matter of “up and away”??!!’ (285).

³⁰ Anatoly Kuznetsov, quoted in Nazonov, *Maria Yudina: Portrait of the Legendary Pianist* (<https://youtu.be/zF03KVIrns?t=2475>, 41:15–41:45; accessed 26/10/2021). This is the same Kuznetsov involved in co-editing the 1978 volume of Yudina resources with Aksyuk. See page 60, footnote 89 of this volume.

³¹ Razumovskaya, ‘Yudina, Maria (Veniaminovna)’.

³² Razumovskaya, ‘Yudina, Maria (Veniaminovna)’.

³³ Lobanova, ‘Maria Yudina’.

Whatever Yudina played, she played ‘not like everyone else.’ Her numerous fans went wild, but there were some interpretations that I didn’t understand and when I asked about these I usually got the reply, ‘I feel it that way.’ Now, what kind of philosophy is that?³⁴

Sviatoslav Richter remarked that, as a teacher, she ‘was kind, but her individuality crushed yours’.³⁵ And it is this sense of individuality that persists in his memory of her playing:

when she played Romantic music, it was impressive – except that she didn't play what was written. Liszt's *Weinen und Klagen* was phenomenal, but Schubert's B flat major Sonata, while arresting as an interpretation, was the exact opposite of what it should have been, and I remember a performance of the Second Chopin Nocturne that was so heroic that it no longer sounded like a piano but a trumpet. It was no longer Schubert or Chopin, but Yudina.³⁶

This is, in fact, exactly what Yudina’s followers found so convincing about her performances. As Bakhtin put it:

Her interpretations were always very much her own. She also, naturally, did not like any musical clichés and defied all expectations. That’s why many thought her musical interpretations were too subjective, too individualistic. But that’s exactly what I liked about her performances—her ability to amplify the most powerful moments in the compositions of her chosen composers.³⁷

The poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko praised her for performing music ‘as though she composed it herself. She puts something intimate into every note she plays’:

Her soul is revealed through her playing; in my opinion, it’s the supreme type of performers who without any dazzling technical skills—only by their helpless intimacy—could reveal something very special in what they play. They become co-authors, because an interpretation coming deep from the soul means a co-authorship.³⁸

Pianist and Yudina disciple Marina Drozdova noted that her ‘personality as a performer was so unique and so nontrivial... It was way beyond any regularities of the art of performance, like we

³⁴ Volkov, *Testimony*, 51–3.

³⁵ Maria Razumovskaya, *Heinrich Neuhaus: A Life Beyond Music* (La Vergne: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), 166.

³⁶ Monsaingeon, *Richter*, 48–51.

³⁷ Gratchev and Marinova, *Bakhtin*, 231.

³⁸ Yevgeny Yevtushenko, quoted in Nazorov, *Maria Yudina: Portrait of the Legendary Pianist* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zF03KVIsmns&t=1675s>, 53:10–54:00; accessed 12/5/2020).

say she felt constrained within the margins of this area'.³⁹ Commenting shortly after Yudina's death in 1970, Stockhausen wrote that 'this pianist's playing should be preserved like a precious material and broadcast regularly: because it is the yardstick for future generations.'⁴⁰

Yudina has certainly not become an international pianistic benchmark since then, but her reputation has grown beyond Russia with the repackaging and wider releases of many of her recordings. Responses to these are partly captured through critics' reviews, and they provide a useful measure of the persistence of her individuality. Arnold Whittall remarks that her recordings are 'far too unrefined and freely expressive for most tastes today', a judgement that rings true for the vast majority of Yudina reviews.⁴¹ Jed Distler of *Classics Today* writes of her recordings of Beethoven's 'Diabelli' and 'Eroica' Variations that 'Urtext fanciers will raise an eyebrow or two at Yudina's lapses from Beethoven's dynamics, phrasings, and, at times, the notes themselves. Her enthusiasm often spills over into pounding, but an individual presence clearly is at work.'⁴² A *Gramophone* reviewer is much more critical of the same recording, asking, 'is it an idiosyncratic attitude to the text or simply a poor edition that is responsible for the occasional missing bars, added bars, phrases in the wrong clef, and more than occasional approximations of dynamic [sic.] and articulation?'⁴³ Steven Laurent, writing in 2012, places Yudina's Goldberg Variations last in his comparative review of interpretations: '[Yudina] wins the prize, hands down, for the worst recording of the Goldbergs I have heard. An ugly, jangly tone, sloppy trills, muddled polyphony and a complete lack of rhythm make this recording more a curiosity than a serious contender'.⁴⁴ Jonathan Woolf issues prospective listeners with a warning:

If you seek singing, rounded tone, an effortlessly spun legato, rectitudinous tempi, a measured approach to rubati, and adherence to the text then she is not your pianist. Her courageous approach to the repertoire is best sought in her Stravinsky, Berg, Hindemith, Bartók and Krenek, where her iconoclasm has less cause to damage the music's fabric.⁴⁵

³⁹ Marina Drozdova, quoted in Nazorov, *Maria Yudina: Portrait of the Legendary Pianist* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zF03KVIsrns&t=1675s>, 51:10–52:20; accessed 12/5/2020).

⁴⁰ Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Karlheinz Stockhausen à Marc Floriot (Correspondance 1967–1970, page 526)', Jean-Pierre Collot (ed.), *Maria Yudina, Pierre Souvichinsky: Correspondance et documents (1959–1970)* (Geneva: Contrechamps Éditions, 2020), 734–6 (736).

⁴¹ Arnold Whittall, 'Schnittke/Stravinsky Piano Works', *Gramophone* (<https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/schnittkestravinsky-piano-works>, accessed 26/03/2019).

⁴² Jed Distler, 'Great Pianists of the 20th Century: Volume 99: Maria Yudina', *Classics Today* (<https://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-3021/?search=1>, accessed 26/03/2019).

⁴³ 'Great Pianists of the 20th Century – Maria Yudina', *Gramophone* (<https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/great-pianists-of-the-20th-century-maria-yudina>, accessed 26/03/2019).

⁴⁴ Steven Laurent, 'Glenn Gould vs the World', *Limelight Magazine* (October 2012: <https://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/features/glenn-gould-vs-the-world/>, accessed 26/03/2019).

⁴⁵ Jonathan Woolf, 'The Legacy of Maria Yudina', *Music Web International* (http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2007/Nov07/Yudina_VVCD.htm, accessed 26/03/2019).

Equally, however, her performances have been met with some praise: a reviewer for *Arkiv Musik* applauds Yudina's recording of Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier' sonata, noting that 'the playing conveys an extraordinary sense of a deeply personal meaning beyond words'.⁴⁶ Peter Gutmann, in complete contrast to Laurent, lauds the distinctively personal nature of Yudina's Goldberg Variations: 'she plays every note with a gripping conviction and even adds her own embellishments'.⁴⁷ Underlying all of these reviews is the sense of idiosyncrasy which Yudina's recordings exhibit; her interpretive personality has continued to stand out beyond the immediate reception of her own historical context.

Yudina's individual voice was a force to be reckoned with by her contemporaries, and its traces remain as flagrant to the present day if the opinions of music critics are anything to go by. But none of these is as outspoken on her sense of musical individuality as she was. Seven weeks before her death in 1970, Yudina was interviewed by Volkov. This interview, which exists now in the form of a short transcript entitled 'Thoughts on Musical Interpretation [Mysli o myzikal'nom ispolnitel'stve]', provides a deep insight into Yudina's pianistic ideals and corroborates much of what her contemporaries (and succeeding critics) thought and observed.⁴⁸ She alludes to individuality as a requirement for up-and-coming performers to last:

I'm disturbed with lots of things. For instance, with the fact that performers wither already at the very beginning of their musical careers. They have nothing to say, they are *headless horsemen*... You'll always be able to recognize it in their performance—some kind of smoothness, roundness, togetherness—but not the entirety, no—only gloss.⁴⁹

Yudina then quotes the Russian musicologist Boleslav Leopoldovich Yavorsky on what she means by differentiating between the artist who creates musical 'symbols'—indicators of true, meaningful art—and the artist who creates 'duplicates' or 'clones'—vacuous attempts to imitate the artistic convictions of others:

⁴⁶ 'The Russian Piano Tradition: Maria Yudina', *Arkiv Musik*

(http://www.arkivmusic.com/classical/album.jsp?album_id=312643#review, accessed 26/03/2019).

⁴⁷ Peter Gutmann, 'Johann Sebastian Bach: Goldberg Variations', *Classical Notes* (2002:

<http://www.classicalnotes.net/classics/goldberg.html>, accessed 26/03/2019).

⁴⁸ My lengthy quotations of this transcript come from two sources: an unpublished English translation by Denis Plutalov, who has kindly transferred it to me for use in this project, and a French translation by Collot (for which see Maria Yudina, 'Réflexions sur l'interprétation musicale', Jean-Pierre Collot (ed.), *Maria Yudina, Pierre Soutchinsky: Correspondance et documents (1959–1970)* (Geneva: Contrechamps Éditions, 2020), 692–7). I consulted both versions, but for scholarly efficacy I cite Collot's published translation in every case. The original can be found in A. M. Kuznetsov and S. V. Aksyuk (eds), *Marija Veniaminovna Yudina* (Moscow, 1978), 299–304.

⁴⁹ Yudina, 'Réflexions', 692.

I already spoke about Boleslav Leopoldovich Yavorsky, who justly demanded from musicians not to create clones, but to create inspired musical elements and symbols instead. Music doesn't copy the emotion, it doesn't duplicate it, music, like some symbol, evokes it! The making of duplicates of real emotions ... is senseless. A real inspired artist never imitates the emotion, but creates its symbol, and their emotionalism is, in fact, a manner of symbolic expression... That is why there is no need for such 'scary' words about the 'truth' and other invented 'virtues' of musical performance.⁵⁰

She likewise laments contemporary misgivings towards a performer's subjectivity:

One resorts to the term 'subjectivity' when a performer goes against the 'rules'. But these imaginary violations are subordinate to a higher logic and, in total, create a straight and strict artistic integrity. The performer, the creator, uses one of the possible multiple lines of feeling, which corresponds directly with their interpretation of life's phenomena and events.

The so-called subjectivity of thinking confirms the plurality of realities, while the desire towards one single possible 'right' interpretation is undoubtedly dead and metaphysical. When the artist aspires towards expression, they are not preoccupied with 'following the rules', but compare and push forward such elements which, at the first look, would have to remain in the shadow.

The true musician, guided by an authentic perceptive force, frees themselves from the chains of the 'canon', while too often young performers submit themselves to the rules, thoughtlessly believing that they are sensible. Then, they measure art according to these rules, a fatal error which is equivalent to losing one's 'vision'.⁵¹

One wonders how Yudina would have contributed more widely to the discourse around performance, and indeed the field of performance studies, had time permitted. For there is a striking resemblance between what she argues for here and, for instance, Richard Taruskin's reflection on authenticity in early music performance fourteen years later. 'Modern performers,' writes Taruskin, 'seem to regard their performances as texts rather than acts, and to prepare for them with the same goal as present-day textual editors: to clear away accretions.'⁵² Daniel Leech-Wilkinson made a similar point when he said that 'perhaps we have been too strongly influenced both by the equation $U_{\text{text}} = \text{"clean" text}$ (and therefore clean performance), and by the law of

⁵⁰ Ibid., 694.

⁵¹ Ibid., 694–6.

⁵² Richard Taruskin, 'The Authenticity Movement Can Become a Positivist Purgatory, Literalistic and Dehumanizing', *Early Music* 12/1 (February 1984), 3–12 (6).

the recording studio, that “performers shall not provide too individual an interpretation lest it prove tiresome upon repeated hearing”.⁵³ Such comments, of course, only scratch the surface of the much larger legacy of performance surveillance across institutionalised classical music practices, what Leech-Wilkinson sums up as the ‘performance police’ (including ‘teachers, examiners, adjudicators, agents, critics, promoters, producers, record reviewers, bloggers’).⁵⁴ Such surveillance goes hand in hand with a more general disregard for the agency and creativity of performers in musicology, a phenomenon which, as Nicholas Cook puts it, is not caused by musicologists being uninterested in performance, but by ‘an almost schizophrenic dissociation between the discursive, academic knowledge with which they deal as musicologists and the tacit, action-based knowledge that they rely on as performers.’⁵⁵

The point with respect to Yudina is that her final take on musical interpretation betrays an awareness of much of this: even in 1970, the issues of increasingly strict rules conditioning performance practices, the devaluation of the performer’s artistic contributions and creative agency, and the shrinking of interpretative plurality are all prevalent. As a pianist who trained and emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century, she seems self-aware of the critical unpopularity of more overtly expressive approaches to performance in the post-war aesthetic climate. Here, she is not only defending interpretative individuality: she is also prizing it as a musical ideal in a way not dissimilar to Mine Doğantan-Dack’s call for each performer to develop their own ‘personal artistic voice’.⁵⁶ That makes Yudina a particularly useful figure for a study of an individual classical performer. None of the foregoing ‘proves’ that her way of playing was unique in any way, but I am less interested in Yudina’s individuality as an empirical fact than as a cultural one. There is ample evidence for the latter, and as I have made clear, I aim to analyse Yudina’s recordings and assess her personal approaches to performance only in a way that is heavily conditioned by the cultural construction of her individuality. Notwithstanding this, my use of empirical approaches to recordings constitutes a foundational part of my research, and I turn now to them and some other important methodological points.

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⁵³ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, ‘What We Are Doing With Early Music Is Genuinely Authentic to Such a Small Degree That the Word Loses Most of Its Intended Meaning’, *Early Music* 12/1 (February 1984), 13–16 (15).

⁵⁴ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, ‘Classical Music as Enforced Utopia’, *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education* 15/3–4 (2016), 325–336 (330).

⁵⁵ Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 23.

⁵⁶ Mine Doğantan-Dack, ‘Insight: Expressive Freedom in Classical Performance: Insights from a Pianist-Researcher’, John Rink, Helena Gaunt and Aaron Williamson (eds), *Musicians in the Making: Pathways to Creative Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 131–6.

In the second half of this chapter, I offer some methodological notes on the analytical apparatus and the discographic and other historical sources that I draw upon in this thesis. There is a further pressing conceptual issue of central methodological importance, however, and that is the notion of performing style. A very important point of departure that I referenced in Chapter 1 is Leech-Wilkinson's work on Elena Gerhardt, in which he put forward his working definition of style as 'a collection of expressive gestures.'⁵⁷ A gesture, in turn, is defined as 'an irregularity in one or more of the principal acoustic dimensions (frequency, loudness, timing), introduced in order to give emphasis to a note or chord'.⁵⁸ Leech-Wilkinson suggested the following distinction (and relationship) between personal and period styles:

At any one place and time there is considerable agreement among performers about how to be expressive (period style), and there is a shared understanding with and among listeners as to what is 'musical' (which simply means the currently agreed period style of expressivity in performance). Within this general period style, each performer has a slightly different manner of expressivity, their personal style.⁵⁹

The idea that a performer has a particular individual style guides much performance analysis and the writing of histories of performance.⁶⁰ I have already shown to a certain extent not only how Yudina's style appeared to stand outside of accepted conventions, both at the time and since, but also that to do so formed part of her performing philosophy. This commitment (at least on paper) to such individuality suggests that Yudina's style could potentially vary considerably more than we might expect from a typical performer within whatever their prevalent period style might be. With this in mind, it may not be sensible to speak of her performing style in the singular. There may be a more general truth to this: one reason for the prevalence of this singular conception is because scholars, lacking the space to consider a performer's discography in detail, tend to exercise considerable selectivity in their choice of repertoire, often restricting their scope

⁵⁷ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'Performance Style in Elena Gerhardt's Schubert Song Recordings', *Musicae Scientiae* 14/2 (2010), 57–84 (58).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'Recordings and Histories of Performance Style', Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, and John Rink (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 246–262 (248–249); Dorottya Fabian and Eitan Ornoy, 'Identity in Violin Playing on Records: Interpretation Profiles in Recordings of Solo Bach by Early Twentieth-Century Violinists', *Performance Practice Review* 14/1 (2009), 1–40; Dorottya Fabian, *A Musicology of Performance: Theory and Method Based on Bach's Solos for Violin* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015), 18 (and footnote 45); Dario Sarlo, *The Performance Style of Jascha Heifetz* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Danny Zhou, 'Evaluating Individual Differences in Musical Performance Style: An Empirical Study of Tempo and Timing Variation in Contemporary Recorded Performances of the Solo Piano Music of Chopin and Liszt' (Doctoral Thesis, University of New South Wales, Australia, 2018); Danny Zhou and Dorottya Fabian, 'A Three-Dimensional Model for Evaluating Individual Differences in Tempo and Tempo Variation in Musical Performance', *Musicae Scientiae* 25/2 (June 2021), 252–67.

to studio recordings of a particular genre, era, or composer's output.⁶¹ Such selectivity is especially unavoidable in shorter studies. Here, I treat performance settings, musical epochs and specific composers' outputs as potential variables within Yudina's pianism. For instance: was a particular performance recorded in a live setting (in front of an audience, involving one take, in which the recorded output of the performance is subsidiary) or in a studio (involving a sound engineer of some kind, possibly amalgamating multiple takes, in which the subsequent recorded artefact is the purpose of the performance)? Equally, what repertoire is being performed? Do Yudina's interpretations vary in significant ways depending on whether she is playing baroque, romantic or contemporary repertoire? Is there evidence that Yudina had a particular vision or interpretative understanding of individual composers?

Ultimately, it may be possible to conceptualise Yudina's pianism in terms of multiple, context-dependent 'styles' rather than conceiving of style as a singular entity. That is what I had initially envisioned when I designed this project, but I have since moved away from 'style' as a guiding concept and instead favour terms such as Yudina's performing strategies, tendencies, approaches and attitudes throughout my case studies. Style is arguably a more fraught concept when pluralised, because it entices the analyst to fix a set of expressive parameters to a particular label—Yudina's baroque style, for instance—when there may in fact be a great deal of fluidity between Yudina's playing and the repertoire and performance settings in question. I find these alternative terms more supple, and endeavour to employ them flexibly throughout the thesis. This is especially important given that, though my study incorporates a large number of Yudina's recordings, it is still ultimately selective and only partially covers a lifetime of musicmaking.

As a means of approaching her legacy, Yudina's discography is an obvious and invaluable starting point. A recently published comprehensive and up-to-date attempt to compile Yudina's recordings is in a French volume of Yudina resources by Jean-Pierre Collot (which I have already cited and on which more below).⁶² The overwhelming majority of her recordings were made in a twenty-one-year period between 1947 and 1968.⁶³ What we are dealing with, then, is Yudina the

⁶¹ Sarlo's book on Heifetz, for instance, focuses on his recordings of only one piece of music: the Prelude from Bach's Partita in E Major, BWV 1006.

⁶² Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 777–91. I must also thank Plutalov for kindly sharing his Yudina discography with me.

⁶³ Collot identifies two fleeting recordings which predate this period, both of music by J. S. Bach and from 1936: the Prelude in F sharp minor, BWV 883 from Book II of the Well-Tempered Clavier, and the Toccata in C minor, BWV 911. The veracity of these dates is disputed. Plutalov, in his unpublished discography, dates both of these recordings to a live performance that Yudina gave in Leipzig on 29 July 1950, and web uploads often confuse the picture further, such as the YouTube posting of Yudina's performance of the Toccata, which dates the performance to Moscow on 23 November 1950 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7rHz2fpYuA>, accessed 20/10/2021). Collot's volume (778), however, includes a photograph of the 1938 reissue of the record in question, and the original date of 1936 is backed up by the 2015 Vista Versa reissue of many of Yudina's recordings (see <https://www.discogs.com/release/7383033-Maria-Yudina-Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Yuri-Schaporin-Kazimierz-Serocki-Bohuslav-Martin%C5%AF-Bela-Bartok-Th>, accessed 20/10/2021). Another disputed date for which Collot

performer between the ages of 48 and 68, in other words in the last two decades of her life as an active pianist. No doubt this is a period of artistic maturity (and possibly, towards the end, of technical decline), one which coincides with the resumption of routine classical music practices in the Soviet Union in the aftermath of World War II.

Though it is wide-ranging, there are three main trends in Yudina's discography which span baroque, romantic and contemporary music. The first trend consists of the compositions of J. S. Bach, who is the only pre-classical era composer to feature in Yudina's discography. Of Bach's solo keyboard music, she recorded the Goldberg Variations, BWV 988, the Toccata in C minor, BWV 911, the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D minor, BWV 903, the second movement of the Italian Concerto, BWV 971 and multiple extracts from both books of the Well-Tempered Clavier, BWV 846–93. The second trend is Austro-Germanic romantic music, of which recordings are plentiful. Beethoven is the most prominent figure here—of his solo piano music, she recorded ten sonatas and four sets of variations—but the music of Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms features heavily, too.⁶⁴ She recorded Schubert's Sonata in B flat major, D. 960, *Moment Musical* in F minor, Op. 94 No. 3, D. 780, and both sets of the Impromptus (Op. 90, D. 899 and Op. 142, D. 935); Schumann's Fantasy in C major, Op. 17, *Kreisleriana*, Op. 16, and extracts from his *Fantasiestücke*, Op. 12 and *Waldszenen*, Op. 82; and Brahms's Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 5, Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, Op. 24, and many of his intermezzos and other piano miniatures. The third trend is Yudina's numerous recordings of contemporary music, which I loosely understand here as music that was composed during her lifetime. She sourced and recorded the music of several western composers including Alban Berg, Anton Webern, Béla Bartók, Paul Hindemith, Witold Lutosławski, Kazimierz Serocki, Ernst Krenek and André Jolivet. She also recorded the music of many of her compatriots, especially Igor Stravinsky, but also Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofiev, and lesser-known figures including Yuri Shaporin, Yuri Kochurov, Andrei Volkonsky and Nikolai Myaskovsky. Indeed, her commitment to Russian composers extends to those who blur the boundaries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and her discography also features the music of Nikolai Medtner, Alexander Glazunov, Alexander Scriabin and Modest Musorgsky.

The case studies I pursue in this thesis all revolve in some respect around these three trends, but I should acknowledge that my parsing of Yudina's discography and the examples I focus on leave gaps that would be worth filling if space allowed. Of specific composers, the omission of Mozart's music is an obvious one—Yudina recorded several of his piano sonatas

provides visual evidence is that of Yudina's recording of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major, K. 488. It is commonly held that this recording was made in 1943, but Collot shows it to have been made on 9 July 1947.

⁶⁴ For the list of Yudina's Beethoven recordings, see Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 783–4.

and fantasies—as is the exclusion of all of Yudina’s chamber and orchestral recordings, of which there is a sizeable number. Not even in a doctoral-length project such as this would it be possible to give each of these recordings its due consideration, and so the question becomes one of where to draw the line, and why. Having said that, the main goal of my thesis is not to analyse Yudina’s recordings comprehensively, but to explore three different avenues of performance in context. I have set up my project so that my case studies achieve this while also investigating Yudina’s performing strategies across different settings and repertoires. It is worth briefly running through how I have managed the distribution and selection of repertoire. All of the recordings I consider in this thesis are available, at the time of writing, on YouTube, and links to each one are provided in the ‘References’ section of this thesis.⁶⁵

The contextual focus on performance setting in Chapters 3 and 4 chiefly incorporates Yudina’s recordings of Schubert and Bach. This is because Yudina recorded their music in live and studio settings more than any other composers, and because they serve as major representative samples of her approaches to romantic and baroque music. Table 2.1 outlines the Schubert compositions upon which Chapter 3 focuses: treating the four movements of the Piano Sonata in B flat major separately results in a total of fourteen interpretations to be analysed.⁶⁶ Using these as a basis, I move on to brief complementary discussions of some of Yudina’s live recordings of Beethoven and Schumann. Brahms (the last main composer from Yudina’s Austro-Germanic trend, as I called it) does not feature here, though his music forms the basis of Chapter 7 in quite a different way. Table 2.2 displays Yudina’s recordings of eleven preludes and fugues from Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier, Book II. In Chapter 4, I employ these as a corpus of live and studio recordings in much the same way as the Schubert.⁶⁷

Chapter 5 adds to this picture by examining a selection of Yudina’s recordings of contemporary music between the years 1959–61. The focus here shifts from performance setting to Yudina’s social milieu, enabled by her published correspondence with key figures in the contemporary music scene during the years 1959–66. Table 2.3 displays the recordings I analyse here: a selection of contemporary solo piano works which includes both western and Russian music. I analyse these works in particular for two reasons: they constitute a suitable variety of Yudina’s contemporary output, and the composers in question feature notably in Yudina’s correspondence. The third and final contextual focus—Yudina’s aesthetic thought—is in play in

⁶⁵ See page 199 of this volume.

⁶⁶ It should be noted that this set of Schubert compositions includes Franz Liszt’s arrangement of Schubert’s song, ‘Am Meer’, No. 4 from *Schwanengesang*, S. 560.

⁶⁷ Though there are two instances of Yudina recording Book I (live in 1950 and in the studio in 1951), there is only one compositional overlap between them: the 1950 set includes Preludes and Fugues 1–19, while the 1951 set includes 19–24. Because of this, the recordings of Book II are the more useful.

Chapters 6 and 7. Here, the choice of repertoire is dictated by a unique and especially insightful pair of essays that Yudina wrote towards the end of her life about Musorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and a selection of six intermezzos by Brahms (Table 2.4).

I have designed my case studies around Yudina's discography in a way that is necessarily selective but, I hope, adequately representative of the variety and breadth of her musical interests and abilities. Two final points are worth bearing in mind. The first is that Yudina's discography is continuously under construction: many recordings have been published for the first time only recently, and it is very possible that more will be located and issued in years to come.⁶⁸ The second is that it is important to remember that discographies themselves are selective and account only for a small fraction of a performer's musical career. This becomes of clear importance in Chapter 5, where I discuss Yudina's contemporary musical imagination in a way that largely excludes avant-garde composers like Olivier Messiaen, Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen, despite Yudina's professed commitment to their music. In the absence of recordings by Yudina of their music—probably the result of official restrictions—I cannot ground these commitments in specific analyses. Even more than this, however, the limits of discographies, and their tendency to favour the polish of the studio, have important implications for the overall conclusions we draw about a performer's artistry. I address these in Chapters 3 and 4.

*

In Chapter 1, I considered the strengths and problems of much of the literature that uses empirical approaches to recordings. I do not intend to rehearse these again here, but it is worth reiterating the basic principle of treating data extracted from recordings as a starting point rather than an end goal. Data extraction, however, is both a time-consuming and an involved process, and in what follows, I introduce the techniques for data collection and analysis that I employ throughout the project. The chief methodological vehicle for this aspect of the research is Sonic Visualiser, an open access computer programme designed at the Centre for Digital Music at

⁶⁸ Yudina's recordings of Webern's Piano Variations, Op. 27 and Andrei Volkonsky's *Musica Stricta*—both of which form a crucial part of Chapter 5—became available as recently as 9 September 2019. Likewise, in 2018–19 the Moscow Conservatory published one of Yudina's recitals of Schumann's music for the first time, one which includes her performance of the Fantasy, Op. 19, partially discussed in Chapter 3. See Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 779. Between 9 September 2019 and 14 February 2020, Melodiya (the Russian state record label) released a six-volume compilation set of recordings entitled 'Maria Yudina – Grand Collection'. Released to mark the 120-year anniversary of the pianist's birth, it is the most up-to-date available collection of Yudina's known recordings. See their separate entries on Discogs.com (for Volume 1, for instance, see <https://www.discogs.com/release/14166479-Maria-Yudina-Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Grand-Collection-Volume-1>, accessed 22/10/2021).

Composer	Composition	Live	Studio
<i>Schubert</i>	‘Am Meer’, No. 4 from <i>Schwanengesang</i> , S. 560 (Schubert/Liszt)	4 April 1954, Kyiv	Summer 1964
	Impromptu in E flat major No. 2, D. 899	15 January 1956, Moscow	Summer 1964
	Impromptu in A flat major No. 2, D. 935	15 January 1956, Moscow	Summer 1964
	Piano Sonata in B flat major, D. 960	4 April 1954, Kyiv	13 August 1947
<i>Beethoven</i>	Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31 No. 2	4 April 1954, Kyiv	–
	Piano Sonata No. 14 in C sharp minor, Op. 27 No. 2	4 April 1954, Kyiv	–
<i>Robert Schumann</i>	Fantasy in C, Op. 17	10 June 1951	–

Table 2.1. Yudina’s recordings of music by Schubert, Beethoven and Robert Schumann

Prelude and Fugue No.	Key	Live	Studio
1	C major	4 November 1950, Moscow	1953–7
2	C minor		
3	C sharp major		
4	C sharp minor		
5	D major		
6	D minor		
8	D sharp minor		
9	E major		
10	E minor		
12	F minor		
15	G major		

Table 2.2. Yudina’s Preludes and Fugues from the Well-Tempered Clavier, Book II

Composer	Composition	Date Composed	Date of recording	Setting
<i>Yuri Shaporin</i>	Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 7	1926	23 May 1959	Studio
<i>Paul Hindemith</i>	Piano Sonata No. 3 in B flat Major	1936	2 April 1960	Studio
<i>Dmitri Shostakovich</i>	Piano Sonata No. 2 in B minor, Op. 61	1943	2 April 1960	Studio
<i>Igor Stravinsky</i>	Piano Sonata (1924)	1924	December 1961	Studio
<i>Andrei Volkonsky</i>	<i>Musica Stricta</i>	1956–57	1961	Live (The Scriabin Museum, Moscow)
<i>Anton Webern</i>	Variations for Piano, Op. 27	1936	1961	Live (The Scriabin Museum, Moscow)

Table 2.3. Yudina’s recordings of six contemporary works

Composer	Composition	Date of Recording	Setting
<i>Musorgsky</i>	<i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i>	Summer 1967	Studio
<i>Brahms</i>	Intermezzo in A Minor, Op. 116 No. 2	21 September 1968	Studio
	Intermezzo in E flat Major, Op. 117 No. 1		
	Intermezzo in B flat Minor, Op. 117 No. 2		
	Intermezzo in A Major, Op. 118 No. 2		
	Intermezzo in E flat Minor, Op. 118 No. 6		
	Intermezzo in E Minor, Op. 119 No. 2		

Table 2.4. Yudina’s recordings of Musorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* and six intermezzos by Brahms

Queen Mary, University of London, one whose importance to the AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (and a huge amount of research that has since been conducted on musical recordings) I noted earlier. Comprehensive introductions to this software are available elsewhere; it is sufficient to say that Sonic Visualiser affords the user the ability to upload and manipulate audio tracks with a view to extracting data or insights relevant to timing, tempo, dynamics and articulation, among other things.⁶⁹ For the first three of these, the process of generating data within Sonic Visualiser relies on what is known as the tapping method.⁷⁰ Once an audio track is loaded into the programme, the user can add a ‘Time Instants Layer’ and tap beats along to the music as it plays; the tapped beats are logged into the ‘Time Instants Layer’,

⁶⁹ The Sonic Visualiser website provides a detailed manual (<https://www.sonicvisualiser.org/doc/reference/4.0.1/en/>, accessed 21/10/2021). For a more accessible introduction, see Nicholas Cook and Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, ‘A Musicologist’s Guide to Sonic Visualiser’ (https://charm.rhul.ac.uk/analysing/p9_0_2.html, accessed 21/10/2021).

⁷⁰ Nicholas Cook, ‘Methods for Analysing Recordings’, Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, and John Rink (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 221–45 (231–2).

after which any inaccuracies can be rectified manually by listening back to one's tapped beats and discerning how well they align with the performance. Such inaccuracies are inevitable, and fixing them is a necessarily laborious part of the process. Once the beats are logged, the data can be transformed into a 'Time Values Layer', which generates a graph representing a musical parameter. Each graph is represented in its own layer in the programme, expresses time elapsed on the X axis and measures the musical parameter in question on the Y axis. These graphs can then be annotated (using a 'Text Layer') with text boxes to clarify the bars which specific points in the graph refer to, and to note particularly salient expressive values that relate to them. In my examples in this project, the Y axis always refers to tempo, quantified in beats per minute (BPM), and I use text boxes to highlight important expressive moments in tempo, dynamics and articulation.

These kinds of graphs are particularly useful for illustrating tempo and dynamics.⁷¹ For tempo, I use the 'Tempo (BPM) based on duration since previous item' function, which generates a graph that maps the temporal fluctuations between beats in a performance. The process for graphing dynamics is longer: first, I use the Vamp Plugin 'Power Curve: Smoothed Power' to generate amplitude data for the track, measured in decibels (dB); I then input this data into the Dyn-a-matic tool (available online as part of the Mazurka Project, on which more in a moment). This in turn generates a new set of data which represents dynamics in positive integers ranging from 0 to 100 (instead of negative ones, as with dBs).⁷² Given that the value of these integers is not specific to any particular amplitude measurement—Craig Sapp notes that it only approximates 'Decibel Sound Pressure Level (dB_{SPL})—in this project I denote them by adding the suffix 'Dyn' (for dynamics).⁷³ By loading this newly generated data back into Sonic Visualiser, a dynamics curve that matches up with the tempo curve can be created. In doing so, the interaction of tempo and dynamics can be more clearly followed and represented than with the raw data produced by the 'Power Curve: Smoothed Power' function.

It is worth discussing an example in some detail at this point because of how extensively I employ Sonic Visualiser graphs in this project. Fig. 4.2 depicts Yudina's tempo and dynamics in her live performance of Bach's Fugue in G major from Book II of the Well-Tempered Clavier.⁷⁴

⁷¹ All graphs referenced in Chapters 2–7 are contained in Volume II of this thesis. I include these graphs in a separate volume, rather than in an interspersed fashion within the main text, because the sheer number of them would unhelpfully disrupt the reading experience. By placing these graphs in a separate, exhaustive volume, I aim to demonstrate the quantitative rigour that underpins my analyses in a way that preserves the flow and readability of the written text.

⁷² This tool and its explanation are available online (see: <http://mazurka.org.uk/cgi-bin/dynamic>, accessed 21/10/2021).

⁷³ See Craig Sapp's explanation on the Mazurka Project website (<http://mazurka.org.uk/cgi-bin/dynamic>, accessed 21/10/2021).

⁷⁴ See Volume II of this thesis, page 44.

In this case, the graph captures the whole performance, though many graphs in my thesis depict only certain specified sections or passages. The X axis indicates that this performance is just over a minute long, and the Y axis depicts notches of tempo in BPM. There are two curves on the graph, one orange and one green. The orange curve refers to tempo, and the green curve refers to dynamics. There is a huge amount of possible information to glean from these curves, but I outline the important points in the blue text boxes, which indicate where a specific point in the graph relates to the music. These text boxes can refer either to tempo (BPM) or to dynamics (Dyn). In this example, my main observation is how Yudina gradually increases the tempo over the course of the performance: beginning at 54 BPM at bar 1, increasing in speed through the subsequent fugal entries, and eventually peaking in bar 47 at 74 BPM. I am less concerned with dynamics here, though I do point out that Yudina reaches a climactic point at bar 59, which is where the green curve reaches its peak (84.7 Dyn).

Each of my Sonic Visualiser graphs follows this model. Like Fig. 4.2, many of these graphs include a green dynamics curve even if I am not especially concerned with dynamics; the reverse is also true in cases where I make a point largely related to dynamics rather than tempo. The reason I often include both is because they are useful impressionistically: Fig. 4.2., for instance, gives a sense of how the dynamics ebb and flow over the course of the piece even if the details are neither explicated nor immediately pertinent to the point I am making. In other cases, especially if the second curve obscures the more relevant one, I include only the orange tempo curve or the green dynamics curve. The fundamental principle to remember, in this respect, is that these graphs serve to supplement, rather than replace, both the listening experience and my analytical descriptions. Occasionally, I include red text labels in my graphs to indicate important information of a different nature to that usually included in the blue text boxes, such as mistakes Yudina makes in performance (as in Figs. 3.37 and 3.39), articulation markings on spectrograms (Figs. 5.1–5.3), and composer indications (Fig. 5.10).

Along with the Dyn-a-matic tool, Sapp developed several other online resources as part of the Mazurka Project to represent data in musical ways, especially ones which foreground large-scale patterns. Chief among these is the Scape Plot Generator, which creates hierarchical graphs out of tempo or dynamics data.⁷⁵ Like Sonic Visualiser graphs, they illustrate fluctuations over time (i.e. they are to be read along the X axis), but they also draw out broader trends in tempo and dynamic changes over the course of a performance. Those which represent tempo are called timescapes, and the changes in tempo are represented through colour: green represents

⁷⁵ This tool is available online (see <http://mazurka.org.uk/software/online/>, accessed 29/04/2020). Sapp provides a deeper introduction to the mathematical principles behind it (hierarchical correlation) elsewhere (<http://mazurka.org.uk/ana/timescape/>, 21/10/2021).

what is interpreted as the global average tempo, while blue and red shades indicate periods which are slower and faster (respectively) than this average. The depth of the colour in question also varies: lighter blue and yellow indicate less extreme deviations from the average, while darker blue and red indicate the opposite. The Y axis displays these tempo trends at different levels: the bottom of the axis displays local tempo changes, while broader trends are made visible the higher up one reads the graph. The same tool can be used to represent dynamics: these are called dynascapes.

The usefulness of these kinds of visualisations is twofold: as well as displaying dramatically different tempo and dynamic profiles succinctly, they also make clear which performances are predominantly governed by a stable tempo and which vary more drastically. Once again, Bach's Fugue in G major is a useful example: Fig. 4.3 captures Yudina's studio recording of this piece, and Fig. 4.4 shows her live performance of it.⁷⁶ Observed from left to right, the overwhelming green of Fig. 4.3 depicts a broadly stable tempo with relatively minor deviations until the end of the piece. The larger blue streak on the right-hand edge indicates that Yudina is employing a short *rallentando* to bring the fugue to its conclusion. Fig. 4.4, on the other hand, shows that something much more volatile is going on. The much larger, dominating streaks of blue, green and red depict a performance that is slowly but surely accelerating, slowing only very slightly at the end. It represents, in a different way, what I observed in Fig. 4.2.

Though I do not make as frequent use of them in my thesis, spectrograms are particularly suited to scrutinising articulation. Spectrograms represent musical sound visually in three dimensions: the X axis displays frequency in Hertz (Hz) and the Y axis, as elsewhere, relates to time. As in the scape plots, loudness is represented through colour: dark green indicates the quietest frequencies, through yellow, orange and red for the loudest. In this way, a spectrographic image is very rich in musical detail: it reveals much about the timbre of a performance by indicating how strong the fundamentals and upper partials are in any given notes, chords or passages, and gives a sense of how connected or detached the sound is. Orange/red colours at the starts of tones indicate strong accentuation, whereas a lack of bright colours denotes softer articulation. The relative sense of legato/staccato in a given phrase is captured by the consistency of the note onsets on the graph: a smooth, uninterrupted line indicates legato, whereas gaps between onsets indicate staccato. What is particularly useful about spectrograms in this respect is their precision in capturing the relative degrees of legato/staccato playing.⁷⁷ Like tempo and dynamic graphs, I generated spectrograms through Sonic Visualiser.

⁷⁶ See volume II of this thesis, page 45.

⁷⁷ For more on spectrograms, see Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performances* (London: CHARM, 2009), ch. 8 pars. 56–61 and Ana Llorens, 'Creating Musical Structure

The extent to which these kinds of resources can supply reliable information is entirely dependent upon the sound quality of the recordings under scrutiny: recording practices vary from one sound engineer and studio to another, and technologies evolve over time. The fidelity of live recordings, at least in Yudina's case, often falls well short of desirable due to any combination of poor equipment, awkward microphone placement and inadequate tape preservation. While this is not as much of an issue for measuring tempo, it can seriously blunt the dynamics and timbre of an actual performance, and the data captured may often only vaguely approximate or even contradict the impression that the recording itself gives. This makes the comparison of live and studio recordings especially fraught, and on certain occasions the data simply cannot be invoked in any useful sense. The need for caution is paramount. Beyond the recorded document, there are aspects of Yudina's circumstances which potentially implicate what was captured. She often played in very cold or freezing conditions and on unmistakably out-of-tune instruments. There is a stark disparity between these hindrances and the relative comforts of most present-day western musicians, and these need to be borne in mind.⁷⁸

These graphing resources are useful starting points, but there is an important gap between the graphs themselves and musically meaningful analysis. To this end, I enlist the concept of shape, something which John Rink has advocated for extensively in analysis which hopes to be sensitive to performance and the concerns of performers. Reviewing Wallace Berry's *Musical Structure and Performance* in 1990, Rink commented that:

Whereas analysts concentrate on musical structure, performers attend primarily to musical 'shape', which is analogous to structure but tends to be more dynamic through its sensitivity to momentum, climax, and ebb and flow, comprising an outline, a general plan, a set of gestures unfolding in time. Attaining a coherent, intelligible 'shape' in performing a work is one of the principal goals of practice...⁷⁹

Along similar lines, Rink (accompanied by Neta Spiro and Nicolas Gold) later argued that 'performers have a seminal role to play' in 'creating musical structures or their counterpart – musical "shapes" – in each and every performance. These go well beyond the surface-level

through Performance: A Re-Interpretation of Brahms's Cello Sonatas' (Doctoral Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2018), 97–8.

⁷⁸ Having said this, Yudina often performed in Kyiv, and undoubtedly there are musicians at present there, elsewhere in Ukraine and beyond who are working in conditions that are possibly worse than those Yudina experienced.

⁷⁹ John Rink, 'Review of *Musical Structure and Performance* by Wallace Berry', *Music Analysis* 9/3 (October 1990), 319–339 (323–4). Rink reflects further on the idea of shape in John Rink, 'Analysis and (or?) Performance', John Rink (ed.), *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35–58.

expressive microstructure upon which much of the literature has focused to date'.⁸⁰ This latter point is backed up in Helen Prior's research, who has shown 'the flexibility of the term' as used by performing musicians and 'its ability to be used in relation to all levels of the musical structure', from a single note to an entire section or movement.⁸¹

All of this has implications for analytical approaches which, as Rink writes, 'need not and indeed should not be undertaken exclusively or even primarily with regard to its notational representation – i.e. the score – but on the basis of how music is enacted and effected over time'.⁸² This has led Ana Llorens to seek alternative routes of explanation in theories of narrativity:

...a theoretical reinterpretation of musical structure through the lens of performance – and performers – entails not only a diachronic perspective, but also the acceptance of metaphors of motion, change, energy, tension, resolution, transformation, shape, time, sound, and narrative, among others. Even if the idea of narrative seems fanciful or questionable, it ultimately refers to assimilation of sounds as organised diachronically in terms of a continuously progressing 'discourse' or 'plot'.⁸³

If all of this is to risk pinning shape too closely to structure, a much broader definition is provided by Zohar Eitan, Renee Timmers and Mordechai Adler:

The multiplicity of the options for modulating the various dimensions of sound to produce a variety of possible mappings, interacting in complex ways, requires an efficient means of managing the overall dynamic profile, and its affective associations, from moment to moment through a performance of a score. What is required is a concept that maps easily between domains, on any hierarchical level, and that can apply equally to scores, performances and experiences, and within them to such aspects as narrative structure, form, loudness, brightness, tempo, speed, density, register, intensity, harmonic or interval patterning, pitch direction, sound spectrum, distance and timbre—all the dimensions of score, sound and performance that we have discussed here. This is what shape achieves.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ John Rink, Neta Spiro and Nicolas Gold, 'Motive, Gesture and the Analysis of Performance', Anthony Gritten and Elaine King (eds), *New Perspectives on Music and Gesture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 267–292 (268).

⁸¹ Helen Prior, 'Shape as Understood by Performing Musicians', Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and Helen Prior (eds), *Music and Shape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 216–241 (227; 239).

⁸² John Rink, 'The (F)utility of Performance Analysis', Mine Doğantan-Dack (ed.), *Artistic Practice as Research in Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 127–148 (130).

⁸³ Llorens, 'Creating Musical Structure through Performance', 251.

⁸⁴ Zohar Eitan, Renee Timmers and Mordechai Adler, 'Cross-Modal Correspondences and Affect in a Schubert Song', Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and Helen Prior (eds), *Music and Shape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 58–86 (82).

For its flexibility in encompassing all kinds of musical parameters, its relevance to how performers think, and its sensitivity to the process and narrative of performance, the notion of shape directs my analytical language in this thesis. I invoke it in three chief respects, though what follows is intended to be a set of broad guiding principles rather than an exhaustive lexicon of terms or questions. The first is in relation to large-scale patterns: how does Yudina shape entire movements or pieces of music, and how does she use expressive parameters to create and mark sections within them? I have argued elsewhere that the performer has considerable agency and control over large-scale musical structures, and that analysts should be wary of allowing score-based formal preconceptions to determine how we make sense of the performer's creative input.⁸⁵ I follow this principle in this thesis in inferring large-scale shapes in Yudina's performances. The second respect relates to Yudina's local expressive inflections: how does she shape music on a bar-to-bar or phrase level, and what kind of role do such inflections play? Does she create recurring local patterns in her interpretations, akin to what Rink, Spiro and Gold have called performance 'motives'?⁸⁶ The third respect relates to expressive climactic points that Yudina marks in her performances. Does Yudina create points of musical arrival? If so, which moments does Yudina seem to emphasise as especially important, and how does she do this? In turn, how do such moments relate to the rest of a particular passage, section or movement?

There is one major and obvious element which falls outside of the analytical purview I have sketched out, and that is the role of the body and pianistic gesture. With no extant video recordings of Yudina performing, it has not been possible to incorporate Yudina's performing body into my analysis, other than with fleeting references to what can be inferred about her hands. This is an inevitable shortcoming of working with sound recordings. Because of the substantial amount of music I discuss in this thesis, I do not provide conventional music examples (i.e. extracts from scores) in my analyses. In the chapters that follow, I often discuss very large examples of Yudina's recordings in the space of a single paragraph. In many cases these consist of large sections of (or indeed entire) works or movements. Targeted musical examples are, in this way, less helpful than consulting the actual scores, which are invaluable to following the analyses. All but one of these scores are available online, and I provide links to each of these in the 'References' section of this thesis.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Adam Behan, 'Large-scale Structure, Performance and Brahms's Op. 119 No. 2', *Music Analysis* 40/1 (March 2021), 104–30.

⁸⁶ Such motives have been defined by Rink, Spiro and Gold as 'expressive patterns in timing, dynamics, articulation, timbre and/or other performative parameters that maintain their identity upon literal or varied repetition'. Rink, Spiro and Gold, 'Motive, Gesture, and the Analysis of Performance', 267.

⁸⁷ See page 198 of this volume. The one score unavailable online is Volkonsky's *Musica Stricta*, of which I discuss the first eight bars of the first movement in Chapter 5 and for which I provide a music example.

I conclude this chapter with a few brief notes on the written historical sources which form an important part of this thesis. Most of them are difficult to access and some I have acquired only through the generosity of others. Central to my research has been the publication of a large amount of Yudina's correspondence in the last decade of her life in a book entitled *Maria Yudina, Pierre Souvtchinsky: Correspondance et Documents (1959–1970)* by Jean-Pierre Collot.⁸⁸ As the title suggests, it consists for the most part of exchanges between Yudina and Pierre Souvtchinsky, a Russian émigré who was close friends with Stravinsky and heavily involved in the promotion of new music in Paris during these years.⁸⁹ Many other important contemporary figures crop up in this correspondence—including Stravinsky, Theodor Adorno, Fred Prieberg and Arvo Pärt—and Collot includes other testimonies, essays and letters that are very valuable in understanding and contextualising Yudina's artistry and to which I refer variously throughout this thesis.⁹⁰ In many of her letters, Yudina was exuberant in her use of punctuation and underlining to add emphasis and vigour to her words: unless otherwise specified, all underlining, italics, extra punctuations and capitalisations are her own as transferred into print by Collot.

While the publication of Collot's book has provided me with unprecedented access to Yudina's letters and essays, it must be acknowledged that my reliance on this volume is linguistically cumbersome: Collot translates Yudina's correspondence and documents from both Russian and German into French, extracts of which I translate here into English. This has required a particularly sensitive handling of the contents of these documents, and in certain cases I have consulted with Collot personally in order to clarify original wordings where multiple stages of translation could obscure them.⁹¹ Chapters 6 and 7, however, undertake close readings of two essays that Yudina wrote near the end of her life that accompany two of her last sets of recordings.⁹² Given the depth into which I go analytically and interpretatively, I commissioned professional translations of these essays from the original Russian into English.⁹³

⁸⁸ See footnote 22 of this chapter for the full reference for this book.

⁸⁹ Levitz, Penka and Grabarchuk, 'Stravinsky's Cold War', 273–4.

⁹⁰ I refer also to Levitz, Penka and Grabarchuk, 'Stravinsky's Cold War', 273–319, though less frequently. This chapter of Levitz's edited volume *Stravinsky and his World* features English translations of a selected correspondence between Souvtchinsky, Yudina and Stravinsky in advance of the latter's return to the Soviet Union for his 80th birthday celebrations in 1962.

⁹¹ For instance, see page 109, footnote 51 of this volume, pertaining to the discussion of Yudina's idea of 'rigour'.

⁹² One other important published essay is her 'Thoughts on Musical Interpretation', referenced earlier in this chapter (see footnote 48).

⁹³ The original essays can be found in Kuznetsov and Aksyuk (eds), *Marija Veniaminovna Yudina* (Moscow, 1978), 277–99. This book is listed in Razumovskaya's *New Grove* entry as edited solely by Aksyuk. However, in his volume, Collot ascribes editorial responsibility to A. M. Kuznetov (Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 27). Collot has pointed out to me (personal correspondence) that this book and its resources were compiled by Kuznetsov, who is responsible for the publishing of a large amount of Yudina's correspondence and documents in Russia in the later twentieth century. The confusion seems to arise from the front matter of the book, which specifies Aksyuk as a general editor and Kuznetsov as responsible for drafting and preparing the book's text and notes. Throughout my thesis, I refer to them both as editors.

The Stage and the Studio, Part I: Yudina and Romantic Music, 1947–64

In an essay published in 2012, Mine Doğantan-Dack wrote the following:

During the live event, the performer makes decisions based on his or her *belief* in a phenomenon that does not yet exist, that he or she hopes to bring about by surpassing what has been achieved in the practice room, by sometimes taking risks and acting *wisely* enough just at the right moment following the subjective evaluation of the expressive potential of a given moment.¹

By ‘the live event’, Doğantan-Dack is referring to the act of performing in a recital or concert in front of an audience, and as a performer, she is speaking from her own experience. As well as many other things, her account of performing live elucidates the suppleness of the activity and the extent to which it lacks predestination. Moreover, it marks out the specific setting of a performance as a very fundamental contextual frame for understanding that performance, one which can inform and specify a performer’s aesthetic actions. It serves as the point of departure for this chapter, which is the first of two to probe the extent to which Yudina’s interpretative strategies varied across live and studio recordings.

Discussing live recordings is not the same thing as discussing live performance, and the proposition to compare live and studio recordings immediately raises several questions about the nature of liveness and the distinction between what counts as ‘live’ and ‘not live’. The traditional, and perhaps seemingly intuitive, definition of liveness—what Philip Auslander calls ‘classic liveness’—is that it ‘involves spatial and temporal co-presence of performers and audience members’: listeners, for instance, might occupy the same room as Yudina at the same time as she performs a Schubert piano sonata.² The key word in such an understanding, as he puts it, ‘is *immediate*, which suggests that the traditional definition of live performance is founded on an opposition between the immediate and the mediated.’³ We may wish to set this up in contrast to studio-based music-making, in which performers are afforded the opportunity to make multiple takes and to perfect their performance before any listeners (beyond the studio) hear it.

¹ Mine Doğantan-Dack, ‘The Art of Research in Live Music Performance’, *Music Performance Research* 5 (2012), 44.

² Philip Auslander, ‘Live and technologically mediated performance’, Tracy C. Davis (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 107–19 (112).

³ *Ibid.*, 107.

Much recent literature on liveness has demonstrated that such a simple binary is fraught with problems. As Auslander shows, the concept of liveness became current only with the advent of radio broadcasts of concerts, when listeners lost the ability to tell whether the source of the music in question was performing musicians or a revolving disc:

Unlike the gramophone, radio does not allow you to see the sources of the sounds you are hearing; therefore, you can never be sure if they are live or recorded. Radio's characteristic form of sensory deprivation crucially undermined the clear-cut distinction between recorded and live sound. It appears then, that the concept of the live was brought into being not just when it became possible to think in those terms—that is, when recording technologies such as the gramophone were in place to serve as a ground against which the figure of the live could be perceived—but only when it became urgent to do so.⁴

This leads Auslander to propose that 'the live is actually an effect of mediatization, not the other way around', and that it was the development of recording technologies that made 'classic liveness' a distinct perceptual category.⁵ Not only does liveness have a specific historical genesis, but its meaning has changed over the course of the twentieth century. This is in response both to 'the development of new media technologies' and to discourses of authenticity within the musical economy.⁶ On the latter, Sarah Thornton has shown, for instance, how the Musicians' Union in Britain used the 'ideology of "liveness" ... "to combat the menace" of recorded music. The Union initiated its "live" music campaign in the fifties, adopted the slogan "Keep Music Live" in 1963 and appointed a full-time official to oversee the project in 1965.'⁷ This feeds into the wider assumption 'that the live event is "real" and that mediatized events are secondary and somehow artificial reproductions of the real', and speaks to a more 'general technophobia' that Paul Sanden argues is 'still clearly present in much musical discourse'.⁸

New media technologies, too, have had a profound effect on what constitutes 'liveness', and the most important of these for my purposes here is the idea of the live recording. As Auslander notes, the expression 'recorded live' seems oxymoronic, but it is a concept we accept unquestioningly. 'In the case of live recordings,' he writes, 'the audience shares neither a temporal frame nor a physical location with the performers, but experiences the performance

⁴ Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2008), 59.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁶ Auslander, 'Live and technologically mediated performance', 109.

⁷ Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 42.

⁸ Auslander, *Liveness*, 3; Paul Sanden, *Liveness in Modern Music: Musicians, Technology and the Perception of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 21.

later ... and in a different place and time from where it first occurred.⁹ In that sense, live recordings break the basic requisites of co-temporality and co-spatiality, yet remain unproblematically 'live'. Live recordings, then, constitute another epicycle of liveness, one captured in Sanden's category, 'the liveness of fidelity': 'Music is *live* when it is perceived as faithful to its initial utterance, its unmediated (or *less* mediated) origins, or an imagined unmediated ideal.'¹⁰ For instance, live recordings may sit above studio recordings due to 'a mistrust of "studio trickery"', and the latter's inclusion of recording techniques like 'retakes, editing, and artificial reverberation.'¹¹

In fact, Sanden's 'liveness of fidelity' is only one of seven conceptual categories of liveness that he proposes, all of which emerge from changing discourses: along with spatiality, temporality and fidelity, Sanden identifies the 'liveness of spontaneity' (music is live when it demonstrates the unpredictability of human performance), 'corporeal liveness' (music is live when it demonstrates a connection to an acoustic sounding body), 'interactive liveness' (music is live when it emerges from interactions between performers and/or performers and listeners) and 'virtual liveness' (the perception of liveness created through mediatisation).¹² As Sanden's categories suggest, liveness is a hugely variable construct. Its malleability has led Auslander to offer a reconceptualisation along phenomenological rather than ontological terms. As he puts it, 'we cannot treat the qualities traditionally assigned to live performance that putatively differentiate it from technologically mediated performance as inherent or ontological characteristics.'¹³ As a phenomenological concept, liveness emerges as rooted fundamentally in perception. 'Liveness is intrinsically linked with perception,' writes Sanden, 'and therefore highly dependent on the one perceiving the musical performance.'¹⁴ Put more succinctly, liveness 'represents a perceived *trace* of that which *could be live*'.¹⁵

Nicholas Cook has drawn on these reorientations of liveness in order to rethink the dynamic between recordings and performance. As he puts it, classical, jazz and popular musics 'share a hierarchical way of thinking that treats one side of the equation between live performance and recording as the original, the real thing, and the other as a copy or substitute.'¹⁶ To move beyond this, Cook appropriates the idea of diegesis from film studies: 'Neither films nor sound recordings signify as traces of real-world events. They signify by prompting acts of

⁹ Auslander, 'Live and technologically mediated performance', 110.

¹⁰ Sanden, *Liveness in Modern Music*, 12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹² *Ibid.*, 11.

¹³ Auslander, 'Live and technologically mediated performance', 108.

¹⁴ Sanden, *Liveness in Modern Music*, 113.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁶ Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 356.

interpretation by listeners, through which those events are understood as elements in an unfolding, imaginatively constituted reality.¹⁷ But unlike in films, ‘musical diegesis takes place in the real time of listening: we experience the music as a continuously unfolding event in which we recover the signs of the body from the sound, map them onto our own bodies, feel the music’s movement as our movement. That is to say, we hear recordings as performances.’¹⁸ In this sense, ‘[i]t makes no difference how the record was produced.’¹⁹

With this perceptual model of liveness as a backdrop, the musicological merit of an investigation whose focus is the distinction between recordings of live performances and recordings made in studios might seem unclear. The important question, however, is: whose perception? Auslander refers to the qualities of liveness as phenomenological ‘in the sense that they are not characteristics of the performance itself but things experienced and felt by performers and spectators.’²⁰ Crucially, this formulation includes both musicians and listeners, but the orientation towards perception leans far more heavily towards the latter than the former, as when he notes that the ‘emerging definition of liveness may be built primarily around the audience’s affective experience.’²¹ Similarly, Sanden proceeds from the simple position that

Liveness is *lived*. Of course, to recognize this is to beg the question: lived by whom? Although I do not take up the issue of identifying and querying specific audiences, I do proceed mindful of the general idea that different audiences may have different understandings of what makes a particular musical experience live.²²

In other words, the issue of perception—perhaps more broadly, the phenomenological understanding of liveness—revolves predominantly around the listener’s experience. I would like to complement this by focusing instead on the agency and subjectivity of the performer. There are clear, compelling reasons for doing so with respect to live and studio recordings, not least how the different environments of the stage and the studio might affect the way a performer plays, their aesthetic choices, the risks they venture, the mistakes they make, and so on. Doğantan-Dack argues that ‘there is ample anecdotal evidence indicating that for performing musicians there are significant phenomenological, aesthetic and indeed existential differences between the experiences of performing live and in the recording studio.’²³ A performer might do

¹⁷ Ibid., 366.

¹⁸ Ibid., 367.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Auslander, ‘Live and technologically mediated performance’, 108.

²¹ Ibid., 112.

²² Sanden, *Liveness in Modern Music*, 32.

²³ Doğantan-Dack, ‘The art of research’, 36.

many things in one that they would never do in the other, and vice versa. The most obvious difference is the management of error: there are no retakes in a classical concert that do not come with grave aesthetic and reputational ramifications, whereas multiple attempts at the same passage have been a routine part of the studio recording process since the widespread adoption of magnetic tape after World War II.²⁴ As Daniel Leech-Wilkinson notes, '[f]rom this point on, records aimed to transmit something more perfect than a live performance, more perfect than any performer could achieve in one unedited take—more perfect, and yet less real', what Simon Zagorski-Thomas calls a 'sonic cartoon'.²⁵ It is in this sense that Edward Said has referred to the modern concert hall as 'a sort of precipice, a place of danger and excitement at the edge', and 'an extreme occasion, something neither ordinary nor repeatable, a perilous experience full of constant risk and potential disaster albeit in a confined space'.²⁶ But this works both ways, not only in terms of the 'red light fever' that many performers profess to experience in the confines of a studio booth, but also in terms of the significance of smaller slips and mistakes. As Susan Tomes puts it:

In a concert, such [mistakes] hardly matter because the unique moment of performance, shared by the audience, means that no one has trouble understanding a minor blemish for what it is. But when it happens on a recording, the whole team knows the take is spoilt. A blemish, preserved for ever on disc to be repeated every time someone listens to it, can assume the proportions of sabotage.²⁷

This could be extended to discs purposefully marketed as 'live recordings' which, according to Robert Philip, 'cannot be taken at face value' as straightforward transmissions of a live event because, 'since the 1950s, when tape-recording and editing became available, it has become increasingly common to record retakes and edit them into the concert recording to cover unsatisfactory passages'.²⁸ But recorded live performances may not necessarily be intended for commercial reproduction and distribution in the way that studio recordings are. The live recordings by Yudina that I discuss in this chapter were all radio broadcasts which were also captured on tape, and none of them was released in Yudina's lifetime.²⁹ The relative permanence

²⁴ Simon Zagorski-Thomas, *The Musicology of Record Production* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 61–2.

²⁵ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performances* (London: CHARM, 2009), ch. 3 par. 85; Zagorski-Thomas, *Musicology of Record Production*, 53–6.

²⁶ Edward Said, 'Glenn Gould, the Virtuoso as Intellectual', *Raritan* 20/1 (2000), 4.

²⁷ Susan Tomes, 'Learning to live with recording', Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and John Rink (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 10–12 (11).

²⁸ Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 49.

²⁹ Jean-Pierre Collot (personal correspondence) has confirmed this to me. Such recordings have, of course, since been included on commercial reissues of Yudina's work, which is how I have been able to access them.

of the studio recording, and its associated sense of ‘definitiveness’, comes with its own wider aesthetic expectations and renders it subject to ongoing scrutiny, criticism, discussion, judgement and comparison as it circulates. In western classical musical cultures, where value judgements and aesthetic hierarchies abound, these factors are of reputational importance for performers: it may not be artistically expedient to attach oneself permanently to daring interpretative choices that one might very willingly try out in the ephemerality of the concert hall. Her live recordings, on the other hand, were not intended to form repeatable musical utterances like her studio recordings, and this makes live/studio comparisons especially interesting.

My analytical focus on recordings of live concert performances and studio-based performances aims to draw out the manner in which Yudina’s interpretative strategies varied depending on performance setting. I do this first to understand her own artistic practice in terms of both romantic (this chapter) and baroque (Chapter 4) repertoire, but I intend also to nuance, or perhaps supplement, current theories of liveness with the aid of performance analysis. Moreover, I assess the implications of my findings for histories of performance style, though I save this until the conclusion to Chapter 4.

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There are few compositions of which multiple recordings by Yudina exist. The piano works of Franz Schubert are an exception (Table 3.1).³⁰ The live performances come from two recitals, the first at the Philharmonic Hall in Kyiv in 1954 and the second in the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatory in 1956. The first of these was of blockbuster proportions: on top of the Schubert, Yudina performed Beethoven sonatas and variations, arrangements of W. A. Mozart and J. S. Bach, and selections of Sergei Prokofiev, Alexander Borodin, and Modest Musorgsky. Her more modest Small Hall recital included Mozart’s *Fantasy in D minor, K. 397* and Schubert *impromptus*. The studio recordings of the *impromptus* date from a series of sessions in the summer of 1964, during which she also made the recording of ‘Am Meer’. Her studio version of the *Piano Sonata in B flat*, however, is one of her earliest extant recordings, dating from 13 August 1947. All of the live recordings, then, predate the studio recordings, with the exception of the sonata.

I analyse each of these pairs of performances in this chapter, and use them to point out increasingly pronounced discrepancies between Yudina’s live and studio recordings. First, I

³⁰ I also include Franz Liszt’s solo piano arrangement of Schubert’s song ‘Am Meer’.

Composition	Live	Studio
'Am Meer', No. 4 from Schwanengesang, S. 560 (Schubert/Liszt)	4 April 1954, Kyiv	Summer 1964
Impromptu in E flat major Op. 90 No. 2, D. 899	15 January 1956, Moscow	Summer 1964
Impromptu in A flat major Op. 142 No. 2, D. 935	15 January 1956, Moscow	Summer 1964
Piano Sonata in B flat major, D. 960	4 April 1954, Kyiv	13 August 1947

Table 3.1. Yudina's Schubert recordings in live and studio contexts

consider the Impromptu in E flat major and the third and fourth movements of the Piano Sonata in B flat, focusing predominantly on local details and concluding sections. I next turn to examples of larger musical shaping in her recordings of 'Am Meer' and the first movement of the Piano Sonata in B flat, showing how Yudina's live and studio performances diverge more significantly from one another. I bring my analysis of local and larger details together in my discussion of the Impromptu in A flat, before turning to the quite different case of the second movement of the Piano Sonata in B flat. Drawing my observations from each analysis together, I highlight the extremes Yudina regularly reaches in her live performances but avoids in the studio. I conclude by extrapolating this out beyond Schubert, briefly examining some of her Beethoven and Schumann performances, and suggest that it is indicative of a particular attitude to performing romantic music live.

The opening sixteen bars of the third movement of the Piano Sonata in B flat are a good place to start because they demonstrate a point that should be borne in mind: that there is, as some might expect, a significant amount of overlap between Yudina's live and studio performances. Timescapes can be quite useful indicators of overall interpretative stability (Figs. 3.1–3.2), and for this movement they indicate an interpretation which, following a slightly slower beginning, settles into a broadly constant tempo for the remainder of the performance. There are many interesting similarities at a more local level in terms of tempo: in the first sixteen bars of the studio recording (Fig. 3.3), Yudina characterises the triple-time rhythm by lingering on the first beat of each bar. In doing so, she establishes a long-short-short, or dactylic, feel to the scherzo. As she transfers the opening eight-bar melody to the left hand (and the accompaniment to the right) in bar 9, this pattern remains. Dynamically, though, she varies the sound, leaning into the melody a little more at bars 9–12, then pulling back for the leaping octaves on F sharp and G in bars 13–14.

The opening sixteen bars of Yudina's 1954 live performance mirror this temporal shape very closely (Fig. 3.4): the anomalous spike in tempo in the middle of bar 3 (to 365 BPM) does not audibly alter the broader sounding effect. Her dynamics are consistent with the studio recording, too: Yudina treats the left/right hand exchange of theme and accompaniment at bar 9 more loudly and leans especially on the downbeat of bar 12, then pulling back at bars 13–14, though this time not bringing out the B flat turn as prominently. In bar 16, she muddles the E flat cadence by accidentally holding on to the leading note, but apart from this mistake we have on our hands so far what could be called two renditions of the same interpretation: relatively consistent tempos, and two iterations of a theme whose dynamic levels are respectively similar.³¹

Comparing the two recordings of the Impromptu in E flat major again draws attention to similarities in Yudina's use of local features. Once more, timescapes (Figs. 3.5–3.6) demonstrate that each performance operates within its own consistent overall temporal register (though the live recording is notably faster). The steadiness of her running triplets shifts the emphasis onto her use of dynamics: in the opening eight bars in both performances (Figs. 3.7–3.8), Yudina treats the A flat chord at bar 6 as the goal of the opening phrase, marking it with a large dynamic accent; then, she draws attention to the second beats of bars 7–8, emphasising them with further dynamic accents. What unfolds from here in Yudina's studio performance is a kind of metrical contest between first- and second-beat accents. Bar 25 initiates the move away from the home key, and Yudina marks the change by leaning into the first beat of the bass octaves in every second bar (bar 26: 78.2 Dyn; bar 28: 78.2 Dyn; bar 30: 79.3 Dyn; bar 32: 79.3 Dyn). In doing so, she creates a two-bar iambic effect (Fig. 3.9). But this becomes ruptured at bar 37 as Yudina—recalling the pattern at bars 6–8—marks the second beat with a strong dynamic accent (37.2: 80.5 Dyn) and again at bar 39, following Schubert's *ff* markings. She applies this pattern once again with the dominant minor ninth chords at bars 44–6, capping it off with a final mid-bar accent at bar 49.

The dynamics of the live recording are harder to compare here than in the third movement of the sonata, but the similarities come through. Yudina invokes the same iambic pattern in her live performance from bar 25 onwards (bar 26: 81.8 Dyn; bar 28: 81.9 Dyn; bar 30: 80.2 Dyn) though it seems less pronounced than in the studio recording (Fig. 3.10). She underplays the bass *ff* at bars 37.2 and 39.2, waiting instead for the dominant minor ninth chords at bars 44–6 to destabilise the established metre.

³¹ Despite the difficulties with comparing recordings across live and studio contexts here, the dynamics curves in both Sonic Visualiser graphs are instructive insofar as they capture quite a similar level of projection.

The respective codas at bar 251 to the performances are another matter entirely. The urgency with which Yudina concludes the live performance is not matched in her studio recording, the end to which is much more measured. In the studio rendition (Fig. 3.11), Yudina continues to place temporal weight on the accented downbeats, slowing (for instance) at bars 252 (161 BPM) and 254 (168 BPM); especially at bars 259 (148 BPM) and 260 (154 BPM) with the arrival of the theme an octave higher; and finally with the longer pull-backs at bars 273 (149 BPM) and 275 (109 BPM) which wind down the tempo conclusively. In her live performance (Fig. 3.12), bar 260 (195 BPM) is as slow as Yudina gets once the theme appears in the higher octave, and she instead builds momentum towards the final cadence, this time speeding up through bar 273 (318 BPM) and maintaining a much faster pace through bar 275. Where in the recording studio she maintains her composure, on stage she allows herself to let loose.

Yudina's approach to the fourth movement of the Piano Sonata in B flat major is similarly consistent across stage and studio settings when looked at in broad brushstrokes. Her studio recording leans on the quicker side for the most part, but both again sit within a consistent temporal space throughout which hovers between the 160–90 BPM range, at moments spilling over either side. Once again, timescapes are useful for pointing out the large-scale similarities over the 500 or so bars (Figs. 3.13–3.14). Like the Impromptu in E flat major, however, the endings diverge remarkably: in Fig. 3.14, the bright red shade at the very end of Yudina's live timescape indicates a much faster finish than in her studio performance. This moment is the Presto section from the upbeat to bar 513, from which in both cases Yudina takes off at speed, hitting upwards of 200 BPM consistently. But it is the *ƒ* chords, separated by bars of rests, at bars 521–4 that really distinguish these two finishes: in the studio performance (Fig. 3.15), Yudina retains these large breaks and restrains herself for the arrival of B flat major at bar 525; in her live performance (Fig. 3.16), Yudina accelerates instead, effectively ignores the rests, speeds through the B flat coda and does not slow down in any meaningful sense for the final chords; by contrast, she savours these chords in her studio rendition with a noticeable final *rallentando*.

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The final moments of Yudina's live performances of the E flat impromptu and the fourth movement of the Piano Sonata in B flat major indicate that her wider interpretative shaping could differ quite profoundly, and the next two analyses investigate further examples of these kinds of discrepancies. Differences like these can often hang on one particular climactic moment,

as is the case with 'Am Meer'. There are some small initial discernible differences in her performances—the studio version leans into the downbeat of bar 6 in a way that the live performance does not, whereas the live version points up bar 4—but the two openings are otherwise quite similar (Figs. 3.17–3.18). Both pause before the opening of the melody at bar 3, linger on the arrival of the subdominant in bars 5 and 9, and lean into the downbeats of bars 10 and 11, slightly moving along the upbeat quavers to do so.

An important change in direction occurs in the tremolando section. In the beginning of the studio version (Fig. 3.19), Yudina persistently emphasises the strong beats of the melody, marked with both dynamic and agogic accents. She slows down and presses into the right-hand G of bar 13.1 (29 BPM) and the d of bar 13.3 (35 BPM). She rushes through the subsequent demisemiquavers before slowing again to mark the dotted crotchet D of bar 14.3 (38 BPM), and then picks up the pace to the downbeat of bar 15 (61 BPM), the loudest chord in this passage (86.1 Dyn). All of this leads up to the resolution to the supertonic at bar 17: she takes her time in bar 16, individually savouring each of the four right-hand crotchets, and builds tension which climaxes at the arrival of D minor on the downbeat of bar 17 (41 BPM), after which the demisemiquavers wither away. In her live performance, however, Yudina turns this approach on its head (Fig. 3.20): she rushes from bar 15 towards the end of bar 16 (starting at 50 BPM and reaching 104 BPM).

Bar 24 signals the return of the opening material, this time stretched to chords spanning over four octaves. Here, Yudina sustains two very different approaches in her recordings. In her studio recording, she adopts the same approach to dynamics in bars 24–32 as she did in the opening twelve bars (depicted by the two large blue flares, Fig. 3.21), and the same goes for the two tremolando sections (depicted by the deep red flares). In short, she oscillates between quiet and loud overall approaches to these sections, and in bars 24–32 she returns to her peaceful opening atmosphere, projecting the right-hand melody but maintaining the left-hand chords as unintrusive and modest rumblings. Yudina conjures this same peaceful atmosphere in the opening twelve bars of the live performance, but her approach to dynamics is entirely different in bars 24–32 (Fig. 3.22). Here, Yudina stretches the returning theme far beyond its opening solitude: she robustly projects the right hand and supports it with much stormier bass chords. Bar 28 is a particularly good example, where Yudina resolutely hammers the repeated tonic chords, as if willing the piece to end there.

This effect is bolstered by the speed at which she plays this section: whereas her opening maintains a steady pulse around the 40 BPM mark, here (Fig. 3.23) Yudina regularly exceeds 50 BPM, reaching as high as 67 BPM (bar 26). And what she interprets as a gentle afterthought in

bars 31–2 in the studio—with the middle register quietly echoing the top octave—becomes something much more boisterous in her live performance, where she strongly brings out the ascending octaves. In the studio version, Yudina lulls the listener into silence, quietening until the crotchet rest at the last beat of bar 32; instead of gentle comfort, her live performance foreshadows the return of the tremolando, which she introduces without a break (ignoring the rest in bar 32). Indeed, the atmosphere of this section in her live performance makes the oncoming tremolando feel as if it has always been hanging over bars 24–32; in the studio performance, it arrives unexpectedly. Yudina’s live performance culminates at bar 40, where she bursts upwards, playing wrong notes as she does, and ratchets the tension higher again in bar 42.³²

This is a more drastic and explosive Yudina than we have witnessed so far, and the same kind of strategy is found in the more extended example of the first movement of the Piano Sonata in B flat major. Space is too limited to analyse the intricacies of her two performances of it justly, but they offer an opportunity to spotlight her handling of large-scale patterns in particular: apart from its concluding first- and second-time bars, the exposition consists of 116 bars which Yudina temporally separates into six quite distinct sections. Working for the moment from the studio recording, she adopts an exceptionally broad tempo for the opening B flat major theme that for the most part hovers at 50–60 BPM, dramatically increasing for the G flat major theme after bar 19 up to around 100–110 BPM, and gradually accelerating through this theme up to 156 BPM until the triplet chords at bars 34–5. Yudina settles into a new tempo for the return of the B flat major theme—at about 80–90 BPM—and accelerates before settling into a tempo that mainly fluctuates between 100–120 BPM following the onset of the F sharp minor theme at bar 48. The F major theme at bar 80 is faster again, consistently hitting over 130 BPM, and for her final section—still in the dominant, preparing the way for the return of the tonic in the exposition repeat—Yudina drops the tempo at bar 99 and continues to slow down through to bar 106 where the tempo wanders between 60–90 BPM.

This tempo plan is more easily grasped through Fig. 3.24. There is no basic pulse that unifies the exposition; rather, Yudina’s temporal decisions create distinguishable musical sections. She follows the same tempo plan in her live performance to a very close degree: as with many of her other live performances, this one is generally faster than her studio recording, and she chooses to mark the G flat major theme at bar 19 with a larger immediate increase in tempo,

³² It is difficult to be certain given the quality of the recording, but Yudina is either leaping to top g octaves instead of the written E octaves in the chords at bar 42, or the power of her playing is causing the overtones of the piano to resonate so strongly as to project that top G a third above. Either way, the E octaves are much more firmly centred in the studio version.

leaving less for the *accelerando* that builds towards bars 34–5. But the overall plan, as Fig. 3.25 shows, is quite similar.

Yudina's choices in dynamics significantly change the shape of her interpretation from the development onwards. She plays much of the development section considerably louder in her live performance (Fig. 3.26). Both renditions open quietly at bar 118, but by the octave repeat of the minor theme at bar 122 in her live performance, Yudina has begun to project the melody much more prominently. She maintains these loud dynamics into the A major triplet theme at bar 131 and dips only slightly in amplitude for the change to D flat major at bar 150 (marked *pp* in the score): the right-hand melody remains robust and the repeated bass D flats snarl. Likewise, Yudina ignores the score's *fp* marking and holds the loud dynamic level through the D minor theme at bar 174, finally arriving at a quiet dynamic with the return of the opening development theme, now in D minor, at the upbeat to bar 188.

In her studio recording (Fig. 3.27), Yudina opens the development much more quietly and maintains this low dynamic level into the A major triplet theme at bar 131. Instead of building to one major climax, she uses loud dynamics to emphasise particular chords, before pulling the dynamic level down again: the downbeat G sharp minor chords at bars 137–8, the B major chords at the downbeats of bars 140–1, the B flat minor chords at bars 146–7, and finally the B flat major chord at bar 149 are cases in point. She lowers the dynamics dramatically for the D flat major theme, swelling for the bass triplets in bars 154 and 158 but hushing after, and builds to her main climax in the development section with a large crescendo towards D minor at bar 173. Apart from the descending slurred bass quavers at bar 183 and the occasional grumbling trill, the subsequent D minor material remains *pp* until a slight increase at bar 200.

As was pointed out, Yudina's larger shaping of the exposition (and indeed, for the most part, the recapitulation) remains relatively consistent across performances, and the quite distinctive musical decisions involved—particularly with regard to tempo—suggests that both performances share a well-prepared interpretative understanding. The two development sections, however, diverge from one another significantly. Her live performance of the development section is a much more explosive experience, as if Yudina has succumbed to the adrenaline of the stage and committed to an immensely impassioned performance.

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Many of the expressive variables in Yudina's interpretations that I've discussed in different performances—local inflections, wider temporal and dynamic shapings, climactic points—

coalesce in her two recordings of the Impromptu in A flat major. The opening theme in her live performance stands out for its rhythm: especially noticeable are the A flat major chords on the downbeats of bars 4 and 8 which mark the high points of the tempo in the opening phrase (Fig. 3.28): bars 1–4 see a gradual acceleration to the downbeat of bar 4 (up to 113 BPM), and likewise in bars 5–8 (up to 117 BPM). Indeed, this pattern is a feature of each of the opening eight bars: 94 BPM is reached by bar 2.1; 94 BPM by bar 3.1; and then 113 BPM by bar 4.1. Bars 5–8 mirror this: 92 BPM by bar 5.1; 100 BPM by 6.1; 114 BPM by bar 7.1; and 117 BPM by bar 8.1. What makes these two A flat major chords so prominent, then, is that they are part of a broader pattern of bar-level accelerations of which they are the culmination in each case. And this four-bar scheme characterises the rest of the opening sixteen-bar period, its repeat and later recurrences throughout the performance.

Yudina's approach to these opening sixteen bars in her studio recording retains some of the traces of this interpretation (Fig. 3.29): the downbeat of bar 2 marks a high point in the tempo (112 BPM), and she pushes through to the downbeat of bar 8 in a similar fashion to her live performance (84 BPM), eliding the third beat of bar 7 in doing so. But there are more important respects in which Yudina changes tack: she slows down instead of speeding up into bar 4 (57 BPM), does likewise when this moment is repeated an octave higher at bar 12 (70 BPM), and sinks heavily into bar 14 (61 BPM). There is less tension and greater expansiveness to Yudina's phrasing here, where the focus is taken away from the more immediate elisions of every third beat and the accelerations that come with them in the live performance.

A second point of comparison comes with the *forte* and *fortissimo* chords of bars 17–24. In her live performance (Fig. 3.30), Yudina diverges from the previous material not simply with hugely powerful dynamics but also by increasing the tempo. She consistently reaches over 100 BPM (hitting 124 BPM in bar 19) before quite dramatically pulling the tempo back at bar 21 and decelerating to bar 23, articulating each change of chord, and then slightly quickening the tempo once more. In other words, this material comes in two very different opening waves: the first, bars 17–20, offers a momentous break from the opening passage by reaching new heights in tempo and dynamics; bars 21–24 maintain the loud dynamics, but significantly pull back the tempo, so that these eight bars enact a large expressive contrast. The same is not the case for the studio version (Fig. 3.31), in which the tempo is kept steadier through bars 17–20, only slightly pushing through bar 19 (up to 117 BPM). And what is interesting about this is not just the different shape that is created for these eight bars—even movement in contrast to a push and pull—but the manner in which this fits into the overall trajectory of the performance: on stage, Yudina uses these bars to break with what has come before, focusing attention on this particular

section as a standout moment; in the studio, this change in material is more subtly subsumed into the pace and feel that have already been established.

The trio begins at bar 47, and with it Yudina ratchets up the tempo in both performances. Though she takes things faster in the live rendition, her interpretative approach on the bar-to-bar level is relatively consistent across both performances. As well as placing dynamic accents on the second beats (as Schubert's score suggests) she alternates between slowing down onto, and speeding up through, the first beats of each bar. In the live version, bars 52 and 53 are good examples of the rushing, whereas bars 57 and 58 are examples of the slowing (Fig. 3.32); in the studio, the slowing can be found in bars 49 and 50, while rushing can be heard in bars 52 and 53 once again (Fig. 3.33). The listening experience of this entire trio is defined by these alternating emphases, and though they differ in their exact placement between performances, this kind of dialectical back and forth is ever-present. The two interpretations diverge remarkably, though, come bar 69: in her studio performance, Yudina drops the tempo to 153 BPM for bar 68.1, preparing a further drop to 119 BPM at the climactic *fortissimo* A major chord at bar 69. It is Yudina's *rallentando* here that marks the importance of this moment. Live, Yudina does the opposite: she accelerates, hitting 225 BPM and 236 BPM at bars 67 and 68 respectively and then peaking at 255 BPM in bar 69, the powerful *fortissimo* bass chords like a racing heartbeat.³³

What each of the points I've raised about Yudina's performance of the A flat Impromptu suggests is that her live performance is more prone to extremes and changeability, and is perhaps less controlled or measured than her studio recording: in the former, this is apparent in the rushing into the downbeats of each of the opening eight bars, the fluctuating tempo of the *fortissimo* chords at bars 17–24, and the treatment of A major at bar 69 as a climactic point of arrival. This raises the question of why, and it is in this context that I come to the last Schubert recordings, which are of the second movement of the Piano Sonata in B flat major. Of special interest is the middle A major section (bars 43–89). At times Yudina threatens to unleash her full force on this middle section in the live version (Figs. 3.34–3.35). For instance, she maintains a louder dynamic level at bars 46–51 in a way that she does not in her studio version; she also rushes the tempo through these bars in her live performance, especially at bars 45 (up to 80 BPM), 48 (78 BPM) and 49 (87 BPM). In this respect, Yudina's studio performance is much

³³ In the repeat of this passage, Yudina's approaches match each other more closely: this time live, she marks the arrival of A major with a *rallentando*, dropping to 136 BPM (in the studio, this second iteration drops to 119 BPM just like the first time). But in the context of the whole performance, the overall effect is quite different: this change of approach in the live performance further adds to the sense of unpredictability, while the degree of similarity across both passages in the studio recording only reinforces the sense of regularity.

steadier, and the effect of her live performance draws the listener's attention to the ebb and flow of each four-bar phrase in a way that does not happen in the studio.

But my point here is not so much about the listener's experience as it is about Yudina's, which is to say that her attention too is very much focused on the here and now of each four-bar phrase and how she will shape it, rather than any longer-term destination. There are good reasons to be cautious when attempting to decipher musical intentions or thought processes like these, but I feel comfortable making this claim here because of what happens at the return of the opening C sharp minor material at bar 90. In her studio performance (Fig. 3.36), she reaches a dynamic climax at bar 102 with great composure, crescendoing through bars 98–101 by lifting the amplitude at each bar but maintaining a steady beat while doing so (bar 97.1: 55 BPM; bar 98.1: 53 BPM; bar 99.1: 48 BPM; bar 100.1: 57 BPM; bar 101.1: 55 BPM). Yudina's live performance (Fig. 3.37) reaches a dynamic climax at the same point, but she also accelerates through bars 97–101 (59 BPM; 72 BPM; 67 BPM; 70 BPM; 76 BPM) and directs all of her focus towards bar 101 as a goal, so much so, in fact, that she loses her place and skips sixteen bars of music. Instead of shifting to C major at bar 103, she curtails the ending by resolving to C sharp minor at bar 119, at which point we are on the home stretch. It should come as no surprise that this does not happen in the studio recording, in which Yudina faithfully plays all 138 bars of the movement. It is worth remembering, as well, that the studio recording came seven years before the concert in question, meaning that it is not the case that she had learned the score incorrectly.

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Memory lapses and technical blunders can be found in her other live performances of romantic repertoire—repertoire for which no studio-recorded counterparts exist (Table 3.2). We have only one performance (a live one) by Yudina of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31 No. 2 ("The Tempest"), but the scintillating tempos that she adopts arguably go beyond anything in her corpus of Schubert recordings (Fig. 3.38). In the opening two bars, Yudina hovers at ~50 BPM, and then ratchets the tempo up to 300–350 BPM for the Allegro at bars 2–6, a staggering turnaround. The Largo at bars 7–8 returns to ~50 BPM, before Yudina multiplies the tempo once again for the Allegro at bars 8–21, this time up to ~300 BPM. Yudina settles into a slower tempo (~230 BPM) for the D minor theme at bars 21–40 before propelling back into the region of 300–350 BPM again at bar 41 for the second theme, all the while accompanied by powerful dynamics regularly registering at over 80 Dyn. Where the ferocity of Yudina's playing really comes out, however, is in the moments where her fingers slip, where musical details are

subsumed into the passionate urgency she is trying to evoke. She can barely play the right-hand melody of the themes at bars 2–6 and 41–52 with the speed she reaches, heavily concertina-ing the slurred quavers in both cases. In the repeat of the exposition, she fumbles with the rhythm of bars 8–13, almost going off the rails, but somehow managing to jitter towards the descending quavers of bars 13–16.³⁴

Two final examples illustrate these kinds of error at their most blatant and thrilling. The first concerns a memory lapse in the final movement of Yudina's live performance of Beethoven's Sonata No. 14 in C sharp minor, Op. 27 No. 2 ('Moonlight'). Her interpretation approaches the same kind of blistering extremes of her 'Tempest' recording. Here, her tempo revolves around the 170 BPM mark—just under half of the ~350 BPM found in the first movement of the 'Tempest'—but the effective pulse is the same (Fig. 3.39).³⁵ As with the second movement of Schubert's piano sonata, what matters is what Yudina does *not* play: so psychologically geared up to erupt into the third movement of the 'Moonlight', she launches into the performance on the wrong bar, beginning at bar 15; only with the repeat of the exposition does Yudina get a chance to correct herself, this time starting from bar 1.

The second example occurs in Yudina's live performance of the second movement of Robert Schumann's Fantasy in C major, Op. 17. In her conclusion to this piece, she comes just about as close to losing control without stopping a performance as is possible. The passage in question is the coda, beginning at bar 232 marked *Viel bewegter*. To reach a climax here Yudina must reach beyond the already fierce dynamics and tempo that she has persisted with for most of the performance. She fluffs the ascent to E flat major in 232, stumbling over the right-hand ascending octaves, and then misplays several notes in the subsequent right hand melody: an A instead of a B flat at bar 233; an A natural instead of an A flat at bar 235; a D instead of a C at bar 237; and a G instead of an A flat at bar 242. She rushes over bars 251–2 into the cadence on E flat major, and plays the wrong notes for the descending octave triads from bars 253–5. Even after she has seemingly landed safely in the tonic key with the large E flat major chord in the second last bar, she fumbles the two crotchet chords of beats 3 and 4 of that bar, hanging on, it would seem, by her fingernails.

I find these performances completely mesmerising, and I am not trying to take anything away from them by drawing attention to Yudina's 'mistakes'. Rather, I do so to form two conclusions. The first is that, at least in the examples where she skips passages, Yudina was

³⁴ Similar slips occupy her performance of the third movement of the same sonata, unmissable especially in the ascending and descending octaves of bars 34–38 in the exposition and its repeat, and once again seemingly inevitable in the context of the furious tempo at which Yudina sets off.

³⁵ Both figures refer to crotchets, but the Tempest is in cut time while the Moonlight is in common time.

Composer	Composition	Live
Beethoven	Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31 No. 2	4 April 1954, Kyiv
	Piano Sonata No. 14 in C sharp minor, Op. 27 No. 2	4 April 1954, Kyiv
Robert Schumann	Fantasy in C major, Op. 17	10 June 1951

Table 3.2. Three examples of Yudina’s Beethoven and Schumann live recordings

playing without a score in front of her, something which seems to have been standard practice for her with much baroque and romantic repertoire.³⁶ To play from memory in a live, solo setting like this, as Cook points out, is to place oneself in a particular tradition of virtuosic performance.³⁷ As well as this, it implies that a particular interpretation has been developed to be more or less stably replicated: it seems inevitable that some degree of fixed interpretation is memorised by the performer, and the performances of all pieces I have surveyed attest to that in different respects. In that way, Yudina chimes with what Daniel Leech-Wilkinson has observed with Alfred Cortot’s recordings of Chopin’s Prelude in E minor, that his fundamental interpretation of the score remains steady even if individual performances differ slightly.³⁸

And that informs my second conclusion, which accounts for the significant differences across Yudina’s live and studio recordings. In the vast majority of the analyses, I have pointed out instances where Yudina appears to let loose in her live performances in ways that she does not in the studio. In musical terms, this translates into a tendency to commit to faster tempos, very loud dynamics and sudden scintillating accelerandos. Table 3.3 collates these. What this points to is a penchant for extremity and even risk-taking in live performance, a willingness to let the passion of the instant dictate the playing, to change fundamentally the compositional material at hand, or to spill over into feverish cacophony. These qualities are absent from her studio recordings, which on the whole betray a more restrained interpretative approach to the music she performs. I suggested above that Yudina’s focus was so ‘in the moment’ that her memory

³⁶ It is also supported by several smaller slips in her performance of the fourth movement of this sonata less than five minutes later. In that movement, Yudina misses out bars 220–222, 233–241, and 486–487. In her denunciation by the Khabarovsk School of Music in March 1963, the faculty noted that while Yudina performed contemporary music with the score in front of her, she played the ‘grand classical works FROM MEMORY’. See the letter from the Faculty of the Khabarovsk School of Music to the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* dated 7 March 1963 in Jean-Pierre Collot, *Maria Youdina, Pierre Souvtchinsky: Correspondence et documents (1959–1970)* (Geneva: Contrechamps Éditions, 2020), 537.

³⁷ Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 333.

³⁸ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, ‘Making Music with Alfred Cortot: Ontology, Data, Analysis’, Heinz Loesch and Stefan Weinzierl (eds), *Gemessene Interpretation: Computergestützte Aufführungsanalyse im Kreuzverhör der Disziplinen* (Mainz: Schott, 2011), 129–144.

failed her. Memory lapses are of course possible in the studio as well—where they can be covered up—but I would go further and suggest that, for Yudina, they are particularly overt symptoms of a distinctively live preoccupation with the expressive potentialities of the immediate moment. So if it is not so much that Yudina’s live and recorded performances entail entirely distinct interpretative strategies, it appears that the occasion of the live event, with the ephemerality and excitement that it involves, lent to her a spontaneity with which she took quite different expressive avenues at certain musical junctures. These matter not only because, in some cases, they entirely change the shape of the performance in question, but because they index a certain performing attitude that revelled in expressive excess and abandon. It is, to paraphrase Sanden, a glimpse into how Yudina lived liveness—but as a performer. Before I can draw out the implications of this for theories of liveness, and indeed for histories of performance style, I must turn to Yudina’s baroque recordings.

Composer	Composition	Section	Features of Live Performance
Schubert	Impromptu in E flat	Coda (Bars 251–283)	Builds momentum towards the final cadence.
	Fourth Movement (Piano Sonata in B flat)	Presto (Bars 513–540)	Builds momentum, accel. through to final chord.
	‘Am Meer’	Bars 16–17	Dramatic accel. through to downbeat of bar 17.
		Middle passage (Bars 24–32)	Sustained powerful chords and loud dynamics.
	First Movement (Piano Sonata in B flat)	Development (Bars 118–188)	Sustained powerful chords and loud dynamics.
	Impromptu A flat	Bars 17–24	Accel. followed by rall.
		Bars 68–69	Dramatic accel. through to downbeat of bar 69.
	Second Movement (Piano Sonata in B flat)	Bars 43–51	Accel.
Bars 90–102		Accel. followed by memory lapse.	
Beethoven	Tempest Sonata (First Movement)	Bars 1–21	Extreme tempos. Finger slips.
	Moonlight Sonata (First Movement)	Bars 1–15	Memory lapse.
Robert Schumann	Fantasy in C (Second Movement)	Coda (Bars 232–260)	Multiple misplayed notes and errors.

Table 3.3. Live performance ‘extremes’ in some of Yudina’s romantic recordings

The Stage and the Studio, Part II: Yudina and Bach, 1950–57

Unlike her interest in much romantic and certain contemporary repertoires, which was more subject to change, Yudina’s dedication to J. S. Bach was eternal. She recorded his music more than that of any other composer and worshipped him as a figure with transcendental power, commenting in relation to his cantatas that his ‘genius exists ... in different dimensions to those in which we, as simple creatures, evolve’.¹ Indeed, Marina Drozdova recalls that Yudina’s ‘contemporaries—critics, friends, colleagues or simply music lovers—associated Yudina above all with Bach’, even going as far as to liken their physical appearances.² In her first letter to Pierre Souvtchinsky, on 16 September 1959, Yudina wrote that she had been studying the music of Bach her whole life, specifically mentioning that she had played all of the Well-Tempered Clavier.³ She favoured Book II (henceforth WTCII), however, and on 4 November 1950 Yudina performed all but seven of the preludes and fugues from WTCII live at the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatory.⁴ Over the course of five years, between 1953 and 1957, Yudina worked on studio recordings of WTCII, only sixteen preludes and fugues of which have been published. Between these live and studio recordings, there exist eleven overlapping pairs of preludes and fugues (Table 4.1).

Prelude and Fugue No.	Key	Live	Studio
1	C major	4 November 1950, Moscow	1953–7
2	C minor		
3	C sharp major		
4	C sharp minor		
5	D major		
6	D minor		
8	D sharp minor		
9	E major		
10	E minor		
12	F minor		
15	G major		

Table 4.1. Yudina’s recordings of Preludes and Fugues by Bach from WTCII

¹ Jean-Pierre Collot, *Marina Yudina, Pierre Souvtchinsky: Correspondance et documents (1959–1970)* (Geneva: Contrechamps Éditions, 2020), 433.

² *Ibid.*, 721–2.

³ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 134 (for Yudina’s preference). Collot suggests that, by omitting certain pieces, Yudina was seeking to construct her own montage and to create a particular kind of musical dramaturgy (136, footnote 12).

These WTCII extracts serve as the largest extant corpus of recordings Yudina made of Bach's music in both live and studio settings. They are especially valuable not only for this reason, but also because of the lack of any other baroque-era (or earlier) compositions in her discography, which is overwhelmingly dominated by romantic compositions and those of her contemporaries. Entirely distinct performing styles do not necessarily follow from different musical eras, but it is certainly the case that differences in playing could be prompted by the compositional affordances, aesthetic conceptions, and performing traditions associated with the eras and composers in question.

In the previous chapter, I suggested on the basis of how she played Franz Schubert, Ludwig van Beethoven and Robert Schumann that the extremes of Yudina's recordings amounted to a romantic interpretative approach that was specific to her live performances. To substantiate and complement this, in this chapter I use Yudina's live and studio recordings of Bach's WTCII as a counterweight to Yudina's romanticism. I begin by closely examining her interpretations of two Bach pieces: the Fugue No. 15 in G major, and the Prelude No. 8 in D sharp minor. Based on these analyses, I suggest two chief expressive strategies for Yudina's Bach playing, which I term Yudina's 'growth' and 'clarity' approaches. I go on to demonstrate the pervasiveness of these throughout her other WTCII recordings, showing how her growth approach is characteristic of her live performances, and her clarity approach characteristic of her studio recordings. Things are not quite this straightforward, however, and I complicate matters in two ways. Firstly, I home in on the porous nature of these categories by pointing to the stylistic hybridity of some of her studio recordings of Bach's fugues. Secondly, I consider those recordings which do not fit neatly into this dichotomy at all, and explore their resonances with her live romantic style. I conclude by taking stock of Yudina's artistic practice so far, but also by returning to the issue of liveness and drawing out the implications of these case studies for histories of performance style.

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What is most striking about Yudina's studio recording of the Fugue No. 15 in G major is how strict and consistent her tempo is: she immediately settles into a speed of ~65 BPM which persists for the entire recording, sinking below 60 BPM only as she draws the fugue to a close from bar 69 onwards, allowing the demisemiquavers in bar 71 to decelerate steadily (Fig. 4.1). The fastest she reaches at any point is 69 BPM, which occurs once (at bar 62), though to speak

of a temporal peak in this performance is simply misleading: any high point is subsumed by the stability of the tempo over the performance. Especially notable are the demisemiquavers in bars 62–4, which she relates precisely to the semiquaver pulse she has set for the rest of the fugue. Whereas flourishing runs of this kind elsewhere often prompt Yudina to take off at speed from whatever tempo she has established, here she plays them in time. Dynamics, too, are quite consistent, and the variations in Fig. 4.1 are more useful for pointing out moments that Yudina subtly highlights rather than dramatically accentuates, for instance, the high dotted crotchet B at bar 16 (87.8 Dyn) and the climax of the demisemiquavers at bar 65 (89.7 Dyn).

This is remarkable, given the flexibility witnessed in many of Yudina's romantic recordings. Here, Yudina perhaps much more closely resembles the 'motoric rhythms' of what Laurence Dreyfus termed 'the "sewing-machine" style' of the mid-twentieth-century early music revival—what he crushingly dismissed as the 'barbaric gropings of the 1950s and a bit beyond'.⁵ Dorottya Fabian's empirical recording analyses attest to the prevalence of certain approaches during this time: she notes that there was 'considerable uniformity of Bach-playing in the 1950s and 1960s'.⁶ To the extent that Dreyfus is analysing a condition of early music 'authenticity' that expressed 'a supposed opposition to the self-aggrandizing individualism prevalent in Mainstream musical praxis', the hallmarks of wider early music norms at that stage would seem of only limited relevance to Yudina. This is in line with Richard Taruskin and Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's arguments against pernicious notions of authenticity in the historical performance movement that I quoted in Chapter 2, and I already pointed out the indirect resonances between these and Yudina's individuating performing philosophy.⁷ Yudina, then, seems to belie this binary opposition between mainstream individuality and HIP frugality. Her recording of the Fugue in G major points to the coexistence of seemingly incommensurate performing styles in her abilities: her riotous romanticism we witnessed in the previous chapter was unleashed from the same fingers that here discipline a Bach fugue with careful restraint.

But Yudina's live recording of this Fugue in G major is different again (Fig. 4.2). The opening six bars set off at 54 BPM, a tempo which initially seems secure, but the ground underneath this stability shifts noticeably from bar 8 with the arrival of the second entry of the subject, which clocks in at 59 BPM. Yet another shift in tempo follows with the third subject

⁵ Laurence Dreyfus, 'Early Music Defended Against Its Devotees: A Theory of Historical Performance in the Twentieth Century', *The Musical Quarterly* 69/3 (July 1983), 297–322 (303).

⁶ Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945–1975: A Comprehensive Review of Sound Recordings and Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), xiv.

⁷ Richard Taruskin, 'The Authenticity Movement Can Become a Positivist Purgatory, Literalistic and Dehumanizing', *Early Music* 12/1 (February 1984), 3–12; Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'What We Are Doing With Early Music Is Genuinely Authentic to Such a Small Degree That the Word Loses Most of Its Intended Meaning', *Early Music* 12/1 (February 1984), 13–16.

entry at bar 15, where Yudina reaches 64 BPM before hitting 66 BPM at the D major cadence at bar 23. In the ensuing antiphonal episode, Yudina reaches 67 BPM at bar 25 and then 70 BPM at bar 31. ~70 BPM then becomes the new temporal norm with the return of the fugal subject in B minor at bar 40 (71 BPM), peaking at 74 BPM at bar 47. Tempo remains steady from here to the end of her performance, but Yudina uses dynamics to ratchet up a final sense of climax, puncturing the texture powerfully with the bass trills at bars 57, 59 and 61, marking the dynamic highpoint of the performance at bar 59 (84.7 Dyn).

In short, Yudina gradually and deliberately accelerates through this performance—an acceleration which is in large part mirrored by the increasing dynamics—until a climactic point is reached at bar 59, after which she settles into the fugue’s concluding phrase. This acceleration is patterned: the sense of momentum she builds is especially driven by fugal subject entries (bars 8, 15 and 40) and the antiphonal episode at bar 24, in other words at points where the texture changes. What appears to matter most is the point of arrival (bar 61) and the simulation of a journey to get there, rather than the intricate part-writing which unfolds along the way. The latter, however, is what Yudina seems to prioritise in the studio recording with her steady tempo. The same goes for the much more subtle dynamics: the high point of Yudina’s demisemiquaver flourish at bar 65 in her studio recording is no match for her forceful trills in bars 57–61 of her live performance. Scape plots are quite useful for visualising these expressive differences. Figs. 4.3–4.4 shows two timescapes of the G major fugue: the thinner streaks of blue and red which populate Fig. 4.3 resemble more localised timing inflections within a stable broader tempo; the much more dominant streaks of blue, green and red/yellow in Fig. 4.4, on the other hand, point towards a global tempo that is itself in a constant state of flux.

Since Yudina’s acceleration fits very neatly around important fugal compositional properties, we might wonder whether she is employing a specifically fugal strategy. Her live performance of the Prelude No. 8 in D sharp minor shows this not to be the case (Fig. 4.5). In the opening two bars, Yudina sets the acceleration in motion, moving from 53 BPM up to 63 BPM at the downbeat of bar 2. By bar 3, she reaches 70 BPM, followed by 75 BPM at bar 4. Yudina does not maintain the same pace of acceleration from bar 4 onwards, but what follows is a change in velocity rather than a change in direction. She reaches 76 BPM at the downbeat of bar 5, quickening slightly through the quavers of bar 6 to reach 79 BPM at bar 7, at which point the tempo levels out through to bar 14 before slowing into the A sharp minor cadence at bar 16. The opening sixteen bars constitute the first of two sections of this prelude, both of which are repeated. Though her repeat of this section opens with a slightly less dramatic increase in tempo over the first three bars, it maintains the same profile of a long acceleration.

Yudina's studio recording is remarkably steady by comparison (Fig. 4.6): the tempo range sits almost entirely within the 60–65 BPM range with only occasional moments that break this consistency (the largest of these is the downbeat of bar 5, which hits 68 BPM). The more important thing to note is that these instants do not signify any kind of broader temporal strategy; they are rather momentary anomalies which do nothing to disrupt the temporal consistency that Yudina creates. The other thing to note is the manner in which Yudina separates each of the four sections (Fig. 4.7): she creates larger gaps between them in her studio performance, lingering much longer in each case on the concluding rising semiquaver and quaver motive. The result is a prelude of four carefully constructed and separated parts, each of equal importance and governed by the same strict and consistent tempo. The material is still parsed into four sections in Yudina's live performance (Fig. 4.8), but there is no single governing tempo: what the larger graph instead displays is the tendency for Yudina to accelerate into and then (to a lesser extent) decelerate out of each section, a greater feeling of larger movement, direction and ebb and flow.

Yudina's performances of the G major Fugue and the D sharp minor Prelude indicate two distinct performing strategies. She employs these strategies irrespective of genre, and in a way that correlates with particular performing contexts: both live performances exhibit what I call Yudina's 'growth' approach—one that is marked by a gradual *accelerando* and a more variable global tempo—and both studio recordings exhibit what I call Yudina's 'clarity' approach, one which is characterised by a more strict tempo, emphasises the contrapuntal part-writing, and corresponds relatively closely to the kind of modernist performance style that Dreyfus and Taruskin have identified as so typical of mid-twentieth-century early music performance practice. Table 4.2 maps the distribution of these strategies across her WTCII recordings. To further clarify the distribution, performances which fall into the clarity grouping are marked in red, while those in the growth grouping are marked in black. Five anomalous cases are marked with a green X.

A few immediate observations follow. The most important is the remarkable split between Yudina's growth tendency and live performances on the one hand, and her clarity tendency and studio recording on the other. The preludes are particularly telling: not a single studio prelude falls into the growth category, and likewise with the clarity strategy for live preludes. All anomalies, too, are preludes, and these are performances I will come back to later in this chapter.

Key	Studio				Live			
	Prelude		Fugue		Prelude		Fugue	
	Growth	Clarity	Growth	Clarity	Growth	Clarity	Growth	Clarity
C major		X		X	X		X	
C minor		X	X		X		X	
C sharp major		X	X		X		X	
C sharp minor		X		X	X		X	
D major	X			X	X		X	
D minor		X	X		X		X	
D sharp minor		X	X		X		X	
E major		X	X		X		X	
E minor		X	X		X		X	
F minor	X		X		X		X	
G major		X		X	X		X	

Table 4.2. Yudina’s clarity and growth styles as observed in her recordings of Bach

The studio fugues constitute a notable set given the distribution of approaches across these recordings, while the live fugues are the most unanimous: every performance follows Yudina’s growth approach.

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Having gone into some detail about Yudina’s D sharp minor Prelude and G major Fugue recordings, I account for her clarity and growth tendencies in her other recordings more briefly, beginning with the preludes.

Yudina’s live performance of Prelude No. 3 in C sharp major largely conforms to the growth model set by the live G major Prelude (Fig. 4.9): Yudina accelerates gradually over the majority of the prelude, reaching a clear-cut climactic point, after which the tempo steadies until the final cadence. Here, this trajectory maps cleanly onto the two contrasting sections: the more obviously prelude-like material of the first 24 bars becomes one large acceleration, the G sharp major chord at bar 25 is marked as the climactic point, while the 3/8 fughetta of bars 25–50 settles the tempo as the piece heads towards its conclusion. It is in the left-hand quaver pulse that Yudina’s acceleration comes through most clearly. She accelerates considerably over the first six bars, beginning at 64 BPM at bar 1 and reaching a new height in each bar (bar 2: 102 BPM; bar 3: 112 BPM; bar 4: 115 BPM; bar 5: 117 BPM; bar 6: 123 BPM) until she eventually hits 134 BPM at bar 24, marking the onset of bar 25 with the dynamic highpoint of the performance (up to 91.3 Dyn).

Though the sense of a specific climactic point is less explicit, the same process is at play in her live performance of Prelude No. 1 in C major, which builds from 38 BPM at bar 1 up to 64 BPM at bar 15, after which Yudina levels the tempo out (Fig. 4.10). Yudina's live performance of Prelude No. 2 in C minor more closely resembles the model set by the live D sharp minor prelude (Fig. 4.11): it consists of four sections, each of which gradually outdoes the tempo of its predecessor. Yudina subjects the first section—bars 1–12—to the largest increase in tempo, beginning at 85 BPM in bar 1 and then reaching 124 BPM in bar 12, hardly pausing before launching into the repeat which consistently hits over 130 BPM, peaking at 147 BPM in bar 5. By the end of the third section—bars 13–28—Yudina is consistently hitting over 140 BPM, a pattern she maintains through the repeat of bars 13–28, reaching 150 BPM in the final bar.

In comparison, Yudina's studio counterparts for these three preludes approach the strictness of the studio G major and D sharp minor Preludes: Yudina pushes the tempo on slightly over the first 24 bars of her studio recording of the C sharp major Prelude (Fig. 4.12), but not to the point of an audible acceleration (hitting 97 BPM in bar 1 and 103 BPM in bar 24). The attention, then, is thrown instead onto the existence of two distinct sections—the prelude proper and the fughetta—replacing the effect of one building up to the other. The tempo of the C major Prelude remains steady around 50 BPM throughout (Fig. 4.13). Likewise, the building momentum of the live C minor Prelude is absent from the studio recording, which instead hovers consistently around the 120 BPM mark and resembles four separate and equal musical sections (Fig. 4.14). Here, Yudina separates these sections with much more pronounced breaks than in her live performance.

One aspect of Yudina's two recordings of Prelude No. 10 in E minor which reinforces this distinction is the absence of repeats in her live performance (Fig. 4.15). The E minor prelude is made up of two sections—bars 1–48 and bars 49–108—both of which are accompanied with repeat marks. Yudina builds from 41 BPM in bar 1 to 59 BPM in bar 45, and her avoidance of repeats in the live performance means that her continued momentum from bar 49 onwards covers most of the prelude, tapering off only after bar 61 (65 BPM). That there are four equally weighted ~60 BPM sections in her studio performance instead of two only adds to this distinction (Fig. 4.16).

In the four foregoing live preludes, Yudina maintains the sense of momentum I described in large part over the entirety of the performances in question. In other cases, she accelerates considerably in the opening bars and then evens out the tempo for the rest of the performance. Yudina's live Prelude No. 4 in C sharp minor is a good example of this approach

(Fig. 4.17), where she uses the semiquavers to push the already lilting tempo forward, stretching from 38 BPM in bar 1 to 63 BPM at bar 10, dropping off with the arrival of the bass D sharp at bar 13 (down to 43 BPM). Her live Prelude No. 9 in E major does the same thing. This consists of two sections, both repeated, and here Yudina accelerates sharply through the first section only, maintaining a steadier pulse throughout the three subsequent sections. She begins at 79 BPM at bar 1 and reaches 131 BPM by bar 24, a turnaround of just over 50 BPM (Fig. 4.18).

Yudina's opposing interpretative strategies might be summarised like this: her clarity approach, with its tendency to follow a consistent tempo, to sectionalise the material more prominently, and to treat those sections as equal parts of a collective whole, gives rise to a quality of musical architecture; her growth style, on the other hand, leans towards musical narrative, with its liberal and dominating use of accelerandos, climactic points and concomitant sense of momentum. Despite their predominance, they should not be concretised into cleanly separable and all-encompassing styles. Examining the fugal counterparts to the above preludes reveals why: while each live fugue falls into the growth style category, Yudina's studio fugues split across both categories, with the majority *also* falling into the growth grouping. This is especially significant given the strong correlation between live/growth and studio/clarity observed in the preludes. I will use this section to investigate what this quite different distribution means.

It is important in the first instance to reaffirm the persistence of the live/growth and studio/clarity division in some of Yudina's fugues. In her live performance of the Fugue No. 1 in C major—much like in the G major fugue discussed earlier—Yudina marks each subject entry with a slightly quicker tempo (Fig. 4.19): she opens the first entry at 125 BPM (bar 1) before accelerating through the semiquavers of the first entry; she then reaches 132 BPM at bar 6 for the second entry, and finally 133 BPM for the dominant entry in the bass at bar 10. It is a gradual but persistent accelerando which follows, and it especially takes off with the D minor fugal entry at bar 25 (up to 137 BPM at bar 26), culminating in speed at bar 38 (140 BPM) just before the bass tonic subject entry at bar 39. Her performance has yet to hit its highest speed, but it is here that the sense of accelerando levels out. Her live performance of the Fugue No. 4 in C sharp minor also follows this pattern, opening with the first fugal entry in bar 1 at 128 BPM, increasing for each further entry (146 BPM at bar 2 and 152 BPM at bar 3), and then pushing on until bar 8 (175 BPM), eventually reaching 179 BPM in bar 26 (Fig. 4.20). The contrasting steadiness of the studio fugues is succinctly depicted by timescape comparison (Figs. 4.21–4.24): as before, the successively larger streaks of blue, green and red in the live performances indicate a tempo that is always increasing, whereas the smaller streaks of blue and red in both studio recordings indicate a broadly stable global tempo with smaller, local inflections.

Yet as I mentioned, Yudina performs most of her studio fugues according to her growth style, which could mean that she maintains relatively stable interpretations across live and studio recordings. This is the case in her recordings of the Fugue No. 9 in E major, at least in terms of their tempo profiles (Figs. 4.25–4.26): both performances steadily increase in tempo over the first eight bars, dropping at the dominant cadence at bar 9, and then steadily increasing once again towards the F sharp minor cadence at bar 23, peaking between bars 18 and 19.

Nevertheless, the two differ quite significantly in character in a way that harks back to the Schubert recordings: Yudina's live performance is consistently faster than her studio recording, her touch is much heavier, and her dynamics much louder throughout the live performance. Indeed, this difference in absolute speed is characteristic of all of the remaining pairs of fugues.

Yudina's recording of the Fugue No. 3 in C sharp major is perhaps the clearest example of Yudina's growth model appearing in a studio setting. Here the fugal entries are very compact, and so it is not so much each subject entry as each set of subject entries that pushes the tempo forward (Fig. 4.27). The first three sets (bars 1–4, 4–7 and 7–10) are instructive: bars 1–4 begin at 71 BPM and end at 80 BPM; bars 4–7 revert back to 71 BPM to begin with, peaking at 85 BPM at bar 5; bars 7–10 once again slacken the tempo to begin with (73 BPM) and reach up to a new height of 88 BPM at bar 9. By the return of the fugal material in the bass in bar 17, we have reached new temporal territory as Yudina hits 94 BPM.

The interesting question here is how exactly the studio recording measures up to the live performance, and the C sharp major fugue is an especially useful example in this respect because the live performance begins with a similar tempo: 73 BPM (Fig. 4.28). What differs is the velocity with which Yudina's live rendition takes off: by bar 2, Yudina has reached 86 BPM, and she hits 97 BPM at bar 3, a dramatic increase of 24 BPM in the space of two bars. Much like her studio recording, each subsequent set of fugal entries goes beyond the tempo limits of that which precedes it: bars 4–7 reach up to 100 BPM (bars 5 and 6) and bars 7–10 hit 104 BPM and 105 BPM (bars 8 and 9). Yudina has reached 107 BPM by the bass fugal entry at bar 17, 13 BPM faster than her studio equivalent. And while this is the moment when Yudina's tempo in her studio recording plateaus, she continues the surge in her live performance, eventually peaking at 118 BPM on the downbeat of bar 24.

While the examples of the E minor and C minor fugues are not quite as clear cut, similar trends underlie the differences at play. There is a subtle but important difference in the openings of both renditions of the Fugue No. 2 in C minor. In her studio recording (Fig. 4.29), Yudina performs the opening four bars (which include the first three fugal entries) at a relatively uniform tempo, beginning at 44 BPM and ending at 42 BPM. She then uses the left-hand semiquaver run

to accelerate to bar 6, after which the tempo remains once again relatively consistent around 54 BPM until the G minor cadence at bar 14. The impression here, in other words, is that of two separate tempos (bars 1–5; bars 6–14) which are connected by a transition bar (bar 5). This is not the case in her live performance (Fig. 4.30), which more closely approaches her growth style: the opening four bars come in steadily at around 55 BPM, and she once again uses the semiquavers in bar 5 to accelerate. But from here onward she pushes more continuously towards the cadence at bar 14, reaching 67 BPM at bar 9, 69 BPM at bar 11.3, and 70 BPM at bar 13.3. The difference between these two recordings is a subtle one, but the timescapes in Figs. 4.31–4.32 depict this point: the transition from blue through green to yellow/red in the opening of the live recording captures the longer accelerando that takes place; the more sharply defined blue vs yellow/red of the studio recording instead indicates the presence of detached tempo areas.

In the case of the Fugue No. 10 in E minor, this trend occurs towards the end of the piece. While Yudina's approach to the fugal subject is similar across interpretations—she accelerates through the semiquavers and lingers on the crotchets—she performs at a speed of around 10 BPM faster in the live version, rushing through the semiquavers somewhat more noticeably, too. Despite this urgency, both performances follow similar trajectories, at least for the most part: it is towards the end where Yudina breaks away in her live performance in a way that she does not in the studio. This change is shaped around the dominant chord at the fermata at bar 70. In her studio performance (Fig. 4.33), Yudina reaches up to 76 BPM, 77 BPM and 78 BPM in the A minor fugal entry from bar 60 before slowing down from bar 66 onwards into the dominant chord at bar 70. Her live performance does the opposite (Fig. 4.34): she instead accelerates through bars 66–70, reaching up to 90 BPM (bar 69), turning the fermata that follows into a sudden caesura. What really matters, however, is what comes next: Yudina's studio performance resumes with the tempo from before bar 70, fluctuating between 70 and 75 BPM before reaching 81 BPM at bar 87. Her live performance, on the other hand, eclipses that which has come before, peaking above 95 BPM four times on its way to the final cadence.

The point that I wish to drive home here most of all is that the raw lucidity of Yudina's live performances, the freedom with which her accelerating tempo dominates the performance in question, is tempered in these studio recordings; though her growth strategy is recognisable in many of the latter, it is a restrained version of something which is much more dramatic on the concert stage. These fugal examples represent hybrid cases that capture an in-betweenness of the clarity and growth approaches that are more firmly separated in her prelude recordings. The C sharp major fugue is possibly the best example in this respect: Yudina's studio recording retains the fingerprints of her growth strategy in its acceleration, but keeps it under wraps in a way that

resembles other elements of her clarity approach: lower dynamics, a softer touch, a less extreme and shorter acceleration, and a slower overall tempo. The signal reminder of these fugal examples, then, is that the categories of growth and clarity are by no means hermetically sealed alternatives. Nor indeed are they all encompassing of Yudina's Bach performances: there are exceptions, and I discuss these briefly below.

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Yudina's two recordings of Prelude No. 5 in D major conform neither to the clarity nor the growth characteristics of Yudina's other preludes and fugues. In her studio recording (Fig. 4.35), Yudina's opening four bars serve as a very useful example: she begins with a loud, accelerating burst of arpeggiated D major in bar 1, reaching 104 BPM and 81.4 Dyn, before tumbling down to 76 BPM and 65.6 Dyn with the lilting quavers in bar 2. Bar 3 repeats this pattern: Yudina hits 81.3 Dyn in the second arpeggiated flourish, peaking at 101 BPM on the last note, and then drops to a low of 75 BPM and 67.7 Dyn in bar 4. This juxtaposition of bars 1 and 3 with bars 2 and 4 is significant to the extent that it breaks so considerably from the patterns that we find in the rest of her preludes and fugues. As well as this, what follows in the rest of the recording is a more flexible approach to tempo than that which typifies Yudina's clarity style: Yudina races up to 109 BPM in bar 5, drops down to 94 BPM in bar 7, accelerates back up to 111 BPM in bar 11, and falls to 87 BPM in bar 12, setting a pattern for temporal fluctuation which continues throughout the rest of the prelude.

The respect in which this studio recording resembles Yudina's clarity style is in its subtlety of dynamics. The same cannot be said of her live performance (Fig. 4.36), in which Yudina does not hold any of her strength back. Her opening four bars follow a similar pattern to her studio performance in terms of tempo, but her dynamics play out somewhat differently. Though she drops from 88.7 Dyn in bar 1 down to 78.2 Dyn in bar 2, her dynamics gradually increase from that point onwards, hitting 85 Dyn in bar 4 and then 86.5 Dyn on the downbeat of bar 5. Yudina powers through the semiquaver runs that follow and hammers home the intervening chords, reaching up to 89.1 Dyn and 89.3 Dyn in bars 11–12. She remains consistently louder in her live performance than in her studio recording.

As the only piece which diverges from the growth/clarity dichotomy in both live and studio renditions, Yudina's D major Prelude is the main exception to the trends of her Bach performances. The Prelude No. 12 in F minor is the only other studio recording that diverges, and it overlaps in an interesting sense with the D major Prelude. Yudina once again rhetorically

juxtaposes two elements of the opening material with contrasting tempos (Fig. 4.37): the suspensions of bars 1–4 start at 35 BPM, reaching 47 BPM at the downbeat of bar 4. She characterises the semiquaver theme that follows in bars 4–8 with an entirely different tempo, reaching 69 BPM in bar 5 and 82 BPM in bar 7. The return of the opening theme at bar 9 sees the tempo drop back down to 45 BPM, and from this point onwards it is the interplay of these two different themes—and the two tempo areas that Yudina adopts for them—that shapes the entire performance.

Yudina’s live performances of Preludes No. 15 in G major and No. 6 in D minor are even more important as exceptions. As well as diverging from the growth/clarity models, they also conform to the ferocity of dynamics witnessed in the live D major prelude. In the G major prelude, Yudina’s more forceful touch in her live rendition is swapped for a much more delicate studio rendition, in which the tolling repeated semiquavers melt into the background instead of protruding into the foreground, as in her live performance. This recording is no match for her truly ferocious live performance of the D minor prelude, however (Fig. 4.38). The speed and volume with which she takes off in this performance stands apart from the rest of her Bach corpus, and is remarkable not only for how much it stands out from the clarity style of Yudina’s studio recordings, but also from the growth style of her other live preludes: the sense of musical unfolding characteristic of so many preludes in that same concert is replaced here with a scintillating tempo and loud dynamics from the start. She begins at 164 BPM and maintains a speed that hovers around 155 BPM for the duration of the performance. The dynamics hardly drop below 84 Dyn in the opening 18 bars—regularly exceeding 89 Dyn—and the respite between bars 18 and 26 serve only to build tension before the return of the opening material in the dominant at bar 26, accompanied once again by the same powerful dynamics. Yudina’s studio performance is nothing like this: it is, in fact, perfectly consistent with the clarity style of her other studio preludes in both its slower tempo and its more nuanced dynamics.

There are two possible ways in which to seek an explanation for this performance. The first draws on comments by Sviatoslav Richter, who recalls approaching Yudina with Heinrich Neuhaus to congratulate her after a performance during World War II:

During the war she had given *The Well-Tempered Clavier* at a splendid concert, even if she polished off the contemplative Prelude in B flat minor from Book Two at a constant fortissimo. At the end of the concert, Neuhaus, whom I was accompanying, went to congratulate her in her dressing-room.

‘But, Maria Veniaminovna,’ he asked her, ‘why did you play the B flat minor Prelude in such a dramatic way?’

‘Because we’re at war!!!’

It was typical of Yudina. ‘We’re at war!’ She absolutely had to bring the war into Bach.⁸

Richter’s description fits this performance, though it is of a different prelude, and in post-war Kyiv, 1950. We cannot know either how Yudina played the D minor prelude during the war or indeed the B flat minor prelude in 1950 because no such recordings exist. If taken at face value, this comment reveals that the ‘constant fortissimo’ of Yudina’s B flat minor Prelude was an exception to the norm in that concert, hence why it was worth remarking upon. It also tells us that Yudina’s reply was at least partly insincere, because the recording of the D minor prelude from 1950 (and to a lesser extent those of the D major and G major preludes) capture performances which approach the very same description. In other words, it was not *only* because of the war that she played the B flat minor prelude that way, which is to say that this kind of ‘constant fortissimo’ might be closer to an unusual trait rather than purely in response to special and specific historical circumstances.

It is not so unusual, however, when put into dialogue with Yudina’s live romantic performances, because there is more than a passing resemblance between the D minor worlds that Yudina evokes in her live performance of the D minor Prelude and her 1954 rendition of the first movement of Beethoven’s ‘Tempest’ Sonata. The broad similarities—the extremes in tempo and dynamics, the turbulent atmosphere—are given further definition by specific textural parallels that Yudina creates. For instance, the powerful rising arpeggiated lines that dominate the main themes of both performances (bars 1–9 and 26–34 in the D minor Prelude; bars 21–41 in the ‘Tempest’), and the urgent and restless forward motion in the perpetual semiquavers and quavers of the prelude and sonata respectively. One might go so far as to say that Yudina’s live D minor Prelude has more in common with her ‘Tempest’ than it does with her studio version of the same prelude. This is only one especially conspicuous example, and it is possible to generalise the point further and assert that Yudina’s D minor Prelude has more in common stylistically with her live romantic performances than her live baroque performances. The same could be said of her D major and G major Preludes. Accepting this, Yudina’s ‘exceptional’ preludes testify to the porous nature of her performing habits, a point which is important to explicate at this juncture of the project given the extent to which I have put forward quite firm categories so far. Even more than this, it is a reminder of how perilous is the prospect of

⁸ Bruno Monsaingeon, *Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations*, Stewart Spencer (trans.) (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), 51.

drawing totalising conclusions about Yudina's performing 'style' from what is, ultimately, a very small sample of her pianism.

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It is worth taking stock of how I have characterised Yudina's pianism up to this point. Broadly speaking, I have looked at Yudina's live and studio performances through the lenses of baroque and romantic repertoire. I described Yudina's Schubert studio recordings as restrained in comparison to her live performances. I inferred from the latter (supplemented by Beethoven and Schumann examples) what I called her live romantic approach, one characterised by very loud dynamics and sudden scintillating accelerandos. Its tendency towards spontaneity not only led her to take unexpected approaches at certain musical junctures, but at their most extreme resulted in large technical blunders and memory lapses. I supplemented these observations with Yudina's Bach performances by grouping them into two large categories, which I called clarity and growth: the former exhibits strict tempos and relatively nuanced dynamics, and corresponds overwhelmingly to her studio recordings; the defining characteristic of the latter is Yudina's tendency to accelerate gradually throughout the performance.

Yudina's approaches to baroque and romantic repertoire, then, indicate distinct and various stylistic features, but the extent to which such features can be generalised and firmly attached to specific repertoire remains uncertain. What we can say is that Yudina's recordings of baroque and romantic music display certain expressive tendencies that are much more common in some repertoires than in others, but such observations are credible only when accompanied by an acknowledgement that the analysis which led to them is very selective. In the grand scheme of Yudina's performing career, the number of performances included in my last two chapters is very small. Whereas an analysis that limits itself to studio recordings has the potential, at least in theory, to be exhaustive, selectivity is inevitable once (recorded) live performances are categorically included, given the numerous undocumented performances which cannot be factored in.

What is certain, however, is that Yudina's live recordings across baroque and romantic repertoire exhibit expressive features that are routinely absent from or rarely found in her studio recordings. Put another way, there is a much more diverse and wide-ranging expressive palette on display in Yudina's live recordings than there is in her studio recordings. This means that performance setting matters enormously as a contextual frame for Yudina's interpretative approaches. The risk-taking attitude that I suggested was particularly prevalent in her

romanticism, for instance, could plausibly be connected to the adrenaline and excitement that live performance brings. But in order to account for these different settings properly, it is vital to reflect on the matrix of distributed creativity that the recording studio necessarily entails, and particularly to acknowledge the creative and artistic input of the sound engineers and producers that Yudina worked with in the studio. Andrew Blake has lamented that, despite their ‘remarkable range of activities and skills, the producer has been the least visible part of the recording process’.⁹ Simon Zagorski-Thomas reminds us of the ‘fundamentally distributed’ creative process involved in the practice of studio recording, that the ‘kinds of decision about microphone placement and processing are often completely out of the hands of the performer’.¹⁰ The same goes for “‘cleaning up” edits and correcting timing’.¹¹ In other words, responsibilities emerge ‘in the studio environment that are either entirely outside the expertise of the performer or are things that can happen after they’ve left the session, with or without their knowledge or permission’.¹² ‘Producers, too, make music’, is how Blake summarises it.¹³

One sound engineer with whom Yudina worked throughout the 1960s is Valentin Skoblo, who recalled that:

Yudina used to play without respite. Variations, complete or incomplete, separated musical episodes, played in the most improbable order, would accumulate, and it resulted in the most chaotic musical material ever. To be able to follow her, to keep in mind that which was already likely to be used for the editing process and what we didn’t already have, we had to have nerves of steel. We couldn’t relax for a moment. Maximum attention and concentration levels were needed for the whole recording session. Yudina’s way of working, extremely incompatible with the recording process, was clearly indispensable to her, because she embodied pure creative energy, and at the same time it was physically very demanding for her. Having played practically without a break for hours, Yudina would leave the instrument exhausted, just like after some long and exhausting manual labour. Asking her at this point to make even the smallest of corrections made no sense because she was no longer in any fit state to play. Even if she agreed to do so, most often the corrections she made were unusable. Yudina gave everything during the recording process and ended up completely bloodless. The corrections then had to be deferred until the following session. So that’s why Yudina’s presence was essential during the editing process. To take notes on the score during the recording, as sound engineers usually do, was absolutely

⁹ Andrew Blake, ‘Recording practices and the role of the producer’, Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and John Rink (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 36–53 (36).

¹⁰ Simon Zagorski-Thomas, *A Musicology of Record Production* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 195.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹² *Ibid.*, 195.

¹³ Blake, ‘Recording practices’, 53.

impossible in Yudina's case. We could only decide on which takes to go with in her presence. She voluntarily surrendered herself to the studio and used to stay for between four and six hours in a row in the editing room. Such an attitude never failed to surprise, what with the editing work sometimes being extremely complicated. One day I asked her if this part of the work was not too gruelling for her. 'Come on, Valia, what are you saying,' she replied. 'On the contrary! These are the only moments when I can rest. Here, I do nothing. It's you who are working....'¹⁴

Yudina may have claimed that she was not contributing at these later editorial stages, but Skoblo is clear about how important her involvement was. He also remarks on how unusual it was:

In general, the interpreter is rarely present during the editing process. This long and meticulous process is tedious for anyone not trained in it. Usually, the interpreter listens to the first provisional edit and makes some corrections. Yudina was always present for the editing process. Exceptionally cultivated and eager for knowledge, she would be sent into fits of joyous ecstasy, like a child, by the range of possibilities of studio recording and editing.¹⁵

Skoblo's testimony reveals much about Yudina's presence in the studio. His account discloses a special kind of artistic passion and spontaneity: it seems as if she played in an unordered, unpredictable fashion, in a state of unbroken creative flow, and with a commitment that left her utterly drained. In that sense, what is perhaps most remarkable is the extent to which Skoblo describes Yudina's studio practices in similar terms to how I have discussed her live performances. Indeed, Skoblo goes so far as to say that, as soon as she sat down at the piano, she 'forgot that she was in the recording studio, that the tapes were rolling, that the sound engineer was in the control room'.¹⁶ But the key difference is that those initial performances were then filtered through a much longer process of refashioning, editing and correction. On the basis of what Skoblo remembers, Yudina was particularly influential behind the scenes, and unusually so, for a performer. At the same time, the results of these extra layers of studio work are indisputable: in both baroque and romantic repertoire, Yudina's listening back, her retake sessions and her editorial involvement all contributed to a much more refined set of published interpretations than what we hear on her live recordings. So, allowing for the starting point of Yudina's studio and live performances to have a certain amount in common (on the basis of Skoblo's testimony), by the time that the studio records were pressed, any sense of liveness captured in Yudina's first takes had been heavily filtered through so many stages of musical

¹⁴ Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 736–7, footnote 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 319, footnote 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 697, footnote 8.

production as to render the final products entirely different in nature. That should not be mistaken for a suggestion that one is more true than the other: it is simply that Yudina's studio pianism emerges from a kind of musicmaking that involves multiple stages and more than one agent.

To return to the perceptual model of liveness discussed in the previous chapter, all of this means that the nature of the recording matters quite considerably in terms of understanding the phenomenology of liveness from the performer's perspective, even if less so from the listener's. It is important to point out that the likes of Philip Auslander, Paul Sanden and Nicholas Cook are of course well aware of such phenomenological differences: Cook, for instance, makes the point that extending the concept of liveness to recorded music 'is not to deny that, for performers such as Doğantan-Dack, performing for an audience and in the studio are quite distinct things'.¹⁷ What I am suggesting is not even to argue against or to rethink recent theories of liveness: it is simply to enrich them by attempting more explicitly to complement the listener's perspective with that of the performer, and no doubt the field of artistic research—upon which my argument for this is based—will have as much, if not more, to contribute to this enriched understanding than empirical studies of recordings. Doing so should allow multiple perspectives of liveness to sit alongside each other without reinscribing the kind of hierarchical thinking between recordings and live performance that Auslander and Cook have gone to such efforts to critique. That is because, ultimately, it is all performance.

It is possible, in turn, to transfer this egalitarianism back to Yudina's performances when accounting for their differences. There are several possible explanations for them, of course. The greater subtlety of her studio romanticism and the predominance of her clarity approach in her studio Bach recordings suggest that marketing reasons may have been at play, possibly an acknowledgement on some level that such extremes or idiosyncrasies might have been less commercially viable. As suggested in the previous chapter, perhaps the prospect of artistic permanency that accompanies studio recordings directed her concerns in a very different way to the live act. With that in mind, it is tempting to suggest that Yudina actively toned down her own personality in both her romantic and baroque studio recordings. It would equally be possible, however, to think of the more unexpected aspects of her live performances as deviations from her more carefully captured studio interpretations—a kind of artistic suppression on the one hand, or a form of artistic distortion on the other. But it is also conceivable that Yudina's aesthetic preferences varied according to context. One does not have to be derivative of the other; they are simply different.

¹⁷ Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 372.

And yet, at the same time, there is an important sense in which Yudina's live and studio performances are not equal. Doğantan-Dack has argued that the 'classical performer depends on live performance to establish and define his or her artistic identity as a musician' and that it is therefore 'particularly important to articulate the significance of live musical performance as the ultimate norm in classical music practice'.¹⁸ I interpret this as a numerical rather than a value judgement, in the sense that the vast majority of musicians play live recitals much more frequently than they make studio recordings. In his study of Jascha Heifetz, for example, Dario Sarlo found that only 197 out of 2,368 performance instances in Heifetz's career were studio recordings: 'the violinist spent an overwhelming amount of his time engaged in live performance, either in recital with piano, as soloist with orchestra, or on a smaller number of occasions in chamber music concerts'.¹⁹ The disciplinary ramifications of all of this for histories of performance style are not small, then, given the extent to which such histories often rely on studio recordings. Fabian's study of twentieth-century performance practice is a useful example, since she essentially works from the listener-oriented perception of liveness:

Some might readily object that recordings are not performances but I believe they are. Those disputing it generally cite the unnatural environment of the recording studio, the inhibiting effect of the microphone and, above all, the editing processes involved. But in my experience the differences between Arturo Toscanini and Herbert von Karajan or Sviatoslav Richter and Alfred Brendel are fairly clear. According to empirical data I collected in 2006, most recordings are released when all parties are satisfied with it and the majority of soloists would agree that their recordings reflect their ideal performance of the work at the time of recording. Most importantly, recordings are experienced by listeners as performances, in my experience they may even sound different each time one listens to them, and so I make no apologies for studying them as such.²⁰

This is an important defence of recordings, but earlier in her book Fabian notes that she 'only deals with recorded performances', and that determining how valid her findings are for 'what one may hear on concert platforms across the world is a task for another day'.²¹ (I take from this that by 'recorded' she means 'studio' in the sense that I use it here.) If we operate from Doğantan-Dack's basis of live music as the ultimate norm, a history of performance style based

¹⁸ Mine Doğantan-Dack, 'The art of research in live music performance', *Music Performance Research* 5 (2012), 34–48 (36).

¹⁹ Dario Sarlo, *The Performance Style of Jascha Heifetz* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 59.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

²¹ Dorottya Fabian, *A Musicology of Performance: Theory and Method Based on Bach's Solos for Violin* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015), 38. In fact, her large discography of Bach recordings does include live performances by two violinists, Rachel Barton Pine and Ruggiero Ricci (307–311).

solely on studio recordings starts to seem like a relatively narrow frame of reference. We might even ask: what, exactly, is a history of studio recordings in the second half of the twentieth century a history *of*? At least in some circumstances, studio recordings might be worth decentring.

That is certainly the case for Yudina—whose studio recordings, no matter how crucial, tell only a small part of the story of her artistry—and arguably extends to studies of individual classical performers more generally, where the omission of live performance or the generalisation on the basis of studio recordings risks considerably obscuring a particular musician’s artistic practice.²² Again, that would be true in Yudina’s case, and I have no strong reason to believe that she is unique in this respect. There is less cause for concern with recordings and performers that predate the adoption of magnetic tape and the maturation of techniques of studio editing and splicing (as, for instance, in the case of Daniel Leech-Wilkinson’s pioneering study of Elena Gerhardt, which does not engage with any live recordings).²³ Yet the creeping ontological break between live and studio musical practices since World War II means that the same is not true for later artists and musicians.

Cook has made the argument that post-war studio practice was conditioned by the ‘best seat in the hall’ (BSH) ideology, the central ambition of which was, in the words of Walter Legge, to ‘set the standards by which public performance and the artists of the future would be judged’.²⁴ It is through such an ideology that concert hall performance and studio performance have come much closer together during the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: as Cook puts it, ‘the BSH ideology of recording interlocks with an ideology of concert performance that is, so to speak, its mirror image: an ideology that renders the concert hall experience as similar as possible to that of recorded music’.²⁵ Maybe, then, Yudina’s practice as captured in post-war recordings is an exceptional case positioned on the crest of a historical wave: a performer from an earlier generation whose strongly diverging live/studio approaches were captured just as emerging technologies allowed, but before the greater convergence of concert and studio musicmaking styles took place. Yet it is also true that Yudina is a neglected case, and the unwritten histories of performance are no doubt populated with many other performers like her. At the very least, then, the faultline between live and studio performance around the middle of the twentieth century is deserving of further investigation.

²² In the same way, it also risks obscuring the creative input of sound engineers and music producers.

²³ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, ‘Recordings and Histories of Performance Style’, Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, and John Rink (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 248; Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, ‘Performance Style in Elena Gerhardt’s Schubert Song Recordings’, *Musicæ Scientiæ* 14/2 (2010), 57–84 (78).

²⁴ Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 376.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Performance, of course, exists beyond recording booths, recital halls, radio broadcasts and revolving vinyl. When they lived in Leningrad, Mikhail Bakhtin remembers that he used to see Yudina almost every day, and that he and others would spend time in her apartment:

She had a wonderful study, a grand piano, and so forth. We often spent the night there listening to her play. She played until morning. Until morning! And how she played! I must say that I heard her perform at concerts, but the way she played those nights, for her closest friends, she never played like that anywhere else! It was amazing! Her power was given free reign [sic.] then.²⁶

I include this quote not simply to acknowledge, in yet another way, how there are performances by Yudina that I have not been able to incorporate into my discussion. I include it to point out that, as we expand our performance histories and our conceptions of liveness, we need not limit ourselves to the dichotomy of the stage and the studio. I mentioned that there might be circumstances under which it would be worth decentring studio recordings in studies of classical performance; it might also be worth decentring concert performance wherever possible, given how broadly the social practice of performance extends. Perhaps more fundamentally, Bakhtin's recollection speaks to the importance of performance venue as a contextual frame, and how each setting's particular affordances shapes what happens in practice. To neglect the frame is to neglect the performer.

²⁶ Slav N. Gratchev and Margarita Marinova (eds), *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Duvakin Interviews, 1973* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 2019), 231–2.

Yudina's Contemporary Musical Imagination, 1959–66

In a letter to Tatiana Kamendrovskaya on 11 January 1961, Yudina wrote that she had no interest in most other pianists because their repertoire consisted mostly of music which had already been fully ‘unveiled’—in other words, from which there was little new to be learned—and she mentioned the likes of ‘Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and even Mozart’.¹ She makes an exception of Glenn Gould, whom she describes as ‘a wonder’ and whose career path and musical conceptions ‘made [her] feel very close to him’.² ‘If in Canada a severe attack of polio interfered with his activity,’ she wrote, ‘for me it’s the difficulties of life in general—but it’s a long story...’.³

Of the several things Yudina could be referring to here, it seems likely that her dedication to the performance of modernist and avant-garde contemporary music in the Soviet Union is central. As Pauline Fairclough has shown, such music was thoroughly on the fringes of Soviet cultural life from 1936 onwards when campaigns against what was dubbed ‘formalism’ (a placeholder for western modernism) in contemporary music became vociferous.⁴ Through her analysis of concert programmes of the Leningrad and Moscow Philharmonias in the 1930s, for example, Fairclough demonstrates how such ‘attacks on formalism marked a watershed in Soviet concert programming and, though there were seasons when chinks in the anti-Western armour did appear ... it is broadly true to say that, for the rest of the Soviet era, the Leningrad Philharmonia never recovered the pan-European focus of the pre-1936 period.’⁵ These restrictions intensified with Andrei Zhdanov’s 1948 ‘Resolution on Music of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union’, which condemned the likes of Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovich, Igor Stravinsky, Béla Bartók, and Aram Khachaturian for their ‘formalist’ music which did not achieve the ideals of socialist realism; from that point onwards, too, musicologists ‘had to avoid all mention of Western influences on Russian music’.⁶

¹ Jean-Pierre Collot, *Maria Yudina, Pierre Souvtchinsky: Correspondance et documents (1959–1970)* (Geneva: Contrechamps Éditions, 2020), 271. Tatiana Kamendrovskaya was the daughter of a close friend of Yudina’s, the Russian historian Nikolai Antsiferov (275, footnote 1).

² Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 271.

³ *Ibid.* Yudina seems to be referring to the Canadian polio epidemic, which was particularly notorious in the Toronto summers of Gould’s youth. See Kevin Bazzana, *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2003), 35.

⁴ Pauline Fairclough, ‘From Enlightened to Sublime: Musical Life under Stalin, 1930–1948’, Patrick Zuk and Marina Frolova-Walker (eds), *Russian Music since 1917: Reappraisal and Rediscovery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 148–63.

⁵ Pauline Fairclough, *Classics for the Masses: Shaping Soviet Musical Identity under Lenin and Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 113–14.

⁶ Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism: From Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 347.

These strictures loosened during the early years of the Khrushchev era when the ‘formalism’ of Prokofiev and Shostakovich (and even Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen) could be found in the Soviet Union, though only as the ‘pursuit of a significant minority’, as Frolova-Walker has put it: ‘at the genuinely avant-garde end there was no state funding or approval (although performances were possible nevertheless).’⁷ Peter J. Schmelz uses the Russian word *vnye* to characterise the ambiguity and ‘outsideness’ of such unofficial musical circuits as a way of avoiding the often unhelpful binary of dissidence/conformism in readings of Soviet life:

This music was criticized throughout the 1960s because it did not fulfil official socialist realist requirements, yet it was not, strictly speaking, illegal to perform it... Even so, performances of unofficial music still necessitated the exploitation of loopholes in the official regulations governing the proper use of official spaces.⁸

Within that *vnye* (literally, ‘outside’) culture, Yudina played a crucial, dedicated and precarious role. Though she recorded music of the twentieth century intermittently during the 1950s, she dramatically increased her number of recordings of twentieth-century music in 1959.⁹ Importantly, 1959 is also the year in which Yudina began to correspond with Pierre Souvtchinsky, an acolyte of Igor Stravinsky with whom Yudina built up a rich and wide-ranging correspondence during the 1960s.¹⁰ She was put in touch with Souvtchinsky by Boris Pasternak and, as their correspondence documents, it was through Souvtchinsky that Yudina learned more about, acquired the scores of, and personally contacted many western composers around the turn of the 1960s.¹¹ Quite rapidly, then, Yudina built up an avant-garde social milieu, and her access to the world of new music began to increase just as the possibility of introducing such music to Soviet audiences became feasible, in however marginalised a fashion. Through these exchanges with Souvtchinsky especially, her own contemporary aesthetic values were elaborated, negotiated and shaped.

There is a feverish eagerness in Yudina’s letters at the prospects of accessing this avant-garde musical world, and she continuously emphasises her absolute commitment to new music.

⁷ Ibid., 353.

⁸ Peter J. Schmelz, *Such Freedom, if Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 15. Schmelz draws this term from the work of anthropologist Alexei Yurchak, specifically from his book *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁹ In 1959, Yudina recorded some of the chamber music of Hindemith and Arthur Honegger, as well as Nikolai Medtner’s Sonata-Elegie, Op. 11 No. 2, Yuri Shaporin’s Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 7 and Paul Danblon’s Piano Concerto (1954).

¹⁰ Specifically, their correspondence began on 16 September 1959.

¹¹ Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 34 (letter to Pierre Souvtchinsky dated 16 September 1959).

In a letter to composer Andrei Volkonsky, Yudina wrote on 22–23 December 1960 that she was playing the music of ‘Stravinsky, [Paul] Hindemith, [Ernst] Krenek *at all costs*’ and was desperately trying to keep up with developments in serialism, mentioning Boulez, Stockhausen and Olivier Messiaen by name.¹² In an earlier letter to Souvtchinsky, from 27 May of that year, Yudina remarked that ‘I will say (and I have gradually come to this conclusion) that music which is old (and still immense, like Schubert, Mozart and so on) is no longer “ours”, as Stockhausen put it; I can play it, but I only want to explore new or little-taken routes...’.¹³ She said to Souvtchinsky in a later letter, from 6 August 1961, that she would play only ‘the best and the most innovative’ new music, and months later to Arvo Pärt she wrote: ‘I must admit that even the greatest of old music is nothing more than a museum to me ... but to play among the people and for the people can only be done in the language and tension of this era, and if it involves the music of your compatriots, even better.’¹⁴

Yudina’s correspondence with Souvtchinsky was crucial to all of this. In her first letter to him, Yudina wrote ‘with the humility of an elderly person who doesn’t have long to live, I beg you to send me certain new works – I should say – scores’, naming compositions by Stravinsky, Boulez, Anton Webern and Bohuslav Martinů, and offering to pay him ‘whatever the amount’ they would cost.¹⁵ As early as his reply—dated 21 September 1959—to her initial letter, Souvtchinsky provided Yudina with the addresses of Messiaen, Boulez and Stockhausen so that she could write to them personally.¹⁶ He followed this up with a package on 30 September containing ‘the scores of Boulez and Stockhausen’, promising to send on ‘the music of Stravinsky, Webern and Messiaen’ in due course.¹⁷

In practice, Yudina became central to the circulation and proliferation of this music in ways that came at great personal cost. She gave the public premiere of Volkonsky’s *Musica Stricta*, which he dedicated to her, in the Gnessin Institute on 6 May 1961, an event that Schmelz locates as the beginning of ‘postwar Soviet New Music’.¹⁸ In a recital which consisted of Bach, Hindemith and Bartók in the first half, Yudina performed *Musica Stricta* twice after the interval.

¹² Ibid., 259–60.

¹³ Ibid., 188.

¹⁴ Ibid., 332–33 (letter to Souvtchinsky dated 6 August 1961); 355 (letter to Pärt dated 30 October 1961).

¹⁵ Ibid., 36–8 (letter to Souvtchinsky dated 16 September 1959).

¹⁶ Ibid., 42. See also, for instance, Yudina’s letter to Messiaen dated 15 December 1959 (100); to Boulez dated 17 December 1960 (254); and to Stockhausen dated 1 August 1961 (320).

¹⁷ Ibid., 57 (letter from Souvtchinsky to Yudina dated 30 September 1959).

¹⁸ Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 89–90. He also notes that it is ‘usually acknowledged as the first Soviet twelve-tone composition and is no doubt deserving of the designation’ (81). Yudina was meant to premiere *Musica Stricta* on 26 March, several weeks previously, as she tells Pierre and Marianna Souvtchinsky in a letter from 13 March 1961 (Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 295–96).

Schmelz notes that the work remained in her repertoire ‘until eventually she began to get the attention of the authorities’:

On 19 November 1961 at a concert in the Small Hall of the Leningrad Philharmonic, Yudina played Webern’s *Variations, Op. 27*, and Volkonsky’s *Musica Stricta* (both twice) and read poetry by Pasternak and Nikolai Zabolotsky from the stage. As a result of this concert and the ‘scandal’ it provoked, Yudina was prohibited from taking part in concerts organized by the Leningrad Philharmonic (the concert bureau).¹⁹

Yudina remained a passionate advocate for Volkonsky after this, eventually partly resulting in her denunciation in an open letter, intended for the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia*, written and signed by the faculty of the Khabarovsk School of Music on 7 March 1963.²⁰ Yudina had been invited to Khabarovsk to play a recital at the faculty, but she began the event by announcing categorically to a packed hall ‘that she would not play and would only speak’, a decision that shocked those in attendance.²¹ In the letter, they subsequently accused her of ‘speaking with enthusiasm of foreign composers like Berg, Hindemith, Schoenberg, Stravinsky’ but of ‘not having a single kind word to say about Soviet music’ with the exception of Volkonsky.²² ‘What is guiding Yudina,’ they asked, ‘when, in the course of a conversation dedicated to the evolution of contemporary music, she passes silently over the work of Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Kabalevsky, Shaporin, Karayev [sic.], Sviridov and a whole host of young, talented composers ...?’²³ The letter culminates with an accusation of ‘bourgeois ideology’ aimed in Yudina’s direction, and a call for greater national efforts to support contemporary Soviet music in ways ‘firmly anchored in the values of socialist realism’.²⁴

Though in the end the letter was not published in *Izvestia*, a copy was sent to the Ministry of Culture, and on 17 May 1963 Yudina wrote to Alexander Kholodilin to defend herself.²⁵ She argued that the Khabarovsk letter contained ‘many of what could be called “inaccuracies”, to say the least’, and that she ‘had warned [the faculty] that [she] would not play’.²⁶ Nevertheless, the complaint resulted in a wider concertising ban for Yudina across the Soviet Union and for an

¹⁹ Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 92–94. Volkonsky himself fluctuated in and out of favour with the Soviet authorities, but this changed following the composition of *Musica Stricta* in 1957 and he was eventually considered ‘unredeemable, lost for good to the forces of “formalism”’ by Soviet officials (77).

²⁰ Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 535–41.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 536.

²² *Ibid.*, 536–7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 537.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 540.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 541–5. Kholodilin was the head of the music division of the Committee for Artistic Affairs in the Communist Party. See Laurel Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 176 and 371.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 543–4.

undetermined length of time.²⁷ This appears to have lasted for three and a half years based on Yudina's letter to Souvtchinsky in November 1966: 'Someone, for whatever reason, somehow, has lifted the "disgrace" – because three and a half years ago I was deprived of public (and lucrative...) activity.'²⁸

Between 1962 and 1963, just before the Khabarovsk denunciation, Yudina corresponded frequently with Igor Stravinsky, a process which had begun the year previously and had been facilitated by Souvtchinsky. Tamara Levitz notes that the correspondence between these three figures 'documents Stravinsky's first tentative contact with Soviet colleagues during the Thaw' in what would culminate in his first return to Russia 'after almost half a century'.²⁹ Following his formal invitation, Stravinsky wrote to Yudina that he would 'make this pleasure a reality and amplify it by meeting with [her]'.³⁰ Yudina's adoration for Stravinsky was incomparable. On hearing of potential delays to his visit, she wrote to Souvtchinsky that 'the center of my life is now not the "Warsaw autumn" ... but Igor Fyodorovich, his colossal figure, his path and—our Exhibit', the last point referring to the 'Stravinskyana' exhibit that Yudina painfully curated and personally financed at the Leningrad House of Composers during his visit.³¹ She continues:

*I implore and beg you to come together with him. I implore and beg you to start working on the visa. Valerian Mikhailovich Bogdanov-Berezovsky, author of the book about Ig. Fyod-ch's father and the vice chairman of the Leningrad Union of Composers, an excellent gentleman, asks the same. And many other people, musicians, scientists, and, of course, M. V. Alpatov. (I was at their place yesterday.) You are not only NOT!! 'not needed by anyone'!! (nonsense, I am sorry!), but needed by all of us both on your own and as the best friends and companions of Igor Fyodorovich. Only with you will this trip truly be on its proper tracks.*³²

²⁷ Collot explains this in footnote 1 on page 541 of *Maria Yudina*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 651. Yudina's only concertising during these years involved playing in 'diverse "themed" concerts' for which she was not paid. 'In the long run,' she notes, 'it made me weary to have only this type of concert activity.' These were perhaps part of some of the other, smaller-scale *mye* circuits that Schmelz identifies in 1960s Moscow, chief among them artistic clubs (like the Physics Institute of the Academy of Sciences and the Scriabin Museum) and "home exhibits" that took place in artists' apartments for small groups. Such gatherings were usually unadvertised. See Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 192–97.

²⁹ Tamara Levitz, Philipp Penka and Alexandra Grabarchuk, 'Stravinsky's Cold War: Letters About the Composer's Return to Russia, 1960–1963', Tamara Levitz (ed.), *Stravinsky and his World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 273–319 (278–79).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 284 (letter from Stravinsky to Yudina dated 19 June 1961).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 296 (letter from Yudina to Marianna and Pierre Souvtchinsky dated 5–15 June 1962); 315, footnote 128.

³² *Ibid.*, 296 (letter from Yudina to Marianna and Pierre Souvtchinsky dated 5–15 June 1962). Levitz notes that in a separate letter Yudina wrote to Stravinsky: 'What can I do? Only thank Providence for the fact that you exist on earth, that I am your co-citizen and contemporary, and that I have the honor and happiness to be acquainted with you even from afar...' *Ibid.*, 311, footnote 51 (letter from Yudina to Stravinsky dated 29 April 1960).

When his return to the Soviet Union eventually materialised—between 21 September and 11 October 1962—Levitz notes that ‘Maria Yudina fell through the cracks’ of his visit, and as neither ‘Stravinsky’s close friend, nor a valued male competitor, nor an official representative of the state’ she was ‘excluded from Stravinsky’s social calendar’.³³ Yudina was devastated, and an emotional outpouring followed her unreturned telephone call to him when he left for Milan with Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft. It is worth reproducing large extracts of her letter to Souvtchinsky of 22 July 1963 which detail this change of heart:

About I. F.— Perhaps the only correct way of living is: ‘not to get offended’— But it is impossible *not to be upset*— I phoned Milan twice, at the Hotel Continental. At first I was told: ‘We are expecting them, but they haven’t arrived yet’ (June 18); the second time: ‘They have arrived but are rehearsing’ (June 19); then I sent a telegram letter (because of the cheaper price), those take *twenty-four hours, no longer*, that was on the 20th or 21st [of June]. It was not returned to me— that means *they received it*— In it were congratulations, respects, and kisses *to all three*, a request for a ‘little message’ and my new address—all very detailed— Until now he (I. F.) has always answered me.

— So, he ‘exchanged’ me with those who are at the helm—I did everything that was possible and impossible— and am no longer needed and, ergo, can be disregarded. When something like this happens to another, one can talk a lot; when it happens to oneself, one can only step aside and be silent— To be honest, there were analogous touches when he was here, too, but I looked at them ‘over the barriers,’ but now I have somehow—lost all desire—no one should have to *aufbinden* one’s friendship and one’s—understanding—...³⁴

There are photographs that show Yudina and Stravinsky embracing on at least two occasions during his visit, but her letters make clear that she never got to meet him in any meaningful way; as she noted to Souvtchinsky on 8 June 1963, ‘I didn’t really get to exchange even two words with Igor Fyodorovich.’³⁵ If Yudina’s commitment to Volkonsky’s music demonstrates the extent to which she willingly risked clashing with the Soviet authorities, her exclusion from Stravinsky’s clique—particularly her remark that she was ‘exchanged’ with those ‘at the helm’—evidences the extent to which she was marginalised within cultural officialdom. She remained very much on the outside, and was easily discarded even by those she supported unflinchingly. As

³³ Ibid., 300.

³⁴ Ibid., 306 (letter from Yudina to Marianna and Pierre Souvtchinsky dated 22 July 1963).

³⁵ Ibid., 305. The photograph in question can be found on the same page and was taken on 6 October 1962. It is also reproduced in Collot’s volume along with the other photo (which dates from September 1962). See Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 244.

Levitz notes, ‘Stravinsky seemed largely unaware of her situation and the courage she displayed in disseminating his music.’³⁶

In word and deed, then, Yudina was deeply dedicated to the promotion of new music; it became her guiding artistic motivation, and her letters and actions betray a desire to become fully ensconced within (and accepted by) the prestigious avant-garde circles that came to define new music in the 1950s and 1960s. This chapter explores how all of this dovetails with Yudina’s pianism. Unfortunately, recordings do not exist of many of the composers that Yudina considered to be at the forefront of contemporary music.³⁷ She sought out and worked on the scores of Boulez, Messiaen and Stockhausen—indeed, Elizabeth Wilson notes that she became one of the first, if not ‘the first person in the Soviet Union’ to own many of their scores—but no performances of any of these were ever captured on tape, or at least are currently extant.³⁸ This renders those recordings of contemporary music that do exist particularly valuable, and for my purposes here I focus on six examples (Table 5.1).³⁹

In this chapter, I examine the messy entanglement of Yudina’s professed commitment to new music with her interpretative strategies. I first trace the rich context surrounding Yudina’s recording of Stravinsky’s Piano Sonata (1924) and explore what she calls her ‘rigorous way’ of playing his music. I complement this discussion with a consideration of her recording of Shostakovich’s Piano Sonata No. 2 in B minor, Op. 61—a composer whose music she also held in high esteem—and ask whether Yudina’s notion of rigour might constitute a set of interpretative ideals for new music more generally. I then complicate the picture by turning to Hindemith and Yuri Shaporin, analysing Yudina’s very different recordings of two of their piano sonatas in the context of her less enthusiastic evaluations of their music. In search of an explanation for these incongruencies, I finish by considering Yudina’s recordings of Volkonsky’s *Musica Stricta* and Webern’s Variations for Piano, Op. 27, the latter in the context of the work’s larger performance history. I conclude by reflecting on the tension between Yudina’s inconsistent performance approaches to contemporary compositions and the idealistic and literalistic discourse that surrounded them, all within the broader context of Soviet *mye* culture.

³⁶ Levitz, Penka and Grabarchuk, ‘Stravinsky’s Cold War’, 279.

³⁷ Given the ‘unofficialness’ of Yudina’s musical activity during these years, and especially considering her concertising bans, it is no surprise that few live recordings exist.

³⁸ One prospective programme for a set of concerts includes extracts from Messiaen’s *Vingt Regards sur l’Enfant Jésus*, Boulez’s Piano Sonata No. 3, and an unspecified selection of Stockhausen’s *Klavierstücke*. See Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 134 (letter from Yudina to Souvtchinsky dated 10 March 1960). Elizabeth Wilson, ‘The Many Faces of the Russian Pianist Maria Yudina’, talk given virtually at the Kronberg Academy on 13 January 2021 (<https://youtu.be/qqJHk0Itu0?t=3214>, accessed 8/10/2021).

³⁹ These examples are picked because of the extent to which Yudina discussed the composers in question in her correspondence as well as the fact that she recorded major works by them.

Composer	Composition	Date Composed	Date of recording	Setting
<i>Yuri Shaporin</i>	Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 7	1926	23 May 1959	Studio
<i>Paul Hindemith</i>	Piano Sonata No. 3 in B flat Major	1936	2 April 1960	Studio
<i>Dmitri Shostakovich</i>	Piano Sonata No. 2 in B minor, Op. 61	1943	2 April 1960	Studio
<i>Igor Stravinsky</i>	Piano Sonata (1924)	1924	December 1961	Studio
<i>Andrei Volkonsky</i>	<i>Musica Stricta</i>	1956–57	1961	Live (The Scriabin Museum, Moscow)
<i>Anton Webern</i>	Variations for Piano, Op. 27	1936	1961	Live (The Scriabin Museum, Moscow)

Table 5.1. Six examples of Yudina’s contemporary playing

*

It is not surprising that Yudina’s adulation for Stravinsky was matched by an anxiety to do justice to his music in performance. Though composed decades earlier, it was not until the end of 1959 that Yudina acquired the score of his Piano Sonata (1924), having asked Souvtchinsky to send it to her after only recently learning of its existence.⁴⁰ Souvtchinsky sent her a copy of the score on 4 December of that year.⁴¹ She noted in her response—dated 12 December—that she had already started learning it, and she eventually recorded it two years later at the end of 1961.⁴² The process of recording the work turned out to be quite protracted. On 13 July 1961, Yudina wrote to the directors of Melodiya’s recording studio to complain about their facilities, citing external noise, poor hygiene conditions, and subpar instruments:

...both of the instruments were practically out of tune. At a pinch, they could be used for pieces with pedal, which would conceal their complete lack of timbre. Impossible [however] to record Stravinsky in these conditions, because the music is transparent, in some places the music is only written for two voices, the defects of the instrument are glaring, the non-existent timbre doesn’t help, in particular in the *Sonata*, but in large part as well in the *Serenade*...⁴³

Yudina delayed her plans to record Stravinsky’s Sonata (and Serenade in A major from 1925) beyond the summer of 1961 due to her dissatisfaction with the conditions of the studio. But it appears that this was not the whole truth behind the postponement, since almost a month later (6 August) she informed Souvtchinsky that she was encountering phrasing problems with both

⁴⁰ Collot, *Maria Youdina*, 68 (letter to Souvtchinsky dated 19 October 1959). As she wrote to Souvtchinsky on 16 September 1959, ‘for some strange reason, I didn’t know about [the sonata]’ until recently, noting that it had been omitted from lists of Stravinsky’s published works that she had consulted (37–8).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 90.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 318.

compositions, and that she desperately sought clarification since she was due to record the sonata soon.⁴⁴

On 13 September, Yudina attempted to bypass Souvtchinsky by sending a telegram directly to Stravinsky, who was staying in Helsinki at the time:

...please let me know your address for September and October so that I can write a detailed letter to you because, among many other things, I must bother you with questions related to the performance of the *Sonata* and the *Serenade* because I have to make this recording and I wish to play exclusively following your conception...⁴⁵

As it transpired, her telegram missed Stravinsky by about three hours, and an increasingly agitated Yudina wrote to Souvtchinsky to implore him to pass on her original message to the composer: 'I am enclosing the text of my telegram on a separate sheet and ask you to send it on...'⁴⁶ She also asked them to send her 'the places where he will be staying and the dates' so that she could write to him thereafter.⁴⁷ At the start of December, Yudina still had yet to record the sonata, but she mentioned to the German musicologist Fred Prieberg that the recording session was imminent.⁴⁸ But on 26 December, she mentions in a letter to Pierre and Marianna Souvtchinsky that she has just recorded the Serenade: 'I have just recorded [the Serenade], but without having been able to exchange questions and answers with Stravinsky, I simply had to record it in 1961, and I waited until the very last minute, or rather, the studio waited for me!'⁴⁹ Yudina does not mention the Sonata explicitly, but that is most likely because she has just mentioned the Serenade in the letter as part of a programme she is preparing for a concert. Both pieces were part of the same recording session, and appeared on the same disc.⁵⁰ Indeed, in this correspondence she seems to refer to the Sonata and the Serenade interchangeably.

The impression here is that Yudina was contractually obliged to record these works by the end of 1961 at the very latest, and did her best to stall until she could incorporate

⁴⁴ Ibid., 329: 'It is essential for me to clarify phrasing problems in the *Serenade* and the *Sonata*. I must record them soon, it should have already been done in the summer, but I postponed the date due to uncertainties related to the text and also because, in the summer, it was impossible to record in stereo for technical reasons.'

⁴⁵ Ibid., 338–9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 340 (letter to Pierre and Marianna Souvtchinsky dated 20 September 1961).

⁴⁷ Ibid., 340–1.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 370 (letter to Fred Prieberg dated 4 December 1961): 'I must now record the *Sonata* (1924) and the *Serenade* (1925) by Stravinsky.' Yudina initially wrote to Prieberg because he was particularly interested in Volkonsky's music. Given his focus on the avant-garde, she likewise was interested in Prieberg's research and asked him to send her 'one of [his] books on new music'. See her letter to Prieberg dated 14 November 1961 (364).

⁴⁹ Ibid., 378.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 438 (letter to Stravinsky dated 30 April 1962).

Stravinsky's thoughts. The answers she desperately sought never materialised, and on 30 April 1962 Yudina attempted to address these worries to the composer:

I will not share with you *my* conception of [the Serenade], but you should know that I have forged my own interpretation (yes, I allowed myself!) beyond that which you may have said about it... I play it, it seems, in a rigorous way. It wasn't possible to wait any longer for your advice or postpone the recording date, you were on tour for too long.⁵¹

There is a certain ambiguity to this phrasing. Given Yudina's wish to follow his conception exclusively and her subsequent reference to rigour, her acknowledgement of possibly going 'beyond' Stravinsky's conception is likely to be no more than a recognition that she had to take some personal interpretative decisions in the absence of his musical counsel. That seems more fitting than a subtle admission that she had rejected or considerably deviated from what she imagined he would have wanted. This is backed up by the correspondence which follows between Souvtchinsky and Yudina, in which Souvtchinsky attempts to reassure the pianist that printing errors in the scores of Stravinsky's works were nothing to fret over:

I have spoken with [Stravinsky] about printing errors in the *Concerto*, the *Serenade* and the *Sonata*. He asked me to tell you that a list of them exists, but he didn't know where it would be possible to consult it. Igor Fiodorovitch begs you not to worry: 'the good musician understands everything by themselves and can play with printing errors, it's not a big deal'...⁵²

This was not enough to soothe Yudina's anxieties, however, and she responded by expressing incredulity at the fact that printing errors could make their way into a Stravinsky score in the first place:

Alas, I didn't get the chance to correct the printings errors in Stravinsky; I hope that they won't disfigure his thinking too much. I absolutely do not understand how, with his demand, his rigour and his sense of detail that he let slip such misprints and why the editors don't have more control. Over here, we certainly print on bad paper, but the employees of any publisher are conscientious and scrupulous in the extreme!⁵³

⁵¹ Ibid. The faithful translation of 'rigorous' here is crucial. Collot (personal correspondence) has shared with me that Yudina's exact words to Stravinsky are: 'As it seems, I play rigorously' (Как кажется, играю строго) and that 'стро́го' translates somewhere in between severely and rigorously.

⁵² Ibid., 451 (letter to Souvtchinsky dated 21 May 1962).

⁵³ Ibid., 458 (letter to Pierre and Marianna Souvtchinsky dated 5–15 June 1962).

As Yudina reveals here, her desire to play Stravinsky's music in a rigorous way was derived from her understanding of the composer, and her worrying about the printing errors betrays a deep desire to do him justice down to the finest details—details which seem to have concerned Yudina even more than Stravinsky.

There is, in short, a certain discourse of fidelity at play. And though Yudina admits her imperfections in a letter to Pierre and Marianna Souvtchinsky—she notes that she took faster tempos than indicated in the score—she otherwise calls the recording successful, having at this stage had the chance to listen back to it.⁵⁴ Leaving aside Yudina's fast overall tempo in the first movement of the sonata, her notion of rigour maps quite neatly onto the strictness of her tempo and dynamics. Though she takes off at a faster pace than the prescribed crotchet = 112 (her tempo fluctuates around the 140 BPM mark), she maintains her tempo throughout the entire performance, relaxing only slightly to mark formal points and then more considerably for the three-bar resolution to C major at the final cadence. The same goes for dynamics, markings for which are scarce in this movement. Yudina interprets them more as local colouration than as larger directions: the volume of her playing more closely reflects her interest in the part-writing and, importantly, the articulation needed to characterise different voices (recall her description of Stravinsky's music as 'transparent' in her letter to Melodiya). In fact, Stravinsky's score is extremely specific in terms of articulation.

Since the nature of recorded sound bundles everything together into one 'text', the analysis of individual parts, voices or instruments is very difficult, something which Ana Llorens has pointed out in her work on chamber music recordings.⁵⁵ Spectrograms can provide useful visualisations of articulation in some cases, however, and here I use them to furnish four key initial examples of articulation in Yudina's Stravinsky recording. The first two come from the opening twelve bars, all of which are characterised chiefly by a running triplet figure. This triplet figure dominates the opening six bars, marked *legatissimo*, after which a long held middle c is played by the right hand at the second beat of bar 6, and the triplet figure appears solely in the left hand, marked *staccato* from bar 6 to 12. Fig. 5.1 captures Yudina's opening legato and highlights the level of connectedness between each of the onsets, indicated by the consistency of

⁵⁴ In a letter from 5–15 June 1962, Yudina writes to Souvtchinsky that 'the Concerto is really successful... the Sonata and the Serenade as well; the only thing is that I took quite quick tempos, faster than those indicated'. Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 460. This comment is part of the same letter as that containing her exasperations over the printing errors. The letter in question was written over the course of ten days, so it seems likely that Yudina listened to the final recording product at some point during that time.

⁵⁵ Ana Llorens, 'Creating Musical Structure through Performance: A Re-Interpretation of Brahms's Cello Sonatas', (Doctoral Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2018), 12. It is not currently possible to separate these into different waveforms using Sonic Visualiser, for instance, and that renders precarious the use of analytical tools for Yudina's intricate articulation.

the yellow/red lines on the lowest part of the spectrogram.⁵⁶ The triplets become one sweeping gesture, covering the first six bars, until the onset of the melody at the upbeat to bar 7. The difference is best grasped by comparing this with bars 6–12 in Fig. 5.2, the weaker yellow/red colours of which indicate the staccato articulation at play. The gaps between each of the onsets are much more noticeable, and the partials are much reduced from the opening six bars.⁵⁷ This figure also demonstrates the onset of the melody in bar 6, to which Yudina applies a large accent to make the note last as long as the piano will allow.

It is only in bar 13 that the melody really takes off. Stravinsky issues a reminder here to the performer to play the left hand *sempre staccato*, while the right hand continues the legatissimo of the opening bars. In juxtaposing these two styles in bars 13–23, Yudina maintains the detachedness of bars 6–12 in the left hand while working very hard to project the right-hand melody legatissimo. Fig. 5.3 displays bars 13–18. The sharp onsets of each note of the melody (represented by long vertical lines) make them easy to pick out of the spectrogram. The length for which they resound reflects Yudina's legato playing, both in cases where minims are sustained (as in bars 13 and 16) and where quavers more easily glide together (bar 17), all the more challenging while playing without pedal and maintaining a staccato bass line.⁵⁸

Stravinsky's articulation changes once again at bar 32 to *articulato ma non staccato*. Here, Yudina finds a subtle compromise between her legato and staccato techniques, one which spectrographic illustration is less useful for showing but which can nevertheless still be heard in her recording. In this passage (bars 32–51), Yudina's playing is on the one hand not as smoothly connected as in Fig. 5.1, where she endowed both left- and right-hand triplets with legatissimo; on the other hand, the notes are also not quite as detached as in bars 6–12 (as per Fig. 5.2.), especially in the case of the slurred crotchets and minims. On the whole, Yudina strikes a balance here, especially evident in the passage of descending sevenths at bars 36–9.

All of this is to say that Yudina achieves distinctive shades of articulation in accordance with Stravinsky's markings, which are plentiful throughout the first movement. All of them can be grouped into these three categories of legato, staccato and *articulato ma non staccato*. What is especially remarkable is how scrupulous Yudina is in following these markings, something which Table 5.2 attempts to collate. Her letter of complaint to Melodiya, quoted earlier, indicates that she always intended to record the pieces without pedal, and her refusal to do so on pianos that

⁵⁶ To be sure, this richness is also a result of the octaves being played and not simply the legato articulation.

⁵⁷ I mentioned that Yudina's dynamics obviously affect the richness of the partials, but it is also the case that her use of much quieter dynamics in bars 7–12 foregrounds the gaps between each quaver, and in turn the staccato effect. The same might be said of her use of louder dynamics to smooth over the onsets in bars 1–6.

⁵⁸ Based on her letter to Melodiya, quoted earlier, we also know that she fully intended not to use the pedal from an early stage.

Bar	Stravinsky's marking	Yudina's playing
1	Legatissimo	Fig. 5.1
6	Staccato, left hand	Fig. 5.2
13	Sempre staccato, left hand (still legatissimo right hand)	Fig. 5.3
22	Staccato left hand	As per Fig. 5.2
32	Articolato ma non staccato	–
51	Legato, right hand Staccato, left hand	As per Fig. 5.3
72	Un poco meno legato	Similar to 'articolato ma non staccato': loud dynamics and detached
81	Legatissimo	As per Fig. 1
91	Staccato right hand	Similar to Fig. 2 (quiet dynamics and detached)
128	Legato right hand	As per Fig. 5.3
134	Legato right hand	As per Fig. 5.3
137	Articolato ma non staccato	–
149	Legatissimo	As per Fig. 5.1
152	Staccato	As per Fig. 5.2

Table 5.2. The distribution of Yudina's types of articulation in Stravinsky's Piano Sonata (1924)

required pedal to cover up 'their complete lack of timbre' suggests that Yudina considered articulation to be the key to interpreting Stravinsky's music faithfully from an early stage.

The point of drawing performance/score comparisons like these is not to test and prove an 'ideal' reading of the sonata, but to attempt to grasp how Yudina's expressed ideas of rigour and fidelity shaped her practice. As she put it elsewhere, Yudina wanted to 'strive to be a rigorous and inflexible artist' in her interpretations of contemporary music, so the notion of rigour—though developed most fully around her preparation of Stravinsky's music—is relevant more generally. The rich context to Yudina's Stravinsky recording provides a benchmark against which to assess Yudina's interpretative approaches to other contemporary music. The components of her 'rigorous way' of performing Stravinsky include a concern for accuracy (in both notation and performance), quality (in instrumental and recording conditions) and faithfulness to the composer's intentions.

Yudina's personal relationship with Shostakovich was the exact opposite to her one with Stravinsky in certain respects. Whereas Yudina idolised Stravinsky from afar, never properly getting to know him either in person or through correspondence, she was on personal terms with Shostakovich from a young age. They met in 1919 in Leonid Nikolayev's piano class during their studies at the Petrograd Conservatory, where Yudina goaded Shostakovich into moving beyond the standard Beethovenian recital repertoire at that time, urging him to take on the Piano

Sonata in B flat major, Op. 106 ('Hammerklavier').⁵⁹ Seven years her junior, Shostakovich was merely fifteen years old when he performed it as part of a class concert in the spring of 1922.⁶⁰ She was, from an early stage of his career, a strong advocate for his music; hers was the most passionate of the small number of voices to support Shostakovich's Twenty-four Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87 in 1951 amid widespread uncertainty and official disapproval. As Laurel Fay notes, Yudina's stance was 'noteworthy in the context both for its sincerity and for its utter incongruity'.⁶¹

Towards their later years, Shostakovich was treated publicly by Yudina with similar levels of adulation as those we saw with Stravinsky. In a journal article originally published to mark the composer's sixtieth birthday, Yudina referred to him as

the great Russian European genius of his time. Like Dostoyevsky and Mahler, he denounces the faults of the individual and of humanity by shedding warm tears of compassion; like Shakespeare, he is universal. But certain traits of his character liken him to a Mozart or a Schubert; we should remind our readers that drawing such analogies should be understood only as a comparison of kindred spiritual atmospheres; Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich is always himself. He never borrows, he is overflowing with his own riches which he alone can bring to the world—because a creator, even as ingenious as he, does not live in an interplanetary vacuum, but in the history of man and mankind! Shostakovich has his own precise language, his constructive thinking, his rhythmic and intonational formulas, his metaphors, signs and symbols.⁶²

The rest of the article is similar in its congratulatory outpouring: she describes his compositions as 'dazzling mountain peaks'; soon after refers to the 'unreachable peaks of most of the symphonies, quartets, preludes and fugues for piano, the second piano sonata, the vocal cycle on Pushkin poems'; praises his 'incomparable humour'; and remarks in conclusion that he 'carries all the complexity of the contemporary artist and human'.⁶³

Privately, however, Yudina spoke of the composer with less bombast and more ambivalence. She criticised what she called his 'late period' in February 1961, and wrote to Pierre and Marianna Souvtchinsky in October 1962 that she and Shostakovich had 'diverged along separate paths', indicating an artistic if not a personal falling out.⁶⁴ The same kind of discrepancy

⁵⁹ Fay, *Shostakovich*, 18.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 178–9.

⁶² Maria Yudina, 'Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich', reproduced in Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 710–714 (711).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 710–14.

⁶⁴ Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 356, footnote 3 (letter to V. S. Lioublinsky dated 28 February 1961); 475. No precise date for the October 1962 letter is given.

is captured in her references to his Symphony No. 13, Op. 113. On 22 September 1965, Yudina wrote to Shostakovich full of praise, that she ‘kissed [his] hand with all [her] soul and conscience, this hand which has written the *Thirteenth Symphony*, and the head which has conceived it’. She proclaimed that ‘all the other [listeners], still deaf and blind, obsessed with their careers— perhaps they will recover their vision and hearing thanks to this *Thirteenth Symphony*’.⁶⁵ But just under three years earlier, in a letter to Pierre and Marianna Souvtchinsky, Yudina was more reserved: she wrote that ‘the language that he uses is archaic, but this choice is no doubt deliberate’, in other words criticising the presence of conventional tonality in the symphony.⁶⁶ Elsewhere, in a letter to Prieberg on 21 February 1963, she referred to the Symphony No. 13 as possessing ‘a certain archaic patina’.⁶⁷

This gives Yudina’s praise for Shostakovich a sycophantic flair. There does appear to have been more than a little personal estrangement too, Yudina acknowledging the growing distance between them quite sharply:

[I am aware] that you don’t want to know me, to see me or to hear me. The Lord ... guides me (I hope) and won’t let me perish. I have distanced myself from you because of our lack of a shared language. During all these years I have made marvellous friends in different countries, magnificent young people right here, and I have assimilated the language of contemporary music (up to a certain point).⁶⁸

Despite this, Yudina is no less careful in interpreting Shostakovich’s Piano Sonata No. 2 in B minor than Stravinsky’s Piano Sonata (1924). In his score, Shostakovich marks out two different tempo sections pertaining to different material which Yudina closely interprets (see Table 5.3). She is especially consistent over the first 54 bars, slackening the tempo only slightly at Shostakovich’s forte marking, coinciding with the return of B minor at the upbeat to bar 48 (Fig. 5.4). Just as importantly, Yudina gradually crescendos over this section, moving from 70.9 Dyn in bar 1 (marked *piano* in the score) to 86 Dyn at bar 55 (marked *fortissimo* in the score). Table 5.4 captures the details in between, which line up very closely with Shostakovich’s directions.⁶⁹ With

⁶⁵ Ibid., 626.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 514 (letter to Pierre and Marianna Souvtchinsky dated 28 December 1962). The thirteenth symphony nevertheless caused Yudina to soften her stance on the supremacy of atonal techniques and serialism, writing in the same passage that ‘[t]here is a truth in the absolute novelty of the language of Boulez and others, and there is also a truth in the old habits...’

⁶⁷ Ibid., 534.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 626–7 (letter to Shostakovich dated 22 September 1965).

⁶⁹ The one exception to Yudina’s diligence is the *piano* marking at bar 43, at which point she remains quite loud, but evident in her approach here is a clear attempt to build towards bar 55 as a point of arrival; that bar 43 is also marked with a crescendo and wedged between two *forte* markings (at bars 42 and 47) lends itself to a momentary dip, as per Yudina’s approach, rather than a larger break with climactic momentum.

the onset of this new section and tempo zone at bar 55 (initially in E flat Lydian), it becomes clear that Yudina pays the same careful attention to Shostakovich’s articulation as we saw with Stravinsky. Her handling of bars 71–84 is a good example, given its combination of staccato accompaniment and legato melody, and spectrographic visualisation is once again revealing. Fig. 5.5 illustrates the abruptness of the left-hand chords (which register as sharp vertical yellow streaks) through which the soothing, rising chromatic melody flows (coloured red) over bars 71–8. The opening 55 bars, by contrast, are almost exclusively marked legato, and the comparison of bars 71–84 with a spectrogram of the opening 16 bars demonstrates the connectedness that she initially achieves to realise this legato: Yudina smooths over the semiquavers and anchors them with the flowing bass melody (Fig. 5.6).

Yudina was less enthusiastic about Shostakovich’s music, but in terms of tempo, dynamics and articulation, her interpretation is remarkable in the degree to which it lines up with the composer’s directions: her playing exhibits all the same values of her ‘rigorous’ way of her Stravinsky recording, which suggests that this kind of expressive strategy might be more broadly attached to her vision of contemporary music in both theory and practice.

Bars	Shostakovich’s Tempo Marking	Yudina’s Tempo
1–54	Crotchet = 144	Crotchet = ~140
55–167	Crotchet = 168	Crotchet = ~165
168–201	Crotchet = 144	Crotchet = 112, accel. to ~140
202–84	Crotchet = 168	Crotchet = ~160

Table 5.3. Distribution of tempos in Yudina’s recording of Shostakovich’s Piano Sonata No. 2

Bar	Shostakovich’s Dynamic Markings	Yudina’s Dynamics
1	<i>piano</i>	70.9 Dyn
12	<i>poco crescendo</i>	71.9 Dyn
15	<i>diminuendo</i>	72.9 Dyn
17	<i>piano</i>	72.6 Dyn
29	<i>crescendo</i>	76.4 Dyn
31	<i>mezzoforte</i>	80.8 Dyn
40	<i>crescendo</i>	81.7 Dyn
42	<i>forte</i>	83.2 Dyn
43	<i>piano, crescendo</i>	79.1 Dyn
47	<i>forte</i>	85 Dyn
50	<i>crescendo</i>	85.6 Dyn
55	<i>fortissimo</i>	86 Dyn

Table 5.4. Distribution of dynamics in Yudina’s recording of the first movement of Shostakovich’s Piano Sonata No. 2

The score of Hindemith's Piano Sonata No. 3 in B flat Major is distinctive in that a large majority of its expressive indicators pertain to dynamics. In her interpretation, Yudina abides by these in the same scrupulous fashion we have seen elsewhere, but her manipulation of tempo is a different matter. Hindemith proffers a tempo marking of dotted crotchet = 64 BPM in the first movement, and Yudina initially approximates this, playing at ~55–60 BPM (Fig. 5.7). However, she slows down considerably for the *pianissimo* chords at bars 18–27 (dropping below 30 BPM at times) and takes a much faster tempo from bars 49–68 with the introduction of the semiquaver runs, coming in at ~85–90 BPM (with one anomalous spike to 123 BPM). Yudina continues with this flexibility in the three remaining movements of this sonata: in the second movement, she once again marks out its middle section (bars 91–145) by quickening her pace, though in this case more subtly. A more notable example is the slow third movement, in which Yudina's tempo fluctuations are more extreme than in the previous two: Yudina employs four different tempo areas for each of the first four thematic areas (Fig. 5.8). Beginning at ~55–60 BPM for the first theme, Yudina speeds up to ~70 BPM for the fugal passage at bars 27–50 before easing into a much slower approach to the lyrical section at bars 56–75, a passage that is so rubato-laden that ascribing a single digit to the tempo is not feasible. The first theme returns at bar 76, but instead of matching this to her opening tempo, Yudina adopts a faster one, starting at ~65 BPM and finishing upwards of 75 BPM. It might be thought that the final movement of Hindemith's sonata—a fully-fledged fugue—would break this chain of temporal flexibility, but Yudina performs the opening 55 bars with a gradual accelerando, beginning at 69 BPM and reaching 111 BPM at bar 44 (Fig. 5.9). In other words, she plays this Hindemith fugue much like many of her Bach fugues: according to her 'growth' strategy, discussed in Chapter 4. These kinds of tempo change would be fully expected in older repertoires, but it is significant that Yudina adopts them in this Hindemith sonata.

This interpretation is a departure from Yudina's expressed desires for rigour in new music and the way we have heard that rigour manifest itself so far. A much more radical departure, however, is her recording of the first movement of Yuri Shaporin's Piano Sonata No. 2 (1926), a work which—like Volkonsky's *Musica Stricta*—was dedicated to her. It is an extremely detailed score: there are seventeen specified tempo areas in the first movement, most with a metronome mark, and this count omits the many local tempo directions that Shaporin marks within these sections (Table 5.5). In the opening Allegro agitato section alone, every single bar

Bar	Tempo	Tempo Marking
1	Allegro agitato. Alla toccata	Crotchet = 108–112
28	Calmo. Meditativo	Crotchet = 54
36	Poco più vivo	Crotchet = 80
39	---	Crotchet = 66
48	Tempo I	Crotchet = 108–112
54	Doppio movimento	Crotchet = minim
58	Tempo I	Minim = crotchet
91	Alla marcia	---
133	Tempo I	Crotchet = 108–112
141	Calmo. Meditativo	Crotchet = 54
149	Poco più vivo	Crotchet = 80
152	---	Crotchet = 66
161	Tempo I	Crotchet = 108–112
167	Doppio movimento	Crotchet = minim
171	Tempo I	Minim = crotchet
182	Più mosso	Crotchet = 152
199	Poco vivo	---

Table 5.5. Distribution of tempos in the score of the first movement of Shaporin's Piano Sonata No. 2

excepting two (bars 18 and 23) contains at least one explicit change in dynamics, articulation or tempo.

There is much that could be said about this performance, but the point can be demonstrated with the first half of the recording and once again with a focus on tempo. Unlike the Shostakovich recording, Yudina largely ignores Shaporin's directions; both her tempos and Shaporin's are compared in Table 5.6. Just as important as these temporal snapshots is the trajectory of Yudina's playing between them. Yudina begins the opening toccata-like section at ~110 BPM, though this is just about the only time that she sustains the prescribed tempo for any length; by bar 20, she has noticeably dropped in speed (down to 78 BPM), and in fact the opening 27 bars are played with a gradual deceleration down to the score's second tempo of crotchet = 54 (Fig. 5.10). This means that by bar 24—which Shaporin marks 'molto agitato con dolore, *ma sempre in tempo*' (emphasis added)—Yudina's tempo has fallen to 65 BPM. She opens the Calmo section very slowly (beginning at 24 BPM). She plays the next 20 bars with much rubato, appearing to pay little heed to Shaporin's tempo markings at bars 36 and 39, and drops to a slow tempo (beginning at 38 BPM) at bar 43, perhaps to project both the octaves and trills of bars 43–6. With the return of Tempo I at bar 48, Yudina adopts a faster tempo than previously at 120 BPM, slowing gradually until the Doppio movimento of bar 54. Here, Yudina manages to double her time (up to 230 BPM) but for one beat only, the physical demands clearly

Bar	Shaporin's Tempos	Shaporin's Tempo Markings	Yudina's Tempos
1	Allegro agitato. Alla toccata	Crotchet = 108–112	Crotchet = 110
20	<i>(Sempre più espressivo, ma in tempo)</i>		Crotchet = 78
24	<i>(Molto agitato con dolore, ma sempre in tempo)</i>		Crotchet = 65
28	Calmo. Meditativo	Crotchet = 54	Crotchet = 24
36	Poco più vivo	Crotchet = 80	Crotchet = 73
39	---	Crotchet = 66	Crotchet = 70
43			Crotchet = 38
48	Tempo I	Crotchet = 108–112	Crotchet = 120
54	Doppio movimento	Crotchet = minim	Crotchet = 230
58	Tempo I	Minim = crotchet	Crotchet = 132
68	<i>(a tempo)</i>		Crotchet = 97
81	<i>(molto ritmico)</i>		Crotchet = 282
85			Crotchet = 137
91	Alla marcia	---	Crotchet = 88
101	<i>(non rit.)</i>		Yudina rit. (142 down to 82)
103			Crotchet = 152
123	<i>Poco meno</i>		Crotchet = 100
126	<i>Quasi meno mosso</i>		Crotchet = 89
128–9	<i>Molto allarg.</i>		Crotchet = 62
133	Tempo I	Crotchet = 108–112	Crotchet = 74
141	Calmo. Meditativo	Crotchet = 54	Crotchet = 29
149	Poco più vivo	Crotchet = 80	Crotchet = 62
152	---	Crotchet = 66	Crotchet = 72
156			Crotchet = 39
161	Tempo I	Crotchet = 108–112	Crotchet = 120
167	Doppio movimento	Crotchet = minim	Crotchet = 174
171	Tempo I	Minim = crotchet	Crotchet = 128
182	Più mosso	Crotchet = 152	Crotchet = 174
196	<i>Non ritardare</i>		Crotchet = 157 down to 69
199	Poco vivo	---	Crotchet = 192

Table 5.6. Distribution of tempos in Yudina's recording of Shaporin's Piano Sonata No. 2

pushing her capabilities to the limit. The returning Tempo I is faster again (up to 132 BPM) and Yudina ignores the *a tempo* marking at bar 68, sinking instead to a new, slower tempo (starting at 97 BPM).

The relative consistency that follows this is shattered at the *molto ritmico* indication in bar 81: Yudina's triplets here are like flashes of lightning, hitting 282 BPM and 227 BPM. The subsequent dotted chords reach up to 137 BPM and pave the way for the Alla marcia section that roughly marks the halfway point of the composition—and the first change of tempo marked into the score since bar 58.

Even allowing for an oversaturation of information for the performer to deal with, Yudina's presence in this recording—and, to a lesser extent, in her Hindemith performance—harks back to her tempestuous romantic self more so than her rigorous contemporary one. And it is important in that respect that Shaporin's composition much more closely resembles a kind of highly chromatic, late romantic work than the neoclassical, atonal or serialist experiments that Yudina tended to favour. In a letter from 21 May 1962 to Prieberg, she wrote:

Shaporin is certainly an 'eclectic and an epigone, but with a lot of talent', how you put it in your *Lexicon* is by all means correct; the sonata is dedicated to me, it dates from at least thirty years ago!!!.. The piece has a certain severity to it, a very personal side, we feel in it the eddies of the beginning of the century... But I certainly don't like this record, the same as with the Medtner... For me, these recordings are 'circumstantial' interpretations, while I strive to be a rigorous and inflexible artist... and to dedicate the rest of my unique life to *Musica Nova* ...⁷⁰

Yudina here is writing of the disc that includes her recordings of both Shaporin's sonata and of Nikolai Medtner's Sonata-Elegy in D minor, Op. 11 No. 2.⁷¹ By agreeing with Prieberg that Shaporin is an 'epigone'—even if a talented one—Yudina distinguishes Shaporin's work from her more revered contemporary composers. Indeed, Frolova-Walker has noted that Shaporin's 'music was always unproblematic', and that he 'managed to achieve Socialist Realist perfection without trying'.⁷² It is noteworthy that Hindemith did not feature too highly in Yudina's estimations either: though in January 1961 she referred to him as 'remarkable', by the end of 1962 she called him 'a little outdated' and wrote to Souvtchinsky that her 'enthusiasm for him has cooled'.⁷³ By 17 November 1963, in a letter to Prieberg, she lamented that a record she was working on wouldn't contain any 'truly modern music'—one with multiple works by Hindemith on it.⁷⁴

One way of explaining these interpretative differences might be that Yudina's approaches varied with her opinion of the composer's music in question: the more avant-garde she considered them, the more strictly she performed their music. There is undoubtedly a kind of compositional hierarchy at play in Yudina's mind, and one of the best ways of gauging this is

⁷⁰ Ibid., 442–3.

⁷¹ Collot points this out in *Maria Youdina* (446).

⁷² Marina Frolova-Walker, 'The Glib, the Bland and the Corny: An Aesthetic of Socialist Realism', Roberto Illiano and Massimiliano Sala (eds), *Music and Dictatorship in Europe and Latin America* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 403–24 (414).

⁷³ Collot, *Maria Youdina*, 272 (letter to Tatiana Kamendrovskaya dated 11 January 1961); 502 (letter to Pierre and Marianna Souvtchinsky dated 28 November 1962); 513 (letter to Pierre and Marianna Souvtchinsky dated 28 December 1962).

⁷⁴ Ibid., 588.

through a prospective set of programmes for a series of Paris concerts that she sent to Souvchinsky on 10 March 1960.⁷⁵ Here, she divides her contemporary repertoire into two programmes:

III

Contemporary Music A (‘Neoclassical’)

1. S. Prokofiev – *Romeo and Juliet*
2. D. Shostakovich – Piano Sonata No. 2 in B minor
3. P. Hindemith – Sonata III
4. E. Krenek – Sonata II
5. B. Bartók (whatever...)
6. A. Berg – Sonata, Op. 1
7. Kaz. Serocki – Suite of Preludes (the seven)

IV

Contemporary Music B (‘Today’)

1. I. Stravinsky – Serenade
2. Ol. Messiaen – extracts from *Vingt Regards*
3. A. Webern – *Variations*
4. P. Boulez – ? (Sonata III?)
5. K. Stockhausen – *Klavierstücke*
6. A. Volkonsky

On the one hand, to position Stravinsky in the ‘Today’ programme, alongside the more radical end of twentieth-century western composition (and Volkonsky), seems unintuitive given that the Serenade in A was composed in 1925 and would fit quite comfortably into the ‘Neoclassical’ programme. On the other hand, it makes sense if we interpret Yudina’s categories as thin disguises for her actual tastes. In light of her professed musical commitments—to play only ‘the best and the most innovative’ of new music, as she told Souvchinsky—these programmes are obviously value-laden.

Yet there are two reasons why this does not add up as an explanation for Yudina’s interpretative choices. The first is because Yudina’s comments about her Shaporin recording do not bear that out: she admitted to being unhappy with her playing on that record and suggested

⁷⁵ Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 133–4. The concerts, and indeed Yudina’s hoped-for visit to France, never happened.

that it took away from her efforts 'to be a rigorous and inflexible artist'. In that respect, she held herself to the same standards of rigour with Shaporin as with Stravinsky. Equally interesting is the fact that Yudina elsewhere described her recording of Hindemith's sonata as 'mediocre playing', since this is another example of Yudina taking liberties with the score of a contemporary composition.⁷⁶ Moreover, in the same letter to Prieberg where she rubbishes her Medtner/Shaporin disc, she writes that she would be 'by contrast very happy if Baden-Baden Radio would broadcast [her recording] of the *Second Sonata* by Dmitri Shostakovich'.⁷⁷ I recounted her happiness with her Stravinsky disc earlier. All of this indicates that the pursuit of rigour animated her contemporary musical imagination in general.

The second reason is because of how she interprets other music that she considered to be avant-garde, and to explore this I turn to the only existing recordings of Yudina playing music of other composers from her 'Today' programme: Volkonsky's *Musica Stricta* and Webern's Variations for Piano, Op. 27.

*

Both Volkonsky and Webern stood close to Stravinsky in Yudina's estimations. In a similar vein to what she was denounced for at Khabarovsk, she told Arvo Pärt on 30 October 1961 that 'here in Russia, among my compatriots, there is only Volkonsky and nobody else... All the others have already withered'.⁷⁸ The death of Webern in 1945 means that he does not feature personally in Yudina's correspondence in the 1960s, but this served only to immortalise him in her mind as a giant of twentieth-century composition. She wrote to Souvtchinsky on 10 October 1959 that Webern seemed to her 'to be a true contemporary martyr, in every sense of the term, his death included'.⁷⁹

Both performances date from 1961, both were recorded live in the Scriabin Museum (possibly at the same recital), and both interpretations are quite apart from the 'rigour' of her Stravinsky sonata.⁸⁰ I will discuss their details only in brief here. In the opening of the first

⁷⁶ Ibid., 370 (letter to Prieberg dated 4 December 1961).

⁷⁷ Ibid., 443 (letter to Prieberg dated 21 May 1962).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 354 (letter to Arvo Pärt dated 30 October 1961).

⁷⁹ Ibid., 62. It is notable that Yudina separated Berg from Webern and included the former in her 'Neoclassical' programme. She recorded Berg's Piano Sonata, Op. 1, but she was less enthusiastic about him, noting that she had 'doubts' about him. Ibid., 139 (letter to Pierre Souvtchinsky dated 10 March 1960).

⁸⁰ The exact dates of these performances are unknown, but it is fortunate that they exist at all. The singer Lilya Davydova remembers a recital from February 1961 at which Yudina was to perform *Musica Stricta*. She recalls that 'all the musicians were so excited and in fact nervous on account of whether or not it would be permitted to be performed. Permission, however, was received and they said the concert would be taped. Suddenly, at the last minute, taping was forbidden.' Lilya Davydova, quoted in Yakov Nazarov (dir.), *Maria Yudina: Portrait of the Legendary*

movement of *Musica Stricta*, Yudina performs slower than the prescribed crotchet = 80–92 and fluctuates the tempo freely, rushing through bars 2 and 7 and speeding up considerably in bar 5 (Fig. 5.11), though the only marked tempo increase on the first page is at bar 8 (Ex. 5.1). At bars 5 and 7, Yudina ignores Volkonsky’s dynamic markings, playing loudly rather than attending to the subtleties of his hairpins and *p* and *mp* markings. This seems to be true of Yudina’s other performances, too: Schmelz has documented (through eyewitness accounts of the first public *Musica Stricta* performance) how Yudina ‘took liberties with [Volkonsky’s] dynamic markings’ and that even the composer commented ‘on the numerous wrong notes in her performance’.⁸¹ I consider her Webern performance in slightly more detail below, but at this stage it is worth noting that similar observations can be made about it: in the first movement, her overall tempo is very free and her middle section (bars 19–36) traverses wide, unnotated tempo extremes (Fig. 5.12). (The first movement is in a straightforward ternary shape: A¹BA².)

At this stage, it might simply seem as if there is no meaningful correlation between Yudina’s articulated ideals and her artistic practice. Indeed, it possibly suggests that there is an arbitrariness to how she chose to play certain works at certain times, but setting her Webern interpretation against the wider performance history of the Piano Variations offers a way out of this impasse. Though composed in 1935–6 and published in 1937, the intervention of World War II meant that the establishment of the work in concert repertoire had to wait until the 1950s, a context which, as Nicholas Cook says, was ‘very different in its aesthetic assumptions and performance practices from those of pre-war Vienna’.⁸² It was in this later context that quite a different image of Webern was constructed by the Darmstadt avant-garde, one which championed ‘a highly selective, scriptist, even fundamentalist appropriation of Webern’s music’.⁸³ There were, nevertheless, those who argued that this idea of Webern was a wrongheaded reimagining, chief among them Peter Stadlen, who was coached by Webern when the composer was still alive and whose 1948 recording captures a pre-war, or perhaps pre-Darmstadt, conception of Webern performance.

Cook builds on Miriam Quick’s observation that there were ‘in the late 1940s, 50s and 60s [...] not one but two Webern performance styles: the Viennese tradition and the avant-garde “Darmstadt” practice’.⁸⁴ He shows there to be considerable continuity between these styles, but broadly confirms the existence of two separate camps before their eventual convergence towards

Artist, English subtitles by Vladislav Lomanov and Ray Widrew (2000: <https://youtu.be/zF03KVIsrns?t=2116>, accessed 16/11/2021).

⁸¹ Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 95, footnote 80.

⁸² Nicholas Cook, ‘Inventing Tradition: Webern’s Piano Variations in Early Recordings’, *Music Analysis* 36/2 (July 2017), 163–215 (163).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 189–91.

Andantino ♩ = 80 - 92

pp

4

p mp f pp sub.

poco agitato

7

p p p f cresc.

rit. accel.

6

secco

Ex. 5.1. The first movement of Volkonsky's *Musica Stricta*, bars 1–8.

the end of the 1960s.⁸⁵ The pre-war style was characterised by ‘slow tempos, the rather disjointed B section [...] and the noticeably more tranquil playing of the A2 section’, whereas pianists in the Darmstadt style shared certain common features—such as fast tempos and what Cook calls a ‘quality of understatement’—but on the whole are best described as having ‘distanced themselves from the overtly expressive playing inherited from the pre-war years’ as typified by Stadlen.⁸⁶

Yudina, who began working on the Piano Variations at least as early as August 1960, would have found it extremely difficult to come across any of these recordings: in the same letter in which Yudina called Webern a ‘contemporary martyr’, she wrote that ‘it seems to me that here in Russia (and I’m speaking of a very small number of people) [Webern] is less known than Berg (who himself is not well known)’.⁸⁷ She had access to at least one recording of the Piano

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 189; 186.

⁸⁷ Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 216 (letter to Pierre Souvtchinsky dated 24 August 1960); 62 (letter to Pierre Souvtchinsky dated 10 October 1959).

Variations by this stage, as on 10 March 1960, Yudina wrote to Souvtchinsky about Webern, informing him that she had finally got to hear some of his compositions:

And now most importantly: lately, I managed to listen to a number of works by Anton Webern on record, in good condition, with a music lover passionate about this composer. We listened to everything once up until his Op. 16 (the *Concerto* which you sent me, thanks!) starting at the beginning, and we intend to continue with the rest soon. Piotr Petrovitch [Souvtchinsky]! For a few days, I was fascinated, shaken, devastated and resuscitated all at the same time. It seemed to me that the music had arisen in my heart like a spring, a key, a path towards Eternity...⁸⁸

Collot identifies these recordings as ones released under the Columbia Masterworks label in 1957 containing the complete music of Webern under the direction of Robert Craft.⁸⁹ Among them is Leonard Stein's 1954 recording of the Piano Variations.⁹⁰ One thing that is significant about this is that, as Cook puts it, Stein's recording 'is generally seen as epitomising Darmstadt literalism'.⁹¹ Of relevance too is the high regard in which Yudina held both Yvonne Loriod and—as we have already seen—Glenn Gould, since both of these pianists also recorded the Variations and both fall into the Darmstadt interpretative tradition.⁹²

But Yudina's interpretation of the Piano Variations is nothing like Stein's, Loriod's or Gould's, and in fact it very closely resembles the pre-war tradition of playing.⁹³ Overall, her performance is a slow one (clocking in at 2:04 minutes), her middle section reaches larger extremes in comparison to the outer material, and her interpretation of A² is more subdued than A¹, especially in the respective opening bars (see Fig. 5.12). In other words, the range of general

⁸⁸ Ibid., 131. As Collot notes (134, footnote 3), Yudina here mixes up her opus numbers; no doubt she means to refer to Webern's Op. 24, which is the opus number assigned to his concerto. Op. 16 is Webern's Five Canons (1924). Yudina does not name the 'music lover' in question here, but it is likely to have been Volkonsky, who she mentions in a previous letter as possessing 'all of Webern's oeuvre on disc'. Ibid., 82 (letter to Pierre Souvtchinsky dated 10 November 1959).

⁸⁹ Ibid., 134, footnote 2.

⁹⁰ Happily, Collot also provides the matrix number for this record—K4L-232—through which the specific set of discs in question can be identified. They are listed on the website Discogs, which not only identifies the track list, but also the performers featured. See <https://www.discogs.com/Anton-Webern-Under-The-Direction-Of-Robert-Craft-The-Complete-Music-Recorded-Under-The-Direction-Of-/release/3995894> (accessed 18/01/2021).

⁹¹ Cook, 'Inventing Tradition', 181.

⁹² I have already pointed to Yudina's affinity for Gould, who she claimed to feel 'very close to'. Collot, *Maria Youdina*, 271 (letter to Tatiana Kamendrovskaya dated 11 January 1961). Gould in fact not only made several recordings but also performed the Variations at concerts in Moscow and Leningrad in 1957, which Yudina may well have attended. Loriod is mentioned several times in Souvtchinsky and Yudina's correspondence, with Souvtchinsky writing on 17 January 1961, 'You know that certain friends of mine say of you: "Madame Yudina, she's the Muscovite (or Soviet) Loriod"', a comparison which pleased Yudina, though she wondered if Loriod would feel the same: 'Nevertheless this comparison is very flattering for me, but for her? To be compared with an antique like me, with my corpulence and all the rest, is there anything [for her] to be happy about?' Collot, *Maria Youdina*, 281; 285 (letter to Pierre Souvtchinsky dated 21 January 1961).

⁹³ Yudina's recording of the Piano Variations became commercially available only in the summer of 2020, which means it was unavailable to Cook when writing his article.

characteristics that Cook describes of the Stadlen tradition maps onto Yudina's performance, and it is in fact Stadlen's recording which seems to have most in common with Yudina's, though Stadlen's tempo contrasts between the outer and middle sections are more extreme (Fig. 5.13).⁹⁴

Yudina would never have heard Stadlen's recording, which was made privately and commercially released only in 2006.⁹⁵ Nor does it seem likely that she would have come across the other two other potential candidates, the American Webster Aitken (who recorded the Variations in 1961, making him an unlikely candidate) or French pianist Jeanne Manchon-Theis's (who recorded the work in 1954, and like Stadlen is supposed to have been coached by the composer).⁹⁶ Indeed, there are considerable similarities between Yudina's and Manchon-Theis's performances, including the more noticeably arch-like temporal shaping around groups of semiquavers, particularly bars 6–7 and 11–12, and the large temporal fluctuations in the B section. Manchon-Theis's playing of the running demisemiquavers through bars 29–36 is much closer to Yudina's than it is to Stadlen's; whereas he breaks up the demisemiquavers into smaller groups, Manchon-Theis plays through them. That is precisely what Yudina does.

My point is not that Yudina must have come across any of these specific recordings, but that she belongs to an older tradition of pianism closer to Stadlen (born 1910), Aitken (born 1908) and Manchon-Theis (born 1902) than the likes of Stein (born 1916), Loriod (born 1924) or Gould (born 1930). While Yudina may have heard and/or praised the latter three, her commitment to new music extended back as far as the 1920s. Likewise, her pianism predated the Darmstadt revival of Webern and the performance ideals that were constructed around him and twelve-tone music in general.⁹⁷ In a sense, Yudina mirrors Webern's transition from the pre-war contemporary scene to the post-war Darmstadt aesthetic—the difference being that she lived to take an active part in it, and did so in the more specified geopolitical circumstances of 1960s Moscow. This has implications for her contemporary practice more generally, and how we understand the interaction of Yudina's expressed aesthetic values with her interpretative strategies.

Chronologically speaking, all six of Yudina's recordings that I have considered were made in close succession, in the years 1959–61, and within the same emerging aesthetic environ. So too were her judgements of her own playing: Yudina derided her recording of Shaporin's sonata in May 1962 and spoke similarly of her Hindemith sonata on 4 December 1961. She

⁹⁴ Fig. 5.13 is adapted from the Sonic Visualiser files accompanying Cook's article (accessible here: <https://www.mus.cam.ac.uk/research/shadows-of-meaning/overview#performance-data>, accessed 11/11/2021). Other performances of Webern's Piano Variations, such as Stadlen's and those of the pianists mentioned in the next paragraph, are also accessible through this webpage.

⁹⁵ Cook 'Inventing Tradition', 163–4.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 171.

⁹⁷ Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 90.

recorded both the Hindemith sonata and the Shostakovich sonata on 2 April 1960, which means that Yudina's self-judged 'mediocre' playing was recorded on the same day as an interpretation she was very happy with. These are all studio recordings and, as we saw in Chapter 4, Yudina was unusually involved in the editing processes of studio practices. She would have had the time to re-record and improve, if not perfect, her interpretations if she had so wished. And if the Volkonsky and Webern performances are anything to go by, Yudina retained highly individual and flexible approaches to twelve-tone music even when more stripped back, expressively subtle modes of interpretation were becoming current. Traces of such approaches are apparent in her studio recordings, too, such as in her Hindemith and Shaporin sonatas. With all of this in mind, I am inclined to treat Yudina's Hindemith, Shaporin, Volkonsky and Webern interpretations as just as purposeful as her Shostakovich and Stravinsky: each discloses a valid attempt on Yudina's part to make musical sense of the compositional scripts in front of her in ways that felt right. More than this, it fundamentally changes how we think about her Stravinsky and Shostakovich recordings: rather than the benchmarks of her contemporary performance style, they are more like rare exceptions to the norm.

In turn, this renders Yudina's contemporary musical discourse more conspicuous than her performances. It adds a new dimension to her anxiety to produce a rigorous interpretation of Stravinsky's music, a composer who notoriously demanded 'executants' of his works rather than interpreters.⁹⁸ Her continuous delays in recording his works in the hope of receiving further guidance from the composer presumably also allowed her extra time to bring her interpretations to the level of inflexibility that she professed to strive for. And when Yudina revealed her happiness with her Shostakovich recording, and her dissatisfaction with her interpretations of Hindemith and Shaporin, it was when she was posting copies of those recordings to Prieberg to listen to, as if to distance herself pre-emptively from her freer interpretations. The relative permanence and transferability of the studio record is important here: it exposes the finer details of the performer's work to repeat listening, and stands in for an artist's definitive statements on the music in question in a way that live performances, perhaps, do not. In that sense, the fact that her Volkonsky and Webern recordings are both live performances raises further questions. If we once again follow Doğantan-Dack's logic that live performance is the ultimate norm in classical music, and given how much Yudina could vary across live and studio settings in other repertoire, what might this imply about Yudina's uncaptured live renditions of Stravinsky and Shostakovich?⁹⁹ Had she been afforded the opportunity to set down a commercial studio

⁹⁸ Nicholas Cook, 'Stravinsky Conducts Stravinsky', Jonathan Cross (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 176–91.

⁹⁹ Mine Doğantan-Dack, 'The art of research in live music performance', *Music Performance Research* 5 (2012), 36.

recording of Volkonsky or Webern, would Yudina have interpreted these compositions differently?

We cannot know for sure, but the central point I am driving at is that there is a fundamental mismatch between the weight Yudina accords to notions of rigour, fidelity and inflexibility in her letters and the usual ways in which she went about interpreting contemporary scores. It suggests a kind of struggle within her artistic practice, a tension between these seemingly requisite values of the avant-garde and the more liberal, individualistic flair for which she was so (demonstrably) renowned in other repertoire and which clearly animated her contemporary practice, too. Crucially, those avant-garde values were socially mediated: they were elaborated and negotiated as her access to figures like Stravinsky, Messiaen, Boulez and Stockhausen increased, at a time when new and unofficial musical practices were emerging in Moscow. Yudina, then, was dually wrapped up in the politics of new music: as a musician on the frontlines of *mye* circles as she helped to carve out space for ‘formalist’ compositions, and *within* those circles as a highly expressive pianist of an older generation striving to establish herself as a suitable and valued interpreter in a changing aesthetic landscape. What all of this means is that Yudina’s contemporary musical imagination was defined not by a specific style of playing guided by certain ideals, but rather by a constant need to reconcile the idiosyncrasies of her own artistic practice with the emerging aesthetic of the avant-garde she so revered. To borrow from Cook, it is a fraught example of ‘the oblique relationship between talking about music and playing it.’¹⁰⁰ Even more than emphasising the intertwinement of discourse and performance, it suggests their inseparability, the precarity of trying to understand one without the other. And from the standpoint of musicology, it also highlights the fruitful possibilities of merging a performer’s social milieu with the close study of their recordings.

¹⁰⁰ Cook, *Inventing Tradition*, 201.

Russian Orthodoxy, Identity and Community in Yudina's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, 1967–70

Between summer 1967 and September 1968, Yudina made what would become her final recordings. They are a precious few, but two sets of recordings—of Modest Musorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* on the one hand, and of a selection of six intermezzos by Johannes Brahms on the other—stand out from the rest of her discography because she wrote detailed, evocative essays that accompany them. These essays, quasi-literary and -philosophical in style and brimming with intertextual and cross-artistic references, offer rare, verbalised insights into Yudina's musical imagination at work. As repositories for artistic meaning and signification, they are invaluable.¹

Despite all her support of her contemporaries in the 1960s, then, Yudina's final recorded statement on Russian music would come not with Andrei Volkonsky, Igor Stravinsky or Dmitri Shostakovich, but with Musorgsky. Musorgsky's *Pictures*, composed in 1874, is a collection of ten pieces, each based on an illustration by Russian architect and artist Viktor Hartmann. These illustrations range from paintings to drawings, sketches to designs, and only some of them have been successfully verified, while others remain lost and often misidentified.² But each of Musorgsky's pieces is both named after and compositionally inspired by Hartmann's illustrations. Interwoven with these ten pieces are five musical interludes called 'Promenades' which, as the name suggests, transition the listener between different 'Pictures' of the collection (Table 6.1).³

Yudina recorded *Pictures* in the summer of 1967. The accompanying essay was a more drawn-out process: originally commissioned by Melodiya in the form of sleeve notes for the record, Yudina expanded these notes into a larger article which she finished in April 1970. The ideas it contains date back to before World War II (based on Yudina's annotations in a copy of the score she owned) and, according to A. M. Kuznetsov, the article 'should be considered as the sum of these meditations – not only on the *Pictures*, but on the creative work of Mussorgsky as a whole, on the particular qualities of ancient and new Russian culture'.⁴

¹ Translations for these essays are included in the Appendix to this thesis (pages 202–21).

² For instance, Marina Frolova-Walker points out that the pictures which inspired 'Two Jews, a rich one and a poor one' are commonly misattributed. See Marina Frolova-Walker and Peter Donohoe, 'Russian Piano Masterpieces: Musorgsky', public lecture given at Gresham College, 24 September 2020 (<https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/musorgsky-piano>, accessed 22/04/2021).

³ In this chapter, I use 'Promenades' to refer collectively to the five promenades in the cycle, 'Pictures' to refer collectively to the ten pieces based on Hartmann's illustrations, and *Pictures* to refer to the work as a whole.

⁴ See Yudina's Musorgsky essay in the Appendix, page 203, footnote 1.

	Movements (full titles)	Movements (shorthand titles)
	<i>First Promenade</i>	
1.	‘The Gnome’	‘Gnome’
	<i>Second Promenade</i>	
2.	‘The Old Castle’	‘The Old Castle’
	<i>Third Promenade</i>	
3.	‘Tuileries’	‘Tuileries’
4.	‘Cattle’	‘Bydło’
	<i>Fourth Promenade</i>	
5.	‘Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks’	‘Trilby’
6.	“‘Samuel’ Goldenberg and ‘Schmuyle’”	‘Two Jews’
	<i>Fifth Promenade</i>	
7.	‘Limoges. The Market (The Great News)’	‘Limoges’
8.	‘Catacombs (Roman Tomb)’ ‘With the Dead in a Dead Language’*	‘Catacombs’ ‘With the Dead’
9.	‘The Hut on Fowl’s Legs (Baba Yaga)’	‘Baba-Yaga’
10.	‘The Bogatyr Gates (In the Capital in Kyiv)’*	‘Bogatyr’

Table 6.1. The movements of Musorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Asterisks indicate movements which contain the main ‘Promenade’ theme. The shorthand titles are those Yudina uses in her essay, and for clarity I employ them also in this chapter.

In this chapter, I analyse Yudina's recording of *Pictures* in conjunction with a close reading of her essay. A concentrated reflection on Musorgsky's work, her essay can be divided, broadly speaking, into two parts. In the first half, Yudina lays down her overall structural conception of *Pictures* and places it within a longer lineage of similar artistic works across music, architecture, poetry and literature. She asserts that *Pictures* 'is in the form of a cycle. Not a suite, as it is naively called sometimes by Musorgsky's contemporaries, but, precisely, a cycle.' By making this distinction, and by wedding the cycle to ideas of 'multiplicity, architecture, synthesis and scale', she presents *Pictures* as a unified entity rather than as ten individual pieces. She names the musical antecedents to *Pictures*, including Robert Schumann's *Kreisleriana* and *Davidsbündlertänze*, and Franz Liszt's *Années de Pèlerinage*, but she pauses especially to revere the later, 'outstanding cycle by Olivier Messiaen', *Vingt regards sur L'enfant Jésus* as well as Fryderyk Chopin's Preludes, Op. 28, the 'essence' of which Yudina understands as 'death and resurrection'. She spends slightly longer reflecting on non-musical cycles: in literature, she alludes to folk traditions, mentioning 'national tales' and 'philological treasures of old Russia', and extends all the way up to the works of her favourite contemporary poets, most of whom—Marina Tsvetaeva, Anna Akhmatova and Boris Pasternak—were also Russian. She gives even more emphasis to what she calls the 'complexes of national architecture':

The Alexander Nevsky monastery in Petersburg, the Novodevichy convent in Moscow, the Trinity Monastery of St. Sergei in the Moscow area, the Metropolis of Rostov Veliki, the astonishing ecclesiastical and urban architectures of the towns of Vladimir, Yaroslav, Pskov, Novgorod, Suzdal, Vologda, so rich in their variety, the almost innumerable graveyards on the banks of northern rivers. In Moscow, Musorgsky was particularly struck by Red Square, the magnificence of the Kremlin, the cathedral of St. Basil, the bell-tower of Ivan Veliki.

In the second half of the essay, Yudina offers imaginative readings of the 'Pictures', but she first reflects on the musical significance of the 'Promenades', which she calls 'unexpected and absolutely new and striking'. 'Without this enigmatic essence of the "Promenades",' she writes, 'the *Pictures* would lose a significant part of their greatness as pure music, as an example of compositional art and as regards their significance.' She acknowledges the 'Promenades' as representations of 'how [visitors] gather, scatter, stop, walk past, fail to understand, make ironical comments, laugh, praise!', but she then suggests that they are more important than this: 'we hear in the "Promenades" an original, characterful *intonatsiya* in the old modes.'⁵ This speaks to us

⁵ *Intonatsiya* is a Russian music theoretical term developed most influentially by Boris Asafyev. As Anicia Timberlake has shown, it is a notoriously ambiguous term. (See Anicia Timberlake, 'Boris Asafyev's Intonatsiya and German

distinctly of its close relation – spiritually and musically – with the greatest treasure of Russian culture: the *znamenny* chant.’ *Znamenny* chant is the monophonic singing tradition of the Russian Orthodox church, one which stretches back to the eleventh century, is widely believed to be of Byzantine origin, and whose hook-like system of notation is comparable to (but by no means the same as) Gregorian chant.⁶ By making this association, and by observing that they ‘are modified according to which pictures they are placed between’, Yudina is leveraging the ‘Promenades’ above their usual pedestrianised role. It would seem that she is making the case for their more involved participation in the musical cycle of *Pictures*.

The obvious implication from all of this is that there is a certain amount of large-scale thinking that frames Yudina’s interpretation of *Pictures*—namely, that we can approach her performance in cyclic terms, and that the ‘Promenades’ function quite importantly in how that cycle plays out. But there is also a crucial subtext to the opening half of her essay. Her invocation of the *znamenny* chant and historical overview of artistic cycles subliminally but continuously foreground two main themes: Christian faith on the one hand, and a sense of Russian nationalist celebration on the other. That is the legacy Yudina traces by discussing the cycles of Russian architecture—all religious buildings, with one or two exceptions of symbolic national importance like the Kremlin—and specifically Russian poetry and literature, both contemporary and folk. When she lingers on non-Russian composers, like Chopin and Messiaen, it is for the religious import she identifies in their music.

These themes emerge in the second half of her essay in her descriptions of each of the ‘Pictures’ of the cycle. These descriptions vary in length: for most she offers a short paragraph, for one in particular (‘Baba-Yaga’) she writes much more, and for some she offers no commentary at all. Out of the content of her descriptions, the intertextual references they contain, and the relative weight given to certain ‘Pictures’ and ‘Promenades’, emerges a stirring

Folk Song in the German Democratic Republic’, *Music and Politics* 14/2 (Summer 2020: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mp/9460447.0014.206?view=text;rgn=main>, accessed 26/04/2021).) Marina Frolova-Walker has written about how this term was repurposed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s ‘as a theoretical foundation for any future Socialist Realist music’, and has pointed out how ‘Asafyev’s intonations were not formal motifs, but musical figures that carried a generally recognized meaning within a particular culture and society.’ (See Marina Frolova-Walker, ‘The Glib, the Bland and the Corny: An Aesthetic of Socialist Realism’, Roberto Illiano and Massimiliano Sala (eds), *Music and Dictatorship in Europe and Latin America* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 403–24 (409).) This is how Yudina uses the term in her essay, i.e. to refer to melodies whose styles participate in musical traditions associated with particular ethnic or cultural backgrounds; for instance, the *znamenny* chant that she discusses in the ‘Promenades’, or the ‘Jewish *Intonatsii*’ she hears in “‘Samuel” Goldenberg and “Schmuyle””.

⁶ Vladimir D. Gusev, Irina V. Bakhmutova, Liubov A. Miroshnichenko and Tatiana N. Titkova, ‘Possible approaches to deciphering Russian ancient Znamenny chant’, *Journal of New Music Research* 49/3 (2020), 298–306; and ‘znamenny’, *Oxford Dictionary of Music*, ed. Joyce Kennedy, Michael Kennedy and Tim Rutherford-Johnson, 6th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199578108.001.0001/acref-9780199578108-e-9999?rsk=OWe0Fm&result=1>, accessed 22/04/2021). See also: Simon Nicholls’s explanation in Yudina’s Musorgsky essay (Appendix, page 206, footnote 13).

narrative which plays out across the cycle and which I parse here into three ‘chapters’. Each of these sets up a threat to Russian integrity (as Yudina sees it) which is then resolved through religious intervention:

1. The first chapter laments the general perversion of the Russian spirit through the suffering of its people, especially in ‘Gnome’ and ‘Bydlo’, culminating with the fourth ‘Promenade’ and the allusion to the ‘death’ of Boris Godunov.
2. The second chapter depicts the incommensurability of Russian identity with materialism and avarice, but in a way that is racially charged. Yudina charts two journeys of spiritual enlightenment from Judaism to Christianity: first, between ‘Two Jews’ and the fifth ‘Promenade’, and second, between ‘Limoges’, ‘Catacombs’ and ‘With the dead’. Both, as I show, seem to betray anti-Semitic connotations.
3. The third chapter connects the narrative most explicitly to the Russian ‘folk’ and folklore. The threat of the terrorising folkloric figure, ‘Baba-Yaga’, is overcome by the Russian ‘Bogatyr’ and by the union of the Russian ‘folk’ with the Orthodox religion—symbolised by the scene of hymnal rejoicing at the cathedral in Kyiv in Yudina’s final description.⁷

In her performance, Yudina adopts three chief expressive strategies which enact this narrative musically:

1. Robust grandeur: characterised by consistently strong dynamics and a stately, composed tempo. This approach is linked to Russian strength, triumph and celebration, appearing in the first ‘Promenade’, the fifth ‘Promenade’ and ‘Bogatyr’.
2. Unpredictable abruption:⁸ characterised by volatile tempo and dynamic changes, often leaping between extremes of fast and slow, loud and soft. This approach is linked to suffering, desolation and danger, appearing in ‘Gnome’, ‘Bydlo’, ‘Two Jews’, ‘Catacombs’ and ‘Baba-Yaga’.
3. Floating ethereality: characterised by quiet dynamics and tempo rubato. This approach is linked to heavenly salvation and the divine, appearing in the fourth ‘Promenade’ and ‘With the dead’.

⁷ This is a synoptic view of what should properly be understood as an unfolding process, and I will try to do justice to Yudina’s rich cyclic interpretation of Pictures in what follows by writing in a more narrative style that interfolds her many intertextual references and three main expressive strategies.

⁸ I use the word ‘abruption’ here to indicate the ‘action or an act of breaking off or away from something; an interruption; a sudden curtailment’, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*. I highlight this because this word is now rarely used in this non-medical sense. See ‘abruption’, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 (updated December 2020)), <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/611?redirectedFrom=abruption&>, accessed 08/11/2021).

All of this is to say that, between her essay and her recording, Yudina is not simply performing Musorgsky: she is also performing identity, in this instance a specific kind of nationalist identity which is tightly wedded to the tradition of the Russian Orthodox church. With the issue of identity in mind, I have two fundamental questions that guide my analysis: what is the purpose of Yudina's cyclic narrative? and to what end is she imbuing Musorgsky's *Pictures* with certain aesthetic and thematic connotations? I will return to these questions at the end of the chapter, but it is worth noting here that, in virtually every respect, Yudina was at odds with the kind of national identity that Joseph Stalin sought to construct in the Soviet Union after World War II. This is especially the case in the last six years of Stalinism, 1948–53, which Pauline Fairclough has called 'the point at which Soviet self-regard took on cartoon-like proportions of absurdity'.⁹ Andrei Zhdanov's 1948 'Resolution on Music of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union', mentioned in Chapter 5, sought to reinforce musical nationalism by reinstating a campaign against both 'formalism' and modernism.¹⁰ Composers including Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev and Aram Khachaturian were attacked for wavering from the increasingly specified prescriptions of socialist realism, now even more narrowly defined in terms of non-western musical forms and Russian folksong. This came as part of a more general public campaign against 'rootless cosmopolitanism', a vector for what Marina Frolova-Walker has called a 'thinly-veiled anti-semitism'.¹¹ Yudina, a Russian Jew whose real musical sympathies lay with the high-modernist and 'formalist' tendencies of some of western Europe's most avant-garde composers, seems to epitomise everything Stalin considered culturally threatening to the Soviet Union, and entirely in opposition to the brand of chauvinistic Russian nationalism his administration peddled. Added to this, of course, was the inevitable friction between Yudina's uncompromising religious beliefs and the equally uncompromising rollout of Soviet atheism and the suppression of religion.¹²

Peter J. Schmelz has written that, over the course of the 1960s, 'the freedom suggested or inspired by certain unofficial venues, pieces, performers, or composers helped audiences imagine alternative possibilities to those suggested by Soviet authorities'.¹³ He is referring to contemporary musical alternatives to socialist realism—a movement of which, as we saw in

⁹ Pauline Fairclough, 'From Enlightened to Sublime: Musical Life under Stalin, 1930–1948', Patrick Zuk and Marina Frolova-Walker (eds), *Russian Music Since 1917: Reappraisal and Rediscovery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 163.

¹⁰ Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism: From Glinka to Stalin* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2007), 347.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 352.

¹² Some of the ways in which Yudina's religious beliefs came with great personal and professional cost are discussed in Chapter 2.

¹³ Peter J. Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 19.

Chapter 5, Yudina was an important part—but this is an equally useful way of positioning her Musorgsky recording. Within the emerging *mye* culture of the 1960s onwards, Yudina found the space in which to reclaim and advocate a quite different sense of Russianness, one which grounds itself in elements of Russian culture that predate Stalinism. There is an obvious sense in which Yudina is turning back the clock by tethering all of this to Musorgsky, a pre-Soviet Russian cultural figure of major importance, but one with very different nationalist connotations, linked more closely (as Frolova-Walker has shown) to a lineage of nineteenth-century literary intelligentsia which was tormented ‘with the crucial questions posed by Russia’s history’ and ‘the competing interests behind tradition and progress’.¹⁴ Musorgsky functions for Yudina as a kind of return to first principles, a blank canvas onto which to project her own sense of identity—one sidestepping the top-down Soviet ideals that not only excluded but vilified her.

This is discernible insofar as we understand identities not as straightforward descriptions of who we are or of how we are located in patterns of social relations, but as what we do in living our lives and interacting with others within the social and cultural contexts that we inhabit.¹⁵ That is how Andy McKinlay and Chris McVittie describe identity, and basic to their definition is that ‘identity is accomplished in discourse’:

As people describe themselves or others in specific ways, so they are identifying themselves and those around them as particular individuals. The descriptions that are on offer, of course, are by no means final or fixed. Any description, whether a claim to identity or the ascription of identity to another, is available to others to accept, challenge, resist, or rework according to the requirements of the interactional context.¹⁶

To the extent that Yudina is constructing this particular kind of Russian identity discursively, her essay is as much a part of her performance as is her recording. And while this identity is constructed discursively, it is also enacted musically. ‘Identity,’ as Simon Frith writes, ‘is not a thing but a process – an experiential process which is most vividly grasped *as music*’ (emphasis in original).¹⁷ This kind of performance—and this aspect of Yudina the performer—is part of a cultural-aesthetic entanglement with her more analytically straightforward ideas of cyclicity and form. The two are not separate. To see her performance in this way is to take seriously Nicholas

¹⁴ Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism*, 44.

¹⁵ Andy McKinlay and Chris McVittie, “‘Will the real Slim Shady please stand up?’: identity in popular music”, Raymond MacDonald, David J. Hargreaves and Dorothy Miell (eds), *Handbook of Musical Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 137–51 (138).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Simon Frith, ‘Music and Identity’, Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), 108–27 (110).

Cook's suggestion that I cited in Chapter 1, that maybe there is no distinction between the musical and the extra-musical in performance at all.¹⁸

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The opening 'Promenade' sets the scene for *Pictures* and functions as a prologue of sorts. I call it a prologue, rather than an integrated part of the first chapter of the narrative, because Yudina does not offer a specific commentary on it in her essay.¹⁹ The opening two-bar melody of this first 'Promenade', solo and unadorned in the right hand, is repeated in bars 3–4 with accompaniment. This call and response format characterises the first eight bars, after which the right-hand melody is largely doubled for the remaining sixteen bars, richly harmonised in hymn-like verticality and supported by deep bass octaves. The tempo marking of the first 'Promenade' asks the performer to play 'in the Russian way', and so it is particularly notable that Yudina's tempo is so disciplined. She largely holds steady at ~110 BPM throughout, avoiding any kind of *rallentando* at the end of the piece (Fig. 6.1). What vary instead are the dynamics, which swell to their loudest when the texture thickens in bars 9–13, recede in bars 14–15, and then swell again for the remainder of the 'Promenade', peaking at bar 16 (84.6 Dyn) and dipping only briefly in bar 20. There is no bombast, and so the effect is one of a chorus of voices that is carefully synchronised and unified in its volume changes rather than a fanfare. In conjunction with Yudina's strictness in tempo, all of this adds a layer of respectability or stateliness to the opening piece: this is the first instance of what I am calling Yudina's expressive approach of robust grandeur. From the start, this expressive approach is wedded both to the *znamenny* chant that Yudina hears in the main 'Promenade' theme, and to 'the Russian way' of Musorgsky's tempo marking.

Her first specified commentary is on 'The Gnome', whose meaning she shapes with reference to three other artworks:

This is not just a fairy-tale dwarf (to be found in the folklore of nearly all peoples). It is a perversion of human nature, which in its origin is beneficent. This is sinfulness, this is the closest 'relation' of Grishka Kuterma in the *Tale of the City of Kitezh* (one of the finest compositions of Rimsky-Korsakov), this is Pieter Breughel the Elder's *The Parable of the Blind*, and again this is the (terrifying) cycles by Francisco Goya, *The Disasters of War*.

¹⁸ Nicholas Cook, 'Bridging the Unbridgeable? Empirical Musicology and Interdisciplinary Performance Studies', Richard Pettengill and Nicholas Cook (eds), *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 70–85 (79).

¹⁹ No doubt this is partly because, in the essay, Yudina moves on to her first 'Picture' commentary (for 'Gnomus') directly after discussing the significance of the 'Promenades' in general. To give a specific 'Promenade' commentary after that general discussion may have seemed duplicative.

The main character depicted in ‘Gnome’, then, is not really a gnome but a human being, originally generous and, we can assume, kind, compassionate, filled with other virtues—but now corrupted. By speaking of ‘sinfulness’, Yudina links this corruption to broken Christian faith. And in defining that sinfulness, Yudina looks to the character of Grishka Kuterma in Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera, *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya*. In the story, Fevroniya meets Vsevolod, son of the prince of Kitezh, while ambling in the dense forest in which she lives. They fall in love and are to be married in Kitezh, but a group of Tatars attacks the wedding cortège and takes two prisoners: the bride-to-be Fevroniya, and Grishka Kuterma, a local drunk. Grishka, who fears for his life, agrees to guide the Tatars to Greater Kitezh. Wishing for the safety of her husband and the people of Kitezh, Fevroniya prays for the city to be made invisible; her prayers are answered, and after their journey the Tatars accuse Grishka of deception and threaten him with death by torture the next day. Fevroniya helps Grishka to escape overnight, but Grishka’s irreversible descent into madness has begun, and in Act III he runs away howling.²⁰

Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera is based on the sixteenth-century hagiography of St Fevroniya, what Richard Taruskin has called ‘a prime document of Russian religious syncretism, in which Christian elements coexist with remnants of pre-Christian Slavonic mythology’.²¹ That makes it no surprise that Yudina invokes it from the very beginning of the cycle. When Fevroniya is ultimately saved in Act IV and led heavenward to be with her fallen fiancé, she asks that Grishka may be saved too, but is told that he is not ready. His betrayal of his homeland to the hostile Tatars is wrapped up with his lack of salvation and, as such, patriotism and Christian faith are bound together. While Fevroniya is saved, Grishka remains lost and incapable of finding his way, just as Pieter Breughel the Elder’s *The Parable of the Blind* (1568) depicts: wayward, tumbling, eyeless travellers tragically off-course, sternly overseen by the imposing and yet out-of-reach church in the painting’s background.²² By referring to Francisco Goya’s *The Disasters of War* (1810–20)—utterly empty of consolation and crushingly harrowing in their portrayal of mindless and continuous suffering—Yudina seems to suggest that the root cause of such penance is

²⁰ Richard Taruskin, ‘The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya’, *Grove Music Online* (2002: <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000009112?rskey=R82ud9>, accessed 26/04/2021).

²¹ Ibid.

²² A high-resolution digital reproduction of this painting can be accessed here: <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-blind-leading-the-blind/pwGQmihrf3O0Lg?hl=en-GB> (accessed 08/11/2021).

complicity in unthinkable acts of human cruelty.²³ Within this nexus of referents, Yudina's gnome becomes a personification of Russia, its atheistic blindness buttressed by unspeakable atrocities inflicted against its own people through treachery.

Musically, Yudina's 'Gnome' is everything the first 'Promenade' is not. Her tempo and dynamics are hugely erratic as she lurches from rapid quavers to abrupt standstills on longer held notes (Fig. 6.2). Like Grishka in his fleeing state of madness, or the blind travellers, we have no idea where we are going or how to get there. Much of this is afforded by Musorgsky's directions, replete with tempo changes and sudden sforzandos, but it is Yudina's interpretation that renders 'Gnome' so jagged. Her decision to slow down considerably in bars 9–10 is a good example, as is the *poco a poco accelerando* section (beginning at bar 72) in which Yudina ratchets up the tempo for the dissonant right-hand chords.

Yudina follows up 'Gnome' with much shorter, less potent descriptions of 'The Old Castle' and 'Tuileries'. With 'The Old Castle', she invites the listener to 'give ourselves over for the moment to peaceful and light sorrow', and describes 'Tuileries' simply as 'exquisitely graceful'. These do not hold special meaning in Yudina's cycle, something which is revealed in her scribbled notes for her article. Of both pieces, Yudina writes: 'Tuileries and fortress – don't need (a commentary)'.²⁴ She moves instead onto 'Bydlo', where she picks up where she left off with 'Gnome'.

'Bydlo', in Yudina's words, depicts '[h]arnessed, oppressed oxen'. It opens with heavy, tired bass chords plodding forth in octave thirds beneath a lamenting bass melody. The oxen are unsteady on their feet, an effect Yudina creates with local tempo inflections: she speeds up slightly through the third and fourth beats of bar 1, slowing again in bar 2, rushing once more in bar 3 and then again in bar 6 (Fig. 6.3). These are subtle changes, but the impression left is that the oxen are staggering, on their last legs, utterly exhausted, and battling with uneven, unforgiving terrain. When the octave thirds are transferred to the right hand and placed in a higher register from bar 21, Yudina shifts the tempo again, and the staggering becomes more volatile, a last-gasp effort, but with the return of the original theme in the bass, above those same tired bass octave thirds in the last eighteen bars, Yudina returns to her original slower pace, the oxen themselves slowing down, the theme cut up into fragments and finally winding down into the thinner and thinner bass chords until only a single note is left—a drawn-out and painful *perdendosi* for the oxen. In the essay, Yudina notes that "Bydlo" has resonances with

²³ Yudina does not mention any of the eighty-two prints of Goya's *The Disasters of War* specifically, but it is possible that the religious connotations of Plate #34—with its depiction of a strangled priest holding a cross—would have resonated with her (see <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/381362>, accessed 08/11/2021).

²⁴ See the appendix to Simon Nicholls's translation in the Appendix, pages 209–10.

“Gnomus” [‘Gnome’]. And in performance, with its wayward tempo, Yudina expressively relates both pieces: ‘Bydlo’ continues the unpredictable abruptness that previously characterised ‘Gnome’.

But just as Yudina described ‘Gnome’ as ‘not just a fairy-tale dwarf’, she likewise searches for a deeper meaning behind the ‘[h]arnessed, oppressed oxen’ depicted in ‘Bydlo’:

Modest Petrovich would not have dedicated such a stately, sorrowful procession in the transparent, crystalline key of G sharp minor to oxen, not even to horses. It may be that that is the reason for the composer’s choice of this radiant tonality: so that both we and you can see through it to a deeper comprehension of existence.

That deeper meaning lies in Musorgsky’s opera, *Boris Godunov*, which Yudina says is related to ‘Bydlo’. In the opera, Boris Godunov becomes tsar of Russia under infanticidal circumstances: he is elected after co-ordinating the murder of Ivan the Terrible’s nine-year-old son, who is next in line to the Russian throne. A select few, aware of the truth of Boris’s rise, plot to reveal his despicable acts; as news reaches Boris that his secret is out, he is gripped with panic and ‘paroxysms of fear, accompanied by hallucinations’.²⁵ When the character Pimen visits Boris’s court to tell him (falsely) that the slain tsarevich, now a miracle-working saint, has cured him of blindness, Boris is so frightened that he suffers a seizure and dies before the revelations of his deeds can be made public.

There is an extraordinary if entirely coincidental resemblance between Boris’s religiously infused demise and the brain haemorrhage Stalin suffers on reading Yudina’s letter in Armando Iannucci’s *The Death of Stalin*. But there is nothing coincidental about Yudina’s calculated reference to Boris Godunov, through which she more acutely attributes Russian misdirection to an irresponsible and illegitimate ruler. When Yudina asks: ‘Why is Tsar Boris the murderer of an innocent child?’, it seems that she is not only talking about Boris, but offering a commentary on contemporary Soviet leadership. Perhaps it is a stretch to read the figure of Stalin into this imagery, but her allusion to Boris’s atrocities seems to direct an accusation of culpability toward Soviet leadership for the misery that she depicts. In turn, the trudging hooves of the ‘[h]arnessed, oppressed oxen’ that Yudina musically conjures in her performance seem to symbolise the suffering of Russia more generally under that leadership.

²⁵ Richard Taruskin, ‘Boris Godunov’, *Grove Music Online* (2002: <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000006575?rskkey=E4h6x&result=1>, accessed 26/04/2021). As Taruskin notes, modern historians tend to acquit Boris Godunov of the infanticide of which he is accused in Musorgsky’s opera.

Yudina describes No. 5, ‘Trilby’, as a ‘virtuoso piece, which requires no commentary’. What is increasingly clear at this point in Yudina’s essay is that her cyclic interpretation of *Pictures*, and relative emphasis on different pieces, is guided by a careful programme. They are not all equal: by eliding the ‘The Old Castle’, ‘Tuileries’, ‘Trilby’ and the second and third ‘Promenades’, Yudina creates a theme of Russian desolation which is evoked especially by the operatic representations of Grishka Kuterma in ‘Gnome’ and Boris Godunov in ‘Bydlo’. It is then the fourth ‘Promenade’ that emerges as Yudina’s priority in resolving the tensions at play. In this way, Yudina bends the musical content of *Pictures* to her own dramaturgical ends:

But between ‘Bydlo’ and ‘Trilby’ there is one of the most remarkable ‘Promenades’, in D minor. It is related to the music of ‘The Death of Boris’. It is as if the question were being asked: ‘Why?’ And this is the most compact, the most intense, the heart, surrendering at the point of death, of the dramaturgy, a dramaturgy of miniatures.

Yudina, then, leaves the reader in no doubt that this marks a culminating point within her cycle. In the first two bars, her dynamics are quiet and her tempo is laden with rubato, as she speeds in the first two bars from 58 BPM up to 77 BPM and then back down to 48 BPM (Fig. 6.4). She follows Musorgsky’s crescendo markings through bars 3–8, but also adopts a much faster (but still flexible) tempo, coming in at ~100 BPM. In this way, she plays this ten-bar ‘heart ... of the dramaturgy’ nothing like the ‘Russian way’ of the opening ‘Promenade’. Perhaps even more significantly, she breaks with the unpredictable abruptness that so prominently characterised ‘Gnome’ and ‘Bydlo’. Here, she employs her third chief expressive approach: her *tempo rubato* and quiet dynamics (at the opening of this ‘Promenade’) signal a floating ethereality that seems to offer a form of divine redemption to the despair she has charted in the cycle so far. This reading is supported by two points in Yudina’s commentary: the first is that she chooses to emphasise a ‘Promenade’ here rather than another ‘Picture’, and by extension disrupts the narrative of despair with the *znamenny* chant. The second is her reference to the death of Boris, which connects the treble *znamenny* chant of the fourth ‘Promenade’ to the angelic, hymn-like chorus of voices accompanying Boris’s final moments at the end of Act IV, scene i (entitled ‘The bell! The funeral bell!’) of Musorgsky’s opera.²⁶ The marking of Boris Godunov’s death with the *znamenny* chant of Russian Orthodoxy seems to offer a gentle signal of hope from the bleakness that has pervaded Yudina’s cycle so far—hope that is offered in religious registers.

²⁶ A performance of this scene can be watched here: <https://youtu.be/T-d5wSMKR-Q?t=411>, accessed 13/07/2021.

This device of treating the *znamenny* chant as a mode of redemption is one which Yudina employs throughout her programme. Whereas in the first chapter of the cycle she invokes the chant after detailing the more general subjugation and perversion of the Russian spirit, the second chapter of her narrative narrows in on the more specific and racially charged question of materialism and avarice within Russian identity. In ‘Two Jews’ and ‘Limoges’, Yudina twice sets up Jewish stereotypes as in need of spiritual redemption, which is then offered by the *znamenny* chant of the fifth ‘Promenade’ and ‘With the dead’. In its equation of Jewishness with capitalist greed, Yudina deploys this stereotype as the opposite to what ‘true’ Russian identity should look like, the latter symbolised as before by the *znamenny* chant.

Taruskin has drawn attention to the anti-Semitism of the title of No. 6 when correctly transcribed, “‘Samuel’ Goldenberg and ‘Schmüyle’”.²⁷ Yudina refers to it by its more generally known title, ‘Two Jews, a Rich One and a Poor One’. The piece is made up of two contrasting themes, depicting each of two Jewish men, which then appear in counterpoint.²⁸ Yudina describes the first of these themes as ‘of eternal sorrow, so inexhaustibly bitter’, and the second as of ‘materialism and miserliness, both crude and cruel’. In the first theme, bars 1–8, Yudina, recalling ‘Gnome’, adopts jerking tempo fluctuations (moving, for instance, from 108 BPM down to 34 BPM in bar 3, and 114 BPM to 29 BPM in bar 5) and uses Musorgsky’s hairpins to swell and fade for large dynamic contrasts (Fig. 6.5). There is an angular quality to Yudina’s playing here which marks it as a continuation of ‘Gnome’ and ‘Bydło’. By referring to this first theme as an *intonatsiya*, Yudina ascribes to it an inherent sense of Jewishness, in the same way as she ascribes to the *znamenny* chant an inherent Russianness; in doing so, she sets them up against one another.²⁹ This is all the more important because ‘Two Jews’ is followed by a reprise of the original ‘Promenade’, which Yudina plays in the spirit of her earlier rendition but with even more urgency (Fig. 6.6). The stateliness of her playing is bolstered here by a faster tempo (~130 BPM compared to the original’s 110 BPM) and more forceful dynamics (for instance, in bar 6):

And here, after Jewish *Intonatsii* of eternal sorrow, so inexhaustibly bitter, on the one hand; on the other, materialism and miserliness, both crude and cruel, the first ‘Promenade’ makes a festive

²⁷ Richard Taruskin, *Musorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 382 (footnote 102).

²⁸ Or two sides of the same person, as Taruskin suggests (*ibid.*).

²⁹ Most obvious in this respect is the prevalence of the augmented second interval in the melody, which Taruskin has called ‘that easiest and most trivial of “Jewish” devices’, and which can be found in ‘cartoonish abundance’ in ‘Two Jews’. *Ibid.*, 382.

entrance, sonorous, mighty joyful, unified, and in even more luxurious raiment: 'Here is the Russian spirit, here it smells of Russia'. But this is a primal antithesis and, so to speak, we are once more in the bright, radiant, problem-free world of the *znamenny* chant and of the triumph of truth and love.

Yudina offers the 'festive', 'mighty', 'joyful' return of the 'Russian spirit' in the fifth 'Promenade' as the 'primal antithesis' of 'Two Jews'. The 'inexhaustibly bitter' 'materialism and miserliness' that she assigns to the latter is even more flagrantly anti-Semitic than Musorgsky's score might itself suggest.

This is further complicated by the fact that, though Yudina had of course long since converted to Russian Orthodoxy, she was also ethnically Jewish. Possibly the most charitable reading of this passage is that it is autobiographical, that Yudina is mirroring her personal transition from Judaism to Russian Orthodoxy in the music of 'Two Jews' and the fifth 'Promenade'. But in its reduction of Jewish identity to capitalist greed, this passage suggests that Yudina was adopting a wider stance on Jewishness, or at the very least was wilfully playing into stereotypes. The same tensions can be read into her interpretation of No. 7, 'Limoges'. Yudina writes:

[L]et us approach it from a position of greater understanding: yes, the characters in 'Limoges' are making merry, trading, scoffing (after all, this is in the sceptical country of France!), gossiping, laughing.

But the key is given by the next picture, which starts with a strong accent *attacca*. This picture drives the traders out of the Temple.

The first thing to note about this description is how Yudina underplays the importance of this 'merry little scene': she argues that what really matters is how it is upended by the arrival of No. 8, 'Catacombs', a picture thematically so saturated in death as to make the giddy activity of the marketplace seem frivolous. But there is more to it than that: Yudina describes the *attacca* as driving the traders *out of* the temple, which means that, in her reading, a site of religious worship was being utilised for commercial purposes. Though Yudina does not say so explicitly, this is a biblical reference to 'The Cleansing of the Temple', an episode which appears in all four gospels: Jesus visits the temple in Jerusalem, which is filled with merchants selling livestock. Depending on the gospel one reads, Jesus '[drove] out those who were selling things there', 'overturned the tables of the money changers', and 'told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things

out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"³⁰ It is a passage with a contentious history, and Curtis Hutt has argued that it is anachronistic to impose 'a postmedieval European antipathy toward interest-charging Jewish money changers' onto this early Christian scene.³¹ But as Hutt recognises, there is a long history of doing just that from the medieval period onwards, and Yudina's reference to it here—just after she has lamented Jewish 'materialism' in 'Two Jews'—builds on those same anti-Semitic sentiments.³²

Yudina offers 'Catacombs' as a stark revelation that the commercialism taking place in the Temple was misguided. She follows Musorgsky's dramatically shifting dynamics (which switch from *ff* to *p* four times in the opening ten bars) as a way of careering the listener into this diametrically opposed scene, but she also goes beyond them in making this intervention as shocking as possible (Fig. 6.7). Tempo inflections once again play an important role in this: Yudina's flexibility makes the onset of each chord unpredictable, and often the onset of a *fortissimo* chord aligns with a much quicker than expected beat (as it does at bars 6, 13, 25 and 29). But it is bars 3–4 that really set this atmosphere in motion, because Yudina does something entirely unnotated: she adds a tremolo to the two G octaves in bar 3 as a way of surging toward the downbeat of bar 4.

Once again, Yudina is drawn to the *znamenny* chant: she spends far less time discussing 'Catacombs' than 'With the Dead', itself based on the 'Promenade' theme. The theme of death has haunted Yudina's *Pictures* since the beginning—Grishka Kuterma's betrayal and Francisco Goya's *The Disasters of War* in 'Gnome'; the infanticide of Boris Godunov in 'Bydło'—but it finds its most plain statement in the eternally resting bodies evoked by 'Catacombs'. Importantly, Yudina's approach to the *znamenny* chant here is unlike the 'Russian way' of the first and fifth 'Promenades'. Her gentle rocking of the F sharp tremolos in the opening bars are indicative: she pulls back from 68 BPM in bar 1 to 57 BPM for the onset of the chant in the left hand in bar 2, and then stalls to 49 BPM to mark the quaver rest at the end of bar 2; she does something similar at bars 4–6 (Fig. 6.8). Unlike the shocks of the more drastic fluctuations and dynamic contrasts

³⁰ 'The Gospel according to Luke, 19:45–8', *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible* (1989: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+19%3A45%E2%80%9348&version=NRSV>, accessed 26/04/2021); 'The Gospel according to Matthew, 21:12–17', *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible* (1989: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+21&version=NRSV>, accessed 26/04/2021); and 'The Gospel according to John 2:13–22', *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible* (1989: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+2&version=NRSV>, accessed 26/04/2021).

³¹ Curtis Hutt, "Be Ye Approved Money Changers!" Reexamining the Social Contexts of the Saying and Its Interpretation', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131/3 (2012), 589–609 (609).

³² For just one recent example in the domain of U.S. politics, see Menachem Wecker, 'AOC's favorite biblical story is mired in a dark, anti-Jewish past', *National Catholic Reporter* (21 November 2020: <https://www.ncreonline.org/news/opinion/aocs-favorite-biblical-story-mired-dark-anti-jewish-past>, accessed 27/04/2021).

of ‘Catacombs’, we are back now to the floating ethereality of the fourth ‘Promenade’. Here, Yudina is especially clear about the religious function of the *znamenny* chant in her narrative:

Next there follows a ‘Promenade’ [‘With the dead’], one of the summits of the work. How transparently the *znamenny* chant which we already know sounds to us here, against the background of a fearful accompaniment! Sometimes the tremolando hovers in the supraterritorial heights of the top register, as if on the violins; sometimes it is heard on the double basses and contra-bassoons, committing the deceased to the earth, mother earth, in the transparent light of funeral chanting! ‘Graveside sobbing creating the song of “Hallelujah”.’

Even more so than with the death of Boris in the fourth ‘Promenade’, Yudina here turns the *znamenny* chant into a full-blown requiem. Nothing less than the salvation of human souls is at stake, all of which comes together in the final ten bars: the celestial weightlessness of the right-hand treble F sharps (now a permanent fixture in the texture) appears as the destination that the bass arpeggios—rising from the depths of the earth—seek to reach. Yudina tops it all off by adding an extra chord at the very end of her performance, the ringing upper tonic note acting as an unwritten extension to Musorgsky’s transcending line. As she puts it, we have now been placed ‘outside the earthly chronology of time’:

And besides the radiance of Eternity, Peace and Rest in this music, we cannot but delight in the perfection of the contrapuntal writing, in the imitations, and also the changing harmonies, as if freed from earthly gravity, ringing, letting in light, beyond the clouds, star-countenanced.

Death, misery and corruption have pervaded the arc of Yudina’s narrative thus far, with glimmers of hope offered only by the recurrence of the *znamenny* chant. The three promises of ‘With the Dead’—eternity, peace and rest—provide the only viable solutions to the vices of the human condition that Yudina has meditated upon in the cycle up to this point. These solutions are, of course, religiously mediated: between the wretched horror of human killing and suffering, and the (racially charged) corruption of avarice, Yudina positions Christian faith as the guiding light for a renewed—she might say, reclaimed—sense of Russian identity.

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If Yudina uses ‘Catacombs’ and ‘With the Dead’ to cement the place of Christian faith within her narrative, she uses the final two pieces—‘Baba-Yaga’ and ‘Bogatyr’—to fuse this with Russian

folk and folklore. In Slavic folklore, Baba-Yaga appears as a deformed and ferocious old woman, the word 'Baba' itself a disrespectful term for an elderly woman.³³ Yudina portrays her as a universal figure of folk terror:

At all times and in all tales, Baba-Yaga is a bearer of evil. And if people pursued by her do not always perish, that depends on their succeeding in getting away from her horrifying, tenacious persecution. Somehow or other Baba-Yaga confuses everything, hinders everyone, harms everyone, and God preserve us from meeting her!

Yudina calls Baba-Yaga 'a symbol of death', and notes that she is 'often accompanied by a snake, also a symbol of death'. So once again, it is the threat of death that lurks behind this picture, and Yudina evokes a sense of panic by dousing the main theme with unpredictable accents that are both dynamic and agogic (Fig. 6.9). She lingers on the notes with dynamic accents, such as the second beats of bars 1 (117 BPM), 3 (136 BPM) and 5 (121 BPM), and the downbeat of bar 8 (144 BPM). She then mixes up this strategy for bars 17–24, where she speeds up into each dynamic accent in every bar. In other words, it is another variation on Yudina's general interpretative strategy of unpredictable abruptness, one which reaches an extreme in bar 74: she fills in the giant minor fourteenth leap with an unnotated glissando. In this gesture, Yudina gives Baba-Yaga an unsurpassable speed of movement, after which she races down perpetual falling semiquavers to the transition into the middle section of the piece. The terrifying chase of Baba-Yaga is on.

In the middle section of the piece, beginning at bar 95, Baba-Yaga shapeshifts:

The image of the evil, old, malicious, pernicious Yaga turns into an enchantress by means of a piece of genius enharmonic writing. A chord built on the aching, irritated basis of an augmented fourth is transformed into a dominant harmony in the third inversion [a 2/4/6 chord], beckoning, sweet, promising, embracing, corrupting.

I struggle to hear the opening chord of this section as a dominant harmony, given the lack of any kind of C major/minor resolution or tonal centre in this piece, but that is perhaps Yudina's point: it is a false promise, and what comes through strongly in her interpretation is the inauspiciousness of those tritones, whose pointed dissonance she sharply brings out of the texture with her left hand. It is an act of deception on Baba-Yaga's part: 'No more a Baba-Yaga,

³³ Thanks to Simon Nicholls for pointing this out. See his translation of this essay in the Appendix, page 208, footnote 26.

this is a Kashcheyevna, a Princess Volkhova even'. Both of these are references to operas by Rimsky-Korsakov: Kashcheyevna, the deadly temptress of *Kashchey the Deathless*, and Princess Volkhova, who shapeshifts between woman, swan and river in her seductions in *Sadko*. Taking the Russian folk imagery a step further, Yudina sees Baba-Yaga conjuring up a fraudulent, idyllic rural scene:

[This scene occurs] in our own dense Russian pine-forest, on the edge of a pond which appears unexpectedly, covered in duckweed, filled with the twining, slippery stems of water-lilies... Against the background of a sunset sky, butterflies are hovering, dragonflies, everything around is permeated with the tinkling chatter of swifts, swallows, bluetits.

And so we have, in their final, most elaborate form, the deceptive tendencies that Yudina first traced in 'Gnome' and 'Bydlo' with the treachery of Grishna Kuterma and Boris Godunov. As Yudina writes, 'the innocent magic does not last long; alas, the princess-watersprite vanishes again':

For a moment a struggle between good and evil also begins, a rhythmic contraction takes place, evil forces try to struggle upward, escape to their refuge – the Bald Mountain, or some such place, but evil is vanquished by good, the cadence falls precipitately ... The morning light begins to blaze.

Whereas the F sharp tremolos and rising bass arpeggios in 'With the Dead' evoked a spiritual ascension, here the jagged rising octaves that conclude 'Baba-Yaga' represent the futile fleeing of evil forces, ultimately and conclusively defeated by the attacca onset of the final picture, 'Bogatyr':

'Baba-Yaga' is a folkloristic painting, a painting of a tale, rural, of the people! Night has passed, the sun has come up, dream images, temptations and terrors are past.

And now, let's get to work! Folk of Russia, arise, gathering spirit and forces! And the Apotheosis will commence! ['Bogatyr'] — a synthesis of Russian culture, a collective image prepared and established not by a single artist – albeit an artist of genius – but by the whole folk of the nation, by its unified, global dream, by hundreds of its calloused hands, by the diligence and the art of its skilled fingers, its mighty, warrior-like shoulders, its legendary, epic endurance, its quick intelligence, its unified thought, its inspiration that fills all peoples, which has triumphed over Tartars, Polovtsians, Pechenegs and other enemies of the Russian world... its love for the Motherland and for one another.

The nationalistic trumpeting, at this point, needs little supplementary commentary. What is noteworthy is how Yudina draws all of this out of the figure of the bogatyr, a Russian warrior of folk epics who conveyed weight, might and courage; as Frolova-Walker notes, this kind of joyful, bogatyr-inspired evocation became a pervasive characteristic of Russian musical imagery in the work of the Kuchka (Mighty Handful).³⁴ Yudina has used both Baba-Yaga and the bogatyr as folkloristic jumping-off points for a much more vivid portrayal of the triumph of the Russian ‘folk’, from the idyllic rural imagery in ‘Baba-Yaga’ to the joyous celebratory scenes of ‘Bogatyr’. Deeply set into Yudina’s story of *Pictures* are incidents of Russian suffering and despair which, in the end, are overcome not by any singular heroic figure, but by the ‘calloused hands’, ‘diligence’, ‘skilled fingers’, ‘mighty warrior-like shoulders’ (and so on) of the people of Russia. These victories owe their thanks to Russian Orthodoxy, and Yudina makes this entanglement of folk and faith clear:

A Russian cathedral, its architecture, its significance and its purpose, chanting by the whole people, jubilant youth, the pealing of bells... We say to it, as to everything precious to the mind and the heart: ‘We have known you for a long time! And you and I shall not part.’

Yudina recapitulates the robust grandeur of ‘the Russian way’, originally heard in the opening ‘Promenade’, in the jubilant opening theme of ‘Bogatyr’. It assumes the role previously held by the *znamenny* chant (Fig. 6.10): Yudina adopts her stately approach to the triumphant E flat major theme in the opening 29 bars, powerful dynamics accompanied by a consistent tempo (~70 BPM). She maintains that consistency for the chorale theme in bars 30–46, but holds nothing back in the celebratory rapture that ensues with the running octaves and returning main theme from bar 47 onwards: her tempo fluctuates freely, and her loud dynamics are unrestrained.³⁵ In fact, both main themes of ‘Bogatyr’ are hymnal, and Yudina’s image of the cathedral—nothing to do with Hartman’s design on which the piece is based—especially frames the chorale-like second theme which, as David Brown points out, is based on the traditional chant ‘As you are baptized in Christ’.³⁶

For the fourth and final time in the cycle, Russian spiritual and moral decay has been halted. The scenes of celebration Yudina describes show masses of Russian people now singing

³⁴ Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism*, 44.

³⁵ It is remarkable that Yudina does not mention the appearance of the ‘Promenade’ theme in bars 97–101, though this is possibly because she struggles to bring it out of the leaping, technically demanding right-hand chords and clusters. It is worth comparing it, for instance, with Elena Kuschnerova’s performance, in which the ‘Promenade’ theme is clear in these bars. It is much harder to make out in Yudina’s performance <https://open.spotify.com/track/1WzhAbnB6IzkVutICDvf8H?si=f8bae3b0f8394cff> (skip to the 3:04 minute mark).

³⁶ David Brown, *Musorgsky: His Life and Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 240.

together in a fervent expression of religious union. In the wake of prolonged hardship, they are united at last in a collective, utopian musical outburst, one grounded in both the defence of the Russian nation against old and folklorist enemies on the one hand, and the prospect of future peaceful, happy coexistence with the guiding light of Christian faith on the other.

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Tables 6.2a and 6.2b offer an overview of how the chapters, programmatic content, narrative arc, expressive approaches and intertextual references that I have identified play out in Yudina's *Pictures*. Many of the individual 'Pictures' and 'Promenades' hardly feature or go unmentioned, and the story that Yudina tells emerges from the pieces she chooses to emphasise and the meanings she attaches to them. As I have indicated throughout this chapter, her interpretations (of Musorgsky's score, of Hartmann's illustrations, of their collective narrative content) are accomplishing identity work, and I would like to conclude by tying the musical and discursive threads of this work together more tightly.

This identity is complex, assembled through a constellation of referents that both shadow Yudina's personal circumstances and attest to her more general ideals of what Russian identity should constitute. With the lost soul of Grishka Kuterma and the blood-stained leadership of Boris Godunov setting the scene, Yudina's first chapter offers a portrait of common Russian struggle, suffering and despondency. In the second chapter, with 'Two Jews' and 'Limoges'/'Catacombs', we can trace Yudina's personal journey from Judaism to Christianity and her condemnation of the pursuit of happiness through wealth rather than through faith, something which mirrors her charitable instinct and lack of materialist compulsion.³⁷ As I have said, it is also racially tethered to Jewish stereotypes, something which speaks to the conflicting layers of identity that this performance betrays: on the one hand, Yudina is a marginalised Jewish person in an actively anti-Semitic state who has survived World War II, and on the other, she appears to perpetuate the alignment of capitalist greed with Jewishness. Enveloping all of this is how she positions religious belief as a mode of resistance: the *znamenny* chant comes up against and resolves tensions set in motion by treachery and materialism in the first two chapters of Yudina's cycle. In a similar way, Yudina relied on her Christian faith to persevere in the atheistic, anti-Semitic, and musically and culturally restrictive environment of the Soviet Union.

Yudina plays all of this out musically using three chief expressive approaches. First,

³⁷ Testaments to Yudina's charitable nature (and opted-for poverty) can be found in Chapter 2.

<u>Movement</u>	First Promenade	'Gnome'	'Bydlo'	Fourth Promenade
<u>Narrative</u>	<i>Prologue</i>		'Bydlo' <i>Chapter 1</i>	
<u>Arc</u>	–	Russian Suffering and Treachery	→	Religious Redemption
<u>Expressive Approach</u>	Robust grandeur	Unpredictable abruption		Floating ethereality
<u>Programmatic Content</u>	'...in the Russian way' [Musorgsky's tempo marking]	'...a perversion of human nature'	'Why is Tsar Boris the murderer of an innocent child?'	'...the heart, surrendering at the point of death, of the dramaturgy...'
<u>Intertextual References</u>	<i>Znamenny</i> chant	Gnishka Kuterma (from Rimsky-Korsakov's <i>The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya</i>) Pieter Brueghel the Elder, <i>The Parable of the Blind</i> Francesco Goya, <i>The Disasters of War</i>	Musorgsky's <i>Boris Godunov</i>	'The Death of Boris': Act IV, scene i of Musorgsky's <i>Boris Godunov</i> <i>Znamenny</i> chant

Table 6.2a. Overview of Prologue and Chapter 1 from Yudina's *Pictures*.

<u>Movement</u>	‘Two Jews’	Fifth Promenade	‘Catacombs’	‘With the dead’	‘Baba-Yaga’	‘Bogatyř’
<u>Narrative</u>	<i>Chapter 2</i>					
<u>Arc</u>	Materialism [Jewish Stereotype]	Religious Redemption	Materialism [Jewish Stereotype]	Religious Redemption	Folkloric Threat → Union of Folk and Faith	
<u>Expressive Approach</u>	Unpredictable abruption	Robust grandeur	Unpredictable abruption	Floating ethereality	Unpredictable abruption	Robust grandeur
<u>Programmatic Content</u>	‘...so inexhaustibly bitter, on the one hand; on the other, materialism and miserliness, both crude and cruel’	‘...in the Russian way’ [Musorgsky’s tempo marking] “Here is the Russian spirit, here it smells of Russia”.	‘This picture drives the traders out of the Temple.’	The <i>znamenny</i> chant commits ‘the deceased to the earth, mother earth, in the transparent light of funeral chanting!’	‘Baba-Yaga is a bearer of evil.’ ‘Baba-Yaga is a folkloristic painting, a painting of a tale, rural, of the people!’	‘a synthesis of Russian culture, a collective image prepared and established not by a single artist ... but by the whole folk of the nation...’
<u>Intertextual References</u>	–	<i>Znamenny</i> chant	‘The Cleansing of the Temple’ (Biblical Passage)	<i>Znamenny</i> chant	Kashcheyevna (from Rimsky-Korsakov’s <i>Kashchey the Deathless</i>) Princess Volkhova (from Rimsky-Korsakov’s <i>Sadko</i>)	‘Tartars, Poloytsians, Pechenegs and other enemies of the Russian world’ ‘A Russian cathedral’

Table 6.2b. Overview of Chapters 2 and 3 from Yudin’s *Pictures*.

especially in the first and fifth Promenades, she turns the *znamenny* chant into a mode of resistance, using a disciplined tempo and powerful dynamics to shape a robust expression of Russian grandeur. She recapitulates this approach in ‘Bogatyr’ to conclude the cycle, here applied to the last movement’s hymn-like main theme. Second, she gives the *znamenny* chant a further role as a mode of transcendent resolution to mournful impasses (at the ‘death of Boris’ in the fourth Promenade and the salvation of souls in ‘With the Dead’). For these, Yudina enters a timeless, rubato-laden state, largely supported by quiet dynamics. And third, Yudina uses a model of abruptness, built around unpredictable accents and unexpected tempo changes, to set up the narrative’s tensions and antagonists—the perverse gnome, the oppressed oxen, the stereotyped Jewish people, the fearful catacombs and the terrifying Baba-Yaga. Musorgsky’s tempo and dynamic directions in ‘Gnome’ suggest an interpretation like this, but what matters more is how Yudina adopts this model of abruptness throughout the other pictures, from the staggering feet of the oxen, to the jagged angularity of the Jewish themes in ‘Two Jews’, and the shocking, unpredictable accents in ‘Catacombs’ and ‘Baba-Yaga’. Using these three expressive approaches, Yudina embodies her narrative in her musical performance: the abruptness of these pictures sets up tensions which she resolves with the *znamenny* chant, either in its robust ‘Russian way’ or in its more spiritual, rubato-laden ethereality.

It is in the third chapter that the spiritual and the nationalist interact especially closely, and Yudina combines them by repeatedly invoking ideas of the ‘folk’ in ‘Baba-Yaga’ and ‘Bogatyr’. This is implicit in the large-scale spiritual redemption she charts in the marketplace scene of ‘Limoges’ and ‘With the Dead’ and its affinities with the gospel passage, ‘The Cleansing of the Temple’. But it happens most obviously in the break of dawn that greets ‘Bogatyr’. ‘Folk of Russia,’ she announces, ‘arise, gathering spirit and forces!’ She speaks of the ‘whole folk of the nation’ with its ‘unified, global dream’, envisaging a transformation on a national scale. Importantly, the ‘chanting by the whole people’ and the ‘jubilant youth’ that she describes are connected to the cathedral: ‘We have known you for a long time! And you and I shall not part.’ In this clinching line, Yudina cements the long institutional tradition of the Russian Orthodox church alongside the folkloric Russian figures, stories and imagery that are central to the third chapter of her narrative. Both, crucially, have deeper roots than the atheism of the Soviet Union; both are tied to the happiness of the Russian ‘folk’; and both are conjoined in Yudina’s individual experience and wider vision of Russian nationalist identity.

That wider vision makes this more than a performance of personal identity. Frith observes that music ‘seems to be a key to identity because it offers, so intensely, a sense of both

self and others, of the subjective in the collective'.³⁸ To conclude, I would like to suggest that Yudina is attempting to forge what Kay Kaufman Shelemay would call a musical community, 'a collectivity constructed through and sustained by musical processes and/or performances'. Such a community 'is a social entity, an outcome of a combination of social and musical processes, rendering those who participate in making or listening to music aware of a connection among themselves'.³⁹ Shelemay identifies three main generative processes for musical communities, two of which are at play and indeed overlap in Yudina's *Pictures*. The first of these is 'descent': musical communities can be created 'through what are understood from within to be shared identities, whether they are grounded in historical fact, are newly invented, or emerge from some combination of historical circumstance and creative transformation'.⁴⁰ Yudina constantly refers to significant figures, trends and folkloric tales that are part of Russia's long cultural history in her essay: the misguided, treacherous Grishka Kuterma, the hostile Tatars, the deceptive Kashcheyevna and Princess Volkhova, the infanticidal Boris Godunov, and the terrifying Baba-Yaga all represent challenges that Russia has faced and overcome in the past. The *znamenny* chant that Yudina hears in Musorgsky's 'Promenade' theme is also part of a centuries-old tradition: within Yudina's narrative, it symbolises the importance of Christian faith for Russian flourishing, something which reaches its apex in the merging of the Kyiv cathedral and the ancient image of the Russian bogatyr in the final piece. The elements of descent in Yudina's imagined community connect her idea of Russianness back to both Russian Orthodoxy and folklore. These resonate remarkably with Kaufman's observation that 'ethnic communities often emerge from processes informed both by biological kinship and religious practices'.⁴¹

The second of Kaufman's processes is 'dissent': 'If a descent community claims a primordial connection, whether based on historical factors or invention, dissent catalyses a decidedly different process of community construction, one based solidly in opposition' and which often emerges 'from minority groups or from those considered to hold subaltern status within a larger society'.⁴² I have already recounted Yudina's marginalised sociocultural position in the Soviet Union, and her placement of the Orthodox church at the heart of Russian identity in *Pictures* is one further act of dissent to add to her legacy of disobedience in an environment that was decidedly inhospitable to religion of any kind. By melding folklore with religion, and by intertwining processes of descent and dissent, Yudina creates something that is part musical

³⁸ Frith, 'Music and Identity', 110.

³⁹ Kay Kaufman Shelemay, 'Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64/2 (2011), 349–90 (364–5).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 367.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 370.

performance, part religious sermon and part political manifesto, one which calls for a renewal of a kind of Russian identity close to extinction. More than a personal expression of Russian identity, it is a musico-political intervention, an attempt to enact social change through music.

In an interview with Viktor Duvakin in 1973, Mikhail Bakhtin said that Yudina's 'main characteristic, as a person and as a cultural figure, was that she couldn't fit herself into a *Fach*, that is, into some specialization, she couldn't restrict herself to music only. She was always striving to break out into something broader'.⁴³ He said that romanticism in music 'stroved to escape its confines and transform itself into something akin to religion. That same impulse drove her as well. She chose to play music that was close to Romantic poetry, to an aesthetic or religious revelation. She could never be contained within the limits of what we think of as your typical career in music.'⁴⁴ Driving this ambition was her desire 'to become something truly valuable, big, important, she wanted to serve higher powers than Art'.⁴⁵ In the truth that it speaks of her experiences and struggles, in its emphatic call to Christian conversion, and in its direct address to the Russian people, Yudina's interpretation of *Pictures* is a fine example of how she pursued such a musical vocation until the very end of her life. Another way of putting that is to say that Yudina seems to have had no desire to distinguish between the musical and the extra-musical, between art and life.

⁴³ Slav N. Gratchev and Margarita Marinova (eds), *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Duvakin Interviews, 1973* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 2019), 231.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 233.

Lateness and Introspection in Yudina's Six Brahms Intermezzos, 1968–69

On 21 September 1968, Yudina recorded six late piano miniatures by Johannes Brahms in what became her final collection of recordings for solo piano.¹ As with the Modest Musorgsky recording, she wrote an accompanying essay that provides individual commentaries on each piece as well as a larger reflective effort to thematise them. And like the Musorgsky essay, the Brahms text began as a sleeve note for an LP and grew over the course of a year into something much longer.² The pieces in question are listed in Table 7.1: rather than record a complete opus, Yudina chose specific intermezzos from across Opp. 116–119 to create a more individualised record.

	Brahms Piece	Opus No.
1.	Intermezzo in A minor	Op. 116 No. 2
2.	Intermezzo in E flat major	Op. 117 No. 1
3.	Intermezzo in A major	Op. 118 No. 2
4.	Intermezzo in B flat minor	Op. 118 No. 6
5.	Intermezzo in E flat minor	Op. 117 No. 2
6.	Intermezzo in E minor	Op. 119 No. 2

Table 7.1. The six Brahms intermezzos that Yudina recorded in September 1968

Yudina begins her essay by defending the significance of the intermezzo as a formal type worthy of serious musical contemplation. ‘Rejecting a few opinions of musical-theoretical thought about the intermezzo form as a sign or symbol of second-rate content,’ she writes, ‘we, on the contrary, affirm the extreme importance of this genre as a special example of concentration in instrumental lyricism.’ Referring to ‘the heights, the distances and the oceans of the music of the intermezzo’, she likens the genre to songs, romances and sonnets before concluding that many of Brahms’s ‘most beautiful works in this genre are *elegies*’ (emphasis orig.). Mirroring her

¹ Jean-Pierre Collot, *Maria Yudina, Pierre Souvtchinsky: Correspondance et documents (1959–1970)* (Geneva: Contrechamps Éditions, 2020), 785.

² According to A. M. Kuznetsov, the date of completion on the autograph manuscript is 4 April 1969.

discussion of the aesthetic ‘cycle’ in her essay on Musorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Yudina’s focus in the opening half of this text is the history of the elegy from across diverse artistic practices.

As a literary form stretching back to antiquity, Karen Weisman assures us that no simple definition of the elegy exists.³ At the same time, she points out that, in the contemporary sense, it is often understood as ‘the framing of loss’, and ‘can be pulled between the worlds of the living and the dead, between the present life of sorrow and the vanished past of putative greater joy. Between the extremes of life and death, joy and sorrow, the receding past and the swiftly moving present, falls the elegy as we know it today.’⁴ These themes of mortality, sorrow, loss and nostalgia resonate powerfully with Yudina’s general overview of the elegiac genre and her commentaries on Brahms’s intermezzos. But as a pithy guiding epigraph, she offers a quote from Pushkin—‘my sorrow is light’—and, explaining this, notes that the elegy’s ‘sorrow will always be cleansed of the everyday, the workaday, from morose subjectivity, momentary despondency—transcending grievances, avoiding despair.’⁵ Thus her distinctive twist on the elegy incorporates an element of hope.

Unsurprisingly, Yudina’s overview of the elegy is dominated by literary examples, which stretch from proverbial epitaphs to nineteenth-century Russian poetry. She refers to ‘antique epitaphs’ as ‘elegies stamped in miniature’ and quotes anonymous examples, including ‘Do not mourn, my sweet, over my departure: an age hurried past, here is what Fate granted me’, and ‘Do not mourn, Mother, this had to happen, this was my Time.’ She similarly highlights the work of the eighth-century poet John of Damascus, in particular his rumination on earthly sorrow and affection, and his observation that ‘[a]ll most charming dreams are taken by Death in a single moment’.⁶ The shadows of death and loss lurk behind the sorrow at play. Yudina briefly offers examples of elegies in music, citing J. S. Bach’s cantata to the text of ‘Bleib’ bei uns, denn es will Abend werden’ (Stay with us, for evening falls), BWV 6 and Gustav Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde*, both endowed with themes of loss and leave-taking. But her touchstone for the elegy—what she calls a ‘sort of “central example”’ to the discussion—is not a literary or musical work but an engraving. She praises Albrecht Dürer’s *Melencolia I* (1514) as ‘an unprecedented synthesis of art and reflection’.

³ Karen Weisman (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1–10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1–3.

⁵ Various translations of this Pushkin poem, the title of which depends on how the poem is translated, can be found here: https://russianlegacy.com/russian_culture/poetry/pushkin/hills_of_georgia.htm (accessed 11/09/2021). Simon Nicholls has also provided a translation in the Brahms essay. See the Appendix, page 212, footnote 4.

⁶ Another translation of this poem can be accessed here: https://hymnary.org/text/what_sweet_of_life_endureth (accessed 11/09/2021).

At the centre of *Melencolia I* is a despondent, winged woman. She is accompanied by an upset cherub, whose gaze is downcast and who appears to be writing something. An emaciated dog lies curled up on the ground: it has not been eating well, and appears huddled for lack of energy or to conserve warmth as night descends. The scene is replete with potential meaning, but Yudina's framing of it as an elegy is an important guide:

With the attributes of Eternity in the symbols of astronomical instruments and of geometrical figures, with an immutable hour-glass, [the woman] fixes her enigmatic gaze not on the sunset sky illuminated by a comet, like a backcloth flickering behind her, but on us and you.

We, the spectators, enter the picture (the engraving), magnetised by its benevolent, silent power. The monumental, gigantic Urania, Andromeda, Cassiopeia, Cassandra, Diotima, Sybil, a heroine of Homer and Plutarch and ... a phantom. Her eyes are motionless, transparent and sad. Neither she nor we shed tears. We are left on the threshold of a myth.

The woman's 'motionless, transparent and sad' eyes are fixed not so much on the viewer as off to the side, trance-like, distracted from the 'sunset sky illuminated by the comet' and absent-mindedly holding a compass in her right hand. It is certainly possible to interpret *Melencolia I* as a scene of mourning, a family coping with loss. Though this is of course to play into stereotyped gender roles, the disused materials strewn about the floor—loose nails, a jagged saw, a hammer, and a carpenter's hand plane—indicate the possible absence of a husband figure.

The theme of loss is one to which I will return at the end of this chapter. But beyond loss, Yudina's fixation on 'the attributes of Eternity' in the engraving, and her allusion to Greek historical and mythological women, speak to a wider existential concern flowing through her survey of elegies. As she cycles through examples and quotations drawn from nineteenth-century Russian literature, Yudina grapples with the inevitability of one's own confrontation with death. She quotes the poetry of Mikhail Lermontov, Fyodor Tyutchev and Afanasy Fet in this respect, but mentions a Pushkin poem as the most important example of a Russian elegy. In 'Whether I wander along noisy streets', Pushkin ponders the unstoppable encroachment of death and the unknowable answers to the when and the how of one's passing.⁷ And for Yudina, it is especially in his intermezzos that Brahms stands 'on the threshold of life and death'.

One way to conceptualise all of this is in terms of lateness, a prevalent yet slippery idea in aesthetic thought which received concentrated attention in Edward Said's *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain*, a book Said never finished and which was published posthumously in

⁷ Yudina does not quote the poem in her essay. An English translation is available here: <http://www.pushkin.org.au/r112/media/system/attrib/file/88/Pushkin-poems.pdf> (accessed 11/09/2021).

2006.⁸ Said was writing from a self-aware standpoint of lateness, associating it explicitly with death: ‘the last or late period of life, the decay of the body, the onset of ill health or other factors that even in a younger person bring on the possibility of an untimely end.’⁹ Said’s concept of lateness stems from Theodor Adorno and is built around three principles: first, that lateness ‘retains in it the late phase of a human life’; second, that an artist working within a period of lateness ‘cannot transcend or lift oneself out of lateness, but can only deepen lateness’; and third, most importantly, that lateness ‘is the idea of surviving beyond what is acceptable and normal’.¹⁰ In particular, Said draws these principles from Adorno’s understanding of how the ‘remorselessly alienated and obscure’ late-style Beethoven became ‘the prototypical modern aesthetic form’.¹¹ And through his own lens of lateness in turn, Said examines the likes of Richard Strauss, Glenn Gould, Jean Genet and Adorno himself.

The implicit majesty of ‘late’ aesthetic achievement is something that Gordon McMullan and Sam Smiles have called into question. ‘For all the conceptual sophistication with which critics approach the so-called “late works” of writers, artists, and composers,’ write McMullan and Smiles, ‘they rarely—surprisingly rarely, in truth—confront the evidence that the idea of late style, far from being a universal creative given, can be understood quite differently—as a critical and ideological construct, the product of a certain kind of critical wish fulfilment.’¹² They argue that

The ascription of ‘late style’ to a body of work has allowed commentators to write as though Titian, Shakespeare, Beethoven, and the rest were somehow united in the same enterprise, that the business of ‘lateness’ is always and inevitably an existential concern, as the supreme creative artist acknowledges his imminent demise—with late style it is almost always a ‘he’, one obvious marker of the limitations of the claim for universality—and devotes what time remains to a testamentary gesture. The attribution of a late phase has thus come to serve as a signal of the elect status of the artist or poet or composer in question; it is incontrovertible evidence of their genius.¹³

The ostensible universality of a certain kind of lateness, its supposed transhistorical and transcultural relevance, is criticised by Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon not simply

⁸ Edward Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006). It was published subsequently as *On Late Style: The Evolution of the Creative Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), which is the edition I refer to in this chapter.

⁹ Said, *On Late Style*, 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Gordon McMullan and Sam Smiles (eds), *Late Style and its Discontents: Essays in Art, Literature, and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

because of its complicity in upholding a pantheon of great men, but also because it is ‘inevitably ageist’.¹⁴ ‘One of the major myths about the elderly,’ they point out, ‘is that they are all pretty much the same.’¹⁵ For them, the way forward is to recognise that there ‘are as many late styles as there are late artists’, and that productive accounts of lateness would benefit from individualised rather than generalisable theoretical outlooks.¹⁶ Indeed, Kevin Kopelson goes one step further when he writes, ‘I do not think it wise to set down general rules about late style in the arts. I do think, still, that such a thing has only ever been, and can only be, quite idiosyncratic.’¹⁷

But late style isn’t tethered to old age, as McMullan and Smiles remind us.¹⁸ Laura Tunbridge observes that we ‘might balk at the notion of someone like Schubert’, who died in his early thirties, ‘embarking on a late period. But then, lateness in this sense has little to do with historical specifics. Its concern, rather, is subjective experience: that of the artist in question and, more tangibly and more often, that of the modern interpreter.’¹⁹ Her chosen example is Schubert, who for a long time was perceived as Beethoven’s inferior in music history: ‘Whereas Beethoven was masculine and heroic, struggling to create symphonic masterpieces, Schubert was effeminate, tubby ... and poured forth that least assuming of genres, song.’²⁰ His elevation to the higher echelons of composerly achievement is the result of more recent scholarly interventions, a central tenet of which, as Tunbridge points out, has been Schubert’s compositional output during his final years of declining health (due to what most agree was his contraction of syphilis).²¹ A new frame of the tortured, suffering artist meant that Schubert could be taken as seriously as Beethoven, and analysis of his late compositions served to justify the frame. Tunbridge’s point is that the musicological act of interpreting lateness is wrapped up in the politics of its own discourse, particularly the canonisation of genius. It is difficult, in other words, to separate accounts of discrete, subjective experiences of lateness from the musicological agendas from which they have tended to emerge.

Lateness, then, appears to be a troublesome concept to repurpose, but the context of Yudina’s Brahms recordings makes it seem otherwise for at least three reasons. First, and most

¹⁴ Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, ‘Historicizing Late Style as a Discourse of Reception’, Gordon McMullan and Sam Smiles (eds), *Late Style and its Discontents: Essays in Art, Literature, and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 51–68 (68).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁷ Kevin Kopelson, ‘Vanishing Point’, *Adorno and the Showgirl: Or, Late Style* (2016: <https://kevinkopelson.com/adorno-and-the-showgirl-2/>, accessed 26/04/2022).

¹⁸ McMullan and Smiles, *Late Style and its Discontents*, 3.

¹⁹ Laura Tunbridge, ‘Saving Schubert: The Evasions of Late Style’, Gordon McMullan and Sam Smiles (eds), *Late Style and its Discontents: Essays in Art, Literature, and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 120–30 (120–1).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

²¹ Tunbridge identifies two key factors in the early twentieth century that set this re-evaluation of Schubert in motion: Adorno’s 1926 essay on the composer and the changing listening practices afforded by recording technology.

obviously, are the existential themes at play in her accompanying essay: her reflections on loss, the inevitability of death, and the possibility of art as a means of grappling with these. Second, at the time of making her Brahms recordings, Yudina was a sixty-nine-year-old woman contending with the frailty and bereavement of aging, both of which emerge as growing themes in her letters in the 1960s. She complains intermittently of cardiac problems and the flu; as she put it in a letter to Souvtchinsky on 21 January 1961, ‘I work permanently in a state of half-sickness, because I don’t have time to lie down and rest, too much work and too many worries, torrents of worries...’²² On 24 January 1968, not long before her Brahms recordings, she wrote to the family of Edison Denisov that she ‘slipped and fell in the studio of the Swedish Church’ and was subsequently hospitalised: ‘I spent the whole week mainly in the emergency room, being x-rayed, or lying at home, my head bandaged and my body all the colours of the rainbow... No fractures, but my forehead and left hand are in pain.’²³ At the same time, she was dealing with the loss, or the impending loss, of those she knew and had grown old with. The next month, in a letter to Souvtchinsky on 27 February 1968, Yudina wrote:

[Around me] serious illnesses and disappearances are innumerable. My tears don’t even have time to dry... We know very well that those we love, those who are dear to us, will join God, but we ourselves become more like orphans every day. And sadness gnaws at us all the more since we have not always been fair to those who have left us, or we have not always been able to express or show our good feelings!²⁴

And third, there is Yudina’s choice, at this stage of her career, to record a selection of Brahms’s final compositions for solo piano. Why Brahms, and not a contemporary or Russian composer, two categories she favoured increasingly in the last decade of her life? Brahms was in his sixties when he composed his late piano miniatures, and the association of a lonely, melancholic sentiment with his later compositions has a long history. Margaret Notley has pointed out that ‘at some point in the early twentieth century, the familiar notion of his so-called autumnal style joined, and eventually almost supplanted, that of him as a cold and calculating composer.’ Indeed, by the time of the Brahms centennial in 1933, ‘attributing autumnal qualities to his music had become commonplace enough for Adorno to think that he had to downplay’ them.²⁵ In part,

²² Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 284. She elsewhere mentions cardiac problems in a telegram to Stravinsky on 19 February 1960 (126), and the flu in a letter to Pierre and Marianna Souvtchinsky on 26 December 1961 (377), to give just two examples.

²³ *Ibid.*, 657.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 658.

²⁵ Margaret Notley, *Lateness and Brahms: Music and Culture in the Twilight of Viennese Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 70–1. Notley is referring to Adorno’s 1934 essay, ‘Brahms aktuell’.

this legacy stems from Brahms's choral works in the 1870s and 1880s, which set texts that deal with 'the transience of life and the inevitability of death', what Nicole Grimes refers to—coincidentally—as 'Brahms's Elegies'.²⁶ As Martin Ennis says, 'no-one could reasonably challenge the idea that Brahms possessed one of the most pessimistic dispositions of nineteenth-century composers or that his oeuvre is dominated by works that engage, one way or another, with loss and mourning'.²⁷ Added to this is the fact that the late piano miniatures in particular have an affinity with an introspective disposition. Steven Rings writes that Brahms's late intermezzos

engage issues of inwardness, ironic awareness, rational control, and subjectivity in ways that are not merely abstract but instead potentially enacted at the keyboard in the moment of performance. They do not merely signify as sounds taken in by a listener, they also signify as sets of actions—bodily and expressive to be performed by a pianist. Such meaning emerges in and through first-person action.²⁸

Diego Cubero notes that listeners 'have long recognized the introspective quality of Brahms's pianism', something he traces back as far as 1863, citing Eduard Hanslick's description of his works as 'characterized by "a sovereign subjectivity bordering in esotericism, a brooding quality, a turning away from the outside world, a sensibility turned inward"'.²⁹

I want to do two things in order to recuperate the notion of lateness for Yudina's Brahms recordings. The first involves decoupling the notion of lateness from that of 'late style'; though these imply quite different things, they are often used interchangeably. I take 'late style' to refer to tangible changes in musical practice that are sought and identified in the final period of a composer's (or a performer's) work. That is not my interest here: my interest is rather in lateness as a way of approaching art under the shadow of death and loss, and how this plays out in Yudina's musical imagination. The second thing is that, in orienting lateness in this way, I wish to position it not as a grand, transcending artistic outlook, but as a particular subjective mode

²⁶ Nicole Grimes, *Brahms's Elegies: The Poetics of Loss in Nineteenth-Century German Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 1–17 (2).

²⁷ Martin Ennis, 'Tumbling in the Godless Deep: Brahms and the Sense of an Ending', *Musicologica Austriaca: Journal for Austrian Music Studies* (February 2020, <https://www.musau.org/parts/neue-article-page/view/77>).

²⁸ Steven Rings, 'The Learned Self: Artifice in Brahms's Late Intermezzi', Heather Platt and Peter H. Smith (eds), *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 19–51 (24).

²⁹ Diego Cubero, 'Inwardness and Inner Melodies in Brahms's Piano Works', *Music Theory Online* 23/1 (March 2017, <https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.17.23.1/mto.17.23.1.cubero.html>). The quote from Hanslick is taken from this article. Similarly, Robert Morgan comments that Brahms's late piano pieces are 'turned inwards as if addressed primarily to the composer himself, or at best to a handful of listeners'. See Robert Morgan, '6 Piano Pieces, Opus 118', Leon Botstein (ed.), *The Complete Brahms: A Guide to the Musical Works of Johannes Brahms* (New York: Norton, 1999), 193–5 (193).

through which music becomes a reflective, self-interpretative act. This is what Ross Cole has suggested with respect to popular song and the ‘poetics of experience’:

Songs, I want to suggest, can work ... as transient and imperfect interpretations of experience shaped by the demands of language, musical performance and studio production. As such, songs afford singer-songwriters the capacity to orientate themselves in the world, in relation to other people and the past. Relying on the singing voice being heard as a classical locus of subjectivity stretching back at least as far as nineteenth-century lieder, song epitomizes this process by which life can be enfolded into text, experience into art and performance into personal identity.³⁰

In this respect, Cole suggests, ‘we might move towards hearing particular songs as acts of autobiographical making’, a means through which musicians blur the boundaries of art and their own lives. This is autobiography as ‘a twofold act of *reading* in which autobiographical writers become the paradigmatic “reader” of their own lives and selves, producing work that in turn compels active reading on the part of receivers’.³¹ I want to suggest that Yudina’s interpretation of these six Brahms intermezzos, comprising both recording and essay, can be understood as an act of autobiographical making in the same way, one which interfolds and poeticises her experience of lateness.

*

Yudina calls the Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 116 No. 2 a ‘Serbian song, sorrowful, humble, resigned. One of the innumerable “Songs of maidens”, deserted, deluded or given in marriage to men they do not love.’ In likening this intermezzo to a Serbian song, Yudina is fitting it into a tradition of Serbian folklore associated with the fourteenth-century conflict, the Battle of Kosovo. A common theme in nationalist folklore that developed subsequently was that of the young Kosovo Girl, what Robert Hudson calls ‘an iconic symbol of Serb identity’ who ‘gave succour to the wounded warriors in the first morning after battle.’³² So, when she describes the 3/8 middle section of Op. 116 No. 2 as ‘like the imploring hands of an aggrieved person or a pearl necklace of tears, compressing the heart to the point of suffocation’, she is conjuring the image of a heartbroken woman.

³⁰ Ross Cole, ‘Popular Song and the Poetics of Experience’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 146/1 (May 2021), 81–116 (93).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

³² Robert Hudson, ‘Popular Music, Tradition and Serbian Nationalism’, Vanessa Knights and Ian Biddle (eds), *Music, National Identity and the Politics of Location: Between the Global and the Local* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 161–78 (171–2).

Yudina leaves us in little doubt that all is lost: the maiden '[m]oans about her incomprehensible, unmerited, lamentable destiny' and the 'comfortless fate' before her. Crucially, she writes that 'for this poor Gretchen no second half of *Faust* has been written'. Her reference to *Faust* is an allusion to Goethe's two-part tragic play. In the first half, Faust's pact with the demon Mephistopheles leads to the pregnancy, suffering, imprisonment and death of the innocent Gretchen—the woman he falls in love with—as well as the death of her mother and brother. When Faust attempts to save Gretchen from prison at the end of the play, she refuses, facing certain death. Though Part I ends with voices from heaven proclaiming that Gretchen will be saved, the fate of the guilt-ridden Faust is deferred until Part II. But with no Part II to come for Yudina's Serbian maiden, it is a singularly bleak reading that she offers of this Brahms intermezzo. This lack of consolation seems to contradict her earlier insistence on the presence of hope in the elegy form. It is closer, instead, to William Kinderman's remark that the close of Op. 116 No. 2 'has an introspective character, and ... seems reluctant to end, as if protecting an inward space of sensibility from the imminent intrusion of powerful external forces.'³³

Yudina is quite specific about how this tragedy plays out in Op. 116 No. 2. After the 'comfortless circling of the semiquavers' in the 3/8 section (bars 19–50) there are 'nine bars of illusory comfort in A major, the mirage of hope' (bars 51–9). But 'it does not achieve reality, there is a six-bar chordal progression of aching chromaticism—and once again the original comfortless fate.' Yudina's strategy in her recording serves to emphasise this harrowing conclusion. Her use of tempo across the A and B sections is relatively consistent, with significant dips saved for the *rallentandos* at sectional breaks. In Yudina's nine-bar A major section, she reprises her lilting tempo from the opening A section, but forcefully ruptures 'the mirage of hope' it creates by ratcheting up her tempo for the series of increasingly chromatic quaver chords at bars 60–65, which reach peaks of 148 BPM, 153 BPM, 161 BPM and 144 BPM (Fig. 7.1). The effect is one of falling, tumbling back to the reality of the 'still fresh injury' that the original A minor theme represents. Importantly, the expressive impact of this moment is heightened by how considerably it stands out from Yudina's much more consistent tempo in the rest of the performance.

This particular aspect of Yudina's interpretation is significant because of how differently Yudina handles tempo in her performances of the next two intermezzos. In Op. 117 No. 1 (Fig. 7.2), Yudina shapes the A section into regular four-bar phrases, each of which she marks with a *rallentando* (bar 4: 65 BPM; bar 8: 42 BPM; bar 12: 44 BPM; bar 16: 48 BPM). On a more

³³ William Kinderman, "Capricious Play": Veiled Cyclic Relations in Brahms's Ballades Op. 10 and Fantasies Op. 116', David Beach and Yosef Goldenberg (eds), *Bach to Brahms: Essays on Musical Design and Structure* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2015), 115–32 (129).

microscopic level, her handling of tempo follows a distinct pattern in each bar, too, where she tends to linger on the downbeat and speed up through the second beat. In this way, she imbues the start of each bar with an agogic accent. There is more to it than that, though, because each four-bar phrase expands the temporal range that Yudina explores. She reaches peaks of 103 and 102 BPM in bars 1–4, and of 112 and 108 BPM in bars 5–8. In the third phrase, bars 9–12, she consistently reaches over 113 BPM, before hitting a new highpoint of 129 BPM in the fourth phrase at the hemiola of bar 13. In other words, just as each bar ebbs and flows, so Yudina's phrases successively expand and reach new tempo peaks. They do so in a way that flows gradually from one to the next, contained within an overall relatively quiet dynamic profile.

She adopts a similar strategy in her recording of Op. 118 No. 2, of which the opening A section can be taken as an example (Fig. 7.3). As in Op. 117 No. 1, Yudina emphasises the downbeats: in the opening eight bars, she lingers especially on the first beats of bars 1, 2, 4, and 6. What seems to be more important are the quavers that Yudina rushes through, first in the middle of the first bar, as this sets in motion a trend which she then builds upon throughout the A section: with the longer sets of running quavers in bars 16–23, she reaches new heights of 154 BPM, 151 BPM and 178 BPM; and with the yet longer sets of running quavers in bars 24–28, she peaks at 186 BPM and 189 BPM. In each phrase, Yudina uses the bass quavers to build expressive momentum through the opening section.

The point in both cases is that the gradual nature of this expressive expansiveness is entirely at odds with the sudden rupture heard towards the end of Op. 116 No. 2. What is also at odds with Op. 116 No. 2 is the optimistic tone that Yudina adopts in her commentaries on Op. 117 No. 1 and Op. 118 No. 2. She calls Op. 117 No. 1 'the symbol of equilibrium, peace and silence', and though its central E flat minor section disrupts the idyll of the A section—quoting Pushkin, she describes it as a '[s]udden gloom or something of the kind'—Yudina confirms that 'this gloom luckily disperses entirely in the reprise and conclusion in the same E flat major'. The music now 'is decorated with ornamental semiquavers' in the 'high registers' and symbolises 'the rejoicing of singing birds'. Alongside them, 'chords ring festively' and 'all is transformed and pacified'. In Op. 118 No. 2, the peaceful bliss is never in danger: Yudina speaks of 'still greater equilibrium' and of 'happiness already transformed into blessedness. Here already we are no longer on the way, not at the threshold of world-wide harmony, but so to speak actually within it.' Indeed, Yudina's repeated use of the word 'equilibrium' here is illuminating: though her interpretations are by no means static, Op. 117 No. 1 and Op. 118 No. 2 arguably capture an equilibrium that the rupture of Op. 116 No. 2 prevents.

Yudina threads together Op. 117 No. 1 and Op. 118 No. 2 using two intertwining ideas: folk song and memory. ‘Yes, Brahms and folk song are inseparably connected,’ writes Yudina, ‘it can be said that they are one. Folk song flourished luxuriantly around him, and he eagerly absorbed and cherished it.’³⁴ In an idyllic description of nineteenth-century Viennese life, Yudina describes how:

In Vienna itself, in the glittering, noisy, populous city, around it, in the suburbs, the outlying areas, the villages, the farmsteads, the huts, the cottages, the country estates, the entailed properties, at work in the fields, in the livestock yard, in the stables, the blacksmiths’ forges, on outings, at weddings, christenings, on name-days, at festivals, in innumerable shops, in workshops, sewing shops, tailors’, clockmakers’, bootmakers’, ironmongers’, metal workshops, the workshops of potters, joiners, in factories—great and small—*everyone sang*, each in their own way or purposefully together, when the desire arose to celebrate ‘the good old days’—there was singing and dancing... [emphasis added]

In this formulation, the purpose of folk song becomes one of remembering times shared ‘with the whole community’. And while she associates Op. 117 No. 1 with folkloric imagery explicitly—the birdsong and festive chords I quoted above—she locates ‘the idea of Memory, of Eternal Memory’ and of ‘the Illumined Past’ in Op. 118 No. 2. For the F sharp minor episode in particular, Yudina quotes the first two stanzas of Lord Byron’s ‘They say that Hope is happiness’:

They say that Hope is happiness;
But genuine Love must prize the past,
And Memory wakes the thoughts that bless
They rose the first—they set the last;

And all that Memory loves the most
Was once our only Hope to be,
And all that Hope adored and lost
Hath melted into Memory.

The futility of hope, the certainty of its loss, necessitates that happiness be sought in the past rather than the present or future. In other words, the positive connotations of the elegy are wrapped up with a deep sense of nostalgia. That is the escapist axis upon which Yudina turns away from the tragedy of the young maiden in Op. 116 No. 2 and toward a more joyous tone in Op. 117 No. 1 and Op. 118 No. 2. In that respect, it is particularly important that Yudina takes note of the epigraph to Op. 117 No. 1, drawn from a Scottish lullaby, in the opening of her

³⁴ Yudina also refers briefly to Op. 116 No. 2 as related to folk song, but the discussion that follows has nothing in common with her commentary on that intermezzo.

commentary: 'Balou, my boy, lie still and sleep / It grieves me sair to see thee weep.' As Rings points out, a host of the intermezzo's musical details 'signify maternal song', including its gently rocking 6/8 meter, its simple diatonic melody and its slow harmonic rhythm.³⁵ Yudina makes no reference to a maternal figure in her commentary, but her placement of this intermezzo directly after the Serbian maiden of Op. 116 No. 2 seems to establish a direct programmatic contrast in individual female expression through song. There is also an obvious resonance between this epigraph and her previously quoted epitaphs near the beginning of her essay.

The theme of memory continues into Yudina's fourth piece, the Intermezzo in E flat minor, Op. 118 No. 6, but here the nostalgia is shattered. Recognising the medieval 'Dies irae' fragment as the main theme, Yudina hears in its development throughout the intermezzo 'an image of the soul's despair and human judgement on the fate of one's own wasted life.' Thus there is an allusion not simply to the musical quotation, but to the 'Dies irae' text as well. That text, with its evocation of a fearsome, judging deity before its trembling, guilt-ridden subjects, emphasises the uncertainty of salvation and one's anxiety over past wrongdoings that may not be forgiven. What is interesting about Yudina's commentary, however, is the extent to which it emphasises endured hardships. The 'wasted life' Yudina speaks of is one which suffered through an 'unjust, iniquitous past' that 'tortures the memory and the heart'. She refers likewise to 'a tortured personality' which now exists only as 'fragments' and 'sawdust'.

Yudina's tempo in this performance is her steadiest throughout the six intermezzos, an approach possibly driven by a desire to maintain a sense of continuity between each variation on the 'Dies irae' theme. Instead, Yudina relies more on the manipulation of dynamics to build this intermezzo to a climax, which starts with an intense outburst of loudness at the onset of the G flat major march theme at bar 41. Twice, it is interrupted and subsumed by apocalyptically loud interventions of the 'Dies irae' fragments. This section of the piece at bars 47–61—capturing what John Rink calls 'one of the most impassioned and poignant passages in [Brahms's] entire output'—is the loudest sustained passage in Yudina's intermezzos (Fig. 7.4).³⁶ It captures the moment of reckoning, the playing out of the day of wrath:

But with these enormous arcs of chords across the whole keyboard, in the inconceivable range of striving modulations, a tortured personality, rather, its fragments, its sawdust even, are being gathered into the gigantic, consoling wings of archangels. In the minor, in the sorrow of the

³⁵ Rings, 'The Learned Self', 33.

³⁶ John Rink, 'Opposition and Integration in the Piano Music', Michael Musgrave (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 77–97 (97).

minor, in a *pianissimo* before the very end of the ‘universal drama’, the fragments of a last-moment repentance are gathered into the vast treasure-house of All-forgiveness.

Like Yudina’s two previous intermezzos, there is an offering of hope here, but it is couched in far more perturbing terms. The theme of memory continues, but the idyll of nostalgia has been broken. And as in Op. 116 No. 2, Yudina defines this interpretation with a sudden rupturing, though this time through sustained loud dynamics rather than with a faster tempo.

In this respect, Yudina’s interpretation of Op. 118 No. 6 acts as a transition of sorts into her much more disturbing commentaries on the last intermezzos of the group. Of Op. 117 No. 2, she writes:

The Intermezzo in B flat minor finds its tonic only in the last bar but one of the work, in bar 84; it wanders in an enigmatic twilight of *intonatsii* which are sometimes bitter and sorrowful, sometimes momentarily surprising, spectrally illuminated. Anxiety can be heard throughout the composition.

Yudina sets up anxiety as the key theme of both Op. 117 No. 2 and Op. 119 No. 2, and quotes Pushkin and Pasternak in defining its all-consuming horror. From Pushkin’s ‘The Bronze Horseman’, she quotes, ‘He was swallowed up by the tumult of inner anxiety’, and from Pasternak’s ‘The Wind’:

Blok foresaw that storm and stress.
It etched, with its fiery features,
Fear and longing for that excess
On his life, and his verses.

Yudina gets to the crux of the matter when she writes that ‘where anxiety is, there also is its source: a search for truth in general, surprise, questioning probing one’s lot and the solution to the cause of the world’s sorrow (“Causa malis”) and, in general, the secrets of the universe, which cannot be grasped by the intellect.’ Anxiety, then, is wrapped up in the present moment, in grappling with one’s imminent fate, and as such a turn away from the past, whether comforting or torturous.

In other words, after three successive intermezzos dealing with different facets of memory, we are back in the world of the young maiden, the Gretchen, of Op. 116 No. 2, lamenting her destiny and the ‘comfortless fate’ of her present. Telling in that respect is Yudina’s allusion here to the character of Ophelia from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*:

...the intermezzo Op. 117 No. 2, which does not find its tonic until the end, receives, so to speak, an illusory comfort in the middle, in D flat major, as we too, it may be, remember:

Ophelia perished and sang,
And sang as she plaited wreaths,
With flowers, wreaths and song
She descended to the bottom of the river.

In the illusory fantasy of her swan-song, Ophelia found the comfort of a Different Reality.³⁷

Throughout *Hamlet*, Ophelia bears the brunt of the political manipulations of the men around her, including Hamlet, whom she loves, and her father Polonius. By Act IV, Hamlet has repeatedly rejected her advances and mistakenly murdered her father, causing her to spiral into a state of ‘madness’. In her final scene, Act IV Scene V, Ophelia bewilders those around her by singing songs and handing out flowers and herbs, including rosemary, pansies, fennel, columbines, daisies and violets. The only one she saves for herself is rue, with its obvious symbolic connotations of regret. News follows not long after of her death by drowning, stirring speculation that she had taken her own life on account of her grief and heartbreak.

Yudina locates Ophelia’s swan-song in the ‘illusory comfort’ of the lilting D flat major section in Op. 117 No. 2. Perhaps more significant than how Yudina interprets this section, however, is the dramatic way in which she disrupts the illusion once it ends (Fig. 7.5): following the soft cadence on D flat major at bar 38, Yudina creates a tempo rupture by accelerating into the A¹ section, picking up speed in each set of demisemiquavers before reaching her fastest passage in the running arpeggiated figures in bars 43–6 (up to 138 BPM). As if to reinforce the point, she completely ignores Brahms’s *diminuendo* and *pianissimo* marks, maintaining loud dynamics and hammering home the low bass resolution to F in bar 48. In doing so, Yudina shatters the illusion of comfort provided by the D flat major section. The chilling revelation of her conclusion—that true comfort for the grief-stricken bride-to-be can be found only in death—is akin to the ‘comfortless fate’ of the Kosovan maiden in Op. 116 No. 2.

Yudina explicitly likens Op. 117 No. 2 to Op. 119 No. 2. She invokes *Hamlet* again as an important intertextual link, and anxiety is the key theme once more: ‘Meanwhile, in the Intermezzo in E minor, Op. 119 No. 2, anxiety is even transformed into trembling in a design and construction of repeated delicate chords in semiquavers.’ No doubt this is prompted in part by the *agitato* of the opening tempo, marked *Andantino un poco agitato*. And in this ternary form, too—like Op. 116 No. 2 and Op. 117 No. 2—respite is offered in the middle section in a

³⁷ Yudina quotes a poem by Fet, ‘Ophelia was singing as she perished’ [‘Ofeliya gibla i pela’] (1846). A full translation is offered here: <https://ruverses.com/afanasy-fet/ophelia-was-singing-as-she-perished/>, accessed 21/09/2021.

major tonality, where Brahms changes the tempo to *Andantino grazioso*: ‘in this intermezzo we hear a ray of hope in the episode in E major. It sounds for us ... like an echo of the character of German romantic music, its bright yearning for the infinite.’ But here, too, Yudina casts a shadow over the promises of this middle section: ‘And yet, comparatively speaking, we take less notice of this episode in E major, for all of the music fundamentally slides, pulses, trembles in a whisper, in a rustle, in the susurrations of night, in the dark, in the unseen’. Kofi Agawu has commented upon the ‘subtle, continuous periodicity’ of this intermezzo and how anyone who plays through it ‘will be struck by the constant presence of its main idea’, something which at least leaves it open to being heard ‘as an instance of developing variation’.³⁸ In this E major section, Yudina avoids this latent continuity by performing yet another tempo rupture, this time within rather than immediately after the major tonality. With the onset of E major at bar 36, Yudina evokes an initial calmness with a regularised tempo grounded in eight-bar phrases, but this is broken by the turbulence that propels the section forward in a new direction from bar 52.³⁹ Fig. 7.6 points to this rupture: immediately after bar 52, the momentum picks up and overthrows the prior feeling of stasis. She reaches up to 200 BPM in bar 53 and 205 BPM in bar 56, and continues in this fashion in the immediate repeat of this passage. These extreme tempo fluctuations break the spell of bars 36–51, pushing the music away from *grazioso* and building towards something else: the returning *agitato* of the forthcoming reprise of the A section.

Hope is dashed for the final time: ‘But, if both intermezzos, so to speak, did not find the Light and were not resurrected with it,’ writes Yudina, ‘both I and you, the listener and reader, have also stayed in confusion and misunderstanding; before us are night, anxiety, searches, secrets, things unattainable, things that must be done, the trembling of hopes and their ruin.’ With Op. 117 No. 2 and Op. 119 No. 2, we finish where we started in Op. 116 No. 2, with a lack of consolation and an overwhelming sense of uncertainty. Indeed, Yudina seems to have fallen short of her own elegiac ideals by the end of her collection of intermezzos: the optimism that she defends early in her essay has vanished entirely.

*

In the maelstrom of death, nostalgia, sorrow and anxiety that infuses Yudina’s collection of six intermezzos, two chief themes emerge: fate and memory. Her commentaries open with the

³⁸ Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 229, 230 and 238.

³⁹ This description is partly drawn from my analysis of this performance elsewhere. See Adam Behan, ‘Large-scale Structure, Performance and Brahms’s Op. 119 No. 2’, *Music Analysis* 40/1 (March 2021), 104–30 (118).

‘comfortless fate’ of the Kosovan maiden in Op. 116 No. 2, whom we come to know only in her grief-stricken present. In Op. 117 No. 1 and Op. 118 No. 2, Yudina recovers an optimistic tone by looking to the past and finding, in the folk-tinged imagery of community revelry and song, a longing nostalgia that celebrates time spent together and, implicitly, the carefree nature of youth. In the ‘Dies irae’ of Op. 118 No. 6, the nostalgia disappears but the preoccupation with the past—now ‘unjust’ and ‘iniquitous’—remains, accompanied by the smallest glimmer of hope. But this hope disappears alongside the theme of memory in the final two intermezzos. In Op. 117 No. 2 and Op. 119 No. 2, anxiety takes over and we return to the hopelessness of the present, shaped by the fate of Ophelia. With the ephemerality of the respite in each middle section, we stay in ‘confusion and misunderstanding’ and witness ‘the trembling of hopes and their ruin’. The three intermezzos that offer hope do so by escaping into the past; the three in which such hope disappears are those in which the present is rendered inescapable.

All of this plays out musically as Yudina mirrors the interplay of memory and fate in her expressive approaches to the intermezzos. In the three ‘Fate’ intermezzos, Yudina employs significant and sudden tempo increases, what I have called tempo ruptures, to disrupt the move to a major tonality and to transition back to the initial minor thematic material. In Op. 117 No. 1 and Op. 118 No. 2, Yudina takes a different approach, employing much greater expressive expansiveness and, crucially, avoiding those kinds of sudden, unexpected breaches of tempo. Op. 118 No. 6 sits somewhere between these two poles: though still affixed to ‘Memory’, the nostalgia has been broken, and Yudina plays this out by performing bars 47–61 louder than any other passage throughout the set. It is a rupture, but one achieved through dynamics instead of tempo.

Importantly, Yudina has taken control not only of the programmatic and expressive character of these pieces: she has also undertaken an exercise in musical curation. Of all Brahms’s late piano compositions, Yudina has chosen these specific intermezzos and placed them in a particular order. There are various possible explanations. They are all in some type of triple metre, and all six are marked with slow tempos—either *Andante* or *Andantino*.⁴⁰ Perhaps physical ability played its part in the decision: Yudina may have strategically avoided the faster, more technically demanding of Brahms’s miniatures. It is possible that her fall in February several months before the recording session resulted in longer-term damage to her left hand. Yet, there are other similarities between the six intermezzos, chief among them their shared compositional structures: they are all in ternary form. Five of them—Op. 116 No. 2, Op. 117

⁴⁰ Op. 117 No. 1 is in 6/8 which is conventionally classed as compound duple time, rather than triple time; however, I hear Yudina’s interpretation in six rather than in two. Yudina’s reference in her commentary on Op. 117 No. 1 to ‘the lulling rocking of six quavers in the bar’ suggests that she might have heard it similarly.

No. 1, Op. 118 No. 2, Op. 117 No. 2 and Op. 119 No. 2—can be parsed straightforwardly into an ABA shape. Op. 118 No. 6 is more complex and ‘among Brahms’s most inscrutable compositions’, as Rink puts it, but it is also discernibly in a three-part form (Table 7.2).⁴¹

Jonathan Dunsby has suggested that Brahms’s *Fantasien* Op. 116 constitutes a multi-piece, a distinct formal template involving ‘the connection of small, heterogeneous pieces to make a large homogeneous work’.⁴² In a similar way, what seems to emerge from Yudina’s set is the sense of a coherent multi-piece, one that she has constructed herself through her own curation, expressive approaches and thematic connections. Just like each of the intermezzos individually, there is a larger, three-part (if not strictly ternary) shape governing the collection of six intermezzos she has chosen (Table 7.3). In this structure, the opening and closing sections foreground the main theme—that of the pessimism of ‘Fate’, broadly construed—and enclose a contrasting middle section on ‘Memory’. Though the nostalgia of the middle section—Op. 117 No. 1 and Op. 118 No. 2—seems to act as an antidote to the initial bleakness of Op. 116 No. 2, that nostalgia is then ruptured by Op. 118 No. 6. Past sufferings are recalled, and we are led back into the despondency of the opening theme of ‘Fate’. In this respect, Yudina’s curated, global shape unfolds in the same way as each of her three ‘Fate’ intermezzos: it begins with its main, bleak opening material (Op. 116 No. 2); offers hope, couched in a major tonality (Op. 117 No. 1 and Op. 118 No. 2), which is ultimately in vain and ruptured (by Op. 118 No. 6); and leads back to the original futility of its opening (Op. 117 No. 2 and Op. 119 No. 2). The indulgence of nostalgia, just like the fleeting major tonalities of those middle sections, is no more than a temporary distraction.

In that respect, a fundamental irreconcilability arises between the programme’s overarching mood and the relatively optimistic nature of the elegy as Yudina insists on it early in her essay. Speaking of the work of Hartmann Schedel and Hans Holbein the Younger, and referring back to John of Damascus whom she had praised, she exclaims ‘but no! – those are not elegies; what we have before us is pessimism, a double assertion of human vices, and not the calming translucent peace which shines in the canon of the enlightened author of Damascus.’ The import of the Pushkin quote, ‘My sorrow is light’, was that grievances were to be transcended, and despair avoided. Her larger message, though, indicates that things are not so simple.

⁴¹ Rink, ‘Opposition and Integration’, 95.

⁴² Jonathan Dunsby, ‘The multi-piece in Brahms: *Fantasien* Op. 116’, Robert Pascall (ed.), *Brahms: Biographical, Documentary and Analytical Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 167–89 (168).

	Parameters	A	B	A ¹
Op. 116 No. 2	<i>Tempo</i>	Andante	Non troppo presto	Andante
	<i>Key</i>	A minor	—	A major → A minor
	<i>Time signature</i>	3/4	3/8	3/4
	<i>Bars</i>	Bars 1–18	Bars 19–49	Bars 50–86
Op. 117 No. 1	<i>Tempo</i>	Andante moderato	Più Adagio	Un poco più Andante
	<i>Key</i>	E flat major	E flat minor	
	<i>Time signature</i>	6/8	—	—
	<i>Bars</i>	Bars 1–20	Bars 21–37	Bars 38–57
Op. 118 No. 2	<i>Tempo</i>	Andante teneramente	— → più lento → Tempo I	—
	<i>Key</i>	A major	F sharp minor → F sharp major → F sharp minor	A major
	<i>Time signature</i>	3/4	—	—
	<i>Bars</i>	Bars 1–48	Bars 49–76	Bars 77–116
Op. 118 No. 6	<i>Tempo</i>	Andante, largo e mesto	—	—
	<i>Key</i>	E flat minor	G flat major	E flat minor
	<i>Time signature</i>	3/8	—	—
	<i>Bars</i>	Bars 1–40	Bars 41–62	Bars 63–86
Op. 117 No. 2	<i>Tempo</i>	Andante non troppo e con molto espressione	—	—
	<i>Key</i>	B flat minor	D flat major	B flat minor
	<i>Time signature</i>	3/8	—	—
	<i>Bars</i>	Bars 1–22	Bars 23–51	Bars 52–85
Op. 119 No. 2	<i>Tempo</i>	Andantino un poco agitato	Andantino grazioso	Andantino un poco agitato
	<i>Key</i>	E minor	E major	E minor
	<i>Time signature</i>	3/4	—	—
	<i>Bars</i>	Bars 1–35	Bars 36–72	Bars 73–104

Table 7.2. A rudimentary overview of the ternary forms of Brahms's six intermezzos. '—'

indicates no change from the previous section.

	A		B		A ¹	
	Op. 116 No. 2	Op. 117 No. 1	Op. 118 No. 2	Op. 118 No. 6	Op. 117 No. 2	Op. 119 No. 2
<u>Temary Shape</u>						
<u>Intermezzo</u>						
<u>Themes</u>	<i>Fate</i>	<i>Memory</i>			<i>Fate</i>	
		(Nostalgia)		(Regret)		
<u>Expressive Approach</u>	Tempo Rupture	Expressive Expansiveness		Dynamics Rupture	Tempo Rupture	
<u>Programmatic Content</u>	‘...like the imploring hands of an aggrieved person or a pearl necklace of tears, compressing the heart to the point of suffocation, we seem to hear “why, why, why?”’	‘...the rejoicing of singing birds, chords ring festively, all is transformed and pacified.’	‘The Illumed Past’	‘An unjust, iniquitous past tortures the memory and the heart.’	‘Anxiety can be heard throughout the composition.’	‘...if both intermezzos, so to speak, did not find the Light and were not resurrected with it – both I and you ... have also stayed in confusion and misunderstanding.’
<u>Intertextual References</u>	The Serbian maiden Gretchen (Part I of Goethe’s <i>Faust</i>)	Epigraph to Op. 117 No. 1 from a Scottish song collected in Herder’s <i>Stimmen der Völker</i>	Lord Byron’s ‘They say that Hope is happiness’	‘Dies irae’ (Day of Wrath)	Ophelia (Shakespeare’s <i>Hamlet</i> via the poetry of Fet)	Shakespeare’s <i>Hamlet</i>

Table 7.3. The overarching three-part shape to Yudin’s six intermezzos.

‘Granted that Brahms would not have thought of a commentary like this one,’ Yudina writes in conclusion to her essay, ‘that is unimportant.’ This is, of course, her indirect acknowledgement that what we have read and heard are her own interpretations, crafted through her personal artistic authority and subjectivity. To bring this back to Cole’s poetics of experience, I would like to conclude on a more speculative and concretely biographical note. In 1936—the same year that she became a professor at the Moscow Conservatory—Yudina met a younger man, fifteen years her junior, called Kirill Saltykov, when he began taking piano lessons with her.⁴³ As she mentions to Souvtchinsky, Saltykov came from a distinguished family whose lineage could be traced back to Russian prince Alexander Nevsky (c. 1220–63), later canonised as a saint in the Russian Orthodox Church.⁴⁴ Before long, the two fell in love and became engaged: Mikhail Bakhtin remembers being visited by them ‘as a husband and wife-to-be’ when he lived in Savelovo, near Moscow.⁴⁵ Bakhtin also recalls that Saltykov’s parents were against the marriage initially because of the age gap, but ‘then changed their position completely, and wholeheartedly supported the marriage, especially the father.’⁴⁶ Before they could get married, Saltykov died tragically on a climbing expedition that ended in disaster. On 28 July 1939, just before the outbreak of World War II, Saltykov and his entourage of alpinists were attempting to reach one of the dangerous peaks of a mountain range near Nalchik, a city not far from present-day Georgia. The group of them—reported to be Saltykov and two others—were tethered to each other and fell to their deaths together.⁴⁷

Saltykov remains present in Yudina’s letters throughout the 1960s. She mentions him in her correspondence with Souvtchinsky and Stravinsky, calling him ‘my late fiancé’ or ‘my Kirill’, even going so far as to send Souvtchinsky a photo of Saltykov taken in the mountains.⁴⁸ Just as significant as Kirill, it seems, was his mother Elena, whom Yudina referred to as the woman who ‘should have become my mother-in-law’.⁴⁹ According to Bakhtin, Yudina moved in with her after Kirill’s death before finding her an apartment for herself, their close connection indicating how

⁴³ Testimony from Vera Yudina quoted in Yakov Nazorov (dir.), *Maria Yudina: Portrait of the Legendary Pianist*, English subtitles by Vladislav Lomanov and Ray Widrew (2000: <https://youtu.be/zF03KVIrns?t=835>, accessed 11/09/2021).

⁴⁴ This comes from a letter from Yudina to Souvtchinsky on 24 April 1960. Collot, *Maria Youdina*, 164–5. See also Richard Hellie, ‘Saint Alexander Nevsky’, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Alexander-Nevsky>, accessed 11/09/2021).

⁴⁵ Slav N. Gratchev and Margarita Marinova (eds), *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Duvakin Interviews, 1973* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 2019), 226.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 226–7; 310, note 39.

⁴⁸ Yudina included the photograph in a letter to Souvtchinsky on 8 May 1960. See Collot, *Maria Youdina*, 175–81 (180).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 138. In a subsequent letter to Souvtchinsky, dated 24 April 1960, she refers to the Saltykovs as her ‘almost-parents’ (165).

she ‘remained faithful to him to the end’.⁵⁰ In a letter to Souvtchinsky on 8 May 1960, she wrote that Elena’s death ‘was a terrible shock that devastated me’, and cited her as a kindred religious spirit.⁵¹ In another letter to Souvtchinsky, on 13 March 1961, Yudina wrote:

on my passport it is written, sure, that I am Jewish, [but] everyone knows that I am orthodox. I have melted so much into the Russian people, yes, precisely the people, with whom I have rubbed shoulders for decades in God’s Temple, and with whom I share not only the faith but also the traditions (my late Elena Nikolayevna Saltykova, moreover, was for me a great master of these things, of customs, proverbs, lived stories and fables!)⁵²

As well as living on through her relationship with Saltykov’s family, Yudina kept his arrangement for piano of Mozart’s ‘Lacrimosa’ from his Requiem in D minor, K. 626 within her repertoire, of which there is one extant recording from her live concert in Kyiv on 4 April 1954.⁵³ A more direct example of how Yudina channelled her grief through her pianism could hardly be forthcoming.

This particular trauma may have animated the lateness of her Brahms recording, too. It adds new meaning to earlier elegiac examples in her essay, like the epitaph, ‘Do not mourn, my sweet, over my departure: an age hurried past, here is what Fate granted me’. More than this, the notion of romantic loss comes through especially forcefully in the recurring image of the grieving woman. Her ‘central example’ of an elegy in her opening discussion is of Albrecht Dürer’s *Melencolia*, an engraving whose ‘motionless, transparent and sad’ eyes are possible to interpret, as I indicated earlier, as linked to the absence of a husband figure. And there is a specifically romantic thread connecting the characters that appear in her commentaries: the mourning, grief-stricken Serbian maiden, the abandoned, betrayed Gretchen and the heartbroken, spiralling Ophelia all obliquely reference the premature loss of love. With the lingering presence of Saltykov, these women become symbolisations of the self, variations on the theme of Yudina’s own romantic tragedy.⁵⁴ Indeed, towards the end of her essay Yudina calls *Hamlet* the greatest of all tragedies. In the narrative that she builds and the characters that she ventriloquises, she also calls attention to how she has suffered the slings and arrows of her own outrageous fortune.

⁵⁰ Gratchev and Marinova, *Bakhtin*, 227.

⁵¹ Collot, *Maria Youdina*, 178–9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 294–5.

⁵³ Incidentally, the Mozart/Saltykov arrangement is her most listened to recording on YouTube: at the time of writing, the uploaded video in question has over 162,000 views (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVP6uWKBMBk>, accessed 11/09/2021).

⁵⁴ We might add the lullaby of Op. 117 No. 1 as an adjacent, escapist imagining to these figures, though as I mentioned earlier the symbol of the lone woman is not as explicitly evoked in this commentary as elsewhere.

Cole describes the world of song as something that leads us ‘down unexpected pathways bent in the undergrowth of reminiscence and imagination’.⁵⁵ That is a good way of thinking about what Yudina is doing, too, in the alchemy of creativity, experience and performance that suffuses these commentaries and recordings. Her aesthetic of lateness emerges from the collision of memory and fate, the interplay between grappling with loss and confronting one’s own mortality. The persistence of hope under such conditions is no foregone conclusion. What plays out between her essay and musical interpretations is like a confession of vulnerability, an admission that one’s determination to retain a happy disposition must tread through the harsh realities of an unforgiving present, with no certainty of perseverance. Perhaps, then, her sorrow-as-light is not a strong, guiding beam, but a fragile, flickering one. Illuminated by it, Brahms’s intermezzos become Yudina’s elegies.

⁵⁵ Cole, ‘Poetics of Experience’, 81.

Conclusion

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

———Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

Perhaps the six Brahms intermezzos should not have been Yudina's final set of recordings for solo piano. On 19 June 1969, Yudina was leaving the recording studio in which she was working when she was knocked down by a car. Less than three months away from her seventieth birthday, she suffered multiple fractures from the collision, including in three of the fingers on her right hand, and remained in hospital for over a month, until 23 July.¹ The incident retrospectively designated her recital in Tallinn on 25 May 1969—at which she played Musorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Bach's Goldberg Variations and her revised version of Leopold Spinner's transcription of Stravinsky's *Orpheus*—as her last official public concert.² Collot dates her final appearance as a pianist to October 1970, when she played at a party held in homage to Ivan Efimov and Pyotr Mitourich at The Central House of Artists in Moscow.³ As a result of her injuries, she played without using certain fingers on her right hand, a testament to the permanent damage inflicted on her by the car accident. At the beginning of November, Yudina's diabetes worsened and her health began to deteriorate. On 19 November, she passed away in hospital in Moscow.

There is so much more to be said about Yudina's life, one which witnessed extraordinary social transformations. As a child, she grew up in the Russian Empire, but she came of age in the aftermath of the 1917 Russian Revolution. She lived through the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, and offered her musical services in whatever way she could during World War II.⁴ Musically, she effectively matured alongside the recording technologies which have made continued access to her pianism possible. Though her training took place in the expressive world of the early twentieth century, she remained committed to contemporary composition even as a younger generation of musical minds emerged in post-war Europe. I have offered a brief portrait and several targeted insights on her pianism and musical imagination that deal only with aspects of the final two decades of her life. I look forward to Elizabeth Wilson's book on Yudina, which

¹ This incident offers one explanation for her turn towards literary outlets in the last year of her life as a means of artistic expression—particularly in the essays on Brahms and Musorgsky upon which I drew in Chapters 6 and 7.

² Jean-Pierre Collot (ed.), *Maria Yudina, Pierre Souvtchinsky: Correspondance et documents (1959–1970)* (Geneva: Contrechamps Éditions, 2020), 770.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Elizabeth Wilson recounts some of Yudina's wartime musical activities in Elizabeth Wilson, *Playing with Fire: The Story of Maria Yudina, Pianist in Stalin's Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, Forthcoming 2022).

will reveal far more about her story, and I hope that this thesis and Wilson's biography will serve as beginnings rather than ends to the extended study of Yudina in English.

I can speak with more confidence about Yudina's pianism, given the greater attention I have given in this thesis to her recordings. I have made several observations about the expressive tendencies of her playing and have characterised these in different ways, all of which I collate in Table 8.1. I must emphasise that this is not, nor is it intended to be, a complete catalogue of the ways in which Yudina interpreted music: rather, it clarifies those approaches that have stood out in the repertoire that I have considered. Some larger categories remain conspicuously absent: I have not, for instance, attempted to provide a wider grouping for Yudina's studio romanticism, nor indeed for those contemporary recordings which do not fit into her (relatively marginal) 'rigorous way'. General trends did not emerge for these categories as they did elsewhere, though these are possibly things that could be furnished in a study which compared Yudina's recordings to those of other musicians.

While I have attempted to incorporate the variety of Yudina's solo recordings into my project, I have also pointed out how selective this variety still is: many recordings remain unconsidered in depth (though I have listened to many more than are analysed in this thesis), and Yudina gave many performances which cannot ever be properly accounted for because they were not recorded. The point made in Chapter 3 about live performance being the overwhelming norm of classical music practice is a reminder of just how much of a performer's practice we can never know, and my more general observations about the diversity of Yudina's performing habits pay testament to how varied and nuanced that practice is. The second of these points is what makes the first so important: unless unknown recordings are unearthed, it is impossible to say how much or in what different ways Yudina's pianism may have changed in other settings—as in private recitals for friends, as Bakhtin remembered—or earlier in her life.⁵ Nor should the labels I have suggested be tied exclusively to the repertoire I have attached to them: there are counterexamples which I highlighted throughout the thesis which indicate that these various approaches bled across repertoire, composers and settings. The growth model in Yudina's live performances of Bach is found in a significant number of her studio recordings of fugues; her live performance of the D minor Prelude from Book II of the Well-Tempered Clavier is cut from the same cloth as her live romanticism; her live recordings of Volkonsky's and Webern's piano music are much more expressively free than her expressed notions of contemporary fidelity; and her recording of the fourth movement of Hindemith's Piano Sonata

⁵ See Chapter 4, page 99.

Case Studies	Expressive Label	Traits	Predominant Repertoire	Setting
Romantic Era	Live romanticism	Sudden accelerandos	Schubert	Live
		Very loud dynamics	Beethoven	
		Technical errors	Robert Schumann	
Baroque Era	Clarity model	Steady tempos Even dynamics	J. S. Bach	Studio
	Growth model	Gradual accelerandos Even dynamics	J. S. Bach	Live
Contemporary Era	'Rigorous way'	Tempos and dynamics adhere closely to composer's markings Clear articulation	Stravinsky Shostakovich	Studio
Musorgsky	Robust grandeur	Strong dynamics; even tempo	<i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i>	Studio
	Unpredictable abruption	Sudden changes in tempo and dynamics		
	Floating ethereality	Rubato-laden tempo and quiet dynamics		
Brahms	Tempo ruptures	Unexpected, sharp tempo increases in specific passages	Six intermezzos (from Opp. 116–119).	Studio

Table. 8.1. Yudina's expressive traits across various repertoire.

No. 3 displays a similar expressive trajectory in its fugal section as the growth model found in many of her Bach fugues (both live and studio). It would be as foolish to ignore the significance of these exceptions as it would be to ignore the overarching trends.

If qualifying my findings so heavily seems to undermine their importance, I hasten to add that they emerge compellingly from the evidence considered. That evidence—Yudina's existing recordings—is precious, as it is in the case of every performer, and to write off what we can learn and conclude from them on the basis of these selectivity issues would be to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Instead, I offer these qualifications on the basis of scholarly vigilance, which in turn strengthens the observations it accompanies. What Table 8.1 amounts to, then, is a fluid nexus of Yudina's expressive habits which exhibits preferences for playing some repertoire, in specific settings, in certain ways. Indeed, the collection of the dominant ways in which she approached interpreting music arguably matters just as much as the specific settings or particular repertoire to which these approaches tended to be attached. Overall, we have a portrait of Yudina's musical tendencies which she variously followed: how she could employ earth-shattering dynamics or more subtle inflections; gradual accelerandos or sudden, abrupt lurches in speed; attempt to follow a composer's markings down to the finest detail or deviate dramatically

from the score. As a performer, Yudina contained all of these possibilities, and an analytical perspective which takes a diverse selection of recordings and remains attuned to potential interpretative difference foregrounds how such possibilities emerge in varied and interesting musical ways.

Given the plural, porous and yet patterned nature of Yudina's habits, her pianism sits uncomfortably within the usual conceptual notions of performing style. In Chapter 2, I articulated the dangers of reifying Yudina's performing artistry by doubling down on 'style' and speaking instead of multiple styles, and the proof of that should be clear here given just how much she could mix and remix the expressive parameters at her disposal. No doubt it would be possible to reconceptualise style in more open terms, but there is a more readily and richly theorised concept that is just as applicable to musical performance: craft. Craft is resisted by musicians and musicologists because it is traditionally conceived as art's less significant and culturally meaningful other. It is in that sense that Daniel Leech-Wilkinson opposes the notion of craft in relation to musical performance, because of how it keeps 'performers in their place as craftspeople, not artists, manufacturing beautifully turned objects conforming to a model bequeathed by tradition'.⁶ But this is only one way of thinking about craft. As Larry Shiner argues, 'As the name of a process, "craft" at its most generic is roughly synonymous with "skill," a meaning that goes back to the Middle Ages. "Craft" as the name of a category of disciplines only goes back to late nineteenth century responses to industrial production'.⁷ Indeed, Glenn Adamson makes the case that craft is most usefully conceived as a process: 'Rather than presenting craft as a fixed set of things', it is more useful to 'analyze it as an approach, an attitude or a habit of action. ... It is a way of doing things, not a classification of objects, institutions, or people'.⁸

So instead of concerning ourselves with what kind of a thing a clay pot or piece of jewellery is, attention is focused on the creative processes that underpin the activities of the computer programmer, the doctor, the artist, the musician, the builder, the parent, the cook, and the glassblower. All of these occupations—and others—are variously considered by Richard Sennett, who sums up craftsmanship as 'the skill of making things well' and calls it a 'basic human impulse'.⁹ This change is symptomatic of a much wider shift in thinking, one which has been advocated for extensively by the anthropologist Tim Ingold:

⁶ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *Challenging Performance: Classical Music Performance Norms and How to Escape Them* (<https://challengingperformance.com/the-book-6-16/>, accessed 01/11/2021).

⁷ Larry Shiner, "'Blurred Boundaries'?: Rethinking the Concept of Craft and its Relation to Art and Design", *Philosophy Compass* 7/4 (April 2012), 230–244 (233).

⁸ Glenn Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft* (New York: Berg, 2007), 3–4.

⁹ Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin, 2008), 8.

In the study of material culture, the overwhelming focus has been on finished objects and on what happens as they become caught up in the life histories and social interactions of the people who use, consume or treasure them. In the study of visual culture, the focus has been on the relations between objects, images and their interpretations. What is lost, in both fields of study, is the creativity of the productive processes that bring artefacts themselves into being: on the one hand in the generative currents of the materials of which they are made; on the other in the sensory awareness of practitioners. Thus processes of making appear swallowed up in objects made...¹⁰

Ingold's basic point is that our emphasis on objects has caused us to lose track of creative processes themselves—the actual processes of making things. The former—what Ingold has branded the hylomorphic model—goes back to Aristotle and the idea that things are created by imposing form onto matter. Processes of making—which Ingold calls the textility of making—are concerned more with the 'flows and transformations of materials' that lead to the creation of things.¹¹ His case is that the overwhelming focus on the hylomorphic model has skewed our understanding of how things are made; form has come to be seen 'as imposed by an agent with a particular design in mind, while matter, thus rendered passive and inert, became that which was imposed upon'. Ingold's alternative position is that 'it is a question not of imposing preconceived forms on inert matter but of intervening in the fields of force and currents of material wherein forms are generated'.¹²

All of this is readily applicable to musical performance, an approach taken up in particular by Emily Payne. A crucial element in her model is that the performance of classical music is 'a process facilitated by repetitive practice':

Instrumental training and rehearsals are often grounded in the organised repetition of technical movements such that, through repeated performance actions, ways of playing are incorporated into the performer's own bodily sensibilities. Repetition seems on the surface to be an elementary activity, largely due to the value placed on originality in the Western art tradition, yet it need not be mindlessly mechanical.¹³

¹⁰ Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013), 7.

¹¹ Tim Ingold, 'The Textility of Making', *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34/1 (January 2010), 91–102 (92).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Emily Payne, 'Creativity Beyond Innovation: Musical Performance and Craft', *Musicae Scientiae* 20/3 (July 2016), 325–344 (329). Payne has noted elsewhere that 'musical performance has not been investigated in any detail within a framework of craft'. Emily Payne, 'The Craft of Musical Performance: Skilled Practice in Collaboration', *Cultural Geographies* 25/1 (January 2018), 107–22 (110).

To sharpen the point, Payne (drawing on Ingold) observes that ‘performance is *itinerative* (i.e. involved in a journey) rather than iterative’.¹⁴ She focuses on rehearsals as one way of drawing out the unacknowledged processual dimensions of musical practice, as does Sennett when he writes of a craftsman who ‘might be heard in the town’s concert hall. There an orchestra is rehearsing with a visiting conductor; he works obsessively with the orchestra’s string section, going over and over a passage to make the musicians draw their bows at exactly the same speed across the strings’.¹⁵ And when Karen Wise, Mirjam James and John Rink, in their study of solo performers in the practice room, note that the ‘majority of creative episodes identified by [their] participants involved problem-solving on multiple levels’, they are using the same language that Sennett (and in turn Payne) use to describe the process of craft.¹⁶ ‘The process of practising’, they conclude, ‘should not primarily be perceived as boring and repetitive, but instead as purposeful, enjoyable and constructive’.¹⁷

What I would like to do, then, is to transfer this thinking from the rehearsal room to the performance itself. Yudina’s artistic practice is fundamentally repetitive, in the sense that she performed music in her current repertoire over and over again in different concerts and locations, but it is also itinerative, because each time she played them the possibilities for differences (either slight or major) were always present. That is a more nuanced way of thinking about the discrepancies between her live and studio romantic recordings, for instance, and the tendency for expressive overdrive that Yudina may or may not follow. At the same time, each performance instance is generative rather than replicative: something new, by definition, had to be created each and every time she took to the stage or the recording booth. In her strategies of playing Bach, her tempo could remain steady, could slowly increase for a short period, or could continue to increase throughout most of the performance. In each case, the musical sounds she sculpts emerge from moment to moment: what is happening is unfolding with a certain amount of unpredictability and is not foregone. To use Ingold’s language, she is not imposing preconceived forms on inert matter, but ‘intervening in the fields of force and currents of material wherein forms are generated’.¹⁸ To say that is not to deny the role of foresight or planning in Yudina’s playing—as I pointed out in Chapter 3, there are stable interpretative

¹⁴ Payne, ‘Creativity Beyond Innovation’, 330.

¹⁵ Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 19.

¹⁶ Karen Wise, Mirjam James and John Rink, ‘Performers in the Practice Room’, John Rink, Helena Gaunt and Aaron Williamson (eds), *Musicians in the Making: Pathways to Creative Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 143–163 (150). Sennett speaks of ‘the experimental rhythm of problem solving and problem finding’ in craftsmanship, something which Emily Payne in turn builds on. See Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 26; Payne, ‘Creativity Beyond Innovation’, 330.

¹⁷ Wise, James and Rink, ‘Performers in the Practice Room’, 161–2.

¹⁸ Ingold, ‘Textility’, 92.

approaches that can be detected across many of her performances—but it is to say that these are never completely, passively guaranteed. ‘When you play a piece you have often played before,’ writes Nicholas Cook, ‘or listen for the nth time to a recording that is etched into your memory, the experience can never be quite the same as last time, because the world constantly changes and we change with it’.¹⁹ Every time, there are always different potential detours and contours in the journey of performance.

That remains true whether the act takes place in one take in front of an audience or is patched together over several takes in the studio. We know from Valentin Skoblo’s testimonies that multiple takes and patches were common with Yudina: given the extent to which she laboured and fretted over the exactitude of her interpretation of Stravinsky’s Piano Sonata (1924), it is not hard to imagine the painstaking process of achieving the kind of rigour she wanted. Skoblo remembers that she was ‘the most severe and unpredictable judge’ of her own work:

Her critical attitude towards her own performances was considerable. Having listened to and approved a take we had already edited, she could, a few days later, call on the telephone to ask to hear it again. And it would often turn out then that she was no longer satisfied with the previous day’s take. All of our work was effectively ruined, and Maria Veniaminovna would record the work in question anew. This happened frequently.²⁰

Working meticulously to hone a particular interpretation in this manner is an equally strong testament to the itinerative nature of performance. Quite simply, there is no way of knowing the end result until you get there, and the affordances of the studio opened up for Yudina a means of revision and synthesis. Though employed in differently timebound ways, the basic techniques and processes of musical craft remain constant.

In this way, the craft of Yudina’s artistic practice, as I have characterised and categorised it, emphasises its vibrancy and processual nature, and helps to retain a sense of the multiplicity of her musical activity. This is easily overlooked: as Payne puts it, ‘once musicians attain the level of “expert”, their technical facility tends to be taken for granted as an individualised and static attribute that is sustained indefinitely, rather than as a dynamic and in some cases volatile phenomenon.’²¹ My in-depth analysis of Yudina’s recordings demonstrate that volatility and changeability in her artistic practice, even if I could not hope to investigate them exhaustively. As

¹⁹ Nicholas Cook, *Music as Creative Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 192.

²⁰ Collot, *Maria Yudina*, 319, footnote 1.

²¹ Payne, ‘The Craft of Musical Performance’, 107.

Cook notes, there is ‘a continuum, not an opposition, between the recall of memorized materials and the generation of new ones through improvisation’.²² Another way of saying the same thing, then, is to state that Yudina is constantly improvising in her artistic practice, ‘not in an extraordinarily innovative or revelatory sense’, as Payne puts it, but in an ordinary (and no less creative) way.²³ It is, in Cook’s words, part of ‘the creative practice of everyday life’.²⁴ And to create, in this open-ended sense, is to craft.

*

Alongside shedding further light on Yudina and investigating the many layers to her interpretative practice, a chief research aim throughout this thesis has been to set Yudina’s performances firmly within different kinds of context (specifically performance setting, social milieu and aesthetic thought), and so I conclude with some thoughts on this. When I began this project, I intended to formulate a generalisable model for the study of individual performers, but the deeper I have waded into the particularities of Yudina’s case—and the extent to which those particularities have shaped my project and the arguments I have made—the more cautious I have become about overextending my own findings for other research projects. Other case studies may always be amenable to different approaches, not least because the available sources and data may differ wildly from those that have been available to me. I would not want to close down alternative theoretical and methodological options, or present mine as if they should not be scrutinised and improved upon. What seems clear, though, is that we need more case studies of individual performers to complement this one, and instead of a model I offer three general principles which I believe other such studies should take into consideration in the marriage of context and empiricism. When coupled with a sensitivity to the processual craft of a performer’s artistic practice, the strength of these principles lies in tangibly intertwining a performer’s ability with cultural meaning.

The first of these is the need to recognise the significance of performance setting in making sense of the interpretations captured in recordings. Chapters 3 and 4 in particular uncovered major trends across Yudina’s romantic and baroque recordings which are inexplicable without this recognition. It raises the question of how performers use the various affordances of performance settings to different expressive ends and why, and conversely, how specific venues shape performers’ actions. Yudina’s experience of liveness on stage—in situations where the

²² Cook, *Music as Creative Practice*, 200.

²³ Payne, ‘The Craft of Musical Performance’, 118.

²⁴ Cook, *Music as Creative Practice*, 197.

recordings made were not intended to be published or commercially distributed—demonstrates remarkably different artistic results to those we hear in her studio recordings. We hear this, for instance, in the clarity of her studio baroque recordings, the extremes of her live romantic performances, and the meticulous fidelity of some of her contemporary studio recordings. Yudina, it seems, had different preferences for different venues. There are many conceivable explanations for this—to take one example, the possible connection between Yudina’s less wide-ranging gamut of expressivity in her studio recordings and emerging post-war performance values—but such explanations are less immediately important than recognising performance setting as a significant and influential contextual frame in a performer’s output. The different affordances of various performance settings are deserving of more systematic musicological attention, particularly in the histories of performance style.

My second principle is the maintenance of a probing sensitivity to the messy entanglement of performance and discourse. In Chapter 5, I analysed several of Yudina’s recordings of contemporary music, which capture strikingly varied approaches to the piano works in question. Those of Stravinsky and Shostakovich’s music pay deft attention to the composers’ markings, while others (chiefly of Hindemith and Shaporin) were much freer in that respect. Using the surrounding discourse and sociocultural context of these recordings—namely Yudina’s correspondence with important figures of the musical avant-garde and her position within unofficial Soviet musical circles in the early 1960s—helped to offer initial clues to the unevenness of Yudina’s interpretations, particularly her advocacy of a rigorous and inflexible way of interpreting music in her letters to Stravinsky and Fred Prieberg. Given that Yudina seemed to value Stravinsky and Shostakovich more than Hindemith and Shaporin in how she spoke about their music in her letters, it seemed possible that her recordings paid testament to a kind of musical hierarchy, in that she strove to be inflexible in the music she favoured. But her unquestionably flexible live performances of Webern and Volkonsky—two contemporary composers she valued the most—showed that this theory was too simple. Instead, there is a fundamental mismatch between Yudina’s expressed desires for rigour, fidelity and inflexibility in her letters and the usual ways in which she went about interpreting contemporary scores. I suggested that this speaks to a kind of struggle within her artistic practice, a constant need to reconcile the idiosyncrasies of her pianism with the emerging aesthetic of the avant-garde she so revered. There is no straightforward link between two activities as distinct as playing music and talking about it, and it is the complexity of this relationship that renders it so fruitful for the study of performers. This is by no means a new point, but the necessity of its reiteration comes

back to the methodological rift that I explicated in Chapter 1, the closing of which has been foundational to my project.

My third principle concerns an awareness of the function of a performer's music in terms of its social and introspective resonances. I explored these in Chapters 6 and 7, respectively. I argued that Yudina's recording of Musorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, considered alongside her essay on the work, was a response to her political circumstances, an attempt to enact social change through music in a way that was driven by her Christian faith and related sense of Russian nationalism. As a performance, it matters predominantly in the effect Yudina wished to achieve in the world around her rather than in its internally aesthetic content. Yet as I tried to show, the expressive approaches she employed were also part of the community-building agenda that I identified in her *Pictures*: Yudina juxtaposes the jagged and despondent movements with the radiance of the 'Promenades', framing the latter as echoing the *znamenny* chant of the Russian Orthodox Church. Chapter 7 explored Yudina's recording of six Brahms intermezzos and their related essay as an act of autobiographical making which ruminates on romantic loss through musical elegy. I speculated that it was like a confession of vulnerability in coping with tragedy, perhaps one specifically shaped by the premature death of her fiancé, Kirill Saltykov. In the Brahms intermezzos, Yudina uses what I called tempo ruptures to disturb the hopeful qualities of the middle parts of the three 'Fate' intermezzos, and arranged all six intermezzos in such an order as to mimic this sense of rupture on a larger scale. To understand both of these recordings in this way involves turning the dial away from what each performance *is* and towards what each one *does*, or attempts to achieve. The first is public-facing while the second is personal, but both performances serve purposes beyond typical aesthetic or musical parameters, and these purposes are shaped by the ways in which she plays and organises the pieces in question.

I finish with a caveat. This study of an individual musician comes with the risk of eliding what Georgina Born refers to as 'a basic property of creativity: that it is social.'²⁵ At a time when a large swathe of music performance research is centring the 'fact that making music is an essentially social activity', what I am suggesting might be challenged more fundamentally with the question: why continue to study individuals or individuality at all?²⁶ Attributing so much agency to a single person simplifies what is going on in a typically romanticist way, one which, as Jason

²⁵ Georgina Born, 'On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity', *Twentieth-Century Music* 2/1 (March 2005), 7–36 (15).

²⁶ John Wallace, 'Preface', John Rink, Helena Gaunt and Aaron Williamson (eds), *Musicians in the Making: Pathways to Creative Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xxvii. The emphasis on music as a social practice comes through in most of the books in the same series as *Musicians in the Making*, especially Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman (eds), *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Tina K. Ramnarine (ed.), *Global Perspectives on Orchestras: Collective Creativity and Social Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); and Cook, *Music as Creative Practice*.

Toynbee puts it, treats ‘creators as a select band of individual geniuses’ and ‘ignores the profoundly social nature of authorship in all forms of culture’.²⁷ Each of my case studies alludes to the social dimensions of Yudina’s artistic practice in some way: the role of Skoblo in the studio (Chapters 3 and 4), the importance of Souvtchinsky and other avant-garde figures in facilitating Yudina’s performances of contemporary music and shaping her ideals (Chapter 5), the targeted if anonymous Russian public towards which her Musorgsky recording was aimed (Chapter 6) and the haunting presence of Kirill Saltykov in her conceptualisation of Brahms (Chapter 7). Yet it is certainly true that I could have gone further in emphasising the creatively distributed nature of the music-making in these cases. The case of Yudina and Souvtchinsky throughout the 1960s is a particularly good example of the kind of relationship that ‘is generally not seen as collaboration at all’, namely ‘relationships with family and personal or professional friends’.²⁸ Cook’s discussion of overlooked creative partnerships involving composers—Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears, Aaron Copland and Nadia Boulanger, and Edward Elgar and Alice Elgar/Augustus Jaeger—could easily be transferred to the extensive exchanges about contemporary music and mutual admiration shared by Yudina and Souvtchinsky.²⁹ These have direct implications for her artistic practice, not least the scores that she would otherwise have struggled to acquire.

Yet, as performance studies and musicology take greater strides towards recognising the fundamentally social dimensions of music-making, I suggest that they are accompanied by continuing (but not totalising) attention to the notion of individuality. This is not only because there are significant individuals—Yudina being my example in this thesis—who have not formed part of traditional, male-dominated canons and deserve to be brought to light, understood and remembered in their own right. It is not only because individuality exists as a historical phenomenon, a means through which humans have parsed and continue to parse society, as with the cultural construction of Yudina as an outlier, musical and otherwise. And it is not only because conceptions of individuality continue to persist in musicology and require critical attention, of which only one prominent example is the domain of empirical studies of recordings

²⁷ Jason Toynbee, ‘Music, Culture, and Creativity’, Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton (eds), *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2012), 161–71 (163).

²⁸ Cook, *Music as Creative Practice*, 149.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 150–63. I have not discussed any of the many longer examples of research into composer-performer collaboration, though they too could be brought to bear on Yudina’s relationships with various composers. See, for instance, Eric F. Clarke, Mark Doffman, David Gorton and Stefan Östersjö, ‘Fluid Practices, Solid Roles? The Evolution of *Forlorn Hope*’, Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman (eds), *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 116–35; and Nicolas Donin, ‘Domesticating Gesture: The Collaborative Creative Process of Florence Baschet’s *StreicherKreis* for ‘Augmented’ String Quartet (2006–08)’, Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman (eds), *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 70–88.

which I considered in Chapter 1. More than any of these, it comes back to the issue of selectivity. The space needed to consider the richness and depths of individual humans—the multitudes that Walt Whitman spoke of—is large and, for that reason, worth guarding, but the notion of individuality also requires continuing refinement and should pay heed to the irreducibly social nature of what we do. In other words, any use of musical individuality as a scholarly lens should operate alongside, or perhaps within, the more general social reorientation of musical practice, something to which I hope to have contributed in my emphasis on context in this thesis. The philosopher Virginia Held reminds us that ‘we may imagine each other as liberal individuals in the marketplace, independent, autonomous, and rational, and we may adopt liberal schemes of law and governance, and policies to maximize individual benefits. But we should not lose sight of the deeper reality of human interdependency and of the need for caring relations to undergird or surround such constructions.’³⁰ This might serve as a guide for thinking about music, too, in the constant balancing act between the individual and the social, and our attempts to understand ourselves and others.

³⁰ Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 43.

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Weblinks for Recordings

Included here are links to Yudina's recordings discussed in this thesis. In the case that the links become invalid and the reader is unable to listen to the specified performance, please contact me. For an up-to-date discography of Yudina's work, visit <https://www.jeanpierrecollet.eu/ maria-yudina/ discography-of-maria-yudina/>.

Chapter 3

Schubert

Live

'Am Meer', No. 4 from *Schwanengesang*, S. 560 (Schubert/Liszt).
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-m8hqquSBss>>

Impromptu in E flat major Op. 90 No. 2, D. 899.
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eY8nXQmsV0s>>

Impromptu in A flat major Op. 142 No. 2, D. 935.
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0wxh0yKVQw>>

Piano Sonata No. 21 in B flat major, D. 960.

- ❖ i <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y_q0YWYAZ0>
- ❖ ii <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2KsXvSwcck>>
- ❖ iii <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kNO2PKLTB8>>
- ❖ iv <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7r4yhzD3CwQ>>

Studio

'Am Meer', No. 4 from *Schwanengesang*, S. 560 (Schubert/Liszt).
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf24l08KMv0>>

Impromptu in E flat major Op. 90 No. 2, D. 899. <<https://youtu.be/pDK5UE1sniY?t=460>>

Impromptu in A flat major Op. 142 No. 2, D. 935. <<https://youtu.be/dmd-Ovoa7ss?t=464>>

Piano Sonata No. 21 in B flat major, D. 960. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7f-8c02BSC8>>

Beethoven

Piano Sonata No. 14 in C sharp minor, Op. 27 No. 2/iii ('Moonlight').

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fbkN8xkYY>>

Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31 No. 2 ('Tempest').

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzpyb4uBoew>>

Schumann

Fantasy in C major, Op. 17/ii. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cfgpmea5aY>>

Chapter 4

Bach

Live

The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 870–84

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qY-jx6q2QAg>>

Studio

Prelude and Fugue No. 1 in C major from The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 870.

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6piZqxlY3I>>

Prelude and Fugue No. 2 in C minor from The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 871

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=va-XgBa-xa0>>

Prelude and Fugue No. 3 in C sharp major from The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 872

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1TGcjDTfvA>>

Prelude and Fugue No. 4 in C sharp minor from The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 873

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wjrj6CLf9U>>

Prelude and Fugue No. 5 in D major from The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 874

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6-PmuVuuM0>>

Prelude and Fugue No. 6 in D minor from The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 875

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbqgZLwDibs>>

Prelude and Fugue No. 8 in D sharp minor from The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 877

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxHvSJe_2NA>

Prelude and Fugue No. 9 in E major from The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 878

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLjZjU7_TXA>

Prelude and Fugue No. 10 in E minor from The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 879

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2gSAe2mrqg>>

Prelude and Fugue No. 12 in F minor from The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 881
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hun1uTefQS0>>

Prelude and Fugue No. 15 in G major from The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, BWV 884
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMqAcVitI8s>>

Chapter 5

Stravinsky, Piano Sonata (1924). <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAybIwV9gck>>

Shostakovich, Piano Sonata No. 2 in B minor, Op. 61.
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nF95HwyjGnA>>

Hindemith, Piano Sonata No. 3 in B flat major.
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYrFrnM9E0M>>

Shaporin, Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 7. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsP4kozumFw>>

Volkonsky, *Musica Stricta*. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kn5GNR94Xs>>

Webern, Variations for Piano, Op. 27. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaQ1_9d6syg>

Chapter 6

Musorgsky, *Pictures at an Exhibition*. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pGXp9wG5p8>>

Chapter 7

Brahms

Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 116 No. 2. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hEUWvI8ves>>

Intermezzo in E flat major, Op. 117 No. 1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMLk_H_EyxE>

Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 No. 2. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzJtD-KfTN8>>

Intermezzo in E flat minor, Op. 118 No. 6. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1naSsTkNj4>>

Intermezzo in B flat minor, Op. 117 No. 2. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQe1deIYidU>>

Intermezzo in E minor, Op. 119 No. 2. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptWziYQWBjU>>

Appendix

Translations of Two Essays by Maria Yudina

Note on the translations

To my knowledge, these essays by Maria Yudina—entitled ‘Modest Petrovich Musorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*’ and ‘Six intermezzos by Johannes Brahms’—appear in professional English translations for the first time here. I would like to renew my thanks to Simon Nicholls, to whom all credit should be given for translating them. Any future references to these English versions of these essays should specify him as the translator. I would also like to thank Peterhouse, Cambridge, from whom I received a generous grant through the Greta Burkill Fund to commission these translations; without financial support, this would not have been possible.

As noted in the text, the original Russian essays upon which these translations are based appear in A. M. Kuznetsov and S. V. Aksyuk, *Marija Veniaminovna Yudina* (Moscow, 1978), 277–99 as ‘Šest’ intermecco Iogannesa Bramsa [Six intermezzos by Johannes Brahms]’ and ‘Musorgskij Modest Petrovič: *Kartinki s vystavki* [Modest Petrovich Musorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*]’. Permission to reproduce them here was granted by Nicholls (for the translations) and the rights holder of the original essays, Tamara Yankevich, to whom I am deeply grateful: future scholars working in English and interested in Yudina will find much to draw out of them. The respect in which I have utilised them in this thesis is far from exhaustive.

Both articles include footnotes written by Kuznetsov and Nicholls, and these are distinguished by the labels ‘Original editor’s note’ and ‘Trans.’ respectively. The page numbers for the essays in the 1978 book are provided in square brackets.

Maria Yudina

‘Modest Petrovich Musorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*’¹

The artist believes in the future, because he lives in it.

M. Musorgsky

[290] Musorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874) is an amazing work, majestic, unprecedentedly original, a work of genius. And, like every revelation, whether in art or in science, which synthesises ever more valuable and genuine qualities in the past, it does not only look into the future, not only lives in it, but also finds support in Eternity.

[291] The *Pictures at an Exhibition* were created remarkably quickly, in the course of not quite three weeks in June 1874. This was one of the most fruitful years in Musorgsky’s biography, containing the premiere of ‘Boris Godunov’ and work on ‘Khovanshchina’. Musorgsky writes to V. V. Stasov: ‘Hartmann is on the boil, as Boris was, the notes and ideas are hanging in the air; I snap them up and gobble them down, hardly managing to scribble them onto paper.’

The work is in the form of a cycle. Not a suite, as it is naively called sometimes by Musorgsky’s contemporaries, but, precisely, a cycle. By itself, the term ‘cycle’ includes within its definition the ideas of multiplicity, architecture, synthesis and scale.

Did cycles exist in the piano literature before the *Pictures at an Exhibition*? It goes without saying, but they are not comparable in scale with the creations of our ancestral Columbus, Newton or Lomonosov.

‘Carnaval’, in part the ‘Kreisleriana’ and ‘Davidsbündlertänze’ of Schumann, similarly the ‘Little Suite’ of Borodin, the monumental cycles by Liszt ‘Années de Pèlerinage.’ Further, [292] ‘The Seasons’ by Tchaikovsky, Debussy’s masterpieces – his preludes, which contain (each of them) a poetic subject, ‘Le Tombeau de Couperin’, and other cycles by Ravel which are not so extensive, but nonetheless characteristic, the ‘Visions fugitives’ of Prokofiev.

The massive, fruitful influence of Musorgsky upon all French music is generally known. The outstanding cycle by Olivier Messiaen, ‘Vingt regards sur l’Enfant Jésus’ is clearly a descendant.

But one equally great forerunner, almost contemporary to the *Pictures*, exists – a piece which carries features of grandeur – the twenty-four Preludes of Chopin. If it were possible to construct a hypothesis about its subject then we dare to conceive that its essence is ‘death and resurrection.’

Let us recall the realization of the idea of a cycle, in illustrative art and in poetry: many works of art were a source of inspiration for Musorgsky, of fruitful consideration and meditation. First of all, the cycles of manuscript miniatures with their narrative perfection: ‘The Lives of the Saints’, on the one hand. But on the other there are the truly magnificent architectural complexes

¹ This article was commissioned by the All-Union Studio of Recordings, ‘Melodiya’, in the form of notes for an L. P. record containing the *Pictures at an Exhibition*. But it should be regarded as an independent work. From the 20s on (cf. for example the letter by Yudina to M. F. Gnesin, May 8 1926 in the present edition), the performer meditated on the *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and this article should be considered as the sum of these meditations – not only on the *Pictures*, but on the creative work of Musorgsky as a whole, on the particular qualities of ancient and new Russian culture. Maria Yudina suggested that she should write an article on Musorgsky for the ‘Musical Encyclopedia’. This work should be compared with the reminiscences of A. M. Kuris about going through the *Pictures* in Yudina’s class (cf. the present anthology) – many similarities may be found in the article written at the end of the 60s and in the autograph annotations by Yudina in a copy of *Pictures* from the pre-war years. It is apparent that Yudina’s thoughts on the synthetic character of the culture of any epoch [291] found their reflection in the article presented. The rough notes for this article are of great interest; following them we may trace the final shaping of the concept. We include some of them. [These have been placed at the end of the article for the sake of clarity of presentation. Trans.] Maria Yudina’s article about

of national architecture: The Alexander Nevsky monastery in Petersburg, the Novodevichy convent in Moscow, the Trinity Monastery of St. Sergei in the Moscow area, the Metropolis² of Rostov Veliki, the astonishing ecclesiastical and urban architectures of the towns of Vladimir, Yaroslav, Pskov, Novgorod, Suzdal, Vologda, so rich in their variety, the almost innumerable graveyards on the banks of northern rivers. In Moscow, Musorgsky was particularly struck by Red Square, the magnificence of the Kremlin, the cathedral of St. Basil, the bell-tower of Ivan Veliki.

Among the philological treasures of old Russia are our chronicles and a series of national tales with their complicated subject matter, such as tales of 'sorrow and misfortune', 'of the prodigal son' and others. And since we have stated the thesis of the timelessness of all works of genius in any art, this is applicable at the present time to Paul Valéry's 'Le Cimetière Marin', a series of works by Marina Tsvetaeva and Anna Akhmatova, and Pasternak's 'The Waves':

Before me are the waves of the sea.
There are many of them. Their number is unimaginable.

In characterising the idea of the cycle in the briefest way, we say that nowhere else can every artist of importance express himself with such freedom and universality, express his [293] inner meaning and order by means of images and phenomena of the objective world.

Musorgsky was a highly educated, well-read man; he himself sought and found the most varied sources for subjects of creative work and nourishment for head and heart. Besides the remarkable, universally famous composers who created the 'Mighty Handful', V. V. Stasov and the families of this enlightened circle, he obtained the friendship of two outstanding, highly talented people: the artist and architect Viktor Alexandrovich Hartmann and the poet Arseny Arkadievich Goleinichev-Kutuzov.

What is friendship? Fidelity to the grave and the exchange of spiritual gifts.

It was to the verses of that same Goleinichev-Kutuzov that Musorgsky composed his magnificent vocal cycles: 'Sunless', twilight, deep, let us say, in the style of Dostoevsky, and the 'Songs and Dances of Death', a work of utmost genius. The bright, joyful cycle 'The Nursery' to his own words he dedicated to Hartmann. Hartmann himself was genuinely a 'model' personality, a person of order, discipline, a lover of hard work, an architect-artist, an illustrator, a highly skilled craftsman, a traveller, and along with all this he perfected and realised everything with a winged quality of ardent fantasy – in the world of creative work, according to his type of mind and soul. Hartmann was deeply akin to his restless, invaluable friend, complementing his stormy, tragic genius, his Russian boundlessness with his own western exactitude and measure. 'Wave and stone, verse and prose, ice and flame.'³

Let us now turn to the *Pictures at an Exhibition* themselves. There is a wise, laconic saying about them by B. B. Asafiev (Igor Glebov): 'These pictures are the soul of things!'

We need to 'read them through' and comprehend them as a symbolic system of signs on two levels: what we hear, what our imagination dictates to us, and what meanings lie behind this tangible reality.

Above all there are the unexpected and absolutely new and striking 'Promenades' which accompany each work. They are modified according to which pictures they are placed between. They bear various functions: constructive, illustrative and cognitive.

the *Pictures at an Exhibition* was her last literary work: it was finished in April 1970. First publication: 'Sovetskaya Muzyka' (1974 no. 9) for the 75th anniversary of the pianist's birth. The article is dedicated to the memory of Anna Venyamina Yudina, sister of Maria Yudina, who died on 3 March 1970 [original editor's note].

² Episcopal see; its bishop is the Metropolitan Bishop of an ecclesiastical province. Trans.

³ A quotation from Pushkin's [verse] novel 'Yevgenyi Onegin'. Original editor's note.

[294] Let us address similar examples of simultaneous support, separation and entwinement from two works of genius. One of them is the *Matthew Passion* of J. S. Bach. Arnold Schering says: ‘like crosses at the parting of the ways, between especially significant pivotal points in the music of the *Passion* tower wonderful old-fashioned chorales. Each of them is a pearl of a musical image.’⁴

And further, a treasure of our ancient ancestral poetry: *The Song of Igor’s Campaign*⁵ (in the unsurpassed transcription by Nikolai Zabolotsky); in the first part of the *Song* at the end of the second and sixth strophes the distich is repeated:

seeking for themselves honor,
and for their prince – glory.⁶

After the fifth and ninth strophes (that is to say, once again at the end of each of them) the distich is repeated:

O Russian land,
you are already behind the culmen!⁷

In the second part at the end of the seventh, eighth and eleventh strophes the tristich is repeated:

to avenge the Russian land,
and the wounds of Igor,
turbulent son of Svyatoslav.⁸

Thus, both the chorales in the ‘Passion’ and the repetitions in the ‘Song’ bear functions related to our ‘Promenades’ – functions which have a bearing on meaning, history, construction and rhythm. In architectural terms, though, the ‘Promenades’ in our *Pictures* can be denominated as the phenomenon which architects call the ‘pace of the construction’.⁹ This consists of: support, cohesion, reinforcement and a rhythmical unit, development in time and space, the architectural order,¹⁰ the style, the verticals, columns, pilasters, pillars. For a ‘pillar’ is also a ‘support’. ‘The support and affirmation’ – ‘the pillar and ground of the truth.’¹¹

⁴ Yudina is quoting ‘In Place of an Introduction’, written by Scherling for the piano arrangement of Bach’s ‘Matthew Passion’ (arr. Kurt Soldan.) A (manuscript) translation by Yudina of the whole introductory essay is in existence. Original editor’s note.

⁵ *The Song of Igor’s Campaign* is an epic poem composed in Old East Slavic. The author is not known but it is thought to date from the late twelfth century. Trans.

⁶ Vladimir Nabokov, trans. and foreword. *The Song of Igor’s Campaign* (1st publication 1960). Woodstock and New York: Ardis, 2003. p. 35 lines 89–90, p. 38 lines 149–150. Rather than work from the transcription which Yudina read, I have preferred to use the English translation made by Vladimir Nabokov from the original text, retaining Nabokov’s American spelling. It will be noticed that the English does not precisely coincide with Zabolotsky’s modern Russian. The point that is being made by Yudina concerns the structural value of these repeated lines. Trans.

⁷ Nabokov, *Igor’s Campaign*, p. 38 lines 140–141, p. 41 lines 195–196. In the second line of the distich Zabolotsky has ‘hill’ for Nabokov’s obscure ‘culmen’ [top, summit]. Trans.

⁸ *Op. cit.* p. 57 lines 520–523, p. 58 lines 539–541, p. 60 lines 580–582. Trans.

⁹ ‘*Shag*’, ‘pace’ or ‘stride’, is an architectural term denoting the proportions governing the plan of the building, the distance between the main axes of the building which determine the position of the walls, individual supports, etc. Trans.

¹⁰ What is printed is ‘*order*’, which just means order in the sense of a warrant or some such thing. It seems that it may very well be a misprint for ‘*orden*’, which refers to the Classical Orders of architecture: the Doric, Ionian, Corinthian etc. Trans.

¹¹ A biblical quotation: Timothy I, ch. 3 v. 15. Yudina quotes from the Russian Synodal translation; her quotation is given here in the King James Authorised Version. These words also constitute the title of Pavel Florensky’s master’s dissertation (1914), an ‘essay on Orthodox theodicy in twelve chapters.’ Yudina stated that Florensky was the principal influence on her spirituality (Elizabeth Wilson, Pushkin House, talk 30.10.18). She had many discussions

Without this enigmatic essence of the ‘Promenades’, the *Pictures* would lose a significant part of their greatness as pure music, as an example of compositional art and as regards their significance. On the one hand, we hear and see almost exactly how the visitors step through the exhibition, how they gather, scatter, stop, walk past, fail to understand, make ironical [295] comments, laugh, praise! On the other hand, we hear in the ‘Promenades’ an original, characterful *intonatsiya*¹² in the old modes. This speaks to us distinctly of its close relation – spiritually and musically – with the greatest treasure of Russian culture: the *znamenny* chant.¹³

But this relation is not textual, not a quotation – all the music of the ‘Promenades’ was created by Musorgsky on the basis of deep knowledge, and more than knowledge – on the basis of an inward and aural mastery of this world, of this gift.

And so: No. 1. *Gnomus*. This is not just a fairy-tale dwarf (to be found in the folklore of nearly all peoples.) It is a perversion of human nature, which in its origin is beneficent. This is sinfulness, this is the closest ‘relation’ of Grishka Kuterma in the *Tale of the City of Kitezh* (one of the finest compositions of Rimsky-Korsakov), this is Pieter Breughel the Elder’s *The Parable of the Blind*, and again this is the (terrifying) cycles by Francisco Goya, *The Disasters of War*.

No. 2. *The Old Castle*. Let us take a rest with the creators of this wonderful elegy based on mediaeval romantic material, let us give ourselves over for the moment to peaceful and light sorrow!¹⁴

No. 3. *Tuileries* (children at play) – the piece is exquisitely graceful: in it are both the purity of childhood and French refinement.

No. 4. *Bydło*. Harnessed, oppressed oxen. But from oxen we turn in the first place to horses, the eternal object of human cruelty, as of human compassion. (Read the story of genius by Maria Konopnicka, ‘The Old Jade’.) Modest Petrovich would not have dedicated such a stately, sorrowful procession in the transparent, crystalline key of G sharp minor to oxen, not even to horses. It may be that that is the reason for the composer’s choice of this radiant tonality: so that both we and you can see through it to a deeper comprehension of existence.

‘Bydło’ has resonances both with ‘Gnomus’ and with *Boris Godunov*. Why does [Boris],¹⁵ a character on such a scale, of such nobility, invariably evoke from the first notes of his appearance in the drama a warm sympathy, respect and keen compassion? Why is Tsar Boris the murderer of an innocent child? To this question no answer is given: neither Pushkin nor Musorgsky can give it.

No. 5. *Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks* (*Trilby*¹⁶). A virtuoso piece, which requires no commentary!

But between ‘Bydło’ and ‘Trilby’ there is one of the most remarkable ‘Promenades’, in D minor. It is related [296] to the music of ‘The Death of Boris’. It is as if the question were being asked: ‘Why?’ And this is the most compact, the most intense, the heart, surrendering at the point of death, of the dramaturgy, a dramaturgy of miniatures.

with him and played to him in Leningrad. (Yudina, *Vy spasetes’ cherez muzyku* [You will be saved through music, literary legacy]. Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2005, p.108). Florensky was exiled in 1928, briefly, and from 1933. He was judicially murdered in 1937 and buried in a mass grave. Trans.

¹² See n. 17 in the Brahms text. Trans.

¹³ Ancient Orthodox unison chant which was originally read from *znamëna*, hook-like signs comparable to, but not the same as, the neumes of Western medieval chant. Trans.

¹⁴ Compare the Pushkin quotation: ‘My sorrow is light’ in the essay on Brahms, n.4. Trans.

¹⁵ Square brackets in the original. Trans.

¹⁶ This second name refers to the lovesick spirit imagined by Charles Nodier in his novella of 1822 ‘Trilby ou le lutin d’Argail’. Hartmann’s design was for a ballet on Nodier’s tale. Trans.

No. 6. *Two Jews, a Rich One and a Poor One*. [...] ¹⁷

Wealth and poverty are a theme both eternal and generally known. And, certainly, something has been picked up here by Musorgsky which is considerably broader and deeper than a straightforward evocation of provincial Jewish existence.

And here, after Jewish *intonatsii* of eternal sorrow, so inexhaustibly bitter, on the one hand; on the other, materialism and miserliness, both crude and cruel, the first ‘Promenade’ makes a festive entrance, sonorous, mighty, joyful, unified,¹⁸ and in even more luxurious raiment: ‘Here is the Russian spirit, here it smells of Russia’.¹⁹ But this is a primal antithesis, and, so to speak, we are once more in the bright, radiant, problem-free world of the *znamenny* chant and of the triumph of truth and love.

No. 7. *Limoges. The Market Place*. Hartmann, as is well known, travelled a great deal, drew and painted in many countries of the world and was able to see this merry little scene, the news, the tower, to contemplate it and to reproduce what he saw.²⁰ But once again: we too both see and hear everything! But let us approach it from a position of greater understanding: yes, the characters in ‘Limoges’ are making merry, trading, scoffing (after all, this is in the sceptical country of France!), gossiping, laughing.

But the key is given by the next picture, which starts with a strong accent *attacca*. This picture drives the traders out of the Temple.

No. 8 *Catacombs*. You and I are suddenly transported into another world. The Roman sepulchre. Here Musorgsky himself speaks to us: ‘with the dead in a dead language’ – *con mortuis in lingua mortua*.

Next there follows a ‘Promenade’, one of the summits of the work. How transparently the *znamenny* chant which we already know sounds to us here, against the background of a fearful accompaniment! Sometimes the tremolando hovers in the supraterritorial heights of the top register, as if on the violins; sometimes it is heard on the double basses and contra-bassoons, committing the deceased to the earth, mother earth, in the transparent light of funeral chanting! ‘Graveside sobbing creating the song of “Hallelujah”’.²¹

Have we not, through this luminescent ‘Promenade’, come close to the remarkable poet and composer of the eighth century John of Damascus, whose praise was sung by Taneyev, come close to his incomparable canon: ‘What sweetness of life abides that is not mingled with sorrow?’ [297] And besides the radiance of Eternity, Peace and Rest in this music, we cannot but delight in the perfection of the contrapuntal writing, in the imitations, and also the changing harmonies, as if freed from earthly gravity, ringing, letting in light, beyond the clouds, star-countenanced.²² And here we are once again outside the earthly chronology of time; we may also remember the astonishing early cantata by Stravinsky to Bal’mont’s text, ‘Zvezdoliki’.²³

¹⁷ Square brackets in original. Trans.

¹⁸ Yudina uses the word ‘*soborno*’, from ‘*sobor*’, ‘cathedral’, but closely related to the Russian concept of *sobornost*, a voluntary unity in God. Trans.

¹⁹ A quotation from Pushkin’s ‘Dedication’ prefacing his narrative poem ‘Ruslan and Ludmilla’. The words echo those said by Baba-Yaga when she detects the presence of a human, similar to our ‘I smell the blood of an Englishman.’ Trans.

²⁰ The title also contains the phrase: ‘La grande nouvelle’. Yudina’s ‘tower’ may refer to Hartmann’s study of the ecclesiastical architecture of Limoges (the painting does not survive, neither is it mentioned in the exhibition catalogue.) Trans.

²¹ A reference to the orthodox ‘Service for the departure of the soul from the body’. Trans.

²² With the last epithet Yudina is quoting from the poet Bal’mont. Trans.

²³ ‘The star-countenanced’, *cf.* previous note. Trans.

No. 9. *The Hut on Fowl's Legs (Baba-Yaga)*. Baba-Yaga, the universally known character of folk-lore, has always been significant; in the thinking of contemporary research she is understood as a symbol of death. At all times and in all tales, Baba-Yaga is a bearer of evil.²⁴ And if people pursued by her do not always perish, that depends on their succeeding in getting away from her horrifying, tenacious persecution. Somehow or other Baba-Yaga confuses everything, hinders everyone, harms everyone, and God preserve us from meeting her! She is often accompanied by a snake, also a symbol of death. All these elements are very clearly given – according to Hartmann's 'Picture' – in the music of Musorgsky. But in the central part of the work Baba-Yaga transforms herself into a different folkloric image – an enchantress, a water-nymph, a vila,²⁵ a nixie. The image of the evil, old, malicious, pernicious Yaga²⁶ turns into an enchantress by means of a piece of genius enharmonic writing. A chord built on the aching, irritated basis of an augmented fourth is transformed into a dominant harmony in the third inversion [a 2/4/6 chord], beckoning, sweet, promising, embracing, corrupting. No more a Baba-Yaga, this is a Kashcheyevna,²⁷ a Princess Volkhova even,²⁸ a tender, frolicsome 'vila'. Blows from a crutch and a mortar²⁹ turn into sweet-voiced calls, a likeness of the image of Lorelei – but not in the Rhine, but in our own dense Russian pine-forest, on the edge of a pond which appears unexpectedly, covered in duckweed, filled with the twining, slippery stems of water-lilies... Against the background of a sunset sky, butterflies are hovering, dragonflies, everything around is permeated with the tinkling chatter of swifts, swallows, bluetits.

This is precisely the image given in Musorgsky's cadence of tremolo, swift-moving chords. In the *intonatsiya* we clearly hear the zig-zags of the flights of the happy creatures. But the innocent magic does not last long; alas, the princess-watersprite vanishes again, again we hear threats, blows from the mortar and the crutch. For a moment a struggle between good and evil also begins, a rhythmic contraction takes place, evil forces try to struggle upward, escape to their refuge – [298]the Bald Mountain, or some such place, but evil is vanquished by good, the cadence falls precipitately ... The morning light begins to blaze.

'Baba-Yaga' is a folkloristic painting, a painting of a tale, rural, of the people! Night has passed, the sun has come up, dream images, temptations and terrors are past. Now begins:

MORNING

Hurry, little shepherds!
 No mirages, no Fata Morgana,³⁰
 Black smoke stands above the hut.
 All is quiet and silent,
 In the village, in the distant barn
 A threshing-chain is hammering and banging.
 The cattle are mooing, the shepherd is playing,
 The red sun is getting up.
 And, like fire, the dawn is playing,
 Will offer you panpipes.

Velimir Khlebnikov

(*Sorrow in the forest*)

²⁴ To be fair to Baba-Yaga, this is not quite true: in rare instances, such as the well-known tale 'Finist the Bright Falcon', she shows a helpful side. Trans.

²⁵ A nymph-like fairy, found only amongst South Slavs and Slovaks, or a wood-nymph as known to the Czechs. Trans.

²⁶ 'Baba' is merely a disrespectful name for a woman no longer young, so 'Yaga' is her real name. Trans.

²⁷ The seductive but deadly daughter of Kashchei the Deathless in Rimsky-Korsakov's opera. Trans.

²⁸ The beautiful youngest daughter of the Sea-King in Rimsky-Korsakov's opera 'Sadko'. Trans.

²⁹ In the tale 'Vasilissa the Fair', Baba-Yaga travels through the air in a mortar, rowing with a pestle and brushing away her tracks with a broom. The 'crutch' may be for walking when on the earth. Trans.

³⁰ Literally: no illusions, no enchantments. Trans.

And now, let's get to work! Folk of Russia, arise, gathering spirit and forces! And the Apotheosis will commence! ('Gate of the Bogatyrs in the capital city of Kyiv') — a synthesis of Russian culture, a collective image prepared and established not by a single artist – albeit an artist of genius – but by the whole folk of the nation, by its unified,³¹ global dream, by hundreds of its calloused hands, by the diligence and the art of its skilled fingers, its mighty, warrior-like shoulders, its legendary, epic endurance, its quick intelligence, its unified thought, its inspiration that fills all peoples, which has triumphed over Tartars, Polovtsians, Pechenegs³² and other enemies of the Russian world... its love for the Motherland and for one another. And here is the last picture.

No. 10. *The Gate of the Bogatyrs in the Capital City of Kyiv*. A Russian cathedral, its architecture, its significance and its purpose, chanting by the whole people, jubilant youth, the pealing of bells...

We say to it, as to everything precious to the mind and the heart: 'We have known you for a long time! And you and I shall not part.'

Afterword

But let us return to the source of our observations and musings: the discoverer of genius, the seer, he only – Musorgsky – by means of his primordial creation, was able to establish on the basis of the supremely animated 'Pictures' of Viktor Hartmann (which are by no means free from [299] the aesthetical shortcomings of their time) a work which is all-embracing and unique in its significance — artistic and spiritual – in the whole history of music.

APPENDIX: MARIA YUDINA'S NOTES FOR THE ARTICLE

[291]

'And so, the Gnome – blind wan(derers)

Tuileries and fortress – don't need (a commentary)

Bydlo – Tyutchev

Chicks – [comment]ary not nec[essary]

2 Jews – problem of Jewishness (Shostakovich) and the rich and the poor (Chromatic fantasia). Magnificat.

Limoges and catacombs – expulsion of the traders

Baba-Yaga (metamorphoses – Zabolotsky [for a translation of Zabolotsky's poem go to <https://ruverses.com/nikolay-zabolotsky/metamorphoses/1169/>]), and, let us say, all of folklore

Gate of the bogatyrs – Trubetskoy [S. N. Trubetskoy (1862–1905), philosopher of Orthodoxy and Slavophile believer in Russia as a defence against the danger of invasion by China and Japan, associate of Solovyov. Trans.]

Andrei Bely follows in the track of Musorgsky.

We will omit N. Klyuyev, Sergei Yesenin, Konst. Vaginov and, of course inevitably the living (?) [query in original – trans.]

short notes on Yevtushenko's 'Winter' and the Thirteenth Symph(ony of Shostakovich), and on [Spiridon] Drozhzhin [poet, 1848-1930], and on Russian subjects, on Michelangelo, 'There are, in the experience of great poets' [a first line from Pasternak – trans.] etc.

³¹ *sobornoi* – see above. Trans.

³² A semi-nomadic Turkish people. Trans.

'Keys' — a surg(ical) incision, Mattheson's (1681-1764) theory of tonality, synthetic understanding. [This brief notation of Yudina shows her association to the Russian word 'klyuchi' which has a number of meanings. A 'klyuch' may be a spanner; there is a surgical instrument called a 'torque wrench' which might figure in a surgical procedure, necessarily involving an incision. 'Klyuch' in its meaning of 'key' means a key signature in a piece of music, hence the association with Mattheson's theory. Mattheson wrote of the 'affective' qualities of tonalities, so the 'key signature' is a 'key' to the meaning of the piece – see the remarks about 'Bydlo'. In referring to 'synthetic understanding' Yudina is probably referring to 'Klyuchi tain', ('Keys to the Secrets', a Symbolist article by Bryusov. Trans.)]

Musorgsky. He had little time in which to prove his genius, but he did prove it. 'If the lightning were to wish to tell of Musorgsky, most likely it would tell like this!'

Kandinsky produced the 'Pictures' in Dessau (Bauhaus) 1928, in the Friedrich Theatre!
(O.R. B. G. L. [manuscript section of the Lenin State Library], fond. 527.

Translation © Simon Nicholls 2020

Maria Yudina

‘Six intermezzos by Johannes Brahms’¹

In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or hearing die.²

[277]

Listening to music is not entertainment. It is a response to the lofty labour of the composer and the extremely responsible labour of the artist-performer.

Listening to music is a cognitive process on a high level, a work of synthesis, including the emotional sphere in a constant observation of dynamic processes and phenomena.

Rejecting a few opinions of musical-theoretical thought about the intermezzo form as a sign or symbol of second-rate content, we, on the contrary, affirm [278: *repro of Shakespeare sonnet No. 3 in in Pasternak’s translation, written out by Yudina*] [279] the extreme importance of this genre as a special example of concentration in instrumental lyricism.

On the one hand, we consider it possible to associate the meanings of the intermezzo with the information in the vocal parts of songs and romances, but on the other, with the poetics of the sonnet in all its diversity.

Stern Dante did not scorn the sonnet;
Into it Petrarch poured out the fire of love;
The creator of Macbeth loved its play;
Camoens wrapped sorrowful thought in it.³

It is this almost universal formulation of Pushkin which will be our guiding star, our compass in the historical-philosophical journey which we propose to the listener through the heights, the distances and the oceans of the music of the intermezzo.

However, examining Brahms’ intermezzos intently, we reach the conclusion (or a hypothesis of this kind) that many of his most beautiful works in this genre are *elegies*, whereas some are hymns.

¹ Original editor’s note: The present work emerged from the concept of a sleeve-note for an LP of performances by Maria Yudina of six intermezzos by Brahms, op. 116, 117, 118, 119 (Λ 023884). The sleeve-note grew into a large work (more than forty pages of typescript with a supplementary section, a memoir of friendship with the Tomashevsky family, omitted in this publication.) The creative work of Brahms attracted Maria Yudina all through her life; one may judge of this by the large space his works occupied in her repertoire. The personality of Brahms became especially precious to Maria Yudina in the final part of her life: in Brahms she saw the true preserver and continuer of the traditions of the artist most dear to her of all — J. S. Bach, but the close connection with the romantic tendency of German art and the national roots of Brahms’ music — for example, the deep interest in village and urban folklore — are related in a direct way to Maria Yudina’s artistic credo. The article about the intermezzos contains many of Maria Yudina’s thoughts about Brahms which had been stated by her in public lectures and in the letters of her last years. The pianist intended to write an article in the form of a monograph on Brahms’ works — a project which was not realised. The article ‘Six intermezzos...’ was written in the course of the years 1968–1969. The date that the work was finished was shown in the autograph: April 4, 1969. First publication. The epigraph is taken from Shakespeare’s tragedy *Henry VIII*, act III scene 1.

² Quoted in Pasternak’s translation in the original. The reader may be expected to remember that the first verse evokes the powers of Orpheus. Trans.

³ Quotation from Pushkin’s poem ‘Soneta’ [The Sonnet]. Trans.

Let us turn first of all to some characteristics of the elegy, but, crucially, with an epigraph from Pushkin: ‘my sorrow is light’.⁴

From whichever epoch, from whichever art we take the model for the elegy – its sorrow will always be cleansed of the everyday, the workaday, from morose subjectivity, momentary despondency—transcending grievances, avoiding despair.

The elegy (as an essence, a sign, a symbol, a term) traces its descent from a Phrygian instrument of the flute type, upon which the accompaniment was played (it follows that another person was playing) to the singing of different kinds of verses: sorrowful and contemplative, amorous or political in character. (However, a single person could alternately sing and play, of course.) *Elegn* is the name for the reed which is the material of which the instrument in question is made. (And is it not from thence that Tyutchev’s words about humanity derive: ‘And does the thinking reed complain?’)⁵

And so we have before us the seventh to the fifth centuries B.C.E. The poets Kallinos, Tyrtaeus (the lame teacher of the Spartans), Solon, Xenophanes, Theognis of Megara.

Let us further remember Ovid and his ‘Tristitia’ and the splendid master of words Yuri Konstantinovich Shcheglov (cf. *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* [Studies in semiotics] collection III, Tartu):⁶ ‘The variety of objects to be described [280] presents the image of the world as a great organic whole, owing to the fact that the most different objects are all subject to the influence of a single ‘operator’ — time.’⁷

Astonishing antique epitaphs may be considered as elegies stamped in miniature, for example ‘Do not mourn, my sweet, over my departure: an age hurried past, here is what Fate granted me.’ Or: ‘Do not mourn, Mother, this had to happen, this was my Time.’

Let us remember a portrait from Fayum, which concentrates all perceptions of the world in the incredibly wide-opened eyes of a person who has carried his spirit and his revelations, enigmatic hitherto, into the sanctuary of sorrow made wise.

Let us turn to the great poet and composer of the VIII century C.E. John of Damascus, whose praise was sung by Taneyev.⁸

We give an excerpt from one of his canons as a splendid example of the lyrico-philosophical elegy. (‘Canon’ is the cyclic variation form of Greek, Latin and Old Slavonic religious – to be more exact, liturgical – poetry, which has passed in procession through the entire middle ages and retains its vitality even now.) ‘What sweetness of life abides that is not mingled with earthly sorrow? Where is the glory that stands upon the earth immutably? Where is earthly affection, wealth, gold, silver, where is the crowd of servants? Who is the tsar, who the warrior? All most charming dreams are taken by Death in a single moment’ etc.

⁴ A quotation from a poem by Pushkin, ‘Na kholmakh Gruzii lezhit nochnaya mгла’: The gloom of night lies on the hills of Georgia;/The Aragba rushes noisily before me./I feel both sad and easy; my sorrow is light/My sorrow is filled with you,/You, only you... Trans.

⁵ A line from the poem by Tyutchev ‘Pevuchest’ yest’ v morskikh volnakh’ [There is singing in the ocean waves] – a paraphrase of Blaise Pascal’s famous thought, ‘Man is a thinking reed.’ (original editor’s note).

⁶ Tartu is the second city in Estonia, perhaps the place of publication. Soviet references often omitted the publisher’s name. Trans.

⁷ Yuri Konstantinovich Shcheglov was born in Kharkov, Ukraine, in 1937. At the time Yudina was writing her article he was teaching at the Institute for World Literature named for A. M. Gorky. In 1979 he emigrated, first to Canada and then to the USA. He died in 2009 in Madison, USA. The work quoted by Yudina is not cited in Shcheglov’s ‘Select Works’ though its ‘List of main works of research by Shcheglov’ includes a collection with a similar title of a later date: *Recherches sur les systèmes signifiants*. Ed. J. Rey-Debove. The Hague: Mouton, 1973. In this collection Shcheglov published an essay on the structure of the crime novel. Yu. K. Shcheglov, *Izbrannyye Trudy* [Selected Works]. Moscow: 2013, Russian State University of the Humanities. Spisok osnovnykh nauchnykh trudov Yu. K. Shcheglova [List of main works of research by Shcheglov], p. 291. Accessed at <https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/405/docs/book.pdf> 5.5.2020. Trans.

⁸ In his cantata *Johann Damaskin*, op. 1, which sets part of Alexei Tolstoy’s poem describing the life of John of Damascus. Trans.

This canon, presented as a fundamental ethical scourge – a levelling of people’s fates – would find an echo in the creations of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in the engravings of the ‘Dances of Death’ (the chronicle by Schedel and the cycle by Holbein), but no! – those are not elegies; what we have before us is pessimism, a double assertion of human vices, and not the calming translucent peace which shines in the canon of the enlightened author of Damascus.

We can also contemplate a similar elegiac illumination in the creative work of Botticelli, in his almost disembodied images, independently of who is depicted: muses, the foam-born Venus, simply people, Italian citizens of all estates and occupations (signifying the composite narrative of a distant epoch), saints, angels, the Madonna herself. Everywhere an ineffable, gracious, mysterious, sweet, swan-like softness, a super-terrestrial gaze, almost imperceptibly touched by sorrow,[281] looking both beyond the spectator and beyond everyone and everything in the picture, turned upon the heart of man, clothing which swirls like clouds, as Lermontov says:

Amongst immeasurable fields
In the heavens walk, leaving no trace,
A flock of strands
Of impalpable clouds.

(*The Demon*)

Both Botticelli and Brahms (especially in his intermezzos) stand on the threshold of life and death, neither judging nor judged by anyone. And the astonishing colouring, the refined intensity of colour (in its own way ‘a stroke of unmodulated colour’) in Botticelli corresponds in a different way with the most brilliant, unexpected acoustic phenomenon in Brahms, with a chord progression, with the sudden appearance of a new theme or its striking transformation.

Brahms lived and worked in countries, towns and rural areas which were crowned with many of the most remarkable architectural monuments of the Gothic and the Baroque. It is to be expected that these impressions illuminated his interior world, his creative work.

As some sort of ‘central example’ and as a reminder to the listener (the spectator, the reader) a striking engraving by Albrecht Dürer may also be brought in, an unprecedented synthesis of art and reflection: his famous *Melencolia* (first decade of the sixteenth century).⁹

With the attributes of Eternity in the symbols of astronomical instruments and of geometrical figures, with an immutable hour-glass, she fixes her enigmatic gaze not on the sunset sky illuminated by a comet, like a backcloth flickering behind her, but on us and you.

We, the spectators, enter the picture (the engraving), magnetised by its benevolent, silent power. The monumental, gigantic Urania, Andromeda, Cassiopeia, Cassandra, Diotima, Sybil, a heroine of Homer and Plutarch and ... a phantom. Her eyes are motionless, transparent and sad. Neither she nor we shed tears. We are left on the threshold of a myth.

But, of course, we also divine the predecessors of Brahms in the music itself, in the magnificent music which is also partly North Germanic and Dutch. This art is strict and severe, it is even possible to say that it is ‘harshly outlined’, its emotionality taken to the fundamental, most glowing core, consciously and ethically organised. [282]

This is Sweelinck and his school, Heinrich Schütz, Dietrich Buxtehude with his amazing prophetic gift of improvisation. And, of course, also the centre point of all loftiest secrets and revelations of art – Johann Sebastian Bach.

If, though, we are obliged to give a precise example of an elegy by Johann Sebastian Bach, then we recommend special attention be paid to the Cantata No. 6 ‘Bleib’ bei uns’. [...] ¹⁰

⁹ 1514. A few small slips of this kind suggest that Yudina wrote out of her capacious memory. Trans.

¹⁰ Ellipsis in original. Trans.

And Beethoven – in part. But the scale of the problem of the elegiac principle in Beethoven exceeds the limits of the possibilities of this outline.

Let us now turn to a few genuinely delightful ‘architectural elegies’.

Pavlovsk Park¹¹ is one of the most beautiful landscape parks in the world. The praise of the Slavyanka River, now disappearing, now re-emerging at the foot of the hills with their perspectives of infinity, was sung by Zhukovsky in the elegy ‘The Slavyanka’.

When we have tapped into this most perfect complex of the realisation of a synthesis of nature with architecture of genius, the invention of Pietro Gonzago, we have ourselves been transformed.

Contemporary with Pavlovsk (a little more recent) is the famous Zelazova-Wola, the small estate of Chopin, with the enchanting little river of Utrata...

In the lyrical poetry of the first half of the nineteenth century the elegy is significant, weighty, not only ‘indispensable’ but, more than that, even central. We have followed its distant sources in various arts to a certain extent. Continuing this process of analysis for a short while, we find genuinely matchless treasures, diamonds of the Russian lyric.

Amongst many remarkable elegies of Russian poetry, the ‘Stanzas’ of Pushkin (‘Whether I wander down noisy streets’ [Brozhu li ya vdol’ ulits shumnikh]) should be regarded as the central creation...

The fulness of youthful boisterousness, of flaming, doomed strength in Lermontov’s ‘Mtsyri’ [The Novice] is also a symphonic elegy. It is sufficient if we listen only to the epigraph to the poem:

I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was
in mine hand, and lo, I must die. (1st book of Kings.)¹²

Tyutchev is genuinely inexhaustible:

O never-failing fountain-head
Of human thought and speculation!
What enigmatic dispensation
Keeps your unflagging waters fed? [283]
How eager is your heavenward thrust!
Yet your insistent beam, deflected
By some unseen hand, is directed
Back down, to splash into the dust.¹³

Or:

My soul, Elysium of silent shades,
Bright shades, resplendent once and ever after,
Detached from all the turmoil that pervades
This age – from its pursuits, its griefs, its laughter –¹⁴

And what about Fet?

¹¹ Surrounding the residence of Tsar Paul I near Petersburg, this landscape garden was laid out by the Scottish architect Charles Cameron in the 1780s. Trans.

¹² The English bible reference is I. Samuel 14.43. Translation from the King James authorised version. The Russian bible calls this book the First Book of Kings. Following Lermontov, Yudina gives the old Church Slavonic text (the Synodal translation first appeared in 1876). Trans.

¹³ ‘The Fountain’ [Fontan] (first half of 1830s). John Dewey, trans. selected and ed. *Fyodor Tyutchev. Selected Poems*. Gillingham: The Brimstone Press, 2014. p. 32. Trans.

¹⁴ First half of the 1830s. Dewey p. 33. Trans.

When my daydreams beyond the border of lost days
Find you again, beyond the mist of memory
I weep sweet tears, like the first of the Hebrews
At the border of the Promised Land.¹⁵

[...] But it is Gustav Mahler's *Song of the Earth* which is the last elegy in music of the nineteenth century, as of the beginning of the twentieth century. It is a mighty, monumental, philosophical, lyrical work, hitherto unsurpassed, ardent, tenderly reconciled.

Let us repeat with Zdenek Nejedly: 'We have lost him whom we should never have lost – a great musician and human being.'

But we have not lost him. He is eternally with us. And now, in the sixties of the twentieth century, we are experiencing a veritable rebirth of Mahler!

And amongst the poetry of the beginning of our century we have *The Duino Elegies*. We read them, guess at their riddles, addle our brains over them, try to establish Russian texts of this incredible cycle by Rainer Maria Rilke.¹⁶

* * * * *

Now, having travelled through many spiritual worlds of different epochs, without having exhausted our 'elegy' theme to any extent, we turn to the study of the immediate characteristics of the six intermezzos of Brahms which the listener has before him. Limited by space and time, it is not possible for us to demonstrate such a wide-ranging analysis of the genres of the idyll and the hymn, for these categories are not central to the intermezzo in Brahms. [284]

Now, before turning to the presentation on a record of six intermezzos of Brahms, we address the remarks of the remarkable musical historian and thinker Arnold Schering. As a basis Schering defines Brahms' style as 'contemporary baroque' (contemporary to the epoch of Brahms, the second half of the nineteenth century); he also reminds us that even Brahms' opponents called him 'a genius of form'.

'The problems of expressivity concerned him no less than the problems of form'; when all is said and done, these are the same (*what* to say and *how* to say it).

And so we perceive in Brahms' intermezzos sharply defined, balanced, concentrated, indisputable, irreproachably constructed images of songs, elegies, sonnets, hymns, idylls, in which the tension of the heart or the contemplation and reflection of the mind is inseparable from the structure of *intonatsiya*¹⁷ and rhythm, as the radiance of light is inseparable from a star or the perfume is from a flower.

¹⁵ Afanasii Fet (1820-1892). *Kogda moi mechty za gran'yu proshlykh dnei* (1844). Trans.

¹⁶ Yudina had herself translated Rilke's eighth Elegy. See p. 266, n. 5 of the present volume. Trans.

¹⁷ Here and elsewhere the Russian '*intonatsiya*' and its plural '*intonatsii*' have been retained without the English translation, 'intonation'. The Russian concept, as developed in the theories of Asafiev and Yavorsky, has a different and very specific meaning, to do with scale construction, melodic utterance, style, cultural background and other elements. See: Ildar Khannanov, 'Boris Asafiev's *Intonatsiya* in the context of Music Theory of the 21st Century.' Core.ac.uk/download/pdf/212495188.pdf, accessed 6 June 2020. John Bell Young, '*Intonatsiia*'. In Lincoln Ballard, Matthew Bengtson: *The Scriabin Companion: History, Performance and Lore*. New York and London: Roman and Littlefield, 2017, p. 9–10. Asafiev's theories are translated in Gordon D. McQuere, *Russian Theoretical Thought in Music*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Rochester Press, 1983/2009. p. 241–43, 241-246. Trans.

I. Intermezzo Op. 116 No 2 in A minor (1880).

We have in front of us a Serbian song, sorrowful, humble, resigned. One of the innumerable ‘Songs of maidens’, deserted, deluded or given in marriage to men they do not love. In so-called ternary form. But we have here an ‘intermezzo within an intermezzo’; in the centre of the song the rhythmic field contracts, 3/8 appears instead of 3/4, and in the comfortless circling of the semiquavers, in the zig-zags and sharp bends of the acutely crazed *intonatsii*, like the imploring hands of an aggrieved person or a pearl necklace of tears, compressing the heart to the point of suffocation, we seem to hear ‘why, why, why?!’ Moans about her incomprehensible, unmerited, lamentable destiny; then nine bars of illusory comfort in A major, the mirage of hope; it does not achieve reality, there is a six-bar chordal progression of aching chromatism — and once again the original comfortless fate.

The composer closes the circle by returning to the still fresh injury, and for this poor Gretchen no second half of *Faust* has been written, either in her earthly existence or by Brahms.

In its transparency of style and construction this is one of Brahms’ finest miniatures.

II. Intermezzo Op 117 No. 1 in E flat major (1882).

From Herder’s collection *Stimmen der Völker* [Voices of the peoples] – Scottish:

Balou, my boy, lie still and sleep,
It grieves me sair to see thee weep.¹⁸

[285] In the construction of the *intonatsiya* in the beginning and the end of this intermezzo the closed circle is striking: the symbol of equilibrium, peace and silence. Again we will say with Lermontov:

In the aërial sea
Without rudder and without sails
Quietly float in the mist
Choirs of harmonious stars...
(*The Demon*)

Thus the melody floats in the fulness of existence, in different voices, in imitations, in transparent chords, the lulling rocking of six quavers in the bar. We inevitably remember the ‘music of the spheres’ we have met with many times in Mozart. And in the present intermezzo, in the E flat minor central section of this ternary form we may remember the words of Pushkin, which he put into the mouth of Mozart:

Suddenly a sepulchral vision,
Sudden gloom or something of the kind...
(*Mozart and Salieri*)

However, this gloom luckily disperses entirely in the reprise and conclusion in the same E flat major. All the music rises to the upper part of the keyboard, hovers in high registers, is decorated with ornamental semiquavers, as it were the rejoicing of singing birds, chords ring festively, all is transformed and pacified. We have before us an idyll, a hymn, a song of glorification.

¹⁸ Yudina does not give Herder’s German, but a Russian translation. The Scots dialect version is remembered by the translator from the Augener edition; it is very close to the German and has the added advantage of rhyming. Trans.

III. The Intermezzo Op. 118 No. 2 in A major (1892) speaks of still greater equilibrium, happiness already transformed into blessedness. Here already we are no longer on the way, not at the threshold of world-wide harmony, but so to speak actually within it. Let us remember our outstanding lyricist Fet:

And the flames of infinity are so transparent,
And the entire abyss of ether is so close,
That I gaze direct from time into eternity
And recognize your flame, universal sun.¹⁹

But here too we have some sort of ‘synthesis’, here too a ternary form, here too ‘an intermezzo within an intermezzo’ – the episode in F sharp minor. In it the idea of Memory, of Eternal Memory is among us.²⁰ Let us recall the excerpt from Byron which Vyacheslav Ivanov translated in *Cor Ardens I*: [286]

They say that Hope is happiness;
But genuine Love must prize the past,
And Memory wakes the thoughts that bless:
They rose the first—they set the last;

And all that Memory loves the most
Was once our only Hope to be,
And all that Hope adored and lost
Hath melted into Memory. *etc.*

Here too we recall with you, as you listen to this intermezzo, precisely this episode in F sharp minor – the Illumined Past. Here too Brahms’ astonishing mastery of construction helps us to understand the meanings of the sacred private chambers of the unity of mind and heart.

However, mention should be made of the song by Brahms himself, ‘Feldeinsamkeit’ [‘Solitude in the Fields’] in A flat major to a text by Rellstab.²¹ The text is carried up into transparent and serene realms, related to the Adagio of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.

As regards the ‘intermezzo within an intermezzo’, we have an amazing example of this method in Russian elegiac literature: to be precise, in the work of genius by Balakirev to Lermontov’s text ‘The Dream’ (‘*Son*’) (‘In the heat of noon...’ [V poldnevnyi zhar], 1903). It is hard to say which is more beautiful — the words or the music; and here there is a ‘dream within a dream’!²²

¹⁹ From the poem ‘By life tormented, and by cunning hope’ [Izmuchen zhizhnyu, i kovarstvom nadezhdi] (1864) translated by A. Wachtel, I. Kutik and M. Denner. Translation at ru.verses.com accessed 12.5.20. Trans.

²⁰ ‘Eternal Memory’ is an Orthodox hymn sung at funerals. It will be remembered that it is sung at the beginning of *Doctor Zhivago*. This F sharp major interlude is indeed somewhat hymn-like. Trans.

²¹ The text is by Hermann Allmers. Yudina is probably writing from memory – see above. Trans.

²² Yudina does not give the text. Translation by A. Z. Foreman:

*By noon heat in a dale in Dagestan,
A bullet in my breast, my body lay;
Deep was the wound and steaming even yet,
My blood was dripping drop by drop away.*

*I lay alone upon the valley sands.
Clustered above my head, the cliffs were steep,
Their tawny summits scorched under the sun
That scorched me too. But I was dead asleep.*

However, in the intermezzo from Op. 116 (the ‘Serbian song’) and in the intermezzo Op. 117 No. 1 – partly because of the epigraph, the Scottish song from the collection of Herder – we have moored at another bank of the river of Brahms’s work, folk song.

This world is hardly less essential than the striking thoroughness of his craft in working out form or the mighty lines of the historical development of his music, its general high level of intelligence and moral purity, which is surprising when the difficult experiences of his childhood are taken into consideration. (As is well known, from early years Brahms earned his humble crust as an accompanist – to all comers! – in dockside taverns and dens in Hamburg, and many of the amusements and orgies that went on there were hardly suitable for a child’s eyes and ears...)

Yes, Brahms and folk song are inseparably connected; it can be said that they are one. Folk song flourished luxuriantly around him, and he eagerly absorbed and cherished it.

In Vienna itself, in the glittering, noisy, populous city, around it, in the suburbs, the outlying areas, the villages, the farmsteads, the huts, the cottages, the country estates, the entailed properties, at work in the fields, in the livestock yard, in the stables, the blacksmiths’ forges, on [287] outings, at weddings, christenings, on name-days, at festivals, in innumerable shops, in workshops, sewing shops, tailors’, clockmakers’, bootmakers’, ironmongers’, metal workshops, the workshops of potters, joiners, in factories – great and small – everyone sang, each in their own way or purposely together, when the desire arose to celebrate ‘the good old days’ – there was singing and dancing; in low dives, taverns, beer-houses, confectioners’ shops, simply ‘in the meadows’, but lightly and appropriately, in an enlightened way and correctly, with the whole community — in the churches. In gardens and parks, military wind bands thundered, playing all dances in the world and heterogeneous potpourris and variations for all tastes and demands.

What a variety of clothing and faces,
Tribes, dialects, conditions!²³

And songs were sung: long-drawn-out ones, mournful ones, chivalrous ones, historical, revolutionary, warlike, military, hunters’ songs, playful songs, dance songs, satirical, amorous, fantastical, comical, canzonets, ballads, round dances, riddles, invocations.

Czech songs, Hungarian songs, Rumanian, Serbian, Croatian, Moravian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Gypsy, German, Austrian, Jewish, Italian, varying according to areas even when near to each other, or generally known. The material was really vast. Besides that, Brahms loved to travel!

Thus this amazing man was saturated with life in all its aspects!

*And in my dream I saw a feast back home
With torches set for evening revelry,
And at that feast young women crowned with flowers
Busied themselves with merry talk of me.*

*But unconcerned by merry conversation,
One woman sat there in confounded thought,
One girl whose youthful spirit had been plunged
Deep in a grievous dream by God knows what.*

*Her dream was of a dale in Dagestan.
In that dale lay a corpse she had once met,
And in his breast a steaming wound went black
And blood ran in a cooling rivulet.* From poemsintranslation.blogspot.com, accessed 12.5.20. Trans.

²³ A quotation from Pushkin’s narrative poem ‘The Robber Brothers’. (original editor’s note.)

IV. Intermezzo in E flat minor Op.118 No. 6 (1892-1893)

Its theme is a fragment of the mediaeval sequence 'Dies irae' ('Day of Anger').

In the numerous rhythmic modifications, in the displacements of centres of gravity, in intermingled *intonatsii*, in the superposition of unrelated harmonies we hear an image of the soul's despair and human judgement on the fate of one's own wasted life. An unjust, iniquitous past tortures the memory and the heart. But with these enormous arcs of chords across the whole keyboard, in the inconceivable range of striving modulations, a tortured personality, rather, its fragments, its sawdust even, are being gathered into the gigantic, consoling wings of archangels. In the minor, in the sorrow of the minor, in a *pianissimo* before the very end of the 'universal drama', the fragments of a [288] last-moment repentance are gathered into the vast treasure-house of All-forgiveness.

V. Returning to the second intermezzo of Op. 117 in B flat minor, we liken it in characteristics and achievements to the intermezzo Op. 119 No. 2 in E minor.

In both intermezzos terrestrial gravity, so to speak, disappears. The Intermezzo in B flat minor finds its tonic only in the last bar but one of the work, in bar 84; it wanders in an enigmatic twilight of *intonatsii* which are sometimes bitter and sorrowful, sometimes momentarily surprising, spectrally illuminated. Anxiety can be heard throughout the composition.

We have, of course, many remarkable examples of images of anxiety in poetry; let us remember Evgeny in 'The Bronze Horseman' [by Pushkin]:

He was swallowed up by the tumult of inner anxiety.

And Lenau, Blok, and Pasternak, and here is 'The Wind', a small cycle of poems about Blok — by Pasternak himself, remembering especially the end:

Blok foresaw that storm and stress.
It etched, with its fiery features,
Fear and longing for that excess
On his life, and his verses.²⁴

However, where anxiety is, there also is its source: a search for truth in general, surprise, questioning, probing both one's lot and the solution to the cause of the world's sorrow ('Causa malis') and, in general the secrets of the universe, which cannot be grasped by the intellect.

On this lyrical–philosophical level, too, we compare these two intermezzos. But they are different too: the intermezzo Op. 117 No. 2, which does not find its tonic until the end, receives, so to speak, an illusory comfort in the middle, in D flat major, as we too, it may be, remember:

Ophelia perished and sang,
And sang as she plaited wreaths,
With flowers, wreaths and song
She descended to the bottom of the river.
(Fet, *Ofeliya gibla i pela*)

In the illusory fantasy of her swan-song, Ophelia found the comfort of a Different Reality.

²⁴ Translation (unattributed) at Poetry.net/poem/4557/the-wind(four-fragments-concerning-Blok), accessed 15.5.20. Trans.

And you and I, having been granted a stop by Brahms, are an image of peace in the midst of that current of existence which Anna Akhmatova named 'The Flight of Time'.²⁵ [289]

VI. Meanwhile, in the intermezzo in E minor Op. 119 No. 2, anxiety is even transformed into trembling in a design and construction of repeated delicate chords in semiquavers. However, in this intermezzo we hear a ray of hope in the episode in E major. It sounds for us, even by its type, like an echo of the character of German romantic music, its bright yearning for the infinite.²⁶ And inevitably we remember Pushkin, too:

It is time, it is time, my friend! The heart begs for peace —
Days fly after days, and every hour carries away
A little piece of existence...²⁷

And yet, comparatively speaking, we take less notice of this episode in E major, for all of the music fundamentally slides, pulses, trembles in a whisper, in a rustle, in the susurrations of night, in the dark, in the unseen — here we approach the subject of Tyutchev's 'Day and Night', of his 'Twilight':

Hour of inexpressible yearning!...
All is in me and I am in everything...

we also approach the 'Hymns to the Night' by Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg, the youth of genius who had such a mighty influence on all subsequent romantic poetry and also music), and also remember Vyacheslav Ivanov, his wonderful meditations on the 'rotation of the earth', albeit only fragments of his 'Daybreak' ('*Rassvet*'):

How magical footsteps sound,
And the clop of hooves in the gloom of night!
And how eternally hostile
To blind pre-dawn eyes!

Everything shakes and suddenly becomes heavy,
Hurrying to the pit and to weightiness,
The free night spirit
Enters into its daytime body!

Etc. ('Cor Ardens', I)

Except that he was singing the praises both of the Sun and of the Sun-Heart:

O Sun, godhead,²⁸ angel of God!
('Cor Ardens', I) [290]

²⁵ A poem of four lines by Akhmatova written in 1961 or 1962 ends: But who will defend us from the horror/That once was named the flight of time? Translation: Judith Hemschemeyer: *The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova* (ed. Roberta Reeder). Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd, 1989/1997. 'The flight of time' is also the title of the volume of Akhmatova's verse issued by *Sovetskii pisatel'* in 1965. Trans.

²⁶ Yudina seems to be making a reference to Pushkin's 'my sorrow [*pechal'*] is light'; but here she uses '*toska*' which can translate as 'melancholy', 'anguish' but also 'yearning'. Trans.

²⁷ *Pora, moi drug, pora!* Pushkin, 1834. Trans.

²⁸ Ivanov is given to antique and borrowed words, as here: he uses the epithet 'bozhatii'. 'Bozhatii slavyanskii' is 'Slavic God'. The ancient Slavs were considered to be sun-worshippers. Trans.

But, if both intermezzos, so to speak, did not find the Light and were not resurrected with it – both I and you, the listener and reader, have also stayed in confusion and misunderstanding; before us are night, anxiety, searches, secrets, things unattainable, things that must be done, the trembling of hopes and their ruin.

“Where are we?” “Who are we with?”

With both of these intermezzos we have come with Brahms to the feet of one of the greatest Creators of Art, to the *Tragedy of Tragedies*,²⁹ to Shakespeare, to *Hamlet*.³⁰

Granted that Brahms would not have thought of a commentary like this one; that is unimportant. These worlds are related. Great art Eternally³¹, unchangeably and unavoidably grants a view into the Future.

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²⁹ The names of Shakespeare and of *Hamlet* are mentioned first in their generalised significance and secondly as an individual and his principal work. Trans.

³⁰ Yudina’s note: Besides this, Shakespeare has well and truly entered German literature, especially after Goethe’s novel on a grand scale *Wilhelm Meister* and the magnificent translation of Shakespeare’s works by Ludwig Tieck, which is to say that Brahms could not read Shakespeare without thinking of Tieck. [Tieck had at least one collaborator – August Schlegel. Trans.]

³¹ Yudina’s capitalisation. Trans.