

PIANO SONATAS OF ELENA GNATOVSKAYA

by

ARSEN GULUA

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Alexandre Dossin, Chair of the Examining Committee

3/3/2014

Committee in Charge: Alexandre Dossin, Chair
 David Riley
 Henry Henniger

Accepted by:

Ann B. Tedards, Associate Dean and Director of Graduate Studies,
School of Music and Dance

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Arsen Gulua

PLACE OF BIRTH: Ukraine

DATE OF BIRTH: 09/07/1978

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

School of Music and Dance, University of Oregon
Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University, Bloomington
The Juilliard School

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Music, Piano Performance, 2009, Indiana University, Bloomington
Bachelor of Music, Piano Performance, 2005, The Juilliard School

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, University of Oregon, 2009-2013

Assistant Instructor, Indiana University, Bloomington, 2007-2009

GRANTS, AWARDS AND HONORS:

Promising Scholar Award, University of Oregon, 2009

Graduate Teaching Fellow, University of Oregon, 2009-2013

Assistant Instructor, Indiana University, Bloomington, 2007-2009

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Introduction

The main purpose of this document is to introduce Elena Gnatovskaya's music to the American audience, and provide information about her compositions for musicians, who might be interested in performing her works.

This document involves analytical work of Gnatovskaya's piano sonatas, in which various musical elements will be examined and compared.

This analysis would also provide a better opportunity to reveal specific stylistic trends, pointing to Gnatovskaya's musical individuality. Her music comes from a Ukrainian and Soviet background, which might create a special nationalistic interest in the US. Her music covers a very large spectrum of instruments, which could be of great interest for performers outside the piano world as well.

Finally, I believe it is significant to introduce Gnatovskaya as a composer to a broad musical audience, not limited to pianists, because the quality and quantity of her music will be a great contribution to the musical society.

Biography

Composer, pianist, and pedagogue Elena Gnatovskaya was born in 1949 in Orel, Russia. That same year her father, who was a combat officer, was assigned to be relocated to Kharkov, Ukraine, where the entire family eventually moved.

At the age of five, Gnatovskaya entered the Leontovych Music School №4. Gnatovskaya's musical gift was noticed right away. Anna Ilyukhina, who was a music theory teacher at that school, suggested that Elena start taking composition lessons with her. It was obvious right from the beginning that Elena possessed a special creativity and sensitivity to music. Her earliest compositions already contained individual tendencies and an unusual characteristic language. Elena's sister Natalia, remembers asking Elena to write something more accessible, but Elena would be only irritated by such requests. It was obvious that despite her early age, Elena had an original connection to the music, from which her own musical language started to develop during her life long career.

In 1974 Gnatovskaya graduated from the Kharkov Institute of Arts, majoring in piano performance as a pupil of G. L. Gelfgat. She later studied composition with D. L. Klebanov, graduating from the same institute in 1979. In 1986 she completed her Practical Training as an assistant at the Kiev State Conservatory under the guidance of Professor Y.J. Ishenko.

Elena Gnatovskaya regularly dedicated three hours during her mornings to composition. Only rarely this rule would be broken. Her family (husband and three children) always knew that it is quite undesirable to bother Elena during her composition

hours. Gnatovskaya believed that it is the best time of the day to create music and during those hours she would get her inspiration in a most natural way. Such a disciplined approach resulted not only in a constant refinement of Gnatovskaya's compositional technique, but also in a big collection of her compositions, written for various instruments and ensembles.

As life in Soviet Union, and later in independent Ukraine, was economically challenging, Gnatovskaya, similarly to her colleagues, had to find different ways to support herself and her family with music. There was a time when Gnatovskaya was commissioned to write in pop-style by one of Ukrainian organizations. It was a shocking gig, because the pay was many times higher for several days of work than what Gnatovskaya was paid per month. However, after some time spent on the project, Elena decided to turn it down. Later she explained that first of all she felt as though some type of an unknown force was pulling her into popular music, in which she found herself uncomfortable, and at the same time cheap. In addition to that, which was the main reason for her to drop this commission, was that during that period, Gnatovskaya was experiencing a loss of her individual musical language, as if the channel which helped her to compose, is gradually disappearing. That immediately served as a red light for her, and despite the tempting financial results, Gnatovskaya did not sacrifice her genuine bond with "classical" music, which for her was always a number one priority.

Gnatovskaya became a member of the Ukrainian Composers Union in 1984. In addition to solo works for piano, her compositions include chamber, vocal, and

symphonic genres. Her music for children includes over fifty piano pieces and has served an important role in her career as a composer, bringing her great artistic recognition.

Gnatovskaya was a permanent member of the jury at the International Children's Festival of Russian and Polish music, which was established under the direction of the Children's School of Music №13 in Kharkov together with the Kharkov Cultural State Administration and the Russian-Polish Association.

After a yearlong battle with cancer, Elena Gnatovskaya passed away in 2007 at the age of 58. Her works continue to be performed throughout Ukraine, Russia, Israel, and the USA.

Piano Sonata №1 (1972)

Piano sonata №1 stands far from Gnatovskaya's other piano sonatas. It clearly carries traces of an energetic and uncontrollable drive of youth, full of technical experiments, together with influences of other composers. Such tendency is quite explainable: two polarities are eventually brought down to a unique compositional language, which will be heard in Gnatovskaya's later works. Here, however, it is quite noticeable how a young composer is going through the process of self exploration: juxtaposing original experiments with traces from the past.

Movement I

The first movement (*Allegretto*) is rhythmically and texturally transparent. The music expresses uncertainty through its harmony and melodic linearity. These elements create an effect of juxtaposition between contrasting elements of simplicity and complexity, darkness and light.

It becomes immediately apparent that the opening measures of the movement present all the contrasting elements mentioned above. This representation is concealed within the nature of the opening measures on a micro level: heavily moving bass notes contrast with the right hand, which systematically moves with its characteristic pair of sixteenth-notes, adding the effect of a constant and stable rhythm. Harmonically, Gnatovskaya implies the minor mode (D), major mode (D sharp), and a dissonant element (A sharp), all of which appear above the low B in the bass.

The arch-like shape of the melodic line in the first measure foreshadows a larger arch which occurs within the first ten measures (mm. 1-11). When the actual buildup of the arch takes place in m. 6, a certain textural shift becomes evident: the repeated figure in the right hand now appears with a new articulation (staccato) and the left hand explores the dissonant harmony. Moving chromatically in contrary motion, the left hand ends with the interval of a ninth at the climax of the arch, one which is harmonically contrasting to the beginning and ending of the phrase.

Sonata no. 1

E. Gnatovskaya

Allargatto

Piano

4

7

10

Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. I, mm. 1-11

At the same time, the left hand in m. 6 foreshadows the right hand figuration which occurs in mm. 8 and 9. This splitting, however, is not literal, but motivic: broken

fifths and thirds make it possible for the listener to focus on either the upper or lower motivic voice within the melody. The material at the outset of the arch in m. 11 is contrasted with *f* and *sf* in the left hand. This dynamic gesture marks the beginning of the development of the first theme and links it with the previous measures.

The elements of the opening measures are interrelated and serve as building blocks for future musical events within the movement.

Before the transition into the second theme, the first theme undergoes a rapid orchestral expansion (mm. 11-26). The left hand assumes the role both of the bass and the main theme. This transformation is clearly seen in mm. 12-15.



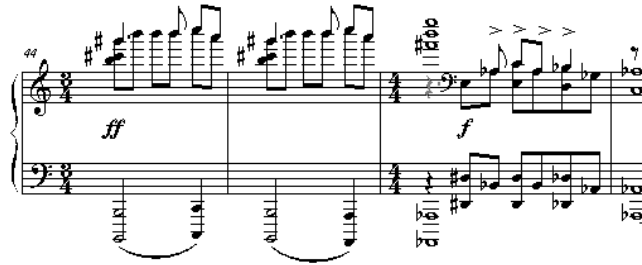
Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. I, mm. 12-15

The two hands gradually reach a textural agreement and engage in a canonic conversation (m. 16). This musical idea is developed further at the arrival of the transition in m. 29. At this point the ostinato figure in the left hand, which is a transformation of the first measure's motivic segment, serves as an accompaniment to the right hand melody, the nature of which is taken from the dissonant leap in the second measure.

The entire transitional section is based on previously heard material, and establishes a new tonal center. In m. 29, for example, there is a clear emphasis on G# in the bass.



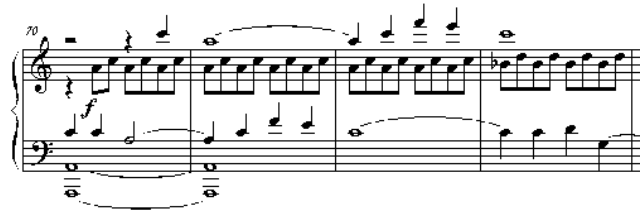
Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. I, m. 29



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. I, mm. 44-46

Between mm. 44 and 46 there is a shift from B to A-flat which eventually serves as an enharmonic dominant to C-sharp at the beginning of the second theme section (m. 50). Such large harmonic poles give an opportunity for Gnatovskaya to explore the chromatic nature of the microelements without losing a sense of tonality.

The second theme has an arch-like shape, similar to the first theme.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. I, mm. 70-73

The closing section (mm. 76-93) is written in an angular style. The combination of disintegrated elements heard previously create a sense of tension before the development.

The drama of the movement which unfolds during the development is anticipated by the closing material. Therefore, the linking and foreshadowing nature of this section is not only textural, but also emotional.

The development section (m. 94) opens with sixteenth-notes moving in contrary motion. This will become the predominant gesture for the entire section. For the first time, the rhythmic nature allows itself to unwind and express a sense of passionate abandon. Stubborn repetitions of fast sixteenth-notes figures (mm. 94, 96, 98, etc.) create the effect of an uncontrollable energy.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. I, mm. 94, 96, 98

The thematic material remains the same, however, it now acquires a completely different character with its constant rhythmic movement. A new idea, sarcastic in character, appears in mm. 103 and 114.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. I, mm. 103, 114

This theme is hidden in a technically awkward Alberti bass accompaniment which brings new light to the music.

The appearance of the second theme and the textual transparency of the music in mm. 129-138 suggest an early recapitulation. However, the material that follows after m. 139 is clearly developmental, thus creating structural ambiguity.

Gnatovskaya, in an understated manner, brings in the recapitulation in m. 154, but this time the second theme is completely absent.

Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. I, mm. 147-154

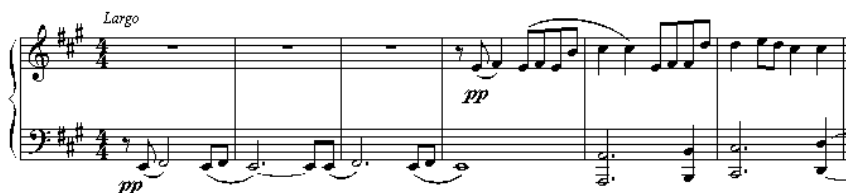
It is important to note that in contrast to the arches in the exposition, the development does not contain any such shapes. Its static texture creates a contrast to the exposition, and its nonstop motion and rhythmic drive make the development especially effective.

The recapitulation blends together material from the exposition and the development, ending the movement softly.

Movement II

The second movement (*Largo*) opens with a low pianissimo bass, a natural continuation of the first movement's soft ending. The motivic anticipation of the main melody creates a sense of uncertainty and this, coupled with an emotional linkage to the ending of the first movement, represents a stylistic trait often found in Gnatovskaya's work.

A clearly diatonic language within an A major scale becomes obvious when the melody finally enters.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. II, mm. 1-6

The expansive melody is very simple and transparent. While the left hand moves stepwise the right hand allows itself occasional leaps, covering up to three octaves in range. Although the melody covers a wide span, motivically it has frequent repetitions.

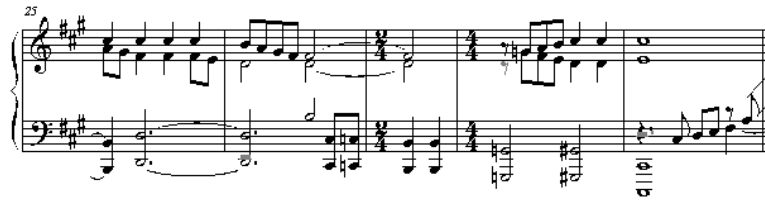
By the time the melody reaches the lower register in mm. 16-18 the left hand continues in a downward direction with its low 6th leap to D-sharp (m. 18).



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. II, mm. 16-18

This brings new light to the relationship between the two hands. For the first time the left hand explores the low register of the instrument.

After this gesture, the right hand moves towards the left hand, splitting into two voices and continuing its initial melodic material while the lower voice supports the left hand in contrary motion. When in m. 25 the bottom voice begins to move at the same pace as the melody, the left hand supports it again (mm. 26-27). The next two measures (mm. 28-29) represent the final transition into a unification of the musical material between the two hands.



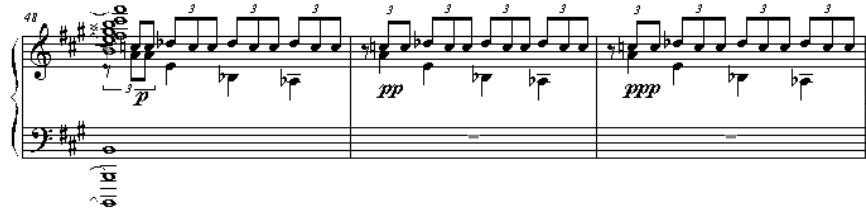
Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. II, mm. 25-29

At this point both hands present the same thematic material in a parallel way, albeit without harmonic agreement. The first part of the movement was based around A major, even though the passing chromatic dissonant sonorities weakened its clear sense of tonality. Now, however, a dark C-sharp minor key emerges, established in m. 29,

coloring the entire episode with gloom and despair. By the time C-sharp minor is reinstated (m. 34), the lower octaves acquire a stable pace, blending with the structure above.

This moment signifies a textural synthesis. With the widening of the direction of the hands into the split chord in m. 47, the listener loses any sense of tonality. A sharp, dissonant harmonic background once again effectively contrasts the same melodic material which the hands had initially shared in their mutual construction of the climax in mm. 34-47.

A sense of complete loss of hope follows the climax (m. 48) and the element of repetition from the initial melody gains a much more dramatic effect. Three measures of complete isolation (mm. 48-50) are now delivered by triplets, a rhythmic device previously unheard in the movement.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. II, mm. 48-50

The pleading nature of the right hand D-flats gives us the sense of a new beginning. Following the staccatos in the left hand we encounter the end of the transition and a complete emotional disorientation. While gradually fading away, the transition allows the main material to take over. By bringing back primary material, the composer creates a harmonic link to the beginning of the movement. Instead of using the dominant

key before the return of the main theme, Gnatovskaya shifts the tonality forward to the key of A major, thereby creating a harmonic bridge. It is not until later, in mm. 64-65, that the harmonic recapitulation takes place.

When tonality is finally reestablished, a new texture occurs, one which presents the main material in a canon. The hands reach a textural and harmonic agreement, as opposed to a textural and rhythmic agreement as seen before in m. 29. A lack of rhythmic synchronization provides a sense of flow, flexibility, and emotional stability, all of which were missing in the first A section. Melodic repetitions, here presented in a new canonic arrangement, do not have moments of hesitation as in the beginning of the movement. Rather, they move in emotional agreement with the polyphonic texture. Shortly after the melody reaches the height of its contour, the canonic texture gradually fades away, returning to the synchronized rhythm (starting in m. 72). The harmony also brings back the minor mode (F-sharp), reminiscent of a previous struggle. Texturally, the movement ends the same way it started.

It is possible to trace compositional devices consistently used by Gnatovskaya: contrasting juxtaposition of elements which are eventually integrated, the use of polyphonic writing, and harmonic and textural links between sections. The entire movement covers a dynamic range of *p* and *pppp*. Gradual transformation of the material happens on every level: harmonic, melodic, rhythmic, and textural.

This sonata contains musical influences from composers such as Prokofiev and Shostakovich, both of whom greatly influenced young composers in the Soviet Union. The first movement, for example, uses polyphony in a transparent texture, which is typical of Prokofiev. The beginning of the development with its surprising sixteenth-

notes, following an exposition which previously faded away, clearly reminds one of Prokofiev's Piano Sonata №8 (first movement). In the second movement, the use of a canon coupled with long organ-like basses against a repeated motivic element in the melody remind one of Shostakovich's fugue in D minor from his collection of Preludes and Fugues Op. 87. The harmonic language of the second movement is also similar to Shostakovich. Such similarity can be noticed in how Gnatovskaya carefully moves away from stable diatonic harmonic poles. This modulatory device is found quite frequently in music of Shostakovich.

Movement III

The third movement (*Allegro molto*) concentrates mostly on rhythmic effects. From the very beginning there are motivic connections to the previous movements. The descending motive in the left hand (mm. 1-10) is an obvious transformation of the beginning and end of the second movement. In the previous movement the wandering seconds were hesitant, later developing into a lyrical melody. Here they have acquired a subtle anxiety and stubbornness.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. III, m. 2.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. I, m. 1

Interrelations of elements abound in Gnatovskaya's music: the third movement is motivically related to the first movement and directionally to the second; the left hand is motivically related to the second movement, but tonally it relates to the first. Another interesting motivic connection to the previous movements is related to the broken descending thirds appearing with a repeated first note. This characteristic element will be later used in the movement and serves as a linking element both to previous movements and the music to come.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. III, mm. 6-10

Before a slight harmonic shift which occurs in a section starting in m. 28, a very special moment unfolds in m. 24:



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. III, mm. 24-25

A syncopated rhythm coupled with $V7^{b10}$ chords serves to surprise the listener with an unexpected hint of jazz.

After a long rhythmic and harmonic ostinato, a moment of emotional relief occurs when the second theme appears in m. 44. The descending third motive is presented in imitation and augmentation, and this brings back the canonic writing heard in previous movements. Being relatively static, this entire section (mm. 44-74) compensates for the harmonic and motivic clarity presented earlier.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. III, mm. 44-47

The development (m. 71) starts with another surprising effect, one which is created by the transformation of the second theme. Rhythmic stability gives life to cascading and continuous sixteenth-notes, summarizing the rhythmic devices presented thus far and adding an extra sense of propulsion.

Polyphonic writing and the use of augmentations and diminutions of the descending thirds motive provide not only rhythmic but harmonic stability. Nonetheless, harmonic clarity gradually vanishes and the chromaticisms begin to dominate.

The element of repetition, clearly taken from the previous movements, becomes reinforced at m. 93.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №1, mvt. III, mm. 93-96

The following measures return to the original texture. However, the expected material does not establish itself, but allows for the main theme to take over (m. 106). A rhythmically modified recapitulation creates a much more effective drive. It does not last long and rather unexpectedly ends with massive repeated chords.

There are differences in how Gnatovskaya treats the textural relationships between all movements. In the first and second movements the left hand imitates the right and becomes texturally united with it towards the end. In the third movement the left hand simply reinstates its original idea. By the end of the third movement there is an emotional integration between the two hands and this carries forth the same energetic message.

Piano Sonata №.2 (1992)

Twenty years after the first sonata, Gnatovskaya composed her second piano sonata. Many changes took place in the composer's life over those years, ones which inevitably had an effect on her music. In 1991 Ukraine separated from the Soviet Union and had begun the difficult process of establishing a new government. This quickly led to an economic collapse which was the result of the old socialistic system being abandoned. This inevitably affected the lives of all Ukrainians and led to rampant corruption.

The Kharkov Conservatory was affected greatly during that dark period. Parts of the music building were rented to businesses which sold coats, shoes, and other common goods. Financially speaking, those who ran the conservatory became quite wealthy due to rental income which they brazenly and dishonestly kept for themselves. The musicians who worked at the Conservatory, including Gnatovskaya, did not receive their paychecks on a regular basis. Salaries were withheld for months at a time, forcing many faculty members to find other ways of supplementing their income.

Gnatovskaya had always been very close to her older sister Natalia. Both their parents passed away when the girls were in their early twenties and Natalia had taken up the role of a mother, always taking care of her younger sister. In 1991, Natalia had emigrated from Ukraine to Israel with her family. This separation was very hard for both sisters. However, thanks to this change, Natalia was able to support Elena financially during the economic crisis in Ukraine. Nevertheless, separation from her beloved sister was very difficult for Elena Gnatovskaya and this emotional pain can be felt in her music.

Movement I

From the beginning of the first movement, one can detect a dramatic change in the compositional style of Gnatovskaya; the harmonic and rhythmical language has become much more complex compared to the first sonata, composed twenty years earlier.

Another noticeable change is how Gnatovskaya utilizes articulation markings. While in the first sonata dynamic and articulation markings are relatively scarce, in the second sonata Gnatovskaya becomes quite specific.

The main theme opens with a gesture which portrays a multitude of emotions. It is both pleading and questioning, disoriented and hopeless. It contains elements of the 12-tone system, adding to the emotional ambiguity. At the beginning, the dialogue is between music and silence. Constant rests serve as a link between the different layers. Rests serve to portray a sense of doubt, one which is expressed motivically, but at the same time these rests provide a logical anticipation of the material that eventually will bring emotional clarity.

In addition, the rests are a link to a juxtaposition of durations: “sound v. silence” is eventually transformed into “short v. long”. This can be seen in mm. 9-10, when a long chord, reinforced by a trill, is followed by a sudden resolution.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №2, mvt. I, mm. 9-10

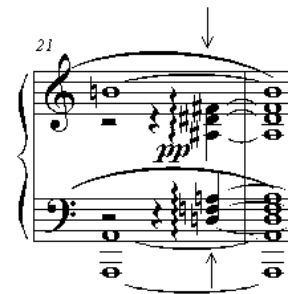
The relationship between short and long sounds is quintessential in this music and will constantly appear throughout the piece on different levels.

After exploring a wide range of the keyboard (mm. 7, 22), Gnatovskaya lets the left hand participate equally in the subject and writes a few measures in imitative style (mm. 25-30). This type of approach is already characteristic in her style; in the first sonata, Gnatovskaya used a canonic technique at similar structural moments.

Gradually the texture turns into a unison (m. 35) which leads into the transitional section (*Allegro*, m. 37). This motion, which is set by the motivically transformed quarter notes, presents alternating short and long sounds: a long melody with constant repetitions of a single F is accompanied by major triads marked *staccato*. The combination of those two ideas serves as an effective preparation of the second theme (m. 62), which will bring emotional unification between hands. Meanwhile, the transition consolidates textural transformation into two distinctive parts: long chords (mm. 52-55) and a fusion of arpeggios and trills from previous bars (mm. 9 and 21).



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №2, mvt. I, mm. 52-55



Elena Gnatovskaya,
Piano Sonata №2, mvt. I, m. 21

An abrupt ending of the transition once again reminds one of contrasting elements, a conceptually important idea for Gnatovskaya.

The second theme (m. 62) represents a new textural approach. Flowing triplets in both hands (*dolce*) bring in textural unity. This entire section is melancholic and almost improvisatory, as opposed to previous material.

As was seen in the main theme, pulse is created by rests between phrases. The music now seems to strive for something unreachable; fusion, which happened to contrasting (“short v. long”) elements during the transition, happens now on a much larger scale with a combination of both themes. The meditative mood creates an entirely different atmosphere, representing the nature of the second theme. It holds the listener mentally attached to the previous material (first theme), for the arch shaped gestures and rests, being so distinctive from what came before, inevitably affect the comprehension of a new section represented by the second theme.

It would be tempting to call this movement monothematic due to the lack of an independent nature in the second theme. However, the contrasting textural effects make the presence of a second theme quite clear. After a failed attempt to reach the unreachable (mm. 79-80), the music enters into a quasi-romantic episode. The repeated F sharp in the bass provides harmonic support for a right hand that seems to be breaking apart both rhythmically and tonally. Leading into a contrasting emotional realm, the second theme ends the exposition with a familiar abrupt texture (mm. 86-89).

The development (m. 90) continues the previous textural transformation. Rhythmic and motivic independence of the hands express the same idea, all the while juxtaposing different melodic lines.

From m. 103 a gradual build towards the climax begins. After a passionate opening, the hands once again reach mutual agreement and continue building emotional intensity with a synchronized texture (mm. 119-121).

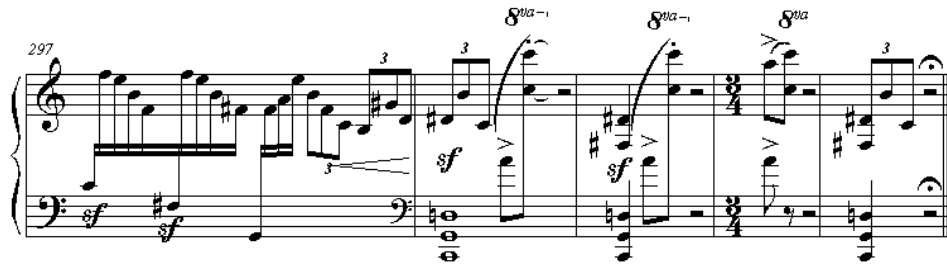
By the time the music reaches m. 129, the mood changes and previous alterations of “short v. long” are developed into a set of long chords, periodically disturbed by fast passages in the high register.

A great deal of the development is dedicated to the transitional material from the exposition. This material is treated harmonically, and, unlike other elements, stays unchanged texturally. However, it gives a greater sense of harmonic stability and even an occasional sense of harmonic sequence, one which can be felt in m. 178. The transparent nature of this section uses imitative technique set one note apart (mm. 173, 175, 179, 181). After being so close together, the hands finally align in unison, expressing the same musical ideas. That leads to a developed version of the second theme where the triple meter from the exposition is turned into the accompanying part, while the right hand plays the transformed first theme (m. 202).

A long pedal point on B (m. 211) ends the development with a stronger tonal sense. The main theme is played in unison and augmentation (mm. 222-224), emotionally anticipating the recapitulation (m. 227).

Recapitulation starts with a combination of the first and second themes exploring different harmonic sonorities and gradually turning into an improvisatory arpeggiated passage (m. 262). This leads to a chordal section which serves to establish a sense of rhythmic control.

The final gesture, which begins in m. 282, once again attempts to reach the unreachable. Combined together, all three essential textural elements (melodic line, long chords, fast passages) seem to give up their effort and sarcastically end the movement with an abrupt triplet.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №2, mvt. I, mm. 297-301

Movement II

The second movement (*Allegro scherzoso*) continues the previously introduced ideas, now with harmonic pedal points, thus providing a stronger sense of tonality.

A series of staccato passages (beginning in the left hand from m. 31) create ambiguity. Arpeggios recall previous material, combining both hands with a similar gesture (mm. 40-44). After an abrupt ending in m. 44 the development of the A material begins when the staccato texture gradually transforms from the main theme into an accompanying element of the inner melody, all of this emerging from a dense texture (mm. 53, 57). As textural transformation progresses (mm. 53-82), it becomes clear that the conflict from the previous movement has returned and the “short v. long” elements are once again juxtaposed.

From the repetition of the texture a remarkable moment arrives (m. 103) where the transformed motivic quotation of the main theme from the first movement is reinstated.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №2, mvt. II, mm. 103-104

This is the first time that a clear example of a cyclic relationship between the movements is heard.

The repeat of the A material returns after a quote of the first movement in m. 109. The arpeggiated staccato figures now dominate even though the long E's are brought back in the last measures of the movement. Considering how much significance was given to the arpeggiated figures towards the end of the movement, it would be illogical to assume that the appearance of the contrasting long element would serve just as a reminder. Taking into account the fact that the last sound of the movement is a long E, one could interpret this gesture as a continuation of the struggle which began at the outset of the first movement.

The harmonic language of the second movement is more tonal than that of the first movement. There are many moments which utilize pedal points, repetitions of melodic material, and textural sequences, all of which produce the effect of a clear tonal

center. Mainly, though, the harmonic clarity is produced by the shorter motivic devices (introduced in m. 37 of the first movement).

Movement III

The third movement (*Andante cantabile*) is an emotional step back into a contemplative mode and here a peaceful atmosphere surrounds the exploration of harmonic colors and motivic lines. The quasi-canonic beginning is written with a great deal of equality between the hands, a vivid contrast from previous movements where this was achieved after a process of gradual textural transformation.

Gnatovskaya writes over the barlines, making the motivic lines rhythmically seamless. Not everything is calm, for already in mm. 3 and 4 conflicting forces appear. Low thirds (perhaps inspired by the second movement of Prokofiev's fourth sonata), disturb the fluidity of the lyrical phrases.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №2, mvt. III, mm. 3-4

When a similar effect occurs in m. 10 it becomes apparent that these thirds serve a multitude of roles. The contrasting effect created by the thirds is due to a combination of registral differences, new harmonies, and the temporary discontinuation of motivic flow.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №2, mvt. III, m. 10

By the time the music reaches m. 11, thirds become an integral part of the left hand pattern and create a better sense of harmonic stability. The transformation of previous structural devices affects the interaction of conflicting elements; the harmonic and melodic ones being juxtaposed together in a style reminiscent of the “short v. long” conflict from previous movements.

The progress of this entire section (mm. 11-43) represents a gradual integration between harmonic and melodic writing. A short climax (m. 35-37) is texturally expanded and represents complete equality of melody and harmony.

Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №2, mvt. III, mm. 40-51

However, in m. 44 the music is interrupted by the arpeggiated element used in previous movements.

With the return of the A section (m. 55) the hands switch roles, allowing the same material to acquire a new effect, this time without the low thirds. The music now flows continuously and displays complete unity between the hands.

For a short time there is an indication of a consonant harmony when the left hand plays an E-flat 5th in the bass (m. 69).



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №2, mvt. III, mm. 67-70

The last five measures condense the entire content of the movement into an emotionally consonant ending, with the staccato thirds moving upwards through the motivic transition of the inner voice (m. 89-90). An F major chord gives a sense of complete musical agreement.

As shown in this movement, conflicting elements do not necessarily need to be striking and aggressive. Subtle effects are achieved in an emotional manner, rather than one that is objective or acoustical.

Movement IV

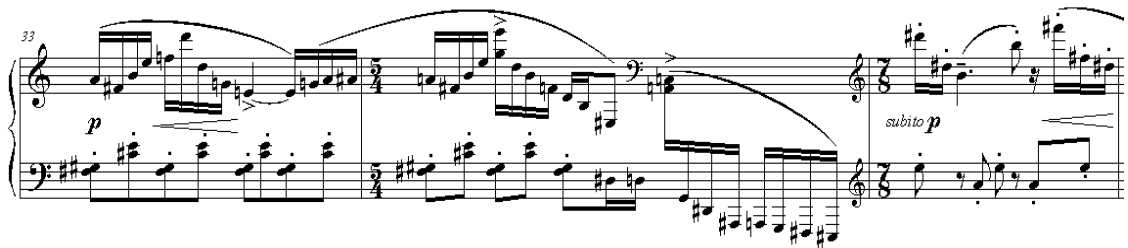
The last movement is essentially a single energetic gesture focused on relieving the anxiety caused by the previous drama. Confidence, persistence, and energetic directness are supported by the clear nature of the rhythm. For the first time in the entire sonata there is a clear sense of rhythm.

The opening measures of the movement contain many of the elements used previously: arches, repetitions, rests. Such an efficient use of materials makes one believe that the struggles are over and finally each voice will have a chance to be heard.

The second theme (m. 18) brings a sense of clarity and light. The diatonic mode, which leans towards A-major, creates a playful character. Taking into consideration that the surrounding articulation markings are predominantly staccato, it is possible to treat this as a final emotional transformation of the short element, a transformation initiated by the third movement.

The contrasting dynamic arches reinterpret the idea of interrupted phrases, while humorous *sf*'s disturb the established rhythmic evenness (mm. 20-21).

The alternation of parts between the hands eventually blends the texture of the first and second themes (mm. 33-34). A sequential shift (m. 35) leads to seemingly unstoppable running passagework and brings the hands into unison once again (mm. 48-49).

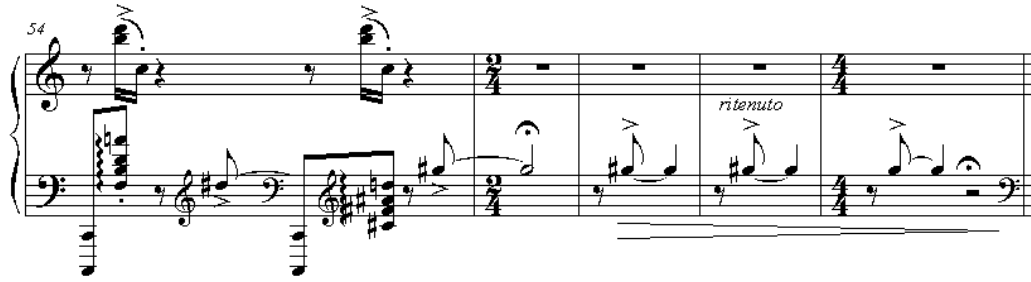


Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №2, mvt. IV, mm. 33-35

Gnatovskaya explores the juxtaposition of varied elements on every possible level and this interaction can be felt between large elements such as the first and second themes.

The closing material is based on the first theme (m. 50), here rhythmically expanded and clarified. The transformed sighing gestures in the right hand (mm. 53-54)

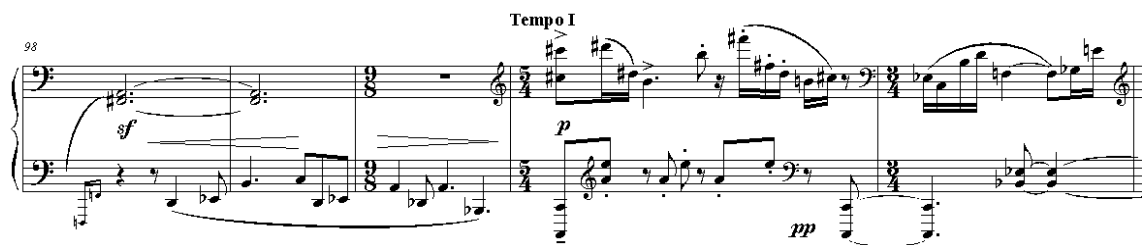
emotionally support the left hand as it builds towards the high repeated G sharps, ending the exposition in an emotionally uncertain way.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №2, mvt. IV, mm. 54-58

The beginning of the development in m. 59 brings back material from the first movement: a melodic line motivically related to the first theme and the triple meter from the second theme. The repeated G sharps (mm. 64-67) seem to be the only link to the previous content of this movement.

A deceptive climax seems to carry the role of being a structural formality, rather than an emotion statement (m. 74). A low bass motive leads into the recapitulation, which starts with the second theme (m. 101).



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №2, mvt. IV, mm. 98-102

As the material of the first theme gradually begins to emerge, the music becomes agitated. Beginning from m. 115, rhythmic and textural clarity is restored as both hands

prepare for the culmination. Syncopated *sf*'s (mm. 127 and 128) disturb the rhythmic stability, this time with the help of the left hand (mm. 129, 133, 136). By the time the music reaches its final culmination the second theme reappears again, this time with heavy A major chords in the bass (m. 142). This type of tonal support provides the second theme with a much more powerful and triumphant character, as opposed to its previous playful nature. The first theme reestablishes its authority in m. 154 and closes the movement in a very determined and somewhat rude style. A heavy pedal point on C with accompanying accented chords creates an atmosphere of inevitability and decisiveness.

Observing the ending of Gnatovskaya's second piano sonata, one begins to realize that the entire content of this sonata consists of constant conflict and juxtaposition. Considering the intense political and personal environment in which this sonata was composed, it would be much less effective if these elements were eventually brought to a desired conformity. Such a turbulent ending greatly corresponds to the essential nature of this music. Disturbing moments in music are often more powerful and memorable than those of peace and harmony.

Considering that this sonata was written during very difficult times for the Ukrainian people, it is only natural that dark elements dominate lighter ones. The listener is left with the opportunity to ponder such negativity after the work is over in a way that prepares them for the struggles of Ukraine as it was entering an extended period of crisis. By contrast, the brief moments of serenity and beauty become even more expressive and heartfelt.

Piano Sonata №3 (2000)

Movement I

Gnatovskaya's Piano Sonata №3 was written in a neoclassical style and is an excellent representation of the composer's lyrical side.

The first movement is in B-flat major and this, combined with the lilting triple meter, imbues the music with tender flexibility and kindness. There is some rhythmic ambiguity in the beginning of this movement as downbeats are not completely clear.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №3, mvt. I, mm. 1-6

After exploring different ranges of the keyboard and sharing the same ideas and gestures (mm. 1-17), both hands gradually begin playing in a staccato fashion (mm. 18-22). The music eventually transforms into a new contrasting character (mm. 23-24), one which will eventually be paired with a singing lyricism. The repetition of the theme in m. 28 displays more fluency and almost unnoticeably turns into a transition built out of the staccatos, bringing them into a dark E minor triad (m. 52) which marks the beginning of the second theme.

The character of the second theme is not clear. Its first measures are reminiscent of a recitative and the lonely motive presented by the broken thirds in the right hand (mm. 62-67) is a result of previous material from mm. 14-24.

By the time the second theme is fully established in m. 68, Gnatovskaya continues to manipulate interrelated combinations of building blocks; thirds, which initially belonged to the first theme and later acquired a humorous character during the transition, have now transformed themselves into the melancholic lyricism of the second theme. The interrelationship of those segments, with the thirds serving as a link, does not diminish the uniqueness of each separate element; rather, it enhances this correlation with a sense of unity and organic integration.

In m. 90, a gradual textural transformation begins and the hands acquire independent importance as they build their ascent into the climactic C major section (m. 111). This marks the beginning of the closing material. Broad and joyful, this section expresses itself with swift running passagework which gradually moves down the keyboard and arrives at the point where the second theme began.

Appropriately wondering in terms of tonal center, the development (m. 133) dedicates all of its attention to the main material of the first theme and becomes more chromatic. The music stays in the low register, displaying the main theme in a completely different light. Gradually inserting running sixteenth-notes, Gnatovskaya gives the music a sense of flow, anticipating the next section which concentrates on the second theme (m. 187).

The recapitulation (m. 255) contains a slightly modified structure of the material. Here the transition and the closing section are combined (mm. 279-289). During the

recapitulation, the broken thirds in the second theme are much less clear than in the exposition, and are used as an accompaniment. The second theme acquires a much more independent nature in the recapitulation, since only its unique element, the long melodic lines, is clearly heard. Gradually, the texture of the first theme takes over, and the movement ends with the material from the first theme.

Movement II

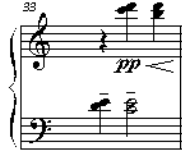
The beginning of the second movement (*Larghetto*) shows a motivic/intervallic connection to the previous movement: a 2nd leading into 3rd, similar to the structure of the main theme in the first movement.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №3, mvt. II, m. 1

A lonely melody emerges in the bass, played by the right hand. The calm and still atmosphere creates a sense of stability and continuity by means of a constantly rocking rhythm.

For a moment, the sudden change of register in m. 33 equalizes the textural roles of the two hands.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №3, mvt. II, m. 33

Resuming their initial textural responsibilities (m. 38), the right hand gradually begins expanding its range (mm. 48-55). Starting in m. 56, the previous textural unity (mm. 33-37) is now expressed in long phrases.

The pedal point on C in m. 86 presents previously heard material. While sharing the melody, both hands carefully accelerate the rhythmic flow and eventually conclude the movement with an improvisatory fast passage (m. 112), followed by a quote of the main material. This rhythmic outburst is caused by a natural desire for movement after such a long time of introverted contemplation. It does not change the basic mood of the movement, but serves as a bridge to the next.

Movement III

The opening of the third movement (*Andantino, ala gavotta*) sets forth a playful mood in contrast to the previous two movements.

Constant agogic delays (mm. 3, 4, 8) create a sense of charming coquetry, giving this movement an atmosphere of tenderness and innocent naivety.

Andantino, alla gavotta E. Gnatovskaya

Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №3, mvt. III, mm. 1-8

The main theme contains many elements that contribute to its lighthearted mood. Those elements are: thematic angularity, staccatos, rapid change of direction, and grace notes (mm. 2, 4) which greatly adds to the playful atmosphere.

After the repeat of the playful element (mm. 3-4), the previously humble material acquires a more self-conscious nature. Its extended length (mm. 4-8), longer legato lines, equally important material between the hands, and its clear emotional control, create the unique features of this section.

The next section, marked *Volando*, presents a new contrasting element in m. 14, providing this movement with an unexpected color. Fluttering thirty-second-notes create a light trembling feeling that combines the playfulness and emotional insecurity of previous elements into a single idea.

From this moment, an essential part of the movement will be dedicated to the juxtaposition of two contrasting elements from the previous structures: fluttering passages and lyrical sighing motives. Providing a long dialogue (mm. 12-34) between these two characters, Gnatovskaya allows the listener to witness how the contrasting materials interact together without any tension. They participate in telling the same story even though each part carries a different mood.

Starting from m. 34, the music begins to combine the musical material into a single unified thought.

The image displays a musical score for the third movement of Elena Gnatovskaya's Piano Sonata No. 3, measures 34 through 43. The score is written for piano and consists of six systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The music features a complex interplay of rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs and longer melodic phrases. Measure 34 shows a transition with a new melodic line in the right hand. Measures 35-36 continue this development with more intricate textures. Measures 37-38 show a more lyrical passage in the right hand. Measures 39-40 feature a return to more active, rhythmic patterns. Measures 41-42 show a continuation of the lyrical material. The final measure, 43, concludes with a final gesture that summarizes the movement's intent, marked with a piano (*pp*) dynamic.

Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №3, mvt. III, mm. 34-43

The final gesture, performed by both hands (mm. 43-45), summarizes the movement's general intention: a constant attempt to freely fly away from the lyrical

restraints holding it back. The last occurrence of the main theme in m. 46 resumes a rhythmically measured approach, but now with a much greater playfulness. Surrendering to the playful joy of the main theme, all the essential building blocks come together in an emotional unison, the establishing of which was, perhaps, the main task of this charming movement.

The image displays a musical score for the third movement of Elena Gnatovskaya's Piano Sonata No. 3, measures 43 through 52. The score is written for piano and consists of six systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef).
- Measure 43: Treble clef has a half note chord (F#4, C#5). Bass clef has a half note chord (F#2, C#3) followed by a sixteenth-note triplet (D#3, E#3, F#3).
- Measure 44: Treble clef has a sixteenth-note triplet (F#4, G#4, A#4). Bass clef has a sixteenth-note triplet (D#3, E#3, F#3).
- Measure 45: Treble clef has a sixteenth-note triplet (F#4, G#4, A#4). Bass clef has a sixteenth-note triplet (D#3, E#3, F#3).
- Measure 46: Treble clef has a half note chord (F#4, C#5). Bass clef has a half note chord (F#2, C#3).
- Measure 47: Treble clef has a half note chord (F#4, C#5). Bass clef has a half note chord (F#2, C#3).
- Measure 48: Treble clef has a half note chord (F#4, C#5). Bass clef has a half note chord (F#2, C#3).
- Measure 49: Treble clef has a half note chord (F#4, C#5). Bass clef has a half note chord (F#2, C#3).
- Measure 50: Treble clef has a half note chord (F#4, C#5). Bass clef has a half note chord (F#2, C#3).
- Measure 51: Treble clef has a half note chord (F#4, C#5). Bass clef has a half note chord (F#2, C#3).
- Measure 52: Treble clef has a half note chord (F#4, C#5). Bass clef has a half note chord (F#2, C#3).
Dynamics include *pp* at measure 43, *cresc.* at measure 45, and *pp* at measure 46. The tempo marking *Poco meno mosso* appears at measure 46.

Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №3, mvt. III, mm. 43-52

Movement IV

The last movement (*Allegro, con fuoco*) begins with a short introduction (mm. 1-11). Being structurally and harmonically disjunct and at the same time carrying hints of previous musical material, it serves as an extended dominant (B7) to the initial subject, which begins in m. 12.

A broad singing melody in the right hand, with an occasional participation of the left (mm. 14-15), is accompanied by repeated low E's, creating a sense of harmonic stability and simultaneously allowing the narrative to unfold in a symphonic style.

The short phrases constantly switch registers, articulation, and dynamics. This results in the creation of a kaleidoscopic effect, one in which all of the elements shine with different musical colors (mm. 12-38).

The imitative nature of the second theme (m. 39) is motivically reminiscent of birdcalls which can be figuratively connected to the fluttering moments of the third movement. Its innocent character is presented in different harmonies: A major, D major (m. 44), followed by F major (m. 52) and finally C major (mm. 59-60).

The closing section (m. 72), seamlessly prepared by the second theme's gradual transformation of texture (mm. 62-71), solidifies the chordal nature of the movement in a triumphant E-flat major sonority. The return of material from the first theme closes the exposition and once again gives it the sweep and drama of a symphonic work.

The beginning of the development (m. 78) is completely unprepared. The lonely mood of the main theme creates a meditative atmosphere that provides contrast to the previously extroverted character. This new textural arrangement of the main theme

creates a distant feeling, bringing a sense of sadness and, at the same time, a curious anticipation of what is to follow.

M. 85 (*Con moto*) brings back the main theme from the first movement.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №3, mvt. IV, m. 85

This theme suddenly brings light and hope in a new textural and harmonic context. Through a double canon, Gnatovskaya combines the main themes from the outer movements of the sonata (mm. 90-94).



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №3, mvt. IV, mm. 90-94

Melodies from the past and present interact with one another and lead into a cyclic surprise once again: a musical quote from the second movement. Gnatovskaya uses combinations of subjects from different movements and explores them during the developmental section of the finale. Considering the faster tempo of the finale, the material of the second movement has in retrospect a completely different character.

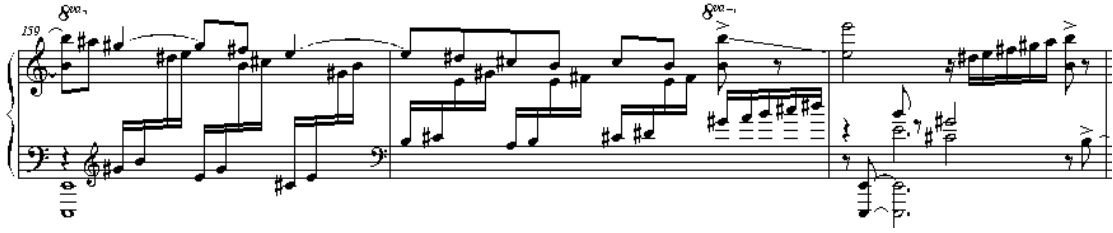
The main theme of the finale is suddenly related to the rounded motivic nature of the theme from the second movement. The long motivic lines of the first theme of this movement now sound as if they were unwound from a condensed version of the second movement's theme. In mm. 101-103, it is possible to see how these two elements are juxtaposed.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №3, mvt. IV, mm. 100-104

The climax of the development is reached by means of textural intensification, one in which all parts resume a chordal texture from the closing section (mm. 121-145) and lead into the recapitulation (m. 146).

Together with its tonal uncertainty, the playful character of the introduction is now even more passionate. Fast passages (mm. 156, 160-161) effectively contrast with the static material of the second theme. Gnatovskaya combines both themes of this movement into a single texture (mm. 157-160). For the first time in the recapitulation, the first theme is briefly introduced in diminution by fast passages (mm. 160, 161), this being a transformed version of this theme's ascending scale.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №3, mvt. IV, mm. 159-161

After giving the second theme an opportunity to integrate with the first theme, Gnatovskaya changes her mind and halts the musical flow with a brief silence (m. 171).



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №3, mvt. IV, mm. 169-171

The final appearance of the opening theme of the sonata (now a *Vivacissimo* in E major) rounds off the work in a tender and delicate way. Lydian mode, presented by the main motives in mm. 187 and 188, serves to summarize the overall harmony of the entire sonata.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №3, mvt. IV, mm. 187-188

It is interesting to note that the keys of each consecutive movement (B-flat, C, D, and E major), create a partial Lydian scale. Therefore this work utilizes the Lydian mode on both macro and micro level.

At the time the third sonata was being written many Ukrainians were living with constant heating interruptions. The absence of hot water and electricity often created extremely difficult conditions. Considering that winters of this region can be quite severe, in many cases lack of heat could be fatal. The piercing wind, which would gust through gaps in the windows, doors, and walls of the old buildings, often brought snow inside Gnatovskaya's apartment.

Keeping this in mind one could argue that the tender and warm tonal language of the third sonata is a natural human reaction to escape, musically speaking, the bleak living conditions of a Ukraine in turmoil.

On a piece of paper found folded into the manuscript, Elena Gnatovskaya writes that this sonata “...*was planned to be looking back at youth; in other words, its music addresses youth. From that comes its light, joyful perception of the world, and its musical episodes, full of rapturous splashes of sunny sparkles.*”

Piano Sonata №4 (2004)

Movement I

Sonata №4 is the last of Gnatovskaya's piano sonatas. The first theme is comprised of rounded repeated motives. The rhythmic stability of the opening bars is compromised by the end of the first phrase:



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. I, mm. 1-5

Such immediate deconstruction of the first musical thought demonstrates the work's inclination towards hesitation and uncertainty. Gnatovskaya uses the sighing motif quite often, as she did in previous sonatas. In this sonata it appears for the first time on E-flats in the first two measures in the right hand. The following measures continue the same idea with rhythmically misplaced stops (mm. 3-5). Starting at m. 8 all of the musical components are brought down into a dark register with the help of syncopated, abrupt grace notes (mm. 8-13).



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. I, mm. 8-18

In m. 21 the hands switch roles. Textural and emotional equality between opposing materials is certainly a technique found often in Gnatovskaya's works, as can be seen in her first three piano sonatas as well.

As the music unfolds a greater level of discord can be felt. The phrases of the initial opening material now become extended and the rhythmic stops lack the clarity they possessed in the opening five bars. This all serves to create a heightened emotional plane and a sense of disorientation (mm. 21-30). A dramatic descent optimizes this complete hopelessness (mm. 37-40).



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. I, mm. 37-40

What is needed in order to resolve this conflict is a common background, or a mutual language, through which the conflicting sides will be able to communicate without suppressing one another. A unison in a low register creates a striking effect and serves as a transition into the second theme (m. 42).



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. I, mm. 42-43

This transition has an emotional connection to the first theme. Its mysterious atmosphere, created by a sudden unison in the lower register, reflects a tension which has resulted from a dichotomy of elements.

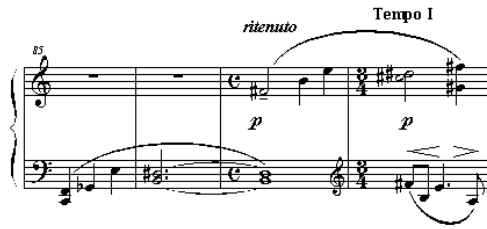
In addition to its connection to the previous material, this transition creates a paradox: the dual effect of an agreement (unison) and a disagreement (three octaves of separation) occurring simultaneously. Such an effect reminds one of how a pair of magnets behave, as it is impossible for the two to achieve any type of an agreement so long as the elements are close to one another.

The second theme, beginning in m. 70, demonstrates how opposing sides can work towards achieving a mutual understanding. Long chords carry the melodic line of the main theme, here augmented in various ways (mm. 71-73, 74-76) and connected to the static tension of the transition.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. I, mm. 71-76

Three measures of closing material (mm. 85-87) lead to the development section.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. I, mm. 85-88

The beginning of the development (m. 88) uses material from the first theme and displays a clear harmonic language. The second phrase, however, immediately brings back tonal ambiguity (m. 96). Gradually the music begins to imitate the texturally static nature of the second theme (mm. 101-129) and during this section the contrasting parts attempt to clarify their musical roles.

The descent into the lower register (starting at m. 129) serves as a starting point for a rapid buildup which will result in a dramatic culmination (m. 143-150).

130 *crescendo poco a poco*

135 *f p*

139 *f*

141

143 *a tempo* *f*

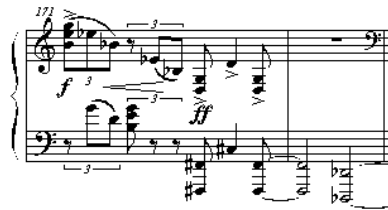
146 *Op.*

149 *stringendo poco a poco*

Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. I, mm. 130-150

The beginning of the recapitulation is not well defined. It is only upon hearing a clear statement of the second theme (m. 167) that the listener realizes that the previous measures are a recapitulated metamorphosis of the first theme, one in which only the essential turbulent mood is present.

A sudden interruption of the familiar downward motion (m. 171), here presented for the final time, reminds one of the first theme's emotional imbalance.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. I, mm. 171-172

Once again, the second theme establishes emotional control, all the while using the motivic line of the first theme. The closing measures (*Lento*, m. 202-207) quote the first theme once again and end the movement in a quiet fashion.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. I, mm. 202-207

Movement II

The second movement opens with a repeated figure in the left hand, one which vaguely resembles transformed material from the first movement (m. 169-170). Improvisatory melodies in the right hand penetrate the otherwise motionless musical surface.

II

♩ = 110

p

Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. II, mm. 1-10

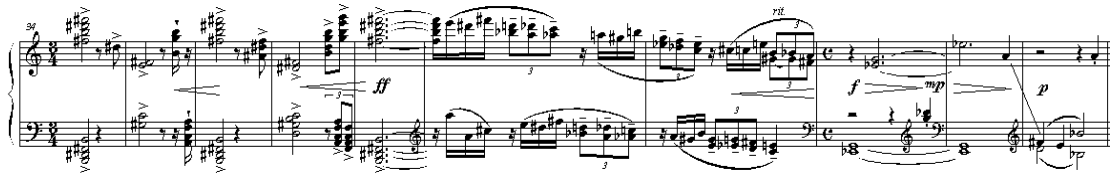
In m. 10, there is a sense of arrival in a D major triad, and this obvious tonal center creates an atmosphere of repose.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. II, m. 10

A playful and contrasting element (B section, m. 12) equalizes the parts and both hands become independent while still expressing the same idea.

A new episode begins in m. 21 with textural and rhythmical integration between the hands. Gradually both parts build to a surprisingly strong climax (mm. 34-38), one built around massive B major chords.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. II, mm. 34-43

A tonal structural divider now appears in E-flat major (mm. 41-42), bringing back the A section in m. 43.

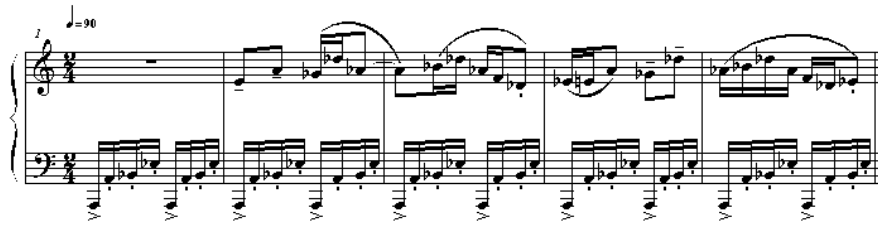
Towards the end of the movement, the sighing motif of the right hand is augmented. Gradually reshaping its rhythm, the tonality dissolves into a single, sorrowful entity (mm. 52-56). A harmonious ending carries with it an element of anticipation.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. II, mm. 52-56

Movement III

The last movement opens with an energetic ostinato figure in the left hand which serves to support an angular melody in the right hand.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. III, mm. 1-5

This movement, with its constant sixteenth-notes in the left hand, creates a sense of rhythmic stability unseen thus far in the sonata. Angular phrases and a solid motivic structure demonstrate confidence and control.

A contrasting interaction between the hands begins in mm. 14-18:



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. III, mm. 14-17

The transition (m. 33-47) consists of a lonely melody in the right hand coupled with left hand's initial accompanying ostinato element, this time in retrograde inversion.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. III, mm. 36-37

The retrograded ostinato figures accompany elements of the first theme (mm. 42-45), producing a sense of isolation and leading the listener to falsely believe that we have now entered the development section of the movement.

The second theme (m. 48) opens with a singing line, however, the unexpected lyricism is soon interrupted by thirty-second notes (mm. 50, 53, 59).



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. III, mm. 48-50

From their first appearance in m. 50 until the recapitulation (m. 81), thirty-second notes appear intermittently in both hands.

With the repeat of the main material a clear rhythmic stability is reinstated. The music suddenly transitions into the playful character of the first theme (m. 85). After sharing the same register for the second time (mm. 95-99), Gnatovskaya switches the roles of the two hands. Tight integration between contrasting elements of the same section prepares the next climactic segment, one in which both parts express equal intensity (mm. 103-130). The textural equality and shared emotional message in this section can be paralleled with a segment of the B section (mm. 60-80).

There is a brief interruption of motion in the middle of the climax before the appearance of the main material (mm. 115-117). The first theme now appears in a chordal arrangement (mm. 118-130) before the return of the motoric drive in the left hand (m. 131). The hands meet in unison in their final gesture as the music brings this sonata to an end (mm. 137-140).



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. III, mm. 137-140

The second theme's absence in the recapitulation can be explained by the fact that its dissonant nature does not correspond to the process of realignment that occurs during this movement. After a final appearance of the transitional theme (m. 14), the sonata concludes with a humorous staccato octave, leaving the listener with a positive and optimistic impression after such angst and uncertainty.



Elena Gnatovskaya, Piano Sonata №4, mvt. III, mm. 148-149

Conclusion

Even though Gnatovskaya provided each piano sonata with a unique character and style, certain aspects of her compositional technique are present in all four piano sonatas. Gnatovskaya manipulates sonata form in an essentially conventional way, and although there are occasional alterations to standard forms, these changes are not major deviations from the usual model.

The textural juxtaposition of opposing elements is a frequent device used. It is noteworthy that each sonata emphasizes the individuality of each hand. Musical development also progresses in a unique way with elements working not only towards a mutual goal, but also towards an equal means of expression.

The harmonic language, with the exception of the third sonata, is often based on chords, producing a clash of sonorities when combined. However, each hand separately often contains a conventional diatonic nature.

The motivic approach in Gnatovskaya's works is intricate. She uses fragments of selected motives, alterations, augmentations and diminutions, cyclical elements, and inversions. The rhythmic nature of selected motives is sometimes shared between different elements. After embarking on this analytical process it became quite apparent that there are close underlying connections between elements that initially seemed disparate and incongruous.

Gnatovskaya clearly favors polyphonic writing. In an essay written by Gnatovskaya, she discusses her former teacher Leonid Reshetnikov, a man who significantly impacted her compositional style. As she puts it:

“Reshetnikov worshiped polyphony his entire life. The reason for such faithful dedication lies within the ability of polyphony to combine intellect and feeling, mathematics and music, analytical and emotional nature into one entity. Its strict style is similar to a monastery seclusion, but after an endless amount of patience and persistent practice, it suddenly removes all restraints and provides the composer with an absolute freedom. In free compositional style, where previously limiting rules do not apply, fantasy suddenly faces no boundaries, and the music becomes live and natural.

During that period I read “My musical life” by Rimsky-Korsakov. Imitating the great composer, I decided to write 50 fugues during one summer. Such quantity was perhaps too much, but I remember that I did not enjoy the marvelous beauties of the Caucasus: instead of its sea, sun, and beaches, all I saw was sheet music paper. All those fugues, and other polyphonic genres which I composed in, were written with a great deal of invention and fantasy. Not all of those, obviously, held any artistic value (except for a few, perhaps), but they all played a most important role in the growth of my compositional technique. Every composer who wants to become a master needs to complete the polyphonic training similar to which was provided by Leonid Reshetnikov.”

Based on such a pedagogical background it is only natural that polyphony can be seen on several levels in Gnatovskaya’s music. Its influence is especially apparent when textural equality is constantly maintained between the two hands. The appearance of polyphonic techniques such as imitation, canon, augmentation, diminution, inversion, and counterpoint (widely used within motivic structures), can be observed throughout

Gnatovskaya's music. Hers is a unique musical language, one that I find to be wonderfully compelling, and one that I intend to champion.

List of compositions by Elena Gnatovskaya

Instrumental concertos:

Concerto for piano and orchestra №1
Concerto for piano and orchestra №2
Concerto for piano and orchestra №3
Concerto for piano and orchestra №4
Concerto for violin and orchestra №1
Concerto for violin and orchestra №2
Concerto for violin and chamber orchestra
Concerto for cello and orchestra
Lyrical poem for violin and chamber orchestra
“Rozdum” for trombone and chamber orchestra
Poem for orchestra
Ballet Scene for orchestra
Variation on original theme for orchestra

Chamber Music:

String quartet №1
Piano trio
String trio (violin, viola and cello)
Trio in memory of Klebanov D.L. for clarinet in B, violin and piano
String quartet №2
Trio for flute, bassoon and piano
Intermezzo for string quartet
Duo for 2 violins
Concertino for violin and piano
Sonata for violin and piano №1
Sonata for violin and piano №2
Sonata for clarinet in B and piano №1
Sonata for clarinet and piano №1
Sonata for cello and piano №1
Sonata for cello and piano №2
Sonata for flute and piano
Sonata for viola and piano №1
Sonata for oboe and piano
Sonatina for trombone and piano
Theme and Variations for violin and piano
Variations for French horn and piano
Fantasy for viola and piano
Intermezzo for viola and piano
Intermezzo for oboe and piano
“Legend” for trombone and piano
Andantino and little scherzo for bassoon and piano

Capriccio for 2 pianos
“Mirages” for 2 pianos
Gala Poem for organ and brass quartet (2 trumpets and 2 trombones)
Slavonic Rhapsody for cello and piano
Intermezzo for violin and piano
Romance for violin and piano
“Solospiv” for violin and piano
“Prinosheniya” for clarinet and piano
“Slobozhanski” puzzles for domra and piano
“Awakening” for flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano
Suite for cello and piano
Dramatic scherzo for cello and piano

Piano works:

Polyphonic suite: Prelude, Canon, Fugue and Passacaglia.
Polyphonic works: Little prelude and Fugue; 2 Preludes and Fugues for piano.
Prelude and Fugue in B major.
Sonata №1
Sonata №2
Sonata №3
Sonata №4
Sonatina
Lyrical pages 10 pieces
Morning Paysages - 5 pieces
“Mozayki” - 5 pieces
Fairytale
7 pieces in silver tunes
5 pieces
5 pieces

Vocal Works:

Vocal cycle (4 romances) (Lyrics by Belarus poets)
Vocal cycle (4 romances) (Lyrics by A. Blok)
3 romances (Lyrics by I. Nikitin)
Autumn choir (Lyrics by V. Syusyura)

Music for Children:

4 pieces for the youngest; 2 pieces
Piano Cycle Russian Pictures 3 pieces
Polyphonic suite for children and youth
Polyphonic works for children and youth
12 character etudes
10 pieces for the youngest

Additional sources and information about composer and pianist Elena Gnatovskaya can be found on her website:

www.elenagnatovskaya.com

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