



20th century russian piano music

Gubaidulina

Pärt

Shostakovich

Shchedrin

Karayev

vladimir yurigin-klevke

## **Sofia Gubaidulina** **Ciaconna in B Minor, 1961**

While women poets have been known since ancient times, women composers have been a rarity in European culture up to the 20th century. The talent and professional mastery of Sofia Gubaidulina are undisputed; her music has won renown in her own country and internationally. Her works are notable for a broad, sweeping, large-scale character; her style is distinguished by a high artistic temperament and will power. In her creative career several periods can be singled out. The earlier period is characterized by the development of polyphonic technique and a skill in building larger musical forms (“Ciaconna” for piano solo). Impulsive rhythms combined with a somewhat dry and hard texture became a hallmark of this composer’s personal style. The creation of her individual manner required an overcoming of tonal asceticism and unfolding rich inner resources of musical sound. Gubaidulina emerged as one of those composers of the 1960s who made an energetic contribution in the renewal of the “musical fabric,” saturating it with new fresh timbres, intonations, and methods of instrumental playing. As the years passed, her music adopted one more dimension — that of expressing a struggle of contrasting sources characteristic of the European classical tradition. This type of musical structure

was first tested in the cantatas written in the late 1960s — *Night in Memphis* and *Rubayat*. In the 1970s, the technique of musical development employing polar contrasts became a permanent feature of Gubaidulina’s personal style. This contrasting dramatic thinking thus asserts a new and most significant stage in the composer’s stylistic evolution.

Gubaidulina’s creative works are in many ways a reflection of the universal character of the present-day creative process, an intensive interpenetration of various cultures and, as a result, a clearly delineated awareness of typically national features in every national art, and a striving to contribute the wealth of one’s own national culture to world culture. Employed by Gubaidulina, this tendency found its expression in a synthetic merging of several artistic notions characteristic of the East and the West. This merging melds together the dynamic character of musical development and the emotional and intellectual activity characteristic of the West with an Eastern spontaneity, improvisational basis, ability for self-development, and a purely Eastern subtle, somewhat sophisticated coloristic timbre. In this very profound and organic synthesis, the oriental aspect loses its exotic tint to bring out a philosophical background filled with deep psychological meaning.

The oriental features, easily discernible in Gubaidulina’s works, can be identified in the

choice of thematic material, as in the cantatas — *Night in Memphis*, based on ancient Egyptian lyric poetry and *Rubayat*, based on verse by oriental poets — Khayam, Khafiz, Khakhani. It also prevails in the pieces for three-string dombras *On Tatar Folklore*, in the liking for decorative-type melodic, and introduction of oriental musical instruments alien to the European tradition. Simultaneously, the signs of Western culture are conspicuous as well. Gubaidulina's music is distinguished by the lyricism of her use of percussion, with the softest tones acquiring a special importance in the temple-blocks, and in its fine fragility — in the *piano* strokes of the cymbals, the lyrical *dolce* derived from the dance tambourine.

The personality of a performer occupies a special place in Gubaidulina's creative art. In the process of composition, she orient herself towards a certain type of creative individual, scrupulously examining his personal manner of playing, the way he acts on the stage, his gestures and movements. A portrait of the performer is embodied in nearly all of her works.

Gubaidulina continuously cultivates the non-tempered musical "space." Glissando, such a favorite of hers, is nothing so much as the cultivation of the new micro-interval sphere of later European harmony.

Gubaidulina is attracted by the eternal themes of art and human life, like good and evil, life and death, moral duty. She finds

them in the literature and art of various countries and epochs, in ancient Egyptian poetry, in the verses of the 14th century Persian poet Khafiz and in the works of the 17th century Czech thinker and humanist Jan Amos Komensky. However, her music is directed to present-day reality and people. The force of present-day life is presented as a novelty and a turn toward the future. Her creative art is an accumulation of the most important movements in the cultural development of the 20th century and presents a highly interesting object for studying the multiple connections between an artist and his epoch.

### **Arvo Pärt — Partita**

In 1980, the composer left the USSR, and in conformity with the "tradition" of the time, his compositions were struck from the concert programs in his country and from musical studies. Yet, in the West, where Arvo Pärt settled after he left the USSR (first in Vienna and then in Berlin) he is still considered a Soviet composer.

Arvo Pärt's creative potential manifested itself already during his years in the Tallinn Conservatory where he studied under Heino Eller and from which he graduated in 1963. He earned his first public renown with his piano compositions — two sonatas and the Partita (1958-1959). They are neoclassical in

style, revealing, however, some individual features of the composer's personal manner — a comparative intonational rigidity, a powerful volitional drive and compactness of form. His official recognition in 1962, followed by an award for the oratorio *Walk of Peace* and cantata *Our Garden*, came along with no less official condemnation of his *Obituary* for large symphony orchestra where the composer employed dodecaphony (1960), and which was received with considerable disapproval. Afterwards, during the 1960s, the heroic age for the Soviet avant-garde, Pärt became associated with the idea of the twelve-tone row, leading to a total twelve-tone idiom. This was a road common to many composers, although Pärt stood out due to his radicalism. Yet there was another feature which distinguished him from others. To some extent he always surpassed his colleagues; anticipating the evolution of present-day music, he could express the essence of the new stylistic situation in a concise and complete way.

For example, his *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra Pro et contra* (1966), an accurate expression of a multi-semantic polystylistic conflict, can be identified as a “formula” of its kind. This line is brought to a culmination with his *Credo* in which the quoted C Major prelude from Volume 1 of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* plays an important dramatic role. Yet *Credo* uncovers another essential

feature of Pärt's creative aspirations — his interest in liturgical genres and sacred texts which is fully revealed in his later works. The inclusion of biblical texts in the score indeed jeopardized the *Credo*, which was practically banned by the composer's immersion in the music of the European Middle Ages, to be continued afterwards in the 1970s, announcing a new stage of his creative achievements. The Third Symphony is indeed closely related to the music of the medieval period, signifying the composer's abandonment of his earlier idiom. In the mid-1970s he developed a new style which he duly designated with the Latin word *Tintinnabuli* (bells). The same title was given to a cycle, or rather collection, of various instrumental and vocal pieces written at that time. As the composer maintains, “the beauty of natural bell sound is associated with euphony or rather a triad which serves as an intonational, as well as structural, form-building basis.” Later, Pärt called his *tintinnabuli* style “an escape into voluntary poverty.” He also associates it with the Gregorian chorale. “Gregorian chants revealed to me what cosmic mystery is concealed in the art of combining two or three musical notes....”

This style is subject to natural evolution. The “polyphonic minimalism” of *Tabula Rasa* and *Cantus* is eventually displaced by an ever more ascetic mode with a prevailing

one-, two- or three-part writing. Extreme self-restraint is consequently extended to the texture too. This type of writing is characteristic of Pärt in his liturgical works which outline the main sphere of his creative activity. His two major works in this field are the Latin *St. John Passion* (1977) and *Stabat mater* (1985).

Arvo Pärt's "new simplicity" is indeed novel. Free of any naive neoprimitivism, his escape into the past in fact paves a way to the future. Obviously, this road is purely individual.

## **Rodion Shchedrin**

### **Twenty Four Preludes and Fugues for Piano**

Rodion Shchedrin's cycle of 24 preludes and fugues for piano, a result of several years of work, bears the imprint of the composer's individual style and genuine inventiveness. Begun in 1964, the first notebook, which has presently made a place for itself in the concert repertoire and curriculum, emerged two years later. The second notebook, 12 preludes and fugues, was completed in October 1970 and 1971. This work Rodion Shchedrin dedicated to his father, the well-known lecturer and musicologist Konstantin Shchedrin.

To write a cycle of preludes in all major and minor keys presents the composer a task which is both extremely difficult and

absorbing. Committed to this idea, each composer would fancy himself following in the steps of Bach, whose preludes and fugues of the two volumes of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* are still the greatest achievement in the world of music.

Prelude No. 10 introduces the listener to the key of C-sharp minor. Here again, one might feel the emerging shadow of Shchedrin's great predecessor who had used this key to write his own outstanding prelude and fugue (from the first volume of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*). It appears that in his prelude Shchedrin could not escape the burden of reminiscences which take him into heart-felt reverie and are related to Bach's piece. This elegant, songful prelude is one of the most impressive in the entire cycle. As for the fugue, it is very original in theme, which is based on an alternating fifth in its full and diminished form, as well as in the insistent triplet pattern and energetic drive. Its condensed form covers a wealth of content.

In the Prelude and Fugue No. 12 the gushing flow of music acquires at places (especially in the fugue) a shade of rage. The alarming, impulsive notes so often heard in Rachmaninoff and Scriabin's works can be identified in this piece too. However, the language of Shchedrin's prelude is absolutely individual, bearing no features characteristic of Rachmaninoff or Scriabin. The fugue is

like a fantastic tarantella. The insistent recurrence of the initial sound of the theme determines the entire character of the fugue where the rhythmic momentum is never interrupted even for a second, while the glamour of passages is enhanced by contrasting registers and shades of sounds. This virtuoso piece fully reveals the composer's temperament and his striving for clear-cut musical ideas.

### **Shostakovich — 24 Preludes, Op. 34**

Written in 1932-33, the twenty-four preludes signify a new stage in Shostakovich's creative achievements, noted for his intensive searches aimed at eliminating the gap between music and contemporary life, especially its everyday moods. This period may be characterized as transitional, as well as unstable and conflicting. It indeed initiated a turning point in the composer's stylistic approach, generating new emotional motives, crystallizing a new, realistic subject-matter and musical language, although certain features of *epatage*, deliberate parody, self-contained grotesquerie and eccentricity still prevailed to a certain extent. At the same time, the aesthetic basis of his music of this period makes clear yet another tendency — that of using semi-borrowings, playing upon certain elements from music by Haydn, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Chopin and others. These are not just an outcome of the

composer's whimsical fantasy or his attempt to contradict such heterogeneous elements of "the light" and "the serious." Shostakovich imparts to them features of his personal style, integrating them into a musical language of his own. The twenty-four preludes for piano, Op. 34, were written within 60 days — from late December 1932 through early March 1933. Basically, it is a cross-section of the two existing trends generally characteristic of piano cycles: the lyrico-dramatic, psychological (preludes by Chopin and Scriabin), and the epic, graphically concise, lyrico-narrative (*Visions Fugitives* by Prokofiev).

Prelude No. 1 in C Major is a lyric introduction to the entire cycle. Written in a free improvisational manner, with a soft and tender cantilena on a continuous pianissimo, despite its chromaticized character, the deep pedal basses, as if softly establishing the contemplative mood of the work, create an atmosphere of a noble idea, a quiet meditation. This is immediately contradicted by the following prelude, No. 2 in A Minor. It seems as if the composer deliberately plunges the listener into an atmosphere of sharp stylistic contrasts. In many aspects, this prelude is especially significant in the entire cycle. To be able to present in a fresh and novel manner the "danger rooted in the everyday Spanish song" is anything but easy! In Prelude No. 3 in G Major, its songful melodic

origin creates features typical of the romance and the instrumental nocturne. Until the culmination in the coda, it is developed on a continuously fascinating *piano*. This is a rare example in the entire cycle when the melodic breadth makes an illusion of extended form with the usual laconicism of expression giving place to an entire flood of sounds, very much in the spirit of Rachmaninoff. Even the coda, usually not elaborated in other preludes of the cycle, is based here on an effective development.

Prelude No. 10 in C-Sharp Minor is one of the most inspiring. This is one of the reasons it acquired a wide popularity and made a place for itself in the concert repertoire. The composer's individual transformation of the Chaplinesque soft, soothing compassion for "the weak" and "the small" is exposed in it in a most concentrated and sincere manner. This includes the scene with the street organ, the commonplace song of the lonely tramp, and, finally, an ordinary lyric episode from the life of a "small" man — all these are told with a rare sincerity, warmth and lyricism feasible within such a miniature genre as the prelude.

Prelude No. 14 in E-Flat Minor is one of the most inspiring anticipations of Shostakovich's talent for tragedy and also one of the best pieces in the entire cycle. Its main idea is symphonic in character, break-

ing the limits of both the miniature form and the chamber genre. It is not accidental that Leopold Stokowsky made a transcription of this piece for symphony orchestra and often performed it in his concerts. The prelude emerges as a synthesis of both the symphonic and the chamber, the epic and the lyrical.

Prelude No. 16 in B Minor is a march based on a somewhat Prokofievian accentuated rhythm. It can also be viewed as an ironic treatment of a bright and cheerful march.

Prelude No. 17 in A-Flat Major is the composer's interpretation of a languid sentimental waltz, with a deliberately slowed-down tempo. This is *largo* with a rubato rhythm penetrating throughout. This, together with a conformable intonational and harmonic setting, serves to enhance the expressivity of the prelude in a parodic way (very much in the style of Stravinsky's *Mavra*) bringing into the foreground in a comic manner the "reinforced" *amoroso* and *dolce*. Or maybe these are just ironic interpretations of the "banal" *ritenuto*. Obviously, the genetic origin of the prelude is rooted in the Chopin lyrical waltzes, but with a deliberate "mixture" of their noble aspirations with the common motives of everyday life.

Prelude No. 24 in D Minor is a brilliant example of a Prokofievian-style scherzo. Using a parodical gavotte-like rhythm based on a sharply modernized classical

melody, Shostakovich developed a characteristic contemporary piece where the light and the chamber are merged in the form of a piano prelude.

### **Kara Karayev — 24 Preludes for Piano**

Kara Karayev's approach to piano preludes is largely determined by the traditions set forth by the founder of the genre, Frédéric Chopin. Undoubtedly there is an attractive wealth of ideas and moods, typical of Karayev's piano cycle, and a special aphoristic character of utterance which not only does not exclude but also concentrates the multiple principles of elaboration employed by the composer in his other works. These qualities reflect Kara Karayev's profound creative comprehension of the musical heritage of the great Polish composer, whose preludes encompass all the main qualities of his creative spirit — its folk roots and national coloring, its radiant and mournful lyricism, dramatic mood and pathos, romantic fantasy and elegant, sincere language.

In Prelude No. 1 in C Major the unifying element which generates the idea of continuous playing, *perpetuum mobile*, is the rhythmically varied formula of a folk dance combined with such other features as the fanciful sparkle of the *rast* mode with a continuous movement of sixteenths. Prelude No. 5 in D

Major is a simple, briefly clouded, lyric utterance rooted deeply in Azerbaijani lyric folk song.

The generic aspect more or less directly exposes certain devices typical of many Azerbaijani dances. The characteristic elements penetrate the gracefully whimsical, softly radiant idea of the Prelude in D-Flat Major, No. 15. However, in this piece the composer seems to be much less dependent on one particular folk source, and rhythms typical of Azerbaijani folk dance are overlapped with those typical of the Italian tarantella.

The free improvisational texture of the impetuously virile Prelude No. 6 in D Minor, a musical narration of the heroic past, is intertwined with intonations typical of the *shur* mode, or repetitions much in the *segnyakh* mood, a device commonly used by the *tar* (the most popular Azeri folk instrument) players.

Prelude No. 8 in A Minor presents a peculiar 3/4 measured funeral procession, rich in the expressive decorative designs typical of Azerbaijani folk songs.

All of the 24 preludes give us an insight into the general dramatic sequence and the basic principle of this cycle. Like Chopin's preludes, each of Kara Karayev's preludes is normally an embodiment of one, often involved idea, one mood, rich in various shades. In the majority of preludes the once

established formula of utterance used to work out the main idea is preserved throughout the whole piece. This aspect also relates Karayev's concept with Chopin's preludes. The only exception to this is Prelude No. 10 in E Minor and, perhaps No. 15 in D-Flat Major, where the comparison of various types of narration or different aspects of the main idea are interrelated with the inherent contrasting content. The entire cycle is distinguished by a fine artistic taste, as well as a wider selection of expressive means, including purely pianistic ones.

*Vladimir Yurigin-Klevke*

*Translated by Marina Ter-Mikaelian*

### **Vladimir Yurigin-Klevke**

The distinguished pianist **Vladimir Yurigin-Klevke** has been closely associated with Russian piano music of the 20th Century since he first came to public attention in 1969. Then just 20 years old, he won first prize at the National Piano Competition of Contemporary Soviet Music. His winning performance featured the music of Shostakovich, Shchedrin, Gubaidulina and Arvo Pärt.

In the 25 years between that concert and the recording on this CD, Vladimir's insights into

this repertoire continued to ripen as he performed the music of many contemporary Russian and European composers. He maintained an extensive concert schedule, appearing regularly as a soloist, with chamber ensembles, and with leading orchestras in Moscow and throughout Russia. He has performed with such renowned soloists as violinists Nana Yashvili, Valentin Zhuk, Kurt Nikkanen, and Piet Koornhof.

Born in Moscow, Vladimir began to study the piano at the age of four and was then admitted to the Moscow Conservatory, from which he graduated in 1972, completing his post-graduate course there in 1976. At the Moscow Conservatory, his teachers were the famed Heinrich Neuhaus, and Yakov Zak, a renowned pianist and pupil of Neuhaus.

Following his years at the Moscow Conservatory, Vladimir was in demand as both professional musician and teacher. He has been a member of the faculties of the Kamchatka High School of Music, the Moscow High School of Music, and the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute. Many of his students have continued their education at the best conservatories in Russia and



in a recording of Russian romances, originally on Russian Disc and now available on Delos (DRD 2007). A highlight in his work with singers was his appearance with world-renowned tenor Nikolai Gedda in 1994 in St. Petersburg.

Vladimir's extensive touring schedule has extended to concerts and recitals internationally, including Russia, Bulgaria, France, Germany, USA, Colombia, Costa Rica and Spain. He has also been a regular participant in international chamber music festivals. Since 1994, he has collaborated with the well-known international charity program "New Names," which attracts the most talented children of Russia.

abroad, including the Royal Academy of Music in London, and have themselves been active in piano competitions.

Also noteworthy is Vladimir's work with singers, among them leading soloists of the Bolshoi Theatre, such as soprano Bella Rudenko, bass Alexander Vedernikov, and bass Arthur Eisen. He collaborated with the late, great Armenian soprano Arax Davtian

*Also Available on Delos*

**Russian Romances**

**Arax Davtian, soprano**

**Vladimir Yurigin-Klevke, piano**

**DRD 2007 (DDD)**

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“one of the most beautiful, honest and touching recordings of these Russian musical gems” *Constantine Orbelian*

Arax Davtian (1949-2010), People’s Artist of Armenia, was often called Armenia’s greatest soprano. She recorded this choice collection for Russian Disc in 1994, at the urging of Constantine Orbelian, who conducted many performances and tours featuring Arax with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra. Constantine writes in his memorial tribute to Arax that when he first heard her sing he was taken with “her crystal clear voice, pinpoint intonation, beautiful phrasing and line,” and goes on to say that “Arax was blessed with the rarest of all gifts: truth and sincerity in art.”



# 20th Century Russian Piano Music

## Vladimir Yurigin-Klevke, piano

### Sofia Gubaidulina (1931–)

- 1 Ciaccona (1961) (11:33)

### Arvo Pärt (1935–)

Partita (1965)

- 2 Toccatino – Fughetta (2:06)  
3 Larghetto – Ostinato (4:53)

### Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

24 Preludes, Op. 34 (1932–33)

- 4 No. 1 in C Major (1:28)  
5 No. 2 in A Minor (0:58)  
6 No. 3 in G Major (2:17)  
7 No. 10 in C-Sharp Minor (1:59)  
8 No. 14 in E-Flat Minor (2:25)  
9 No. 16 in B Minor (1:01)  
10 No. 17 in A-Flat Major (1:51)  
11 No. 24 in D Minor (1:15)

### Rodion Shchedrin (1932–)

24 Preludes and Fugues for Piano (1964–70)

- 12 No. 10 in C-Sharp Minor (5:54)  
13 No. 12 in G-Sharp Minor (4:02)

### Kara Karayev (1918–1982)

24 Preludes for Piano (1951–61)

- 14 No. 1 in C Major (1:23)  
15 No. 2 in C Minor (1:30)  
16 No. 3 in G Major (0:55)  
17 No. 5 in D Major (1:34)  
18 No. 6 in D Minor (1:00)  
19 No. 8 in A Minor (2:49)  
20 No. 10 in E Minor (1:21)  
21 No. 15 in D-Flat Major (1:16)  
22 No. 19 in E-Flat Major (2:31)  
23 No. 23 in F Major (1:17)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 57:45

Recording producer & engineer: Tatiana Vinnitskaya  
Mastering: Oleg Ivanov

Recorded in Studio 5, State Radio, Moscow, Russia



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