

COMPOSING MUSIC IN THE SILENT BODY

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Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Holistic Approaches to Resonating Bodies | 5 |
| Contextual Resonance | 7 |
| Anna Halprin: Body Constructing Meaning | 11 |
| Bodies Sharing a Pulse: <i>Circle the Earth</i> | 12 |
| <i>Earth Run: Gathering Intentions</i> | 13 |
| <i>The Vortex: Connecting Inside Out</i> | 14 |
| Bodies in Space: Finding Memory, Intentions, Narrative | 17 |
| Curating Bodies | 19 |
| Lawrence “Butch” Morris: Body Shaping Music | 21 |
| Gestural Language/Body Language | 23 |
| Locations of Power | 25 |
| Sofia Gubaidulina: Body Becoming Music | 28 |
| Composer within Religion/Body within Fibonacci Sequence | 28 |
| Dichotomy: Earthly and Eternal in <i>Stimmen...Verstummen...</i> | 34 |
| The Body as Zero: Agreeing to Silence | 38 |
| Approaches to Personal Meaning | 42 |
| Silent Resonance | 44 |
| Bibliography | 46 |

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Holistic Approaches to Resonating Bodies

Write a letter.

When you are finished, begin to play.¹

Paper, pens, and a flat square vase sit on the altar in the center of the chapel.

Four saxophonists enter and begin to write. The only sounds are pens scratching on pages, the occasional pause and thoughtful pen click. The audience sits in concentric circles around the players, watching and listening.

As silent bodies create and incur meaning in space, context becomes a resonating membrane against which emotion is held and negotiated. In the process, the body becomes a vessel of experience, a messenger, a symbol – a cognizant material whose actions can mold and be molded. It can also become an agent of change and transformation.

The performing body focuses attention and therefore requires careful intention. As a composer, writing music for the instrument becomes a matter of writing music for the instrumentalist. Personhood and place matter most immediately in the specifics of a particular performance, but more broadly in the aim to create something that transcends time or place. The process becomes a balance between the physicality of the individual, the score's negotiation of power, and context.

¹ Julie Herndon, *(de)attachment* for saxophone quartet (2015), 3.

My interest in the musical body comes from my own visceral experience of writing music – the act of translating and preserving a physical action that is guttural and immediate. When I compose, I feel the resonance in my flesh and bone. It is this experiential relationship that evolves into the voices of other instruments, the skin of other instrumentalists. Content that sparks within me is translated to material that is then embodied by others. Investigating this shift between personal and universal, self and other, performer and audience has led me through an array of scholarship on the body and music. My pathway through it travels from the inside out: from dance, through conducted improvisation, to gestural music, and lastly, to affect.

I begin with dance to examine the individual’s experience of emotional content as it relates to community. Anna Halprin’s community rituals use rhythm, text, and graphics to anchor the individual form moving within communal space. Her work outlines some of the challenges of working with raw emotions as material and the necessity for structure when curating multiple intentions and personalities.

Second, I look at Lawrence “Butch” Morris who used physical gestures to conduct improvisers in *Conduction*®. His method was to develop a full-body sign language to communicate with ensembles of improvisers. In doing so, Morris’ self becomes the structure by which disparate material is organized. His work is an interactive gestural conversation, body becoming both messenger and message.

Third, I discuss Sofia Gubaidulina, who recontextualizes the performer’s gesture within the expectations of the concert hall. In her symphony *Stimmen...Verstummen...* (“Voices... Become Silent...”), she composes a climactic solo for the conductor that functions as an embodiment of her own struggles with communication and gender. She

frames the individual within the context of rhythm, conducting gestures, and the symphony stage.

These representative approaches to the performing body serve as conceptual reference points integrating physicality, intention, and sound. I consider how they inform my own process of composing music in *(de)attachment* for saxophone quartet. The opening instructions, “Write a letter. When you are finished begin to play,” initiate an intention. Motivic development creates symbolic transformation and draws a narrative. These narratives are sparked internally, shaped interpersonally, and drawn outward symbolically through the composition.

Contextual Resonance

In art music, the importance of the body is now widely acknowledged, progress largely indebted to feminist musicologists like Susan McClary, Catherine Clement, and Suzanne Cusick among many others. Gender and physical identity within opera and instrumental music alike has gained increasing attention. Opera, for reasons that are inherent in its active and embodied nature, has served as a conduit for extensive discourse on gesture and physicality in music.²

Other types of performative time-based media, such as dance, theater, and video, work extensively with body language and setting. Dance improvisation fully engages the internal matter of the individual. Simone Forti, Nancy Stark Smith, Ruth Zaporah, and

² See, for instance, Linda and Michael Hutcheon, *Bodily Charm: Living Opera*, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000) and Paul Atkinson’s “Opera and the embodiment of performance” in *Body/Embodiment: Symbolic Interaction and the Sociology of the Body* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 95-108.

Anna Halprin, to name only a few, use movement to access the internal world and connect it with external surroundings. Life Scores, kinesthetic memories, and even psychic improvisations expose a realm that is both deeply intimate and profoundly universal.³ Similarly, method acting locates physical storage of memory and emotion and requires actors to react from these regions.⁴ Experimental filmmakers, such as Maya Deren and Yvonne Rainer, layer these nuances of situation and personhood to establish complex evocative states.

Popular Music Studies also evaluates the social and contextual experience of music, though often prioritizing the audience's experience over that of the performers.⁵ As a necessary consequence of this socio-spatial awareness, attention turns to the semantics of the performer's gestures as they relate to the occurrence of meaningful symbolic associations. However, as Edward Lippman warns, "let us not fall into the easy trap here of assuming that because musical and extramusical events both evoke emotions, they must both evoke the same emotions." "Emotions," he explains, "are [...] fully dependent upon attendant circumstances."⁶ Indeed, the body's language is not universal; but it can be metaphorical. This "metaphorical transference," unites "the external, visible movement with internal, therefore private, physical experience."⁷

³ See Ann Cooper Albright and David Gere, *Taken by Surprise: a Dance Improvisation Reader* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2003).

⁴ See Amanda Rogers, "Emotional Geographies of Method Acting in Asian American Theater," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 102, No. 2 (March 2012): 423-442.

⁵ Lee Marshall, "The sociology of popular music, interdisciplinarity and aesthetic autonomy," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (March 2011): 154-174.

⁶ Edward A. Lippman *The Philosophy & Aesthetics of Music* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press: 1999), 12.

⁷ Jenefer Robinson, ed., *Music and Meaning* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 208.

Landscape and culture become intertwined in the experience of the body. Emotional geography, the notion of navigating the relationship between self and space, specifically investigates the experience of place as it applies to, for example, issues of fear, home, or travel.⁸ The significance of location is recognized not only socio-politically, but also intuitively as it relates to such phenomena as wanting to hear a specific sort of music when in a certain geographic region. For example, “Why do I want to listen to country music when I go home?”⁹

This associative, internal material is highly sensitive. In case studies, most people have trouble sharing trigger word associations even with one other person they know in the room.¹⁰ Phobias can be spatially activated.¹¹ And in Bunita Marcus’ case, childhood abuse was brought to memory by internally contextualizing a composition.¹² There is a distinct lack of control implied in working with internal material.

Accessing memories and emotions through music must be carefully structured. Graphic scores are open forms that can function as departure points.¹³ Their symbols,

⁸ See John Urry and Owain Jones in *Emotional Geographies*, ed. Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, Mick Smith (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd: 2007), 205-218.

⁹ Elliott J. Gorn, “That Lonesome Whistle: Music and loss in the Southland,” *Boom: A Journal of California*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer 2012): 76-81.

¹⁰ Julie Brownlie “‘Being there:’ multidimensionality, reflexivity and the study of emotional lives,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (Sept. 2011): 462-481.

¹¹ Mick Smith, Joyce Davidson and Victoria L. Henderson, “Spiders, Sartre and ‘magical geographies:’ the emotional transformation of space,” *Translations of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2012): 60-74.

¹² Frank Oteri, “Who is Bunita Marcus?” *New Music Box* (August 1, 2010) <<http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/who-is-bunita-marcus/>> (April 14, 2015).

¹³ See Galia Hanoach-Roe, “Musical Space and Architectural Time: Open scoring versus Linear Processes,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Dec. 2003): 145-160.

signs, and associations can progress deep into the personal psychology of the performer.¹⁴ Cage's *Notations* and the "scratch book" compositions of Cardew's Scratch Orchestra contain and discuss a multitude of unconventional notations inviting interpretative and associative material from the musician. These types of structures move towards the creation of meaningful temporal gestalt in a way different from that of traditional notation.¹⁵

Narrative and text scores can also elicit emotive or physical responses, serving as portals into the story-telling mind. Owain Jones employs narrative to access the emotional geography of his home, using recollection to embody a location that no longer exists.¹⁶ Nancy Stark Smith's Life Scores describe routine movements in order to reframe them as dance.¹⁷ Anna Halprin frequently pairs verbal phrases with images to trigger and structure individual responses.¹⁸ This fusion of methods links inward response with outward representation to create a meaningful transference.

¹⁴ Petr Kofron and Martin Smolka, *Graphic Scores and Concepts*, Prague: Votobia Olomouc (1996): 7-9.

¹⁵ See James Tenney and Larry Polansky "Temporal Gestalt Perception in Music," in *Journal of Music Theory*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Autumn, 1980): 205-241.

¹⁶ *Emotional Geographies*, 205-218.

¹⁷ Nancy Stark Smith in *Taken by Surprise*, 245-254.

¹⁸ Anna Halprin, *Returning to Health with Dance, Movement, and Imagery*, (Mendocino: LifeRhythm, 2002), 26-28.

Anna Halprin: Bodies Constructing Meaning

But, as with the world inside, it is the connections between sensing and environment and moving that engender the richest improvising [...].

-Simone Forti¹⁹

Anna Halprin deals with the personalization of the body as it relates to growth and healing within the individual and the greater community. Her work is intensely introspective, aiming to access three levels of awareness: “physical (the body, sensory awareness, sensations, movement), emotional (feelings/emotions), and mental (imagery, associations, conscious reflection and integration into daily life).”²⁰ Her *Life/Art Process* blurs the lines between daily routine and dance by using “tasks” and pedestrian movement. These accessible forms, in Halprin’s words, “exist outside the theater and in the daily lives of ordinary people.”²¹ The result, as she describes it, is that “dance became more connected to people’s lives and more responsive to people’s needs [...]. My search was for the whole person, and my criterion was the meaning in each individual’s life.”²²

This criterion, however, has unearthed surprisingly volatile material. As Libby Worth recounts of Halprin’s work in the Human Potential Movement, “nothing in Halprin’s dance training had prepared her for, or equipped her to deal with, the strong emotions which were being provoked in performers and audiences alike once she moved

¹⁹ Simone Forti “Improvising Body, Improvising Mind,” in *Taken by Surprise*, 32.

²⁰ Libby Worth and Helen Poyner, *Anna Halprin* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 59.

²¹ Anna Halprin, *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance*, Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995), xi.

²² *Ibid*, xi.

away from the confines of a stylized approach to dance.”²³ While emotions surged in these improvisations, habitual patterns were also being formed. As Worth describes, “Dancers’ Workshop improvisations based on the body itself became too introspective, in danger of replicating the very patterns and predictable repetitions she had wanted to abandon in her move away from modern dance techniques.”²⁴ The development of a scoring process, in addition to her work with Gestalt Therapy and non-verbal communications, enabled a shift in Halprin’s work toward community ritual and mark a turn in her work.

While still using “the raw material of our lives to make our art,” her works for community require a different kind of structure than pieces for Dancers’ Workshop.²⁵ As these rituals expand from local to international execution, the scoring process works in tandem with rhythm to structure and organize. Simple, streamlined choreography and accompaniment make dances accessible and emphasize internal states and personal intentions.

Bodies Sharing a Pulse: *Circle the Earth*

Halprin uses pulse to collect and direct energy. *Circle the Earth*, Halprin’s annual Bay Area community ritual, includes two dances exhibiting her uses of rhythm. In *Earth Run*, rhythm unifies and mobilizes disparate groups and intentions. In *The Vortex*, pulse affirms the individual within the community by drawing internal material outward into a communal act. In both cases, rhythm serves as a supporting activity, structuring

²³ Worth, 19.

²⁴ Ibid, 53.

²⁵ Halprin, *Moving Toward Life*, xi.

movements, connecting individuals to the community, and generating energy.

Earth Run: Gathering Intentions

In 1981, serial killer David Carpenter, the “Trailside Killer,” was at large on Mt. Tamalpais targeting lone female hikers. Halprin responded to this community terror by leading a ritual performance, *In the Mountain, On the Mountain*, in which participants walked on the trails in order to reclaim the space and send their collective energy toward justice. After having eluded police for two years, Carpenter was apprehended three days after the ritual. Months later, as Halprin explains, “Don Jose Mitsuwa, a Huichol shaman then 109 years old, visited [and] said, ‘This mountain is one of the most sacred places on Earth. I believe in what your people did, but to be successful in purifying this mountain, you must return to it and dance for five years.’”²⁶ Halprin continued annual mountain rituals, and recurring performances grew into celebrations of peace and reconnection with the earth. Over twenty years after the memorial, *Circle the Earth*, as it is now called, remains an annual event. This ritual event is sometimes focused on a specific cause, such as in 1989 when it dedicated to the victims of the AIDS virus, or can be organized more broadly to encompass a variety of individual intentions.

In the spring of 2014, I performed in *Earth Run*, one part of *Circle the Earth*, with Halprin in the dance department at Mills College. Before we began, she sketched a diagram, a simplified version of figure 1, and gave us a few verbal notes: *Begin kneeling*.

²⁶ Planetary Dance™. Planetary Dance. A Community Dance of Planetary Healing, 2014, <<http://www.planetarydance.org>> (March 30, 2015).

Stand and proclaim your intention. The outer circle is running; the middle circle is walking; the inner circle is rhythm.



Figure 1: *Earth Run score*²⁷

Halprin carefully set the center pulse with a shekere, taking into consideration the speed of the body in a slow upward and downward walking movement. Various other drums and percussion instruments lay in the center of the room where she circled. After she had

²⁷ Ibid.

set the pulse, participants, in no set order, began to stand and proclaim their intentions, issues as broad as “I run for peace in Palestine,” or as personal as “I run for Mom.” We then embodied our intentions by moving in the varied speeds of the circles: running in the outer circle, slowing and reversing direction into the walking circle, and in the center, drumming and stomping.

Pulse in this case unified the three speeds of motion as well as a diversity of intentions. The center rhythm was embellished by individuals and, while always centered around the foundational tempo, varied according to the rotating percussionists. Dancers themselves do not always perform this pulse, however. It can also function as a separate and supportive element. Performances on Mt. Tamalpais, for example, included designated “drummers and musicians playing to keep a regular pulse and help the runners maintain energy and focus.”²⁸

The Vortex: Connecting Inside Out

In *The Vortex*, Halprin uses pulse to draw individual biorhythms into a collective act. The rendition I performed with Halprin at Mills College began with feeling one’s own pulse in the neck. While this is not included in the original score, it is referenced in her book *Return to Health* and also functions as its own score, *Pulse*.²⁹ Once dancers had established their biorhythm, we began walking around the room in time with that rhythm. After some time, a collective pulse developed and the group began to move in synchronicity. Halprin’s directions for the piece are as follows:

²⁸ Worth, 106

²⁹ See Anna Halprin, *Returning to Health*, 56 and Worth, 169-170.

THE VORTEX

INTENTION

To create a group identity.

THEME

In the Vortex Dance, we gather strength from each other. Using the ordinary movement of walking, we pass each other in the space in a kind of communal greeting. Within our different ways of walking, different paces and carriages, different steps and directions, we are searching for something: a common pulse, a common beat in the sounds of our feet upon the ground. Once we have reached this non-verbal consensus, we build upon the group spirit it expresses. We dance in two's. We dance in three's. We build human families. Finally we join as a whole in the center of the space and build a symbol of our collective strength, a mountain.

ACTIVITIES

Walk.

Cooperate in finding a collective pulse.

Develop a personal walking movement to the collective pulse.

Evolve your dance.

Move in lines, circles, levels, areas, between, over, under, around.

Join and rejoin with other people, and other groups.

Build a mountain of people with a base and a peak in the center of the space. (The mountain image is changeable in accordance with each community's tradition – whatever is built need to have a vertical use of space.)

TIME: 20 mins³⁰

While these instructions do not include the pulse as the set individual tempo (instead, individual walking speed would be the variance here), they do outline the psychological progression of the performer uniting self with surroundings. These stages include developing a personal style, evolving, and joining to build a whole.

Halprin describes bodies unified around music as creating an energetic, healing power. She finds that a shared pulse focuses individual narratives into a collective body and mind:

³⁰ Worth, 117-118

In large group dances an exceptional phenomenon occurs time and time again. When enough people move together in a common pulse with a common purpose, an amazing force, an ecstatic rhythm, eventually takes over. People stop moving as individuals and begin to move as if they were parts of a single body - not in uniform motion, but in deeply interrelated ways. In these archetypal movements they seem to be tracing out the forms and patterns of a larger organism, communicating with and being moved by a group spirit. This is an ancient phenomenon in dance. Cultures everywhere in the world have channeled the power of such a group spirit to help them bring rain, hunt, raise crops, and initiate the young. It is a power that can renew, inspire, teach, create and heal.³¹

At its most effective, rhythm becomes part of what she calls “The feedback process between movement and feelings” by reinforcing the body within environment and the environment within body.³² Its support and structure anchors and encourages individual expression, as she describes it occurring with a workshop participant:

She began stamping. This brought a new dynamic to the room. We went from swaying and being tentative, to finding a pulse which could have been expressing anger, determination, strength, courage, or perseverance. For each person, a movement of that kind of intensity can have a different meaning. We immediately put on some music to reinforce the pulse of the movement. It was [drum music]. We developed the stomping movement until people began to interact with one another [...] Gradually the movement and the dance brought us into our own collective expression.³³

Bodies in Space: Finding Memory, Intentions, Narrative

Environment gains importance as it relates to the dancer’s experience of self. In her workshop, *A Healing of Grief and Loss*, Halprin leads participants in “a journey in two parts – we’re going to journey into our own nature but we’re also going to journey into

³¹ Anna Halprin as quoted by Jamie McHugh, <www.somaticexpression.com/PD.html> (April 14, 2015).

³² Halprin, *Returning to Health*, 24.

³³ *Ibid*, 180.

the natural world – the nature outside. [...] we're going to bring those two internal and external natures together so that it creates a whole."³⁴ Halprin leads this workshop much like a therapist would, asking guiding questions and responding with affirmation. Her philosophies of “nature as healer” and “Power Spots” emphasize space as it relates to the internal landscape.

Her use of emotional geography focuses on the human experience of interacting with place. In this interaction, land gains significance and is transformed into landscape through relationship and movement. This involves a negotiation process of remembering and forming identity within a place.³⁵ For instance, when Owain Jones uses personal account to recollect past emotional-spatial experiences, he gives new meaning to a space. By recalling his childhood home despite its physical destruction, a suburban housing development becomes a former farm homestead.³⁶ Through this exchange, both person and place, incur meaning.

“What can occur in the space between,” Julie Sutton explains, is “an unfolding communicative act.”³⁷ Sutton’s therapy-focused exploration of “The Air Between Two Hands: Silence, Music and Communication,” speaks of music in terms of space and silence. She turns attention toward what is heard or sensed in spatial gaps and physical pauses, saying that it is the between-ness in which communication becomes its most rich.

³⁴ *Dancing Myths and Rituals in Nature: A Healing of Grief and Loss* (Dir. and prod. Anna Halprin 1995) Video, Mills College Library.

³⁵ *Emotional Geographies*, 77.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 205.

³⁷ Julie P. Sutton “The Air Between Two Hands: Silence, Music and Communication” in *Silence, Music, Silent Music*, Nicky Losseff, Jennifer Ruth, ed. (Hampshire, Burlington, Ashgate, Ltd: 2007), 169.

For Halprin, it is in this space between dancer and place that landscape becomes an active collaborator and mirror – opening experience to the realm of fantasy. In one of Halprin’s workshops, a participant carries a mass of seaweed as a symbol for his mourning the death of his partner. He grasps the grass in a field to hold on to his will to live, and gathers stones on a hill to reinstate order into his life.³⁸ His intentions transform his actions, and therefore his location, into meaningful communion.

Curating Bodies

Halprin sees herself as a curator, enabling others to find their authentic means of expression, rather than relying on traditional movement-based choreography.³⁹ In *Dancing with Life on the Line*, a documentation of *Circle the Earth* in the year it was dedicated to victims and survivors of AIDS, dancers created group pieces on topics involving life and death, finding collective expressions for phrases such as “standing in the midst of death, falling in the midst of life.” These text prompts provided the structure for Halprin to organize individual experiences, even as extensive workshop time was spent on interpersonal communication as dancers navigated their reactions not only to the topics, but also to one another.

Halprin’s emphasis on individual experience pulls the dancer into the emotional contents of the body-vessel. Those contents – felt memory and experience – are drawn out through ritual and explored in relation to landscape. But physical and psychological participation is crucial to accessing her work. Being within her rituals, I had the

³⁸ *A Healing of Grief and Loss*.

³⁹ *Circle the Earth: “Dancing with Life on the Line,”* Dir. Anna Halprin. Media Arts West and Tamalpa Institute, 1989, Mills College library.

experience of connecting emotion with place. Observing a piece from the outside, however, I saw people stomping, running, forming a group – and I wanted to join, not to watch.



Figure 2: from Anna Halprin’s workshop, “Affirming Our Nature.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Anna Halprin, “Affirming Our Nature,” *Conscious Dancer Magazine: Movement for a Better World*, <<http://www.consciousdancer.com/events/empowering-creativity-through-movement-metaphor--dance-with-anna-halprin/>> (April 14, 2015).

Lawrence “Butch” Morris: Body Shaping Music

In trying to find the language to talk about this whole idea, I started reading a number of other kinds of books, like physics books. That’s where the terminology comes from - Conduction - this transmission of information, this transmission of heat and energy. That’s what you see between me and the ensemble - energy. I’m transmitting information, they’re giving it back. The more we do this the more this electricity flows, the more this music levitates, on its own.

-Lawrence “Butch” Morris⁴¹

Conduction® is a system of codified symbolic gestures designed to create real-time improvisations with to ensembles ranging from chamber to orchestral. Performers improvise material that Butch Morris spontaneously shapes as the conductor. As Morris describes it, “I supply the structure, you supply the content. You give me the content and I give it back and we start this [...] transferal.”⁴²

Performances typically begin with one or more downbeats, cuing instantaneously improvised material.⁴³ That material is then directed using Morris’ sign language. For example, material can be looped with a U-shaped hand gesture pictured in figure 3, or saved as “Memory 1” with a raised finger. The transferal that occurs is a series of improvisational reactions between performers and Morris. He communicates beginnings, endings, tempi, dynamics, and soli assignments. The performers must react instantly to

⁴¹ Dino J.A. Deane, “Comprehending Conduction” Blog, August 05, 2014, <<http://jadeane.com/blog>> (April 21, 2015).

⁴² “Lawrence D. ‘Butch’ Morris – Conduction #174: ‘Gregorian Leap’” *Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center* (Feb. 13, 2013) video, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXRvHQEWQKQ&spfreload=10>>, accessed April 14, 2015.

⁴³ Thomas Stanley, “Butch Morris and the Art of Conduction ®” (Ph.D. diss., College Park: University of Maryland, 2009),19.

this information. “Performance is an instant composition,” Morris describes.⁴⁴ The practice is to explore “the divide between what is notated and what is improvised.” He calls performers “interpreters” and continues, “with few exceptions, Conductions were created with no notation, preconceived ideas as of what was to be performed, or tonal centers (keys), only knowledge of the Conduction lexicon.”⁴⁵

Performers Morris worked with extensively operated in a refined communication system, while ensembles that he guest conducted worked to come to a clear understanding of the language in the span of a few days before a concert.⁴⁶ Morris considers this ductility to be part of his practice, saying “the idea was and is to see and explore how effectively the lexicon could be extended to accommodate each ensemble.”⁴⁷

Like Halprin’s work, interpersonal trust becomes an important part of the aesthetic language. This trust is formed between individual, ensemble, and director and affects the quality of the performance:

The more the musicians become comfortable with the vocabulary, the more they will give. The more they give, the better the ensemble will sound. The better the ensemble sounds, the higher the level of music we will make. The higher the level of music we make, the more joy we will experience [...]. There is a lot of trust involved with this.⁴⁸

There is also an element of self-trust that enables direct access to and exposure of inner material in the form of improvisation. This reactive vulnerability enables Conduction by creating versatility of content and volatility of form.

⁴⁴ Farai Chidea, “Butch Morris on the Art of ‘Conduction,’” *National Public Radio: News and Notes* (February 18, 2008), web, <<http://www.npr.org/artists/19168408/butch-morris>> (April 14, 2015).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ See “Conduction #174: ‘Gregorian Leap.’” *Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center*, Feb. 13, 2013. <www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXRvHQEWQKQ> (April 4, 2015).

⁴⁷ Chidea.

⁴⁸ Deane.



Figure 3: Morris loop/repeat sign⁴⁹

Gestural Language/Body Language

The importance of the individual is notable within this practice. Not only are performers selected based on their individual sounds, but also Morris himself as an individual body constructed each performance. Unlike Soundpainting, Walter Thompson's similar gesture-based improvised system in which workbooks and certifications are offered, Morris is the commonality that all Conductions share. Though there is a Conduction workbook being published posthumously, Morris describes:

⁴⁹ "Butch Morris - Othello A," *Dadalites*, Feb. 10, 2014, video <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eh2nPsH4Okg>> (April 6, 2015).

It is not my intention, and it has never been, to redefine music or music theory with Conduction, or to standardize Conduction as a system. Through it, rather, I wish to stimulate a way of making and thinking about music that can expand the concept of musicianship and musicality in the individual and in the ensemble, supplementing and augmenting given forms with a greater appreciation of possibility, and refining the qualitative standard for what ensemble music is and can be.⁵⁰

Morris defined himself as a jazz musician continuing the evolution of improvisation.⁵¹ His system of personalized body language brought not only his gestures, but his entire self into an embodied reactive state. Thomas Stanley, in his dissertation about Morris, describes:

I have seen Morris' face flash alternately with satisfaction, shock, disgust, and delight. And while these emotive cues will be shown to be a part of the glue that holds the music together, it is not intended to suggest that this level of communication is scripted, but rather that it is part of the warm context of social intimacies within which Conduction occurs.⁵²

Furthermore, Zeena Parkins, who played harp in Conductions for ten years when Morris was beginning his practice in 1985, describes Morris miming words in rehearsals to elicit specific reactions from performers. She describes him as being critical of performers and inspiring them to play material that was meaningful for them and moving for him.⁵³ "I don't want any old thing," he says in one documented rehearsal.⁵⁴ Morris specifically warned not to anticipate his cues, but to react instantaneously. Personhood and reactivity is the conductive material Morris worked to activate. His gestures, like Halprin's use of

⁵⁰ Deane, "Happy Birthday Maestro" Blog, February 10, 2015, <<http://jadeane.com/blog>> (April 21, 2015).

⁵¹ Chidea

⁵² Stanley, 20.

⁵³ Zeena Parkins, personal interview, Mills College, March 28, 2015.

⁵⁴ "Lawrence 'Butch' Morris Documentary conduction 1980s" *conductionUS* (Jul 11, 2014), <www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhXnA7gj6j4> (April 4, 2015).

pulse, are the organizational element around which individual material can accumulate meaning and context.

It is in this reactive state that improvisation sparks within the physical body of the performers as they respond not only to Morris, but also to one another in the moment. For Parkins this is an energized state of “high alert.” She describes herself as “one part of a bigger body [...], an instrument body” and relates performances to that of a symphony playing Brahms or another notated piece. The difference is that in this case, performers are reading Morris’ movements rather than a score. While improvising the entirety of the content, they remain in service of a greater whole. Parkins also notes that this “instrument body” was curated by Morris to include “a mix of race and gender that had to be intentional.” At that time, an ensemble including such diversity was rare and showed Morris’ consciousness of the politics and complexity of curating individual bodies.⁵⁵

Locations of Power

Stanley calls Conduction® a “reverse dance” that focuses energy and attention in the present.⁵⁶ The importance of this system, he says, is that the authority of the score migrates from page to standing body. The focus changes the paradigm of the composer’s intention from something on a page to be analyzed, to an active, performative presence to engage with. This engagement transforms both the conductor’s body and the ensemble into “a new musical instrument,” capable of making music in new ways.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Parkins.

⁵⁶ Stanley, 37.

⁵⁷ Stanley, 27.

While the conductor becomes an improvising collaborator, so each individual instrumentalist is a separate cue-able entity. Morris worked extensively with ensemble members to clarify their individual cues.⁵⁸ Place and location becomes important as each performer is referenced with pointing baton and eye contact. Each space becomes an identity. Each identity, when activated, must respond internally and externally.

This combination of individuality and group-mind parallels Halprin's curating of individuals. Both Halprin and Morris emphasize individual material and supply structure to improvisers toward the creation of a greater whole. The essential difference between the two is in the emphasis on individual creators versus creation. Halprin's methods require an unwavering connection with the internal world – the structure provides a means of exploring feeling and experience. Morris similarly works with individual material, but his constructions require the utmost external awareness.

Morris acts as a composer. Parkins says that in response to criticism that he was “stealing” from improvisers, she viewed herself as “serving” a composition.⁵⁹ This dialogue between collective whole and individual experience is what positions gestural improvisation as a bridge between performer-focused work and performance-focused work. Both forms require improvisation and individual voices, yet authority shifts away from the performer in the latter, focusing power on the conductor over the individual. Conducted improvisation consciously steps away from “the absolute power” of the conductor by inviting individual expression.⁶⁰ But Conduction blends these worlds of domination and collaboration as the compositional process. The individual is selected, or

⁵⁸ “Lawrence ‘Butch’ Morris Documentary conduction 1980s”

⁵⁹ Parkins.

⁶⁰ Marc Duby, “Soundpainting as a system for the collaborative creation of music in performance” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pretoria, 2006): 45.

curated, for specific abilities and sound, but the material is actively shaped by the director. Personal meaning is inserted by the individual, but its place is contextually evaluated based on its relation to the group aesthetic.

The body in Conductions becomes a messenger, relaying external stimulus and internal information. Morris translates his intentions to the performers, communicating instructions. Performers respond by varying their material. The instantaneous nature of their creation necessitates a music-making of immediacy and physicality.

Sophia Gubaidulina: Body Becoming Music

Sophia Gubaidulina's *Stimmen...Verstummen... Symphony in 12 Movements* frames the human body within an earthly/eternal apocalypse. Gubaidulina calls the silent conductor solo in Movement IX "the hieroglyph of our connection with the cosmic rhythm."⁶¹ It encapsulates the overarching structure of the form and creates the focal point upon which the piece pivots and gains new meaning.

Composer within Religion/Body within Fibonacci Sequence

Gubaidulina's work is highly symbolic, with mystic Christianity being a defining characteristic. That colorful and explicit imagery, in combination with the former Soviet Union's label of "avant-garde," has many times prohibited the performance of her work.⁶² Vera Lukomsky, prefacing one of her interviews with Gubaidulina, explains:

factors that doomed Gubaidulina's works to non-performance and non-publication were her predilection for mysticism and metaphysics, her outspoken religious spirituality, her preoccupation with musical images of the Apocalypse and the Last Judgment, and her interest in developing religious music symbols, such as the cross, cruxifixion [sic], resurrection, and Transfiguration.⁶³

It is no surprise this symphony bears such imagery. What is unique about this piece, however, is its emphasis on humanity. Gubaidulina presents here the human body as the container of extremes: the earthly and the eternal. It becomes the uniting fabric that

⁶¹ Vera Lukomsky, "Hearing the Subconscious: Interview with Sofia Gubaidulina," *Tempo: New Series*, No. 209 (Jul., 1999): 31.

⁶² Gubaidulina discusses her thoughts on being called "avant-garde" in Lukomsky's 1998 interview, "My Desire Is Always to Rebel, to Swim against the Stream!" *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Winter, 1998): 5-41.

⁶³ Vera Lukomsky, "The Eucharist in my Fantasy: Interview with Sofia Gubaidulina," *Tempo: New Series*, No. 209 (Jul., 1999): 29.

brings the two together as well as a symbol of her own efforts to communicate and function in these two worlds.

Stimmen... Verstummen..., which translates as “Voices... Become Silent...,” begins by outlining two distinct worlds: the Earthly and the Eternal. The boxes in figure 4 show the structure of the piece. Eternal movements are the duration of a number of quarter notes corresponding to the Fibonacci sequence, beginning at fifty-five and descending. Therefore, the first Eternal movement is fifty-five quarter notes long, the second is thirty-four quarter notes long, and each becomes progressively shorter until “Zero.” Alternate Earthly movements are structured more freely.

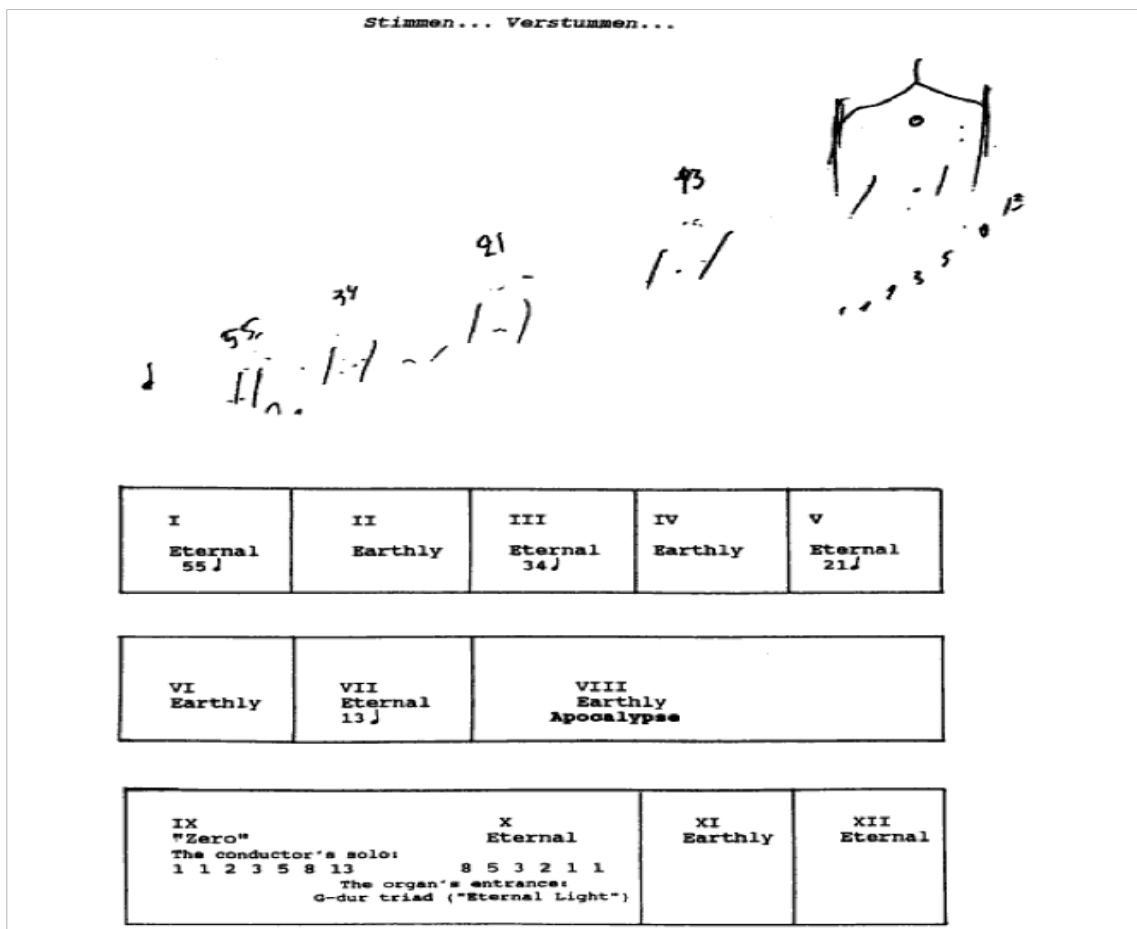


Figure 4: from Lukomsky's interview *'Hearing the Subconscious'*⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Ibid, 31.

The sketch at the top of figure 4 depicts the arc of the form, showing how the movements (labeled with their durations above) progress toward zero, the physical culmination of the countdown. The Static Gestures key in the score, shown in figure 5, provides more detailed instructions as to the conductor's choreography.

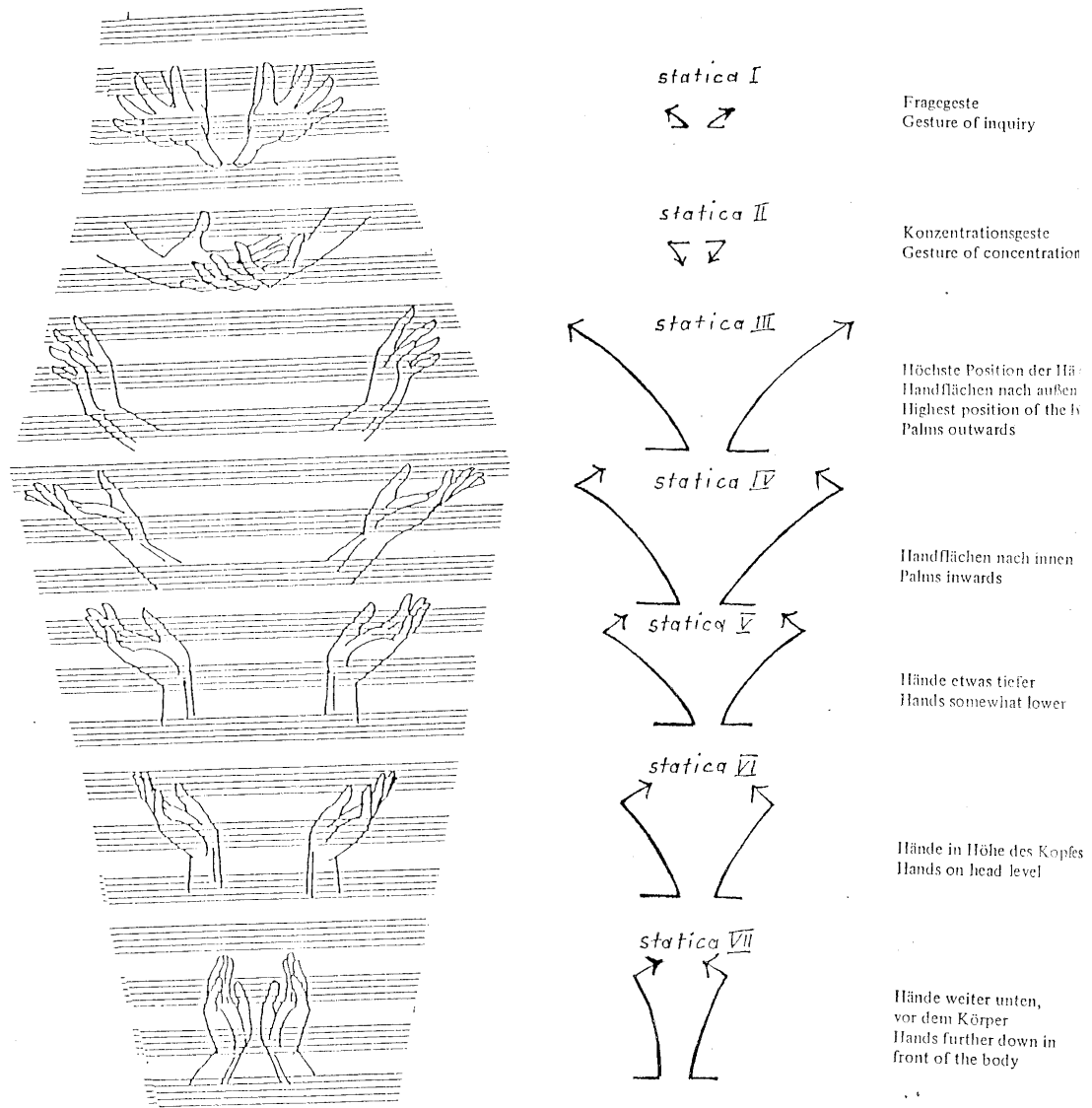


Figure 5: Static Gestures key⁶⁵

⁶⁵Sofia Gubaidulina, *Stimmen...Verstummen...: Sinfonie in 12 Sätzen*, (Hamburg: Musikverlag Hans Sikorski c) 1986), IV.

The conductor begins his solo with *Statica I*, accompanied by minimal percussion and organ, and alternates Gestures of Inquiry with conducted rhythmic patterns. He then conducts a silent ascent (the numeric durations in relation to form are listed in the bottom row of figure 4: 1 1 3 5 8 13; the gesture within score is pictured in figure 6). As the conductor's uplifted arms turn palms inward, the organ enters and the music resumes (Figure 7). From here, as the orchestra continues, the conductor returns arms down once more, following the folding progression pictured in figure 5.

These actions serve as a reversal of the structure of the entire piece: from a structural descent to zero, the conductor's body emerges to enact a physical, upward-reaching ascent from that zero and return thereto. When the arms have been slowly lowered, following their assigned durations, the symphony departs from its strict numeric structure and motivic polarity. An analysis of the piece provides the context of these movements.

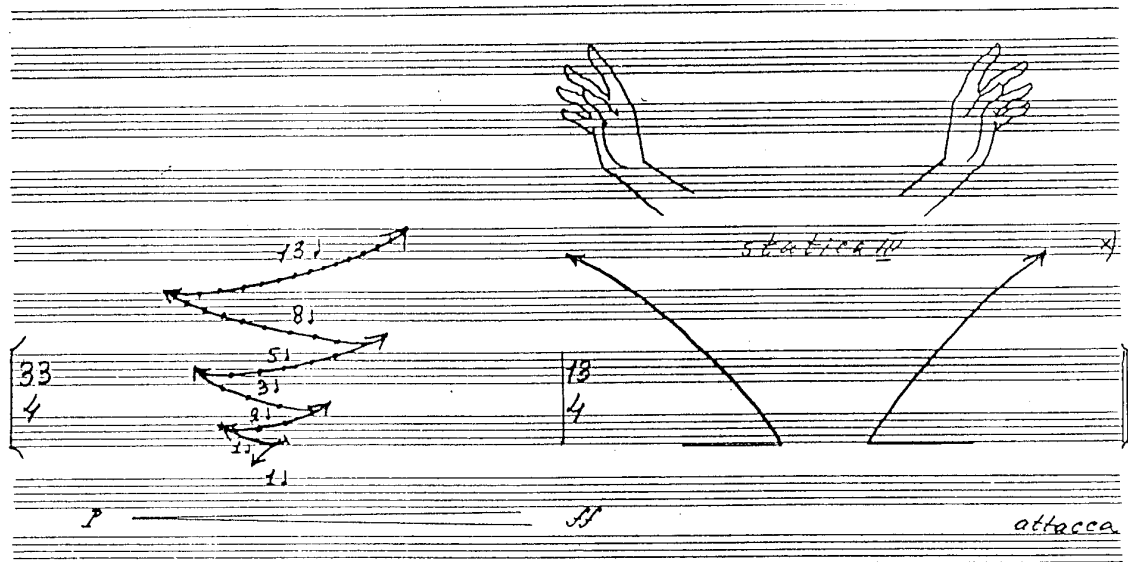


Figure 6: Gestures within the score.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Ibid, 154.

X

The musical score is divided into three sections: *statica II* (measures 1-3), *mosso* (measures 4-6), and *statica I* (measures 7-8). The Organ part features a tremolo in the upper register. The Dripend part has a melodic line with a 5-measure rest. The vocal parts (V-ni I, V-ni II, V-le, V-le II) are marked *col legno tremolo* and *diva*. The score includes conductor's hand gestures: a downward arrow for movement and a hand with fingers spread for standstill.

- * In diesem Abschnitt spielt jeder einzelne seine Einwürfe bis Ziffer 4 in einem selbständigen Tempo, das sich nicht nach den anderen Instrumentalisten richtet. Dabei achtet er ausschließlich auf die Gesten des Dirigenten. Es ist wichtig, daß der Stillstand der Handbewegung exakt mit dem Pausenbeginn zusammentrifft. Eine gewisse Ungenauigkeit beim Einsatz der Stimmen ist wünschenswert.
- * In this passage each instrumentalist plays his contribution up to fig.4, in an independent tempo paying attention only to the conductor's gestures. It is important that the standstill of the movement of the hands exactly coincides with the beginning of the rest. A certain inaccuracy in the entry of the instruments is desirable.

** Gesten des Dirigenten: gleichmäßige Abwärtsbewegung beider Hände
 Conductor's gestures: both hands moving smoothly downwards

Stillstand
standstill

Figure 7: Eternal material: *col legno tremolo*, sustained upper register.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Gubaidulina, 155.

3/4 = 67

Perc. 4.

1 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

3 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

5 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

7 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

9 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

11 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

12 V. ni II Soli

2 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

4 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

6 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

8 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

10 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

12 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

6 V-le II Sole

1 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

2 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

3 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

4 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

5 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

6 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

6 Celli II Soli

1 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

2 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

3 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

4 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

5 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

6 C.S. *pp* *sempre*

3/4 = 68

Figure 8: Earthly material: *glissandi*, chromatic motion as exhibited in the apocalypse. Here, the material has split into individual trajectories.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Ibid, 148.

Dichotomy: Earthly and Eternal in *Stimmen...Verstummen...*

Movements I through VII establish two contrasting spaces. Eternal (odd numbered) movements are characterized by static linearity: gauzy major triads, *col legno tremolo*, harmonics, and sustained tones in upper registers (Figure 7).

Earthly (even numbered) movements are primarily characterized by tugging *glissandi* and chromatic motion, as shown in figure 8. In contrast to the Eternal held tones, Earthly material consists of movement and motion, whether it be climbing upward or downward in *glissandi* or stepwise chromaticism. These “earthly” motives can be contained within a section or span the orchestra from contrabass to flute. Many times, the broad, reaching figures lead to sections of close chromatic movement between parts, a slow drooping down from the ascent.

Even as this dichotomy is being presented and developed, there are hints of upcoming entanglement. Movement I, for example, consists entirely of a D-major chord—until four measures before the end when trumpets play a jarring Ab-major against this sustain. Such foreshadowing stirs the otherwise constant opposition between Earthly and Eternal for the first half of the piece.

In Movement VI, the dichotomy begins to break down. A *caesura* in Earthly chromaticism cuts out to reveal a static *piano* G-major in the organ (hinting of specific Eternal material to come). But this chord is disturbed by another Ab-major entangling with its sustain just a minor second above. Dissonant chordal juxtapositions, interspersed with cymbals and timpani, continue to build to a full orchestral *fortissississimo* (at rehearsal 24). A single violin soars out after the terrific chord at the very top of its

register. The sporadic, jabbing chords that follow give way to wandering *trill glissandi* in all parts (Figure 8), a scattering and individualizing of the once unified *glissando* motif.

Movement VII returns again to this wandering *trill glissando* material after a darker Eternal opening. The celli *col legno tremolo* motif materializes on a low triple stop with a timpani roll forewarning of the upcoming Apocalypse. Here, the formerly ethereal technique sounds more like what the composer describes in her *Concerto for Bassoon and Low Brass*: “the ‘low strings’ personify a ‘low’ and aggressive crowd [...] their *pizzicato* and *col legno* sound like ‘pinching’ and ‘beating.’”⁶⁹

Sharp and rapid contrasts between Eternal and Earthly constitute the Apocalypse in Movement VIII. While the two subjects do not occur simultaneously, they are spliced together in increasingly small pieces. Wandering *trill glissandi* alternate with sustained triads. The organ in its major stasis interrupts the contrasting melodic movement like light peeking out from behind a billowing cloud.

Rhythm becomes far more prominent as the movement progresses (rehearsal 57). *Fortissimo* chords punctuate and then *crescendo* into a terrific *fortississimo* growing out of brass F unisons. Gubaidulina attributes many spiritual qualities to percussion: “The sound and nature of percussion,” she says, “is very complex and irrational.”⁷⁰ Bells, which also appear in this movement for the first time, interest her with their “non-linear spectrum: so much happens after they have been struck! Their reverberation has an extremely complicated inner life.” In her piece, *The Hour of the Soul*, written for the Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva, Gubaidulina uses percussion to represent the poet’s soul:

⁶⁹ Lukomsky, “Eucharist,” 30.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 30.

It may seem strange: how can the percussion instruments express a female soul? But I am sure we come across the truth: the mysticism and even the rebellious quality of percussion may serve best to represent the mystical and protesting soul [...].⁷¹

This description illuminates the lurching climax of the Apocalypse. The first introduction of a new Earthly rhythmic element appeared in Movement VI with a light arpeggiated jig in the strings. In the Apocalypse it appears with increasing frequency, interspersed between the sustained major triads and *glissandi*, each statement modulating higher in pitch chromatically. Finally, there is a staggering rhythmic climax; however, as soon as a rhythmic motive is established it stops abruptly and breaks into sporadic full-orchestra eighth-note chords as if disintegrating into vertical shards. Earthly chromatic material returns (at rehearsal 70) and leads back to the wandering *glissandi*. This wandering, individualistic Earthly motif has the last word of the Apocalypse.

Gubaidulina describes the apocalypse as “the attainment of purity.”⁷² This movement wrestles for reconciliation between the Earthly and the Eternal. Rhythm and percussion begin to form a bridge between these worlds, but the Apocalypse stops short of uniting these disparate materials. After the Apocalypse, the Eternal has not become the prominent force. And it is from the wavering *pianissimo glissandi* that the *candenza per direttore* emerges.

“My specialty is rests.” Gubaidulina says, “the longest ‘rest’ I have written so far is a conductor’s solo in the symphony *Stimmen...Verstummen...*”⁷³ The only sonic material in Movement IX is soft percussion and organ chords in the first measures. The

⁷¹ Ibid, 31.

⁷² Ivan Moody, “‘The Space of the Soul:’ An Interview with Sofia Gubaidulina,” *Tempo* Vol. 66, No. 259 (January 2012): 32.

⁷³ Lukomsky, “My Desire,” 15.

conductor begins with a “gesture of inquiry” followed by a “gesture of concentration.” Percussion enters, a 5/4 measure is followed by another gesture of inquiry. This alternating pattern continues until, as depicted in figure 5, a silent dynamic marking of *piano crescendo fortissimo* leads to the still silent Statica III: “highest position of the arms palms outward.” Lukomsky describes this as a “‘spiritualized,’ [...] meaningful concept of the Fibonacci series” as it manifests as the “absolute zero” the conductor embodies.⁷⁴

When the director reaches Statica IV, “palms inward” shown in Figure 7, what Gubaidulina refers to as the “eternal light” of the organ enters on a familiar G-major triad.⁷⁵ Marking a return to Eternal material, this begins movement X. The *col legno* strings enter “in an independent tempo paying attention only to the conductor’s gestures. [...] a certain inaccuracy in the entry of the instruments is desirable.”⁷⁶ In the duration of five dotted quarter notes, the director brings his arms to “Statica V: somewhat lower.” After eight dotted quarter notes, he performs “Statica VI: hands on head level.” After thirteen dotted quarter notes, “Statica VII: hands further down in front of the body.” With the conclusion of the director’s instructions, the celesta enters. The appearance of this instrument for the first time, a mix of tone and percussion, is the only exception to an otherwise characteristically pure Eternal movement.

XI is the last Earthly movement and is characterized by tolling bells and intervallic expansion, as opposed to movement by seconds as before. Bells carry religious imagery, but also the complex irrational frequencies Gubaidulina admires. Just as bells

⁷⁴ Ibid, 10-11.

⁷⁵ Lukomsky, “Hearing the Subconscious,” 31.

⁷⁶ Gubaidulina, 155.

resonate after they have been struck, so their placement after a violently rhythmic Apocalypse draws attention to broadening harmonic expansion after a great percussive strike.

The Eternal XII is the final movement and begins with bowed cymbals and tam tams improvised by the percussionist. She refers to these sounds in the score as “screams” and instructs movement “independent of the conductor’s gestures, being guided only by their own musical feeling.”⁷⁷ *Glissandi* and rhythmic chords occur over the two harps ominously repeating triplets (which is sustained unchanged throughout the piece). The effect is an Eternal that feels unfamiliar – an eternity consisting of what we have come to know as the characteristically Earthly. Familiar Eternal material does not appear until nearly two thirds of the way through the piece (at rehearsal 29), and when it does, its statements alternate with the eerie harp ostinato.

In the final moment of the piece, Eternal material reappears, *col legno tremolo* under a D-minor chord held in the organ. At the same moment, overlapping for the first time, is Earthly material: celli “*gliss. sempre*” into a *scordatura* so low it is nearly inaudible. The two worlds sound together for the first time, the stratospheric strings lightly hanging over the yawning celli descent.

The Body as Zero: Agreeing to Silence

Gubaidulina’s evocative, almost pictorial motives of Eternal horizontality, Earthly diagonal reaching, and Apocalyptic vertical rhythmic shards illustrate her experience of

⁷⁷ Ibid, 171.

communication. In recalling her thought processes and fear of speaking as a child, she relates verticality with an inability to self-express:

All my thoughts came to me at the same time, forming something like a vertical thought structure. Instead of a line, I experienced a vertical form. I would say something and felt at the same time that it wasn't right. It was a real tragedy for me, this pileup of disparate thoughts; I wanted to express all levels simultaneously, but of course that was impossible.⁷⁸

It is also, for her, an issue of gender identity. She continues, "I believed that a man does not experience such a disordered consciousness, that for him things are simple and clear, that his thoughts are horizontal and linear. This led me to conclude that the ability to think vertically is peculiarly feminine."⁷⁹ Gubaidulina describes her reach for horizontality as it relates to gender, light/dark, and communication:

My consciousness contains much darkness; it is not suffused with light. Men's thinking, on the other hand, is bright, logical, and very clear. My vertical thinking comes from my feminine nature. Only with great self-discipline have I learned to concentrate at the uppermost layer of my verticality and to articulate it. It took me a long time to understand that it is necessary to do so, that not all layers are equally important, that it is impossible to include everything, and that the vertical must be transformed into the horizontal. It was only then that I learned to speak coherently – even to live.⁸⁰

These binaries of male/female, light/dark resemble her earthly/eternal paradigm. Yet she simultaneously holds and destroys her own dualistic constructions, paradoxically believing "no person is either purely a man or purely a woman."⁸¹ When she brings together Earthly and Eternal within the body of the conductor, she likewise acknowledges

⁷⁸ Kurtz, *Sofia Gubaidulina: a Biography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 70.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 70. Personal note: in an extracurricular attempt to debunk this theory, I asked a friend if he experienced his thoughts as vertical or horizontal. He said he thought in "clumps."

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

their same-ness, dissolving these extremes within physical gesture. Neither purely horizontal nor vertical, the conducting body emerges from zero, reaching up and opening.

Verticality as a symbol for silence appears in other pieces as what Gubaidulina calls “gestural music.”⁸² In her setting of “Fisches Nachtgesang,” the soprano follows the vertical lines of the graphic score pictured in figure 9, reading “from head to tail of the fish.”⁸³ This movement of the larger song cycle, *Galgenlieder*, is entirely silent. The shape of the score mirrors the shape of the graphic poem she is setting. This wordless graphic poem is based on the line, “a fish opens its mouth, but nobody hears what it sings.”⁸⁴ The score instructs the singer to slowly open her mouth, wider, and then slowly close it. The double bassist and percussionist silently accompany with gestures on their instrument.

In “Fisches Nachtgesang,” Gubaidulina equates verticality with silence. As this upward shape represents the inability to sound, so does the horizontal long tone linearity of the Eternal represent clarity, an ability to shimmer on the upper layer of her verticality. The upward reaching of the *glissandi* and conductor coda reflect her reach from vertical thought. Considering her discomfort with verticality, the stacked and pointed chords that comprise the climax of the Apocalypse represent an inability to communicate – an inability “even to live.”

This communication is not only interpersonal, but between the earthly and the divine. Gubaidulina uses epistemology to describe her spirituality, saying she believes in

⁸² Lukomsky, “My Desire,” 15.

⁸³ Ibid, 14.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 13.

re-legato, reconnecting with God.⁸⁵ The upward reach of the conductor’s body mirrors her experience of religion itself as a bridge between heaven and earth and becomes a metaphor for reconnection. For her, music is “a mystical act – the act of grasping your fate.” In *Stimmen...Verstummen...*, she not only grasps, but embodies her journey within the conductor.

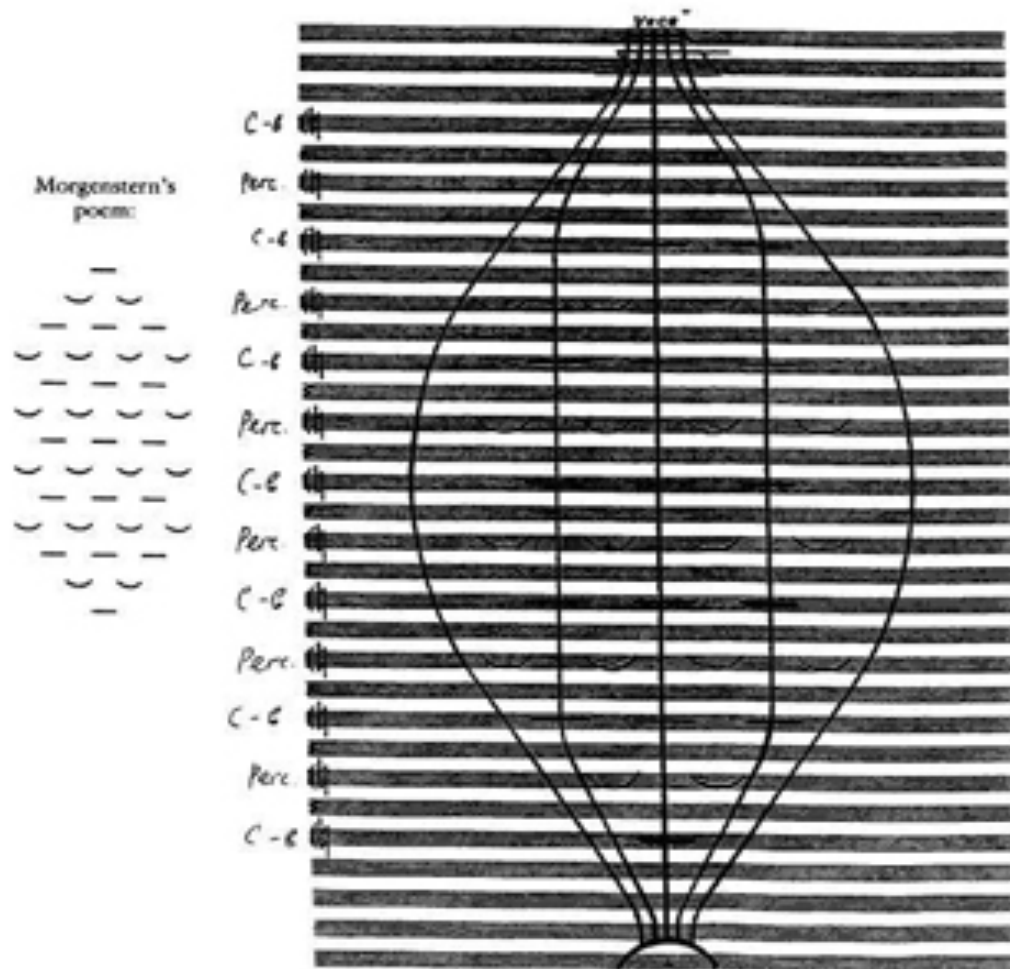


Figure 9: “Fisches Nachtgesang”⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Lukomsky, “Eucharist,” 33.

⁸⁶ Michael Berry, “The Importance of Bodily Gesture in Sofia Gubaidulina’s Music for Low Strings,” *Society for Music Theory*, Vol. 15, No. 5 (October 2009), <<http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.09.15.5/mto.09.15.5.berry.html>> (April 14, 2015).

Approaches to Personal Meaning

Consider each work [...] a kind of spiritual journey that parallels the evolution of the piece.

-Ellen Taaffe Zwilich⁸⁷

My work as a composer follows Halprin's journey into the body, Morris' reactivity through the body, and Gubaidulina's transformation through embodiment. I address the internal world of the performer and the physicality of place using text scores and graphics, as in figure 10. I use notation to structure content in order to develop material and enable a departure therefrom.

(de)attachment begins with the premise of writing a letter. This setting of an intention acts as an expansion of the silent frame from which music emerges.⁸⁸ This is the portal through which we enter the imaginary world of the piece; this world can be literal, as with visual art, or metaphorical, as with music.⁸⁹ In the minutes of silence before the music begins, this quiet introduction pulls the audience into the internal world of the performers. Program notes inform the audience of the instructions to write a letter and in so doing draws attention to the music occurring in that action. Tiny rhythmic pulses and scratches of the pen on paper are experienced within the frame of the performance.

When all letters have been written, players begin with the first of three "songs." This first melody is a love song, the second is an interruption, and the third, a goodbye.

⁸⁷ Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, *String Quartet No. 2* (Theodore Presser Company: Merion Music, Inc., 1998), preface.

⁸⁸ Richard Littlefield, *The Silence of the Frames,* in *Music/Ideology: resisting the aesthetic*, ed. Adam Krims, (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998), 213-231.

⁸⁹ Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance* (New York: Norton, 1966) as quoted in *Music/Ideology*, 285-286.

The songs, stripped of their lyrics as they appear in the score, can be played in or out of time, resulting in uniform fragments mixed with improvisatory pauses and starts. These songs were my own receptacles and landmarks of emotion in a transitional time. By removing my own words, I present the performers with the task of inhabiting them with their own intentions.

These intentions develop through the materiality of the letter-paper. As a substance, the paper is used to affect the sound of the instrument and act as a representation of the intention. Through the course of the piece the letters are whispered aloud into the bell of the saxophone, crushed into the horn as a mute, smoothed back onto the table, and, in the soprano's case, finally dissolved into water. Rather than manipulating the performers' intentions sonically, I translate them into a physical material that can be handled with privacy. (It is notable that in rehearsals I encountered hesitation to read or share letters aloud, leading me to revise my score from "READ letter into bell" to "WHISPER letter into bell." However, many times performers nonchalantly left their papers with me after our sessions, though in these cases they were always unsigned.)

When the paper finally dissolves at the end of the notated portion of the piece, the performers begin to walk in the spiral pictured in figure 10, improvising and making their way to the doors around the edges of the room. Since their physical relationship with the paper has ended, they embody the intentions themselves. When they are outside, they return again to the first notes of the piece, recalling these intentions in a new space and sounding, to the audience inside, distant and removed.

Silent Resonance

After the premiere, while the players were still backstage, audience members congregated around the altar to read the letters. Curiosity on the nature and consistency of the intentions was met with a love poem, a letter to mom, and a note one audience member described as seeming to address someone in another world. The dissolved letter hung suspended in the vase, forever silent. (Her previous letters in rehearsals were many times affectionate encouragement addressed to me.)

As the players returned to put away their instruments, a listener asked me if I had read the letters and I said I hadn't, though I had seen a few after rehearsals. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed one performer, when he overheard me saying this, abruptly grab his letter from the altar and slip it into his saxophone case, in the sort of swift gesture with which one would self-consciously cover nakedness. In that moment, I became suddenly aware of the trust the performers had extended into the piece and of the intimacy that had been formed within the safety of the composition. As I became aware of inserting myself into their world, and of my own breaching voyeurism, I also became deeply grateful for the vulnerability the performer had become suddenly aware of exposing. That vulnerability is, I believe, the very reason for creating music in the first place: so that the letter need not be read – so that it can exist as a form beyond its own.

Begin at a point in space with a musical idea.
Develop this idea within space:
Concentrate density in the center in of the room
Expand outward, engaging external influence.
Depart carrying the original intention.
End with the first notes of the piece.

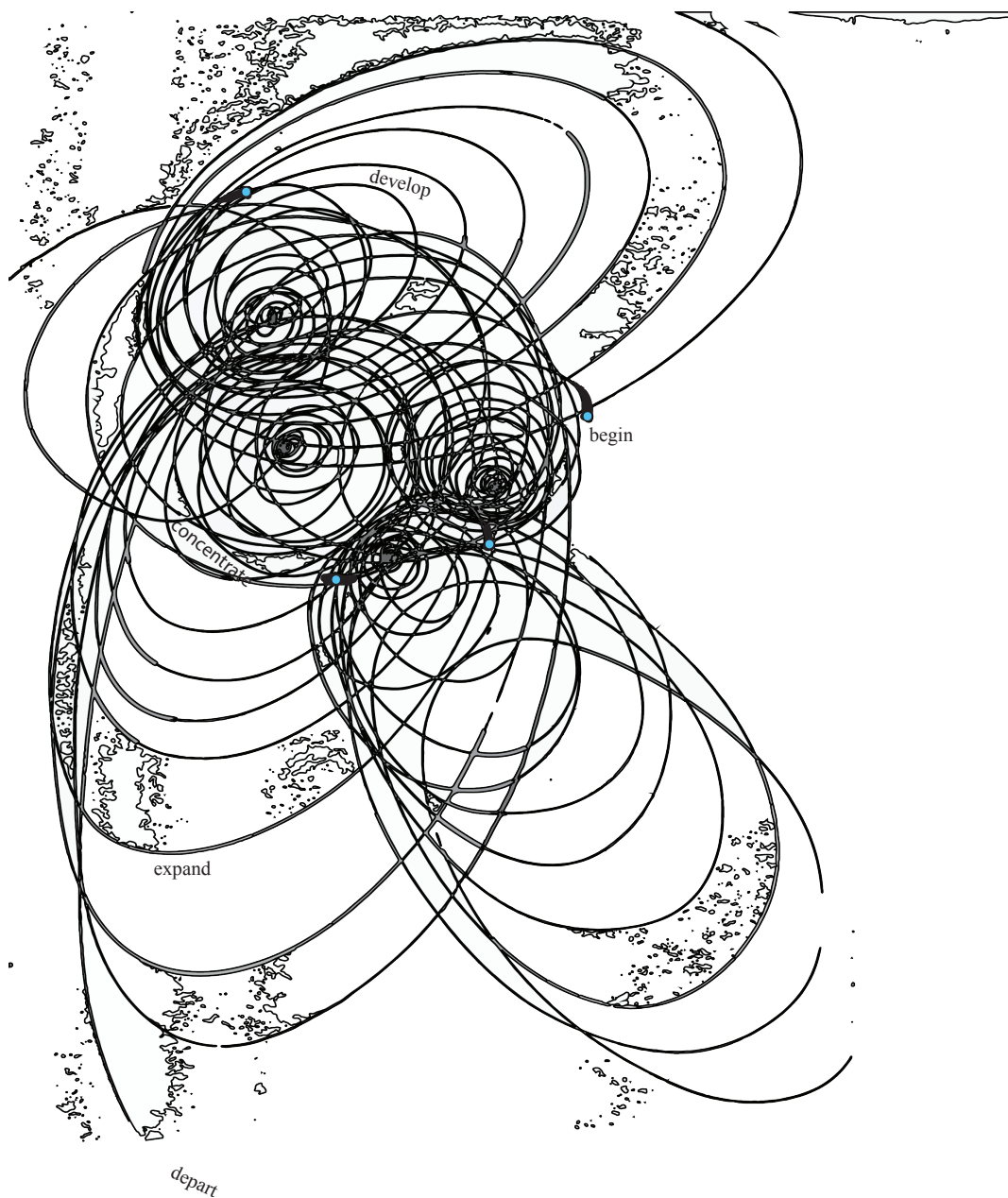


Figure 10: *(de)attachment* score⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Herndon, *(de)attachment* for saxophone quartet score, 11.

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