

STYLISTIC EVOLUTION IN EMILE NAOUMOFF'S PIANO MUSIC

by

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Submitted to the faculty of the
Jacobs School of Music in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree,
Doctor of Music
Indiana University
July 2017

Accepted by the faculty of the
Indiana University Jacobs School of Music,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Music

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July 14, 2017

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To my teacher, Emile Naoumoff

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my teacher and mentor, Professor Emile Naoumoff, for the endless support throughout my graduate study at Jacobs School of Music. His patience, motivation, and continued faith in me have encouraged me at every stage and the positive impact he has made on my life is indescribable. I shall remain the most fortunate person in the world to have had such an incredible artist for many years, I could not have asked for a better teacher. Indeed, I am deeply indebted to him for my existence as a pianist. My heartfelt gratitude also goes to the special one, one of my doctoral committee, Professor David Cartledge who had attended all of my doctoral recitals since 2012. I owe more than I can express to the continued encouragement of him throughout my studies. Furthermore, he provided me an opportunity to work as a piano teacher in the secondary piano program as well as the Young Pianists Program. Without his support, I would not be the pianist I am because I am indebted to my students for teaching me from their different perspectives. Moreover, his piano literature classes truly fueled my passion for music. I extend my thanks to my research director, Professor Norman Krieger, and another doctoral committee Professor Arnaldo Cohen for their artistic models of scholarship, musicality, and pedagogy. Their insightful guidance and invaluable lessons for this project made this essay possible.

As I recollect of countless days of crying, disappointment, anger, and self-doubting throughout this doctoral program, the whole procedure was indeed an incredible journey for me to become a better person, not only a better musician. I will not forget what I have learned and promise to live by these principles. I eternally thank each and all of you, my friends, my family, my students, my colleagues, my doctoral committee, and my special teacher.

Preface

Emile Naoumoff (born February 20, 1962 in Sofia, Bulgaria) is a French pianist, teacher, and more importantly, a composer. Among his achievements as an all-round artist, this essay focuses on his accomplishment as a composer, specifically piano compositions. He likes to refer to his music as to the soundtrack of his life, and his piano compositions truly reflect the various inspirations of his journey resulting in a dramatic stylistic evolution.

Based on distinctive compositional changes, his music can broadly be divided into four periods: the early period intrigued by Bulgarian folk music; the neoclassical period influenced by Nadia Boulanger and Igor Stravinsky; the French art song period; and lastly, the improvisation period.

The purpose of this document is to introduce his piano compositions and to provide information to help understand the musical aesthetics engraved in his music. As an introduction of his piano music, this essay aims to serve as a practical manual for pianists considering to learn his pieces and seeking guidelines.

I expect three goals in this paper.

First this paper defines distinctive features of each period. A number of excerpts from representative pieces demonstrating each period are included and each example is explored through a theoretical analysis of harmonic/rhythmic gesture, tonal scheme, phrasing, metrical features, formal structure, melodic contour, etc.

Next this document addresses the motivation and/or inspiration behind significant changes made in Naoumoff's compositional output. Compositional background and history of

the pieces are provided to demonstrate how his previous musical language influenced (and continues to influence) his subsequent stylistic periods.

Lastly, an attempt is made to outline common compositional features, his “signatures”, which encompass his entire collection of piano compositions.

In summation, this paper demonstrates how Naoumoff employed many of musical languages of his time and drew heavily on elements from Baroque, Neoclassical music, French art song, and Bulgarian folk period, using these elements, he integrated them into the music that reached the utmost level of poetry and delicacy in his piano music.

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Introduction

Emile Naoumoff started his musical journey as a prodigy at the age of five. He was a lucky son of two artistic parents: his mother, Eli Ivanova Naumova, who was culturally sophisticated, and his father, Professor Dr. Gueorgui Naumov, who was a skillful amateur musician¹ as well as a highly respected oncologist/radiologist. His extraordinary talent took him to a fateful meeting in Paris with the prestigious teacher Nadia Boulanger at the age of eight. Naoumoff became her last disciple in 1970 and studied with her for nearly ten years until her death in late 1979.

As an exceptionally gifted child, he displayed astonishing facility in composition at a very early age, which eventually led him to be the youngest composer to sign with the music publisher Schott, in Mainz, Germany, in 1980. Among various compositional genres, including opera, songs for voice and piano, symphonic pieces featuring piano, concertos, and works for chamber groups and solo instruments, the largest portion of his compositional output is written for the piano, including a sonata, preludes, small-scale works for children, fantasies, transcriptions of symphonic works, dance music, character pieces, piano duets, as well as two piano pieces dating back to 1969.

Naoumoff's piano compositions fall roughly into four broad categories:

1. 1962–1972, when he combined Bulgarian folkloric features into the format of Western traditional classical music,
2. 1973–1981, when he explored and mastered the Neoclassical idiom,

¹ He is the author of an introductory method book for accordion learners; *I learn accordion: self-teaching* (Sofia, Bulgaria: Science and Art, 1969.) Also, two of his tango compositions were recently found and will be included in a Bulgarian guitar/mandolin handbook by Virginia Danaylova.

3. 2003–2010, when his compositional inspiration was exclusively devoted towards French art songs, and

4. 2011–present, during which he primarily improvises.

Such distinctive characters from each period clearly reflect his life’s journey, even though he was less productive in composing from the latter part of the 1980s through late 1990s, as he focused on his career as a concert pianist.

The information of Emile Naoumoff’s biography was gathered over years of study with him unless indicated otherwise.

Chapter 1: Early Period

(1962–1972)

To quote him, Naoumoff recalls his earliest childhood experience as “living in a giant bubble.” His parents were highly educated professionals, yet they were fairly concerned about unstable social circumstances in Sofia, which made them decide to raise their boy mostly inside the apartment, with limited access to outdoor activities. Meanwhile, that special environment allowed him to be exposed to sophisticated culture at an early age. Indeed, his entire family was artistically enlightened, quite unusual for common families in a Communist society in 1960. For example, his grandfather, who died early, was a painter, and his grandmother was a solfège teacher who educated her son (Naoumoff’s father) to be an enthusiastic amateur musician with a high level of musical knowledge. His mother had keen insight into French literature and art nurtured in a French Catholic school. Consequently, the apartment was full of paintings drawn by his grandfather and there was always a great deal of classical music to provide him with early exposure to this art form. Thus, one could reasonably speculate that his extraordinary talent is part of the artistic heritage he carries on from this family.

As a prodigy who felt no difficulty in musically expressing himself, he started improvising on the piano before he learned the fundamentals of music; so when he started composing at the age of five, he was inevitably not capable of notating what he played. On his behalf, his father recorded what little Emile played on audio tapes and he himself notated for his son. Even after Naoumoff moved to Paris in 1970, his father’s patriotic desire to develop a taste for Bulgarian music in little Emile continued. From West Berlin (where his father resided in order to practice medicine during that time), his father sent a weekly packet that included his

own handwritten scores of Bulgarian traditional music, letters, and audio cassettes, which little Emile would listen to before falling asleep.

Therefore, it is obvious that Slavic features in his compositions from this period do not reflect his personal memories from Bulgaria, since he had already relocated at the age of seven and had had limited outdoor experience, even before he could have become conscious of his national identity or developed a nostalgia for it. Instead, his father's committed and continuous effort to establish Bulgarian musical roots in him could be the most influential factor in his compositions during this period.

Nocturno, Pastorale (1970)

Two short pieces composed in 1970 in Paris, *Nocturno*² (*La ruelle de Tryavana*, A tiny street in Triavna) and *Pastorale* are prominent evidence of his early, yet in-depth understanding of unique features of Bulgarian traditional music: irregular meters, sorrowful peasant melody, ornaments, unexpected accents and modal scales.



Example 1. *Nocturno*, mm.1—7

There is a fairly pronounced stylistic resemblance between *Nocturno* and *Pastorale*. To be more specific, both begin with a gently-walking *andante* tempo in the middle register of the

² The piece was inspired by the painting (A landscape of Triavna) of his grandfather, Vladimir Naumov (1897-1947), a Bulgarian painter. As mentioned earlier, these two pieces were notated by his father after listening to the recordings of Emile Naumoff's playing.

piano and change to *piu mosso* at the second half. As the tempo increases, the motif shifts to a lower register which greatly enhances the primitive and unrefined folkloric character. It eventually resumes its original tempo in a less agitated mood and the pieces end softly. Furthermore, both works clearly establish their tonal centers at the beginning by starting on D octave unison; as tonic for *Nocturno* and dominant for *Pastorale*. The main motives are short and repetitive following the folkloric dance music fashion, and he reinforces a peasant–song like sorrowful mood with the ornaments generously applied on the first beats.

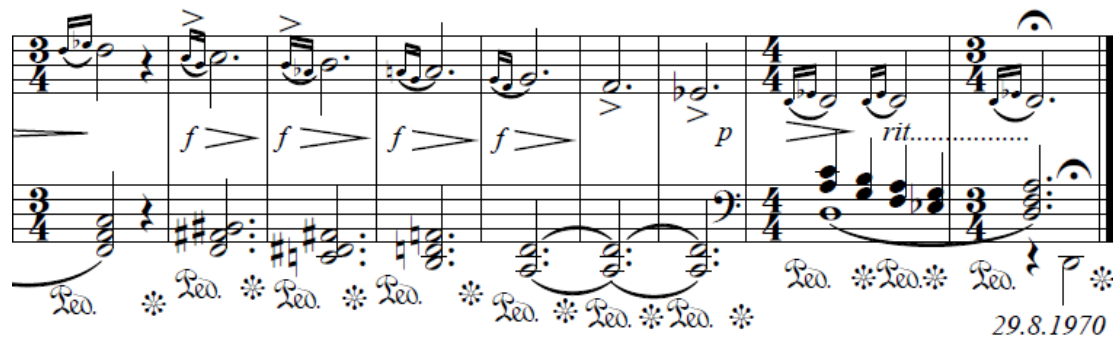


Example 2. Maqam Bayātī D

With prevailing minor second intervals (D and E–flat, A and B–flat) these two pieces are specifically built on a unique scale comprised of D, E–flat, F, G, A, B–flat, C and D, which is a slightly modified maqam Bayātī D, a type of Arabic/Turkish mode commonly used in Bulgarian music (D, E–half–flat, F,G,A,B–flat, C, D.) Maqam Bayātī is similar to a natural minor scale, with the major exception of a half–flat second degree.³ Even though Naoumoff was not aware of this denomination or the concept of the scale when composing, he must have been aurally familiar with this scale, since he was constantly exposed to Bulgarian music. With such exposure, the sound may have come to him intuitively.

³ Habib Touma, *The music of the Arabs* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1996), 24.

At the end of the *Nocturno*(mm.51–59) this maqam Bayātī D appears in its full form as a rhythmically augmented descending scale in the right hand, much like the *Pastorale* in mm.44–46.



Example 3. *Nocturno*, mm.51–59

Despite of its undeniable similarity, there is a remarkable musical development to note in *Pastorale* compared to *Nocturno* which was composed approximately three and a half months before *Pastorale*.⁴

Unlike *Nocturno*, which was composed in a homogenous texture with limited rhythmic motions, *Pastorale* is motivically more various and substantial. The opening phrase consists of two materials; one is a melancholic peasant song, and another is bell-like chord texture placed in the extreme register of the piano at the end of the phrase. This celestial chord texture provides not only textural variety, but also an unexpectedly reverent tone, as if striking a bell or gong at the end of a religious stanza sung by a group of priests in a ritual ceremony.

Not only is the main motif rhythmically more active; it also develops through a variety of rhythmic patterns across a wide range of the piano. The dynamic range expands from *ppp* to *f*, and the performance indications, as well as the musical markings, are much more detailed. The

⁴ *Nocturno* was composed on August 29, 1970 and *Pastorale* was written on December 12, 1970.

strong half-diminished seventh chord in G minor at m.28 announces another return of the main theme at m.29, which is surprisingly tonal in this modal-oriented piece.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Pastore" (Example 4), measures 1-4. The score is in G minor, 3/4 time, marked "Andante". It is a piano piece. The first system shows measures 1-4. The second system shows measures 5-8. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p* and *pp*, and articulation like accents and slurs. The piece is in a modal-oriented style.

Example 4. *Pastore*, mm.1-4

In *Nocturno*, the basic four-bar phrase is sometimes hypermetrically arranged into five-bar units (mm.9—13, 22—26 and 47—51) resulting in the phrase expansion. However, since the meter also simultaneously changes from 3/4 to 2/4 at m.10, 23 and 48 it actually retains the same twelve beats in both four and five-bar phrases (3+3+3+3, or 3+3+2+2+2 in hemiola). The primary purpose of this metrical manipulation is to have more down beats which is one of the distinctive characters of the folkloric music, too.

The phrase irregularity becomes much more evident in *Pastore*. The piece initially begins with a six-bar phrase but it is followed by three-bar phrases in mm.7—9, 10—12 and four-bar phrases in mm.13—16 and 17—20, thus creating an interesting asymmetry between the phrases. Both pieces prominently feature *bassi ostinato*, which became Naoumoff's stylistic signature. While the ostinato in *Nocturno* repeats exactly, *Pastore* features much more

variation and decoration in its ostinato presentations. This dramatic musical development between these two pieces indicate how quickly he absorbed music education he received at a very early age, and also forecasts how dramatically his music could be evolved.

Dance Bulgares (1972)

As can be seen from the title, Bulgarian influence became more prominent in Naumoff's music, beginning not long after he relocated to Paris. Unlike the two compositions mentioned earlier, he quickly became capable of notating under intensive music education, so this composition is the first one fully written by the composer at the age of ten. Consisting of three Bulgarian traditional dances, *Ruchenitza* (Handheld Dance), *Bavna Ruchenitza* (Slow Handheld Dance) and *Païdushko Horo* (Circle Dance), each movement shares similar folkloric dance characteristics: asymmetrical phrasing, compounded meter, unusual modal scales, and short, repetitive motifs.

Ruchenitza

Allegro (2+2+3)



The musical score for *Ruchenitza* (mm. 1-6) is presented in a grand staff format. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melodic line in 7/16 time, marked *Allegro (2+2+3)*. The left hand (bass clef) provides a rhythmic accompaniment. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The melody is marked *mf* and features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The bass line consists of eighth notes and rests.

Example 5. *Ruchenitza*, mm.1—6

Augmented seconds permeate the work, providing the special timbres of Arab or Turkish scales, and the modes constantly oscillate between major, minor, church and Slavic scales. It is important to note how he gradually infused classical harmonic language into the folk elements.

The significant difference between this set of Bulgarian dances and the two other pieces introduced before is the tonal modulation. Not only does this set actively modulate to other keys, but the transition is thoroughly prepared and processed. For example, in *Ruchenitza* Naoumoff prepares the modulation at m.17 through a tempo change to *andantino*. The transition prepares the upcoming modulation to F major, and the strong dominant seventh chord (V/F major) at m.20 confirms the newly approaching tonality. Another modulation in mm.29–33 towards the new key in C major at m.34 is also presented. This time, the very first bar of the main theme is repeated four times, featuring both dynamic expansion from *pp* to *mf* and contrary motion. After reaching to the C major at m.34, the piece stays briefly in it but soon gets ready to return back to home key at m.44. Since Naoumoff intentionally avoids the G-sharp leading tone throughout the piece, the m. 44 dominant seventh presentation is both shocking and gratifying. As the composer mentioned, this type of classical cadences is especially reserved for the dramatic effects to give the audience most strong hint of the upcoming tonality.

Of all dances, the second dance, *Bavna Ruchenitza* clearly demonstrates Naoumoff's interest towards the next period, neo-classicism. The piece begins with a two-bar principal accompaniment ostinato before right hand dance motif appears at m.3. Because of Naoumoff's characteristic leading-tone avoidance, there is barely any harmonic tension, but frequent weak-beat accents coupled with a dramatic change of dynamic to *f* reinforces the intensity of the dance from m.14. Upon the Piccardy third cadence at m.26, the piece seems to have a peaceful breathing moment.

Example 6. *Bavna Ruchenitza*, mm.37—53

However, now the dance motif appears in the bottom with thicker and larger percussive chords in right hand. This tension is intensified through the following crescendo in mm.35–38, and leads us to the highly unexpected cadence in A flat major, the Neapolitan, at m. 38.

Before the audience fully digests this harmonic surprise, the piece turns again in a completely different direction with a dramatic change of texture, register, and dynamic, from percussive to linear, from *ff* to *p*, and from thick to light. This mysteriously colored modulation slowly moves down to a lower register and leads the audience to the return of the beginning material at m.46 as the peaceful two–bar introduction is again followed by the main the motif at m.48.

However, this time the main motif is in A minor on top of the F-sharp minor ostinato in the bottom, which is answered by another type of bi-tonal section in mm.52–57, C-sharp minor main motif coupled with ostinato accompaniment in C-sharp major.

The image displays a musical score for two systems of music. The first system, starting at measure 39, features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with an ostinato accompaniment. A dynamic marking 'f' is present. The second system, starting at measure 49, continues the melodic line and accompaniment, with dynamic markings 'ff' and 'sff'.

Example 7. Païdushko Horo mm.39—56

In the same vein, another piece of evidence of Naumoff's interest in bi-tonality is shown in the last dance, *Païdushko Horo*. After the famous Dominant E repeating drum, the main motif appears again at m. 41, but from now he uses mixed mediants (C-sharp and C-natural) and leading tones (G-sharp and G-natural) implying A major and A minor, which clearly demonstrates the most essential feature of neo-classicism: bi-tonality.

Chapter 2: Neoclassical Period

(1973—1981)

As soon as Nadia Boulanger recognized this young boy's marvelous talent, he and his mother relocated to Paris to study with her, who chose to teach him as her last disciple while his father was away in West Berlin, working to financially support him. The composer recollected that his father's physical absence made him suffer tremendously, more than the stress he received from the heavy assignments he was given every day during that time. Indeed, his daily schedule was unimaginably packed. He received intensive music training on a daily basis, including solfege, keyboard harmony, counterpoint, analysis, music history, orchestration, accompanying, rhythmic dictation, sight-reading in all seven clefs, and various lectures, on top of three-hour musicianship lessons three times a week, which Nadia Boulanger generously offered him. Surrounded by teachers in their senescence and other students in their thirties who had already established their careers in music, he sometimes found a reprieve from his adult-like childhood when his mother would gift him a *Matchbox* toy car as a reward after a satisfactory lesson.⁵

It must have been such a heavy weight for an eight-year old boy to carry, since he had to start his day at 5 am and continue working until late into the night to follow this schedule. Nonetheless, he was willing to take that responsibility as his duty, because he was conscious of the sacrifices his family made for him and the humbling obligation towards the "unusual" talent; as Nadia Boulanger regularly emphasized, it was "a gift from God."

⁵ Emile Naoumoff, "My chronicles with Nadia Boulanger," edited by Gregory Martin, 2015, https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/9aaf97_fd97e9af97934dca8e96720cd66e5f08.pdf (accessed April 15, 2017). 61.

Owing to her dedicated tutelage and the fact that she invested in every meeting for him, his gift started blossoming tremendously and he absorbed this enormous amount of knowledge like a sponge. The more he studied others' compositions, the more quickly his compositions grew more fluent and sophisticated. In particular, Nadia Boulanger's in-depth understanding of Stravinsky's music in the Neoclassical idiom directly passed down to Naoumoff, eventually leading him to compose a number of pieces in that style. This stylistic evolution in a totally different direction was only possible because he was already intimately familiar with an extensive repertoire of composers, ranging from the ancient to the modern, by age ten. Starting from his first attempt, 4 inventions (1972), his subsequent pieces, such as the Youth Sonata – Bulgaria's creation (1972), Marching, from the Suite in memory of a heroic child (1974), Sonata (1980—2002), Dedicatio 1 and Tango (directly inspired by Stravinsky's tango pieces) from Serenata (1982) demonstrate his fascination with the Neoclassical idiom during this period.

4 Inventions (Four Two-Part Inventions, 1972)

This piece could be considered Naoumoff's first decisive step into the neoclassical style. The set of inventions consists of four pieces: Moderato, Andante, Moderato, and Animato.

In a traditional contrapuntal genre from the Baroque period, the first invention, Moderato, is structured in the typical "Scarlatti sonata" simple binary form with roughly two equal sections spanning mm. 1—10 and 11—23. The tonal scheme is quite obvious. The piece starts on the tonic, A, and modulates to its dominant, E, at the end of the first part, and from the second half it moves back to the tonic. While taking advantage of the form's neatness and balance, Naoumoff actively applies chromaticism to blur the tonal clarity, as can be seen all over the piece. There is neither a main theme nor a pure accompaniment pattern, but the two voices are fairly equally

treated in imitative motion, naturally requiring pianists to employ more control and dexterity.

The ascending subject in perpetual sixteenths begins on the downbeat on the tonic, and the lower voice immediately imitates the upper at the octave below in m. 2. The new material, consisting of falling leaps with light chromaticism in a slower rhythm, is introduced as a countersubject at m. 2 in the upper voice and it is also immediately answered by the left hand at m. 3.

Musical score for Example 8, First Invention (Moderato) mm. 1-2. The score is in 3/4 time and features a rapid change of meter from 3/4 to 4/4. The upper voice begins with an ascending subject in perpetual sixteenths, while the lower voice imitates it at the octave below. A new countersubject is introduced in the upper voice at m. 2, consisting of falling leaps with light chromaticism, which is then answered by the left hand at m. 3. The tempo is marked Moderato (♩ = 104). Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte).

Example 8. First Invention (Moderato) mm. 1-2

A rapidly changing meter alternating among 3/4, 4/4, 2/4 and 1/4 within the first ten bars creates frequent heavy downbeats influenced by folk music, and this also contributes to the piece's interesting phrase asymmetry in imitative motions. The sudden change of dynamics in mm.5-8, (crescendo from *p* to *ff* in mm.5-6 followed by a sudden *subito p* to *fff* at m. 7, followed by another *subito p* leading to *pp* at m. 8) is smartly coupled up with running chromatic sixteenths to build up a dramatic driving force.

Example 9. First Invention (Moderato) mm. 5-10

Each part's intriguing endings draw attention. The major seconds at the end of the first part, at m. 10, shows the clear influence of Slavic traditional music, since the major second is mostly a common tone placed at the end of a piece within the Bulgarian tradition, where it almost functions like a "unison" (which is why Naoumoff ingeniously named it the "Bulgarian unison"). Conversely, the end of the second part's ending at m. 23 finishes on an A major tonic chord with a Picardy third (C sharp), betraying his interest in Western traditional tonality. Frequent short rests in mm. 9-10, 13-14 reveal his fascination with stark timbres, influenced by Igor Stravinsky. From this point, his interest in the neoclassical idiom developed in a more substantial way through the next decade, and it is truly crystallized in the next piece I introduce, the Piano Sonata.

Piano Sonata (1980, rev. 2002)

Like Franz Liszt, Samuel Barber, and Alban Berg did, Naoumoff contributed to the piano sonata repertory, and this is the first and last piano sonata. This outstanding piano sonata began life in conventional three-movement format, fast-slow-fast without titles, in 1980. To quote him, he was an “impatient eager young musician,” so when he was offered a publication deal for his piano sonata by the prestigious publisher Schott, he was in hurry to transform his other work for two violins into the last movement for the piano sonata, since he had only two movements ready at that moment. He later regretted his actions in rushing into publishing, so he decided to rework this sonata. His newly-composed *Passacaglia Fugata*, in a neo-Baroque style, became the sonata’s fourth movement, and his piano solo piece *Impasse* (Perpetual Movement, 1982) was transposed to fit into the second movement. Italian titles were added, since he thought it to be the most authoritative language for the musical designations. It was completed in 2002 and the current version of the sonata is shaped as follows.

1. Sinfonia
2. Scherzo Perpetuo
3. Aria
4. Passacaglia Fugata
5. Toccata

Among a number of his piano compositions, this piece is officially considered the most demanding one to perform due to its technical demands, rhythmic/harmonic complexity, tonal distortion, its variety of genres, and the length, lasting approximately 35-40 minutes. Each movement is distinctively characterized in its own way. For example, the Scherzo Perpetuo is written exclusively on white keys, and the texture is a stylistically obvious homage to minimalism. With constant motion in each hand, the simple pattern is endlessly repeated without

seeking any harmonic/motivic development or emotional involvement. From time to time the accents are placed on weak beats to surprise listeners who have acclimated to this mechanical hypnosis, but as the title means, “no outlet” in French, the piece goes nowhere but runs in circles over and over again. At a certain point the piece suddenly stops without any preparation and directly transitions to the next movement, Aria.

The Passacaglia Fugata is built over a variety of contrapuntal techniques with polytonality, and its crisp sound and motoric motion in the Toccata reminds listeners of Stravinsky’s *Octet*.

Among the five movements, the first movement, Sinfonia, is the best example demonstrating Naoumoff’s indulgence in the Neo-classical idiom. In its unmistakable three-part Classical sonata-allegro form, the listener would almost immediately become aware of the two contrasting themes in the first part. After its systematical motivic development, the obvious resemblance between the first and last sections betrays the sonata form. What distinguishes this piece from his early compositions is that Naoumoff became increasingly adept at using bitonality with rich chromaticism, resulting in intentional tonal distortion while being comparatively straightforward in the formal structure.

The introduction, mm.1-7, begins with the grandiose low C held by the sostenuto pedal, creating a lush sonority before two contrasting ideas in the opening are displayed: the bi-tonal chordal section in a majestic French overture style and a swift set of sixty-fourths that interrupts the descending chordal motion. The composer mentioned that these two materials are especially designed to bring out contrasting musical effects; specifically, the set of sixty-fourth notes imitates electronically created sounds, in contrast to the rich sonorities within the chordal section.

Maestoso (♩ ≈ 84)

f *mf* *ff*

S. P.

2

f *mf* *ff*

S. P.

Example 10. Piano Sonata, first movement, mm.1-3

After this splendid opening, the primary theme starts at m. 7, marked *Allegro vivo e ritmico*. The first theme weights significantly: not only does it demonstrate his inspiration from Bulgarian folk music with its prevailing major/minor seconds in dance-like rhythms, but this is also the main ingredient for the second theme, which was inverted into major/minor seconds. Even though E flat, as a tonic pedal, is reinforced by the reiterated bass ostinato in major–seventh chords, this dissonance is neither resolved nor does it wish to be, like we have witnessed in Stravinsky’s music. It simply functions like a percussive consonance until it reaches the second theme at m. 23.

Allegro vivo e ritmico (♩ ≈ 168)

Example 11. Piano Sonata, first movement, mm.7-9

Contrasting with the primitive dance-like first theme, the second theme in C is sensually lyrical and even melancholy, with its expressive leaps in sevenths in chromatic motion, reminding one of Alban Berg's incredibly appealing opening to the Piano Sonata op. 1. Hearing one last recall of the first theme in mm.48-54, the piece proceeds to the development.

Un poco meno mosso

Example 12. Piano Sonata first movement, mm.27—30

In addition to its conventional threefold scheme and tonal relation between two themes (E flat major and C minor) cast in textural contrast, the motivic development in this second part is more than straightforward. Percussive large chords, a reiterated ostinato, frequent meter changes, modal scales, and unexpected accents on off-beats all reveal his affection for Bulgarian folk music, but the way he treats these themes (through voice imitations, invertible counterpoint,

rhythmic augmentation and diminution, and repeats in different registers) is quite conventional and conventionally “Westernized.”

Example 13. Piano Sonata, first movement, mm. 57-63

After the rhythmic metamorphosis into a compound meter (9/16) at m. 58 (second theme in A) and m. 65 (first theme in C-sharp), followed by rhythmic modification and juxtaposition in mm.68-69, the composer leads us to a crucial moment, the return of the full-fledged second theme in E minor in mm. 87-94. It seems to clearly signal the recapitulation, but it is actually a witty manipulation to deceive our expectations within the sonata form; indeed, we are still in the development, as hinted by the supertonic “E minor” (where the recapitulation would be in the home key). By canonically imitating the first theme’s incipit in mm. 98-100, and including rhythmic acceleration in mm. 100-1, Naoumoff completely transforms the first theme into the left hand ostinato at m. 102 while the second theme appears on top with lighter articulation.

When we reach the cadenza at m. 112, the reiterated ostinato in the left hand is randomly interrupted by the modified tonic C chord, and the frequent meter change builds up the piece's driving force.

Example 14. Piano Sonata, first movement cadenza, mm. 120-122

Exponentially expanded in its register, dynamics, and rhythmic motion, the cadenza finally reaches its climax at m. 120, the *cadenza furioso, violento e rivoltato*. This section covers almost the piano's entire range and produces an extremely powerful sonority in a *fff* dynamic with the damper pedal blurring the swiftly-moving notes. This momentary but unforgettable firework seems demanding for performers to play, but in fact, the composer specifically used small-font notation to allow the performers to flexibly play random notes as long as its creates mechanical brilliance within a similar melodic line. The return to E flat major signals the beginning of the recapitulation at m. 112. Compared to the exposition, this recapitulation is not

only more concise, with a shorter first theme area, but it also omits the second theme, which is only slightly suggested in the right hand in mm. 132-3, juxtaposed over the first theme in the lower part.

The image shows a musical score for a piano sonata, first movement, measures 128-133. It is written in 8/8 time. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 128-130) features a right hand with a melodic line and a left hand with a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system (measures 131-133) continues the melodic and rhythmic patterns. Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, and *(p)*. There are also markings for 'Red.' and '*' in the bass staff.

Example 15. Piano Sonata, first movement, mm. 128-133

After the coda in mm.140-8, which mirrors the opening with dynamic expansion from *ppp* to *fff*, the piece finishes in an extremely low register in a *ppp* dynamic. What distinguishes this coda from the opening is that the set of sixty-fourth notes no longer interrupts the French overture motif; rather, it only appears once at the end of the piece and quickly dies away.

Chapter 3: French Art Song Period

(2003–2010)

After gaining admiration as a concert pianist through the 1980s and 1990s, and during which time he performed in more than a hundred concerts a year throughout the world, his family moved from Paris to America in 1998 so that he could serve as a piano professor at the Jacobs School of Music, in Bloomington, Indiana. Unfortunately, relocating to a dramatically different place caused him inescapable emotional emptiness. He inevitably started feeling nostalgic for his cultural homeland, France: he especially missed Nadia Boulanger, the music of Gabriel Fauré, poetry and literature by French symbolists, and the highly cultivated artists he encountered daily in France. Like many of the composers before him had (for example, Chopin in his *Mazurkas* or Albeniz in his *Iberia*) he was seeking a way to express his nostalgia in his music, and French art song was the genre he considered the most French, the means by which he hoped to reconnect with his adopted homeland.

The composer passionately and somewhat obsessively devoted himself to the French art song during this period while being less productive in other genres, as Robert Schumann did in 1840. He worked on this project daily after his lessons until late into the night; consequently, he created more than 300 art songs based on the poems of French symbolistic poets such as Paul Verlaine, Charles Baudelaire, Emile Verhaeren, Jean Moréas, Albert Samain, Henri de Régnier, Auguste de Villiers de l'Isle–Adam, and others. What significantly attracted him to these specific poems was their profoundly evocative and eloquent powers of symbolic description, using nature to express the human psyche. For instance, they use the descriptive filter of the four seasons as an analogy for the various stages within life: love, hope, and despair.

What he especially considered crucial in song composition was to avoid systematically imitating the words with the piano part, as in 16th-century madrigal writing practice, since he was afraid of destroying the music's nuance and delicacy by exaggerating what the words delivered. Rather, he keeps the piano part subtle (except to highlight a climactic point) to create a beautiful counterpoint to the text. He is able to suggest a lot within space and time without overpowering the words, yet he also highlighting them with an inner incandescence. Indeed, compared to the previous compositions he created in the Neoclassical period, his music had become much clearer in tonality, lighter and thinner in texture, less contrapuntal in its textural complexity, more delicately nuanced in its harmonies, and more gently narrative in its melody.

Naoumoff has set some of same poems that Gabriel Fauré, Henri Duparc, and Claude Debussy also used. A great deal of similarity in musical writing is apparent, corresponding to those composers' styles, especially in the piano introductions, between Naoumoff's and Fauré's songs. One of his signature styles, featuring rich chromaticism, is the main difference between Fauré and Naoumoff's compositions: Naoumoff uses chromaticism as a tool to express the protagonist's emotionally intense situation and to describe the singer's emotional status, instead of intentionally distorting the key or manipulating the motivic content, as he had done in the previous period.

In spite of his less prolific output in other genres during this period, the musical language he developed from French art songs—an intimate setting of the melody, anti-climactic phrase shapes, main motifs with narrative moods, and the absence of obsessive motivic development—became great assets for the composition in the following period, and all are found in his modular prelude.

Modular Prelude (*Prélude à Géométrie Variable*, 2013)

Composed in Bloomington in 2013, and published in 2014 by Schott, in Mainz, Germany, this extraordinary piece draws our attention at first through its puzzling title, in which “modular” suggests a couple of performance options pianists could make by variously assembling its layers. To be more specific, the right-hand part is itself a prelude for the right hand and the bottom two voices form a prelude for left hand. These preludes can be performed as two individual preludes for each hand or could also be played together, as published, by one performer. Furthermore, two pianists simultaneously can play each prelude as a duo piece, or four hands one piano can be another option when each voice is played by a separate pianist, each with one hand.

At the beginning of the composition process, Naoumoff started writing both hands together, but soon after decided to work on the left hand first. After completing the right hand part, he placed that on top of the left-hand part to complete the composition. A few sections had to be re-adjusted to solve the issues surrounding hand disposition, register use and harmonic/melodic discrepancy between the two hands.

Scriabin’s prelude for the left hand, op. 9 no.1 in C-sharp minor, which the composer loved to play for an encore, became the main inspiration for his left hand prelude, as can be seen in examples 14 and 15. This piece is indeed suitable for pianists who are eager to develop their agility, independency and left hand thumb flexibility, since the thumb sings a beautifully sustained melody while being accompanied by pumping chords with the weaker fingers.

I PRÉLUDE

A. SCRIBINE, Op.9. N°1

Andante

* Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped.

Example 16. Alexander Scriabin, *Prelude* op. 9, no. 1 mm. 1-3

Eloquent et vibrant (♩ ~ 84)

mf *p* *mf* *p*

mpp
Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

Example 17. *Prelude*, part for left hand, mm. 1-4

The kind of melody-accompaniment combination is also shown in the prelude for right hand, except this time the accompaniment contains endless trills underneath the soothing aria in the example. The unique texture in each voice is this piece's most noticeable feature. When the composer came up with this exquisite design, he specifically chose to write textural distinctiveness into each voice so the listeners could follow its own horizontal layer from beginning to end.

Murmure chanté (♩ ~ 84)

p
pp *tr*
baigné de pédales

Example 18. Prelude, part for right hand, mm.1-4

The left hand's melody is pleading, elegiac, and yearning at every point in the questioning gesture, whereas the right hand's melody is less expressively spoken, but more soothing in its answering character. The repetitively pounding chords characterize a desperate yearning that gives the expressive impetus to the melody while the whispering trills symbolize a subtle, yet evident inner, shivering soul. Altogether, what we hear is, in short, a single mood penetrating the piece, an elegy.

The melodic line rises, only to drop, and its slightly major-colored chords quickly disappear even before we fully notice them. Without any dramatic exploration or climax the piece sorrowfully finishes on the tonic in C minor in a low register. In spite of this piece's obvious charms, which will greatly appeal to many pianists, this piece is not easy to access due to not only its technical difficulty but also the advanced listening ability required to differentiate each voice's distinctive characters. The least flexible fingers, the thumbs, are responsible for almost never-ending trills as well as sustaining the melody, so it is almost impossible for pianists to perform this piece convincingly if they do not have great agility, suppleness and thumb flexibility. The hand-crossed sections in mm. 15-18, then 23-30 are also another challenge potentially causing unstable posture for pianists. On top of this, the widely spread arpeggios in

the left hand (sometimes spanning more than three octaves) constitute one of many hurdles, especially for pianists with only moderate-sized hands.

(♩ ~ 84)
Murmure chanté
p
pp *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr*
(baigné de pédales lorsque joué à la main droite seule)

mf *Eloquent et vibrant* *p* *mf* *p*

mpp
Ped. * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.* *

Example 19. *Modular Prelude*, mm. 1-4

Nonetheless, the composer later stresses the importance of the two preludes being played simultaneously since each prelude is one individual monologue, and the two individual monologues can only evolve into one dialogue when combined together in performance. Indeed, his statement accounts for the continuous metrical dissonance between both hands throughout this piece. Once the rhythmic pattern of each hand has been established, it continues without variations until the end of the piece. Both preludes are written in 3/4 time, but most of the right hand part actually implies a compound duple meter with two dotted quarters, inevitably resulting in relentless two-against-three metrical dissonance. When the right hand changes from two to three (with three quarter notes) at m. 15, that very moment is the rare point where the two hands comfortably line up in their rhythmic motion as two monologues become one dialogue in agreement after a long argument.

14 *poco rit.*
p

pp *tr*

14 *tr*

poco rit.

a tempo

a tempo

Sb

ped. * *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped.* *

*

Example 20. *Modular Prelude*, mm. 14-15

Chapter 4: Improvisation

(2011-Current)

While he was studying with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, she strictly forbade students from improvising unless it was meticulously structured and formatted. She was indeed a true definition of the “perfectionist.” As one of the most indescribably exceptional, yet self-critical artists⁶, her artistic philosophy was fairly strict in that she believed that each piece must be presented only when it reached a supreme level. In the same vein, everything had to be written so composers could have enough time to re-organize their thoughts for improvement.⁷ To her, composition was the holy procedure through which an artist could keep the essence of the inspiration and endlessly sculpt it until it reached the highest level, rather than keeping everything that emerged at the moment of inspiration. This explains why, as her last protégé, Naoumoff had to postpone his urge to improvise for a long time. Even he himself considered improvisation as a secondary skill for pop musicians rather than a significant form of art.

Nonetheless, after his intensive period of composing French art songs, he felt a strong need to express emotional outbursts in a more spontaneous way, and finally, he liberated himself from this long restraint. In 2011, he started improvising and recording video clips of it. The first improvisation dates back to March 7th, 2011, in Recital Hall at Indiana University. Since then he avidly keeps a journal of improvisations, updated on daily basis. Currently, he has uploaded nearly 5500 videos onto his YouTube channel.

⁶ Léonie Rosenstiel, *Nadia Boulanger: A Life in Music* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 24.

⁷ Caroline Potter, *Nadia and Lili Boulanger* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006), 127.

Because of the nature of improvisation, his music is much freer, more narrative, and more spontaneous, with lyrical melodies he mastered through his French art song composition. Since this practice serves as an emotional journal for him, he does not shy away from expressing his most intimate and sensitive feelings in his improvisations. In his opinion, improvisation is something that composers can use to let their spirits expand without any boundaries, even knowing or allowing for its redundancy or lack of novelty. Indeed, the process (writing) and product (performing) form an insoluble amalgam in his music.⁸

Naoumoff has confessed that only one out of every thousands of improvisations miraculously comes without the slightest doubt, as if the piece had already existed and he has known it from memory for so long. This rarely happens, but it does indeed happen. His *Romance* and *Seven Sisters Ballade* (2012) are two prominent examples of it. Later, the composer mentioned that he has to do exactly the same thing as his father did for little Emile's earliest improvisations: record an improvisation and listen to it repeatedly to notate it on manuscript paper, bar by bar. Both of these pieces were published by Schott in 2014 with two other pieces in a set of *Fantasies*⁹. These two pieces are dedicated to Yau Cheng, a former piano student of his.

Le parfum de l'âme (The Scent of the Soul, 2013) is another excellent piece representing this period. Compared to *Romance*, this piece is structurally and motivically more substantial, with two essential themes, and the performance duration is approximately 10 minutes, three times longer than *Romance*. The piece is dedicated to Gabriel Fauré, whose heritage served as the musical foundation for Nadia Boulanger, and her disciple, Emile Naoumoff.

⁸ Nicholas Cook, "Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance." *Society for Music Theory* 7 (Nov. 2001):20, http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook_frames.html.

⁹ Two other pieces include *Las Brisas* (1996) and *Prélude à géométrie variable* (Modular Prelude, 2013).

Romance (2012)

Composed in London in 2012, the *Romance* is an incredibly emotional, narrative, and intensively dramatic piece. Even though the piece is only approximately 3 minutes long, it generously paints the composer's delicate emotional stages bar by bar. Compared to his other pieces from the previous periods, this piece's structure is rather loose. An intimate two-bar introduction in d minor, marked "*Tendrement abandonné*" (tenderly abandoned), invites the four-bar main motif in mm. 3-6 in an arch-like contour. This main motif repeats almost until the end of the piece through constant permutations over a wide range on the piano, and this seems to form one single thought. He remains in a four-bar phrase pattern (with breath marks written every four bars) almost until the end, and this periodicity can be considered one of the compositional features he indulged in his French art song period.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Tendrement abandonné" (mm. 1-4). The score is written for piano in 4/4 time. The first two bars (mm. 1-2) are marked *p* and *Legato cantabile*. The first bar has a fermata over the final note. The second bar has a breath mark. The third bar is marked *mf* and has a breath mark. The fourth bar has a breath mark. The score is divided into two sections by a double bar line. The first section is labeled "Tendrement abandonné (♩ ~ 48)" and the second section is labeled "(♩ ~ 63)". The second section has a fermata over the final note. There are also some markings like "Red." and "*" below the staff.

Example 21. *Romance*, mm. 1-4

The most noticeable style characteristic in this piece is the lavish use of ornaments. Not only does this motif recur many times through a wide range, it is variously and continuously embellished with a variety of ornaments, including mordents, turns, grace notes, and arpeggios.

Among those, the widely spread arpeggio is one of his favored textures, which can be easily found in other pieces, since he has always wanted to depict emotional depth by providing

a rich piano sonority with the low bass. The ornaments placed on top of wide arpeggios, the mordents, are particularly significant, too. Not only do they highlight the end of the large arpeggio, but they allow the pianists to regain the momentum they lose from playing widely spread notes.

Throughout the piece, when the melody moves up the dynamic level increases, and the sound decays away when the melody descends, as if the storyteller is hopeful at the beginning of each phrase but soon resignedly accepts his/her unchangeable situation. Detailed dynamic and tempo markings hold particular weight, since they imply what kind of emotional fluctuation and mental restlessness the composer went through while composing. The sustaining melody is in an *arioso* style and the obsessively grounded low basses are indeed operatic. Specifically, the frequently repeated tonic bass ostinato on D is an essential part of the theme and enriches the piece's yearning character.

The musical score shows two staves. The bass staff has a constant D note (pedal point) marked 'Leo.' with asterisks. The treble staff has wide arpeggios with mordents and ornaments. Dynamics include 'ppp' and '8va' markings. A tempo marking '(♩ ~ 72)' is present at the start.

Example 22. *Romance*, mm. 37-42

The piece continuously oscillates between major and minor mode, and unexpected dissonant notes are deliberately placed from time to time onto the richly chromatic background, communicating the composer's vulnerable emotions. However, as the D major tonic chord on m. 30's first beat suggests, D major becomes more evident as the piece proceeds and the composer

finally confirms D major on the first beat of m. 34. From m. 37 a dramatic textural change occurs; a simple chordal progression appears in rising motion without any ornaments, rhythmic variety, or constant dynamic changes. Through simply ascending half notes, which reach into an extreme high register at a *ppp* dynamic, the composer peacefully finishes this piece with a sense of stasis as if he hopes to believe in ultimate optimism through whatever adversity he may encounter in life.

The Scent of the Soul (Le parfum de l'âme, 2013)

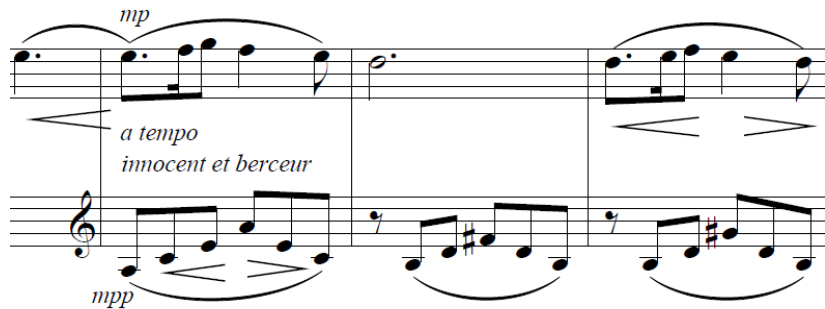
The Scent of the Soul is a single-movement piece created on November 13th, 2013 in Bloomington. With its exceptionally poetic character, the piece is substantial, containing two themes in a somehow unique ternary form; A (1-53)-B (54-133)-A+B (134-169).

The image shows a musical score for the first theme of 'The Scent of the Soul'. It is in 4/4 time and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The tempo is marked as '♩ ~ 60' and the mood is 'Profondément narré'. The treble staff begins with a 'legato' marking and a dynamic of 'mf'. The bass staff begins with a dynamic of 'mp' and a 'Trio' marking. The score shows four measures of music. The first measure has a half note G4, a half note A4, and a half note B4. The second measure has a half note C5, a half note D5, and a half note E5. The third measure has a half note F5, a half note G5, and a half note A5. The fourth measure has a half note B5, a half note C6, and a half note D6. The bass staff has a tremolo pattern of eighth notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, B31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, B32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, B33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, B34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, B35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, B36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, B37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, B38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, B39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, B40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, B41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, B42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, B43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, B44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, B45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, B46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, B47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, B48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, B49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, B50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, B51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, B52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, B53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, B54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, B55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, B56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, B57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, B58, C59, D59, E59, F59, G59, A59, B59, C60, D60, E60, F60, G60, A60, B60, C61, D61, E61, F61, G61, A61, B61, C62, D62, E62, F62, G62, A62, B62, C63, D63, E63, F63, G63, A63, B63, C64, D64, E64, F64, G64, A64, B64, C65, D65, E65, F65, G65, A65, B65, C66, D66, E66, F66, G66, A66, B66, C67, D67, E67, F67, G67, A67, B67, C68, D68, E68, F68, G68, A68, B68, C69, D69, E69, F69, G69, A69, B69, C70, D70, E70, F70, G70, A70, B70, C71, D71, E71, F71, G71, A71, B71, C72, D72, E72, F72, G72, A72, B72, C73, D73, E73, F73, G73, A73, B73, C74, D74, E74, F74, G74, A74, B74, C75, D75, E75, F75, G75, A75, B75, C76, D76, E76, F76, G76, A76, B76, C77, D77, E77, F77, G77, A77, B77, C78, D78, E78, F78, G78, A78, B78, C79, D79, E79, F79, G79, A79, B79, C80, D80, E80, F80, G80, A80, B80, C81, D81, E81, F81, G81, A81, B81, C82, D82, E82, F82, G82, A82, B82, C83, D83, E83, F83, G83, A83, B83, C84, D84, E84, F84, G84, A84, B84, C85, D85, E85, F85, G85, A85, B85, C86, D86, E86, F86, G86, A86, B86, C87, D87, E87, F87, G87, A87, B87, C88, D88, E88, F88, G88, A88, B88, C89, D89, E89, F89, G89, A89, B89, C90, D90, E90, F90, G90, A90, B90, C91, D91, E91, F91, G91, A91, B91, C92, D92, E92, F92, G92, A92, B92, C93, D93, E93, F93, G93, A93, B93, C94, D94, E94, F94, G94, A94, B94, C95, D95, E95, F95, G95, A95, B95, C96, D96, E96, F96, G96, A96, B96, C97, D97, E97, F97, G97, A97, B97, C98, D98, E98, F98, G98, A98, B98, C99, D99, E99, F99, G99, A99, B99, C100, D100, E100, F100, G100, A100, B100, C101, D101, E101, F101, G101, A101, B101, C102, D102, E102, F102, G102, A102, B102, C103, D103, E103, F103, G103, A103, B103, C104, D104, E104, F104, G104, A104, B104, C105, D105, E105, F105, G105, A105, B105, C106, D106, E106, F106, G106, A106, B106, C107, D107, E107, F107, G107, A107, B107, C108, D108, E108, F108, G108, A108, B108, C109, D109, E109, F109, G109, A109, B109, C110, D110, E110, F110, G110, A110, B110, C111, D111, E111, F111, G111, A111, B111, C112, D112, E112, F112, G112, A112, B112, C113, D113, E113, F113, G113, A113, B113, C114, D114, E114, F114, G114, A114, B114, C115, D115, E115, F115, G115, A115, B115, C116, D116, E116, F116, G116, A116, B116, C117, D117, E117, F117, G117, A117, B117, C118, D118, E118, F118, G118, A118, B118, C119, D119, E119, F119, G119, A119, B119, C120, D120, E120, F120, G120, A120, B120, C121, D121, E121, F121, G121, A121, B121, C122, D122, E122, F122, G122, A122, B122, C123, D123, E123, F123, G123, A123, B123, C124, D124, E124, F124, G124, A124, B124, C125, D125, E125, F125, G125, A125, B125, C126, D126, E126, F126, G126, A126, B126, C127, D127, E127, F127, G127, A127, B127, C128, D128, E128, F128, G128, A128, B128, C129, D129, E129, F129, G129, A129, B129, C130, D130, E130, F130, G130, A130, B130, C131, D131, E131, F131, G131, A131, B131, C132, D132, E132, F132, G132, A132, B132, C133, D133, E133, F133, G133, A133, B133, C134, D134, E134, F134, G134, A134, B134, C135, D135, E135, F135, G135, A135, B135, C136, D136, E136, F136, G136, A136, B136, C137, D137, E137, F137, 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E161, F161, G161, A161, B161, C162, D162, E162, F162, G162, A162, B162, C163, D163, E163, F163, G163, A163, B163, C164, D164, E164, F164, G164, A164, B164, C165, D165, E165, F165, G165, A165, B165, C166, D166, E166, F166, G166, A166, B166, C167, D167, E167, F167, G167, A167, B167, C168, D168, E168, F168, G168, A168, B168, C169, D169, E169, F169, G169, A169, B169, C170, D170, E170, F170, G170, A170, B170, C171, D171, E171, F171, G171, A171, B171, C172, D172, E172, F172, G172, A172, B172, C173, D173, E173, F173, G173, A173, B173, C174, D174, E174, F174, G174, A174, B174, C175, D175, E175, F175, G175, A175, B175, C176, D176, E176, F176, G176, A176, B176, C177, D177, E177, F177, G177, A177, B177, C178, D178, E178, F178, G178, A178, B178, C179, D179, E179, F179, G179, A179, B179, C180, D180, E180, F180, G180, A180, B180, C181, D181, E181, F181, G181, A181, B181, C182, D182, E182, F182, G182, A182, B182, C183, D183, E183, F183, G183, A183, B183, C184, D184, E184, F184, G184, A184, B184, C185, D185, E185, F185, G185, A185, B185, C186, D186, E186, F186, G186, A186, B186, C187, D187, E187, F187, G187, A187, B187, C188, D188, E188, F188, G188, A188, B188, C189, D189, E189, F189, G189, A189, B189, C190, D190, E190, F190, G190, A190, B190, C191, D191, E191, F191, G191, A191, B191, C192, D192, E192, F192, G192, A192, B192, C193, D193, E193, F193, G193, A193, B193, C194, D194, E194, F194, G194, A194, B194, C195, D195, E195, F195, G195, A195, B195, C196, D196, E196, F196, G196, A196, B196, C197, D197, E197, F197, G197, A197, B197, C198, D198, E198, F198, G198, A198, B198, C199, D199, E199, F199, G199, A199, B199, C200, D200, E200, F200, G200, A200, B200, C201, D201, E201, F201, G201, A201, B201, C202, D202, E202, F202, G202, A202, B202, C203, D203, E203, F203, G203, A203, B203, C204, D204, E204, F204, G204, A204, B204, C205, D205, E205, F205, G205, A205, B205, C206, D206, E206, F206, G206, A206, B206, C207, D207, E207, F207, G207, A207, B207, C208, D208, E208, F208, G208, A208, B208, C209, D209, E209, F209, G209, A209, B209, C210, D210, E210, F210, G210, A210, B210, C211, D211, E211, F211, G211, A211, B211, C212, D212, E212, F212, G212, A212, B212, C213, D213, E213, F213, G213, A213, B213, C214, D214, E214, F214, G214, A214, B214, C215, D215, E215, F215, G215, A215, B215, C216, D216, E216, F216, G216, A216, B216, C217, D217, E217, F217, G217, A217, B217, C218, D218, E218, F218, G218, A218, B218, C219, D219, E219, F219, G219, A219, B219, C220, D220, E220, F220, G220, A220, B220, C221, D221, E221, F221, G221, A221, B221, C222, D222, E222, F222, G222, A222, B222, C223, D223, E223, F223, G223, A223, B223, C224, D224, E224, F224, G224, A224, B224, C225, D225, E225, F225, G225, A225, B225, C226, D226, E226, F226, G226, A226, B226, C227, D227, E227, F227, G227, A227, B227, C228, D228, E228, F228, G228, A228, B228, C229, D229, E229, F229, G229, A229, B229, C230, D230, E230, F230, G230, A230, B230, C231, D231, E231, F231, G231, A231, B231, C232, D232, E232, F232, G232, A232, B232, C233, D233, E233, F233, G233, A233, B233, C234, D234, E234, F234, G234, A234, B234, C235, D235, E235, F235, G235, A235, B235, C236, D236, E236, F236, G236, A236, B236, C237, D237, E237, F237, G237, A237, B237, C238, D238, E238, F238, G238, A238, B238, C239, D239, E239, F239, G239, A239, B239, C240, D240, E240, F240, G240, A240, B240, C241, D241, E241, F241, G241, A241, B241, C242, D242, E242, F242, G242, A242, B242, C243, D243, E243, F243, G243, A243, B243, C244, D244, E244, F244, G244, A244, B244, C245, D245, E245, F245, G245, A245, B245, C246, D246, E246, F246, G246, A246, B246, C247, D247, E247, F247, G247, A247, B247, C248, D248, E248, F248, G248, A248, B248, C249, D249, E249, F249, G249, A249, B249, C250, D250, E250, F250, G250, A250, B250, C251, D251, E251, F251, G251, A251, B251, C252, D252, E252, F252, G252, A252, B252, C253, D253, E253, F253, G253, A253, B253, C254, D254, E254, F254, G254, A254, B254, C255, D255, E255, F255, G255, A255, B255, C256, D256, E256, F256, G256, A256, B256, C257, D257, E257, F257, G257, A257, B257, C258, D258, E258, F258, G258, A258, B258, C259, D259, E259, F259, G259, A259, B259, C260, D260, E260, F260, G260, A260, B260, C261, D261, E261, F261, G261, A261, B261, C262, D262, E262, F262, G262, A262, B262, C263, D263, E263, F263, G263, A263, B263, C264, D264, E264, F264, G264, A264, B264, C265, D265, E265, F265, G265, A265, B265, C266, D266, E266, F266, G266, A266, B266, C267, D267, E267, F267, G267, A267, B267, C268, D268, E268, F268, G268, A268, B268, C269, D269, E269, F269, G269, A269, B269, C270, D270, E270, F270, G270, A270, B270, C271, D271, E271, F271, G271, A271, B271, C272, D272, E272, F272, G272, A272, B272, C273, D273, E273, F273, G273, A273, B273, C274, D274, E274, F274, G274, A274, B274, C275, D275, E275, F275, G275, A275, B275, C276, D276, E276, F276, G276, A276, B276, C277, D277, E277, F277, G277, A277, B277, C278, D278, E278, F278, G278, A278, B278, C279, D279, E279, F279, G279, A279, B279, C280, D280, E280, F280, G280, A280, B280, C281, D281, E281, F281, G281, A281, B281, C282, D282, E282, F282, G282, A282, B282, C283, D283, E283, F283, G283, A283, B283, C284, D284, E284, F284, G284, A284, B284, C285, D285, E285, F285, G285, A285, B285, C286, D286, E286, F286, G286, A286, B286, C287, D287, E287, F287, G287, A287, B287, C288, D288, E288, F288, G288, A288, B288, C289, D289, E289, F289, G289, A289, B289, C290, D290, E290, F290, G290, A290, B290, C291, D291, E291, F291, G291, A291, B291, C292, D292, E292, F292, G292, A292, B292, C293, D293, E293, F293, G293, A293, B293, C294, D294, E294, F294, G294, A294, B294, C295, D295, E295, F295, G295, A295, B295, C296, D296, E296, F296, G296, A296, B296, C297, D297, E297, F297, G297, A297, B297, C298, D298, E298, F298, G298, A298, B298, C299, D299, E299, F299, G299, A299, B299, C300, D300, E300, F300, G300, A300, B300, C301, D301, E301, F301, G301, A301, B301, C302, D302, E302, F302, G302, A302, B302, C303, D303, E303, F303, G303, A303, B303, C304, D304, E304, F304, G304, A304, B304, C305, D305, E305, F305, G305, A305, B305, C306, D306, E306, F306, G306, A306, B306, C307, D307, E307, F307, G307, A307, B307, C308, D308, E308, F308, G308, A308, B308, C309, D309, E309, F309, G309, A309, B309, C310, D310, E310, F310, G310, A310, B310, C311, D311, E311, F311, G311, A311, B311, C312, D312, E312, F312, G312, A312, B312, C313, D313, E313, F313, G313, A313, B313, C314, D314, E314, F314, G314, A314, B314, C315, D315, E315, F315, G315, A315, B315, C316, D316, E316, F316, G316, A316, B316, C317, D317, E317, F317, G317, A317, B317, C318, D318, E318, F318, G318, A318, B318, C319, D319, E319, F319, G319, A319, B319, C320, D320, E320, F320, G320, A320, B320, C321, D321, E321, F321, G321, A321, B321, C322, D322, E322, F322, G322, A322, B322, C323, D323, E323, F323, G323, A323, B323, C324, D324, E324, F324, G324, A324, B324, C325, D325, E325, F325, G325, A325, B325, C326, D326, E326, F326, G326, A326, B326, C327, D327, E327, F327, G327, A327, B327, C328, D328, E328, F328, G328, A328, B328, C329, D329, E329, F329, G329, A329, B329, C330, D330, E330, F330, G330, A330, B330, C331, D331, E331, F331, G331, A331, B331, C332, D332, E332, F332, G332, A332, B332, C333, D333, E333, F333, G333, A333, B333, C334, D334, E334, F334, G334, A334, B334, C335, D335, E335, F335, G335, A335, B335, C336, D336, E336, F336, G336, A336, B336, C337, D337, E337, F337, G337, A337, B337, C338, D338, E338, F338, G338, A338, B338, C339, D339, E339, F339, G339, A339, B339, C340, D340, E340, F340, G340, A340, B340, C341, D341, E341, F341, G341, A341, B341, C342, D342, E342, F342, G342, A342, B342, C343, D343, E343, F343, G343, A343, B343, C344, D344, E344, F344, G344, A344, B344, C345, D345, E345, F345, G345, A345, B345, C346, D346, E346, F346, G346, A346, B346, C347, D347, E347, F347, G347, A347, B347, C348, D348, E348, F348, G348, A348, B348, C349, D349, E349, F349, G349, A349, B349, C350, D350, E350, F350, G350, A350, B350, C351, D351, E351, F351, G351, A351, B351, C352, D352, E352, F352, G352, A352, B352, C353, D353, E353, F353, G353, A353, B353, C354, D354, E354, F354, G354, A354, B354, C355, D355, E355, F355, G355, A355, B355, C356, D356, E356, F356, G356, A356, B356, C357, D357, E357, F357, G357, A357, B357, C358, D358, E358, F358, G358, A358, B358, C359, D359, E359, F359, G359, A359, B359, C360, D360,

character as a vivid illustration of the shivering soul, which is described as “*frissonné*” below (“chills”).

Example 24. *The Scent of the Soul*, mm. 14-17

The first theme continuously appears in a variety of textures until the new theme approaches at m. 53: 1) the first theme decorated in chords in mm.9-16,2) the melody starting in the left hand and transferred to the right hand with a modified melodic contour in mm. 18-27, 3) the melody decorated with heavy dissonance in the accompaniment in mm. 28-35, 4) the first theme spread over a wide range and in large chords in mm. 36-39, 5) the first theme in the transitional section, slowly moving to the lower register in mm. 41-53. When the second theme begins at m. 54, a considerable change occurs. Compared to the deeply narrative first theme, the second theme is more sensitive and delicately nuanced, and it is set in A minor, the subdominant of the home key. Now the piece is set in 6/8 in a relentless rocking motion, like a lullaby, and it mostly moves within a two-octave range in the middle register, imparting a sense of serenity.



Example 25. Second theme of *The Scent of the Soul*, mm. 54-56

After presenting the variously developed second themes, the composer prepares the piece's climax at m. 136, where two main themes are juxtaposed on top of each other in the right hand. This superimposition becomes more obvious at m. 143 when each hand plays one theme, the first theme by the right hand and the second theme by the left hand. While the first theme remains in its original form, the second theme is significantly adjusted.

Not only does the meter change from duple (the rocking lullaby motion) to triple (three sets of triplets), the melodic line is shaped into a bigger arch form and the second theme's spacious range creates a fluidity that allows the two themes to merge. According to the composer's own recollection, he noticed the stylistic similarity between Gabriel Fauré and himself as he composed bar 136, where the two themes are combined, a technique thought to be one of Fauré's compositional signatures. It was most probably a part of the unconscious stylistic package he carried over from his earlier studies with Nadia Boulanger; thus, his decision to dedicate the piece to Gabriel Fauré was solidified at that moment.

Example 26. *The Scent of the Soul*, mm. 134-8

As we have seen in *Romance* (2012), the piece peacefully ends in E major on a Picardy cadence after the slow ascending chordal progression in a *pp* dynamic and in a high register, as if the soul has evaporated into the air and its gentle fragrance lingers around for a while, imparting a sense of repose. In most of his compositions, not only this piece, Naoumoff explores the piano's wide range, which enables him to depict dramatic emotional fluctuations with a broad timbre palette. Indeed, his mastery in creating coloristic piano sounds allows him to find a fascinating way of presenting themes with various musical effects without obsessive motivic development.

Conclusion

This document aims to account for four periods of Emile Naoumoff's piano composition through various theoretical approaches and analytical techniques. He religiously studied an extensive body of repertoire, from ancient to modern, and his ingenious musical language is deeply expressed because he successfully encapsulates the essence of each era, combining them and creatively breaking their rules. As Nadia Boulanger used to say, the composer studied music by learning the rules, but he broke them to create one. His frequent bass ostinati, extreme registral variants, extended trills, delicately nuanced harmonies in a more or less clear tonal center, meticulously and yet poetically indicated performance directions, and narrative melody are among his trademarks, employed from the early period to his current improvisatory period.

The common-sense account that music involves two stages of writing (composition) and executory activity (performing) is oppositely defined in his improvisations.¹⁰ For him, music is a not two-stage art. The process of composing manifestly engages the act of performing it. Even though he barely plays the piano when composing, he sits on a chair, imagines, then writes on manuscript paper without producing audible sound; but at the end of this imaginative process, the composer is able to perform and hear it in his head, and at that very moment, the composer presumably finishes the piece.

In the same vein, performing is another level of composing, since pianists must make numerous formative decisions about how a piece shall sound. He always welcomes spontaneous interpretational choices pianists make in performing his piano pieces, as he endlessly emphasizes that his composition is not an end-product, but can only be completed by someone who

¹⁰ Philip Alperson, "On Musical Improvisation," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, no. 1 (1984):19, doi:10.2307/430189.

performed or will perform it. When any pianists ask his advice for his compositions, he humbly resists giving detailed direction, whereas he respects their interpretational choices, even though that sometimes does not correspond to his initial intention.

What Naoumoff usually mentions to the pianists, specifically when it comes to playing his music, is simply to follow where their musical intuitions lead them. Not only does he not insist on wielding total dictatorship/ownership over his output, he gratefully encourages pianists to actively engage in another level of composition to give the piece life.

As Nadia Boulanger told Quincy Jones, "Your music can never be more or less than you are as a human being."¹¹ Indeed, Naoumoff's music explicitly shows what kind of human being he is. None of his compositions are designed to show off brilliant virtuosity, extravagant textures or technical maturity, and this resembles the composer's personal humility. Instead, his music requires a high artistic level of pianism to shape the delicate sounds in different registers, to bring out layered voices in polyphony, to create nuanced colors in a broad sound palette, and to sing the beautiful legato with a sensitive touch. In this sense, I truly believe his compositions in richly diverse styles will nurture pianists' musical experience, and studying his piece will assist pianists in maturing their musicianship. I would like to finish this document by quoting Nadia Boulanger's saying, which encapsulates Naoumoff's aesthetics we have witnessed in his music.

Words created divergences between beings, because their precise meanings put an opinion around the idea. Music only retains the highest and purest substance of the idea, since it has the privilege of expressing all, whilst excluding nothing.¹²

¹¹ Quincy Jones, "Quincy Jones on Nadia Boulanger". NEA Jazz Moments. Podcast audio, Aug. 9, 2013. <https://www.arts.gov/audio/quincy-jones-nadia-boulanger>.

¹² Alan Kendall, *The Tender Tyrant, Nadia Boulanger: A Life Devoted to Music : a Biography*. (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1976), 130.

Appendix: Catalogue

Chronological Catalogue with English translations of Solo Piano Works by Emile Naoumoff

Menuet (1969) *Requiem* (1969) *Pastorale* (1970)

Nocturno (La ruelle de Tryavna) (A Tiny Street in Tryavna) (1970)

Partita pour Piano “Forum Romanum“ (Roman ruins’ memories: Partita) (1971)

Danses Bulgares (Bulgarian Dances) (1972)

Le marché aux oiseaux (The Birds Market) (1972)

4 Inventions (à deux voix) (Four tTwo-Part Inventions) (1972)

Sonate de jeunesse: « La création de la Bulgarie » (Youth Sonata : « Bulgaria’s Creation »)(1972)

Burlesque Brillante (1974)

“Sonorama” pour main gauche seule (for left hand alone) (1976)

Suite à la mémoire d’un enfant héroïque (Suite in memory of a heroic child) (1974)

12 Pièces (Twelve Pieces) (1977)

Musique à Deux (Music for two) (1979-2016) (for two pianos)

La musique dans l’univers d’un enfant (Music in a Child’s Soul) (1980)

Sonata (1980-2002)

Serenata (Serenade) (1982)

Impasse (Perpetual Movement) (1982)

Deux Miniatures pour piano (1983) (Two piano Miniatures)

Suite sur le nom de B.A.C.H. (1985) Suite on the name of B.A.C.H.

Quatre Préludes (1988) (Four Preludes)

13 Anecdotes (1990)

Rhapsodie (1993)

Morceau de concours (“Berceuse”) 1993 (Examination piece. «Lullaby»)

Las Brisas (1996) (The Breezes) (From *Fantasies*)

Cinq Valses pour Piano à Quatre Mains (Five Piano Duet Waltzes) (1996)

Réminiscences (1997)

Réflexions (1997)

Humoresques (1997)

Trois Gymnopédies (Three Gymnopédies) (1998)

Etude (2012)

Infinite Variations (2012)

Seven Sisters Ballade (2012) (From *Fantasies*)

Romance (2012) (From *Fantasies*)

Les Saisons de la vie (The seasons of life) (2013)

Aubade (2013)

Le parfum de l'âme (The Scent of the Soul) (2013)

Prélude à géométrie variable (Modular Prelude) (2013)

Mazurka (2014)

La pénombre ardente (Glowing Dusk) (2014)

Déploration (Bemoaning) (2015) *Souletudes* (2015) *Poetudes* (2016)

Theme and 30 Variations on “Bulgaria 1300” (2016)

* The examples of music in this paper were taken from Emile Naoumoff’s personal archive except the ones that were published.

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