

Specters of Bach: Hauntology in the Music of Sofia Gubaidulina

Christopher Segall
Associate Professor of Music Theory
University of Cincinnati

segallcr@ucmail.uc.edu

Photo: Young Pioneer Camp, Russia
Rebecca Bathory, *Soviet Ghosts* (2013)



1. The Terror and Its Aftermath

If the Nazi Holocaust exterminated the Other, the Soviet terror was suicidal.

—Alexander Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied* (2013)

Composers of the Thaw

- Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998) **Concerto Grosso No. 1 (1977)**
- Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931)
- Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)
- Edison Denisov (1929–1996)
- Valentin Silvestrov (b. 1937)
- Sergey Slonimsky (1932–2020)
- Boris Tishchenko (1939–2010)



Polystylism represents a way of being—of becoming—in the world, a means for sifting, sorting, filtering, and organizing contemporary sonic spaces.

—Peter J. Schmelz, *Sonic Overload: Alfred Schnittke, Valentin Silvestrov, and Polystylism in the Late USSR* (2021)

2. Hauntology

It is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept.

—Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (1994)

Hauntology in Music Studies

- Isabella Van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny* (2012)
- Edward Venn, "Thomas Adès and the Spectres of *Brahms*" (2015);
"Findings, Keepings and Borrowings: Uncanny Intertextuality in
Thomas Adès's *Powder Her Face*" (2021)
- Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology
and Lost Futures* (2014)

In hauntological music there is an implicit acknowledgement that the hopes created by postwar electronics or by the euphoric dance music of the 1990s have evaporated—not only has the future not arrived, it no longer seems possible.

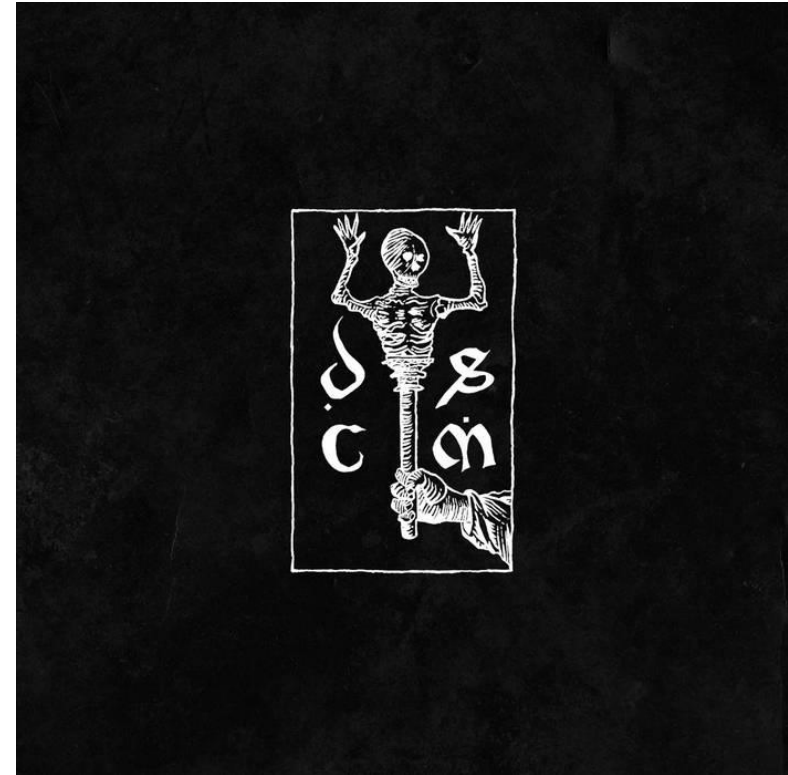
—Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (2014)



Burial, "Archangel" (2007)



Dead Space Chamber Music, "The Grail Carol" (2022)



Hauntology in Music

- Distorted timbres
- Disintegrating quotations
- Disrupted temporality

3. Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931)

Sofia Gubaidulina: Sources

- Michael Kurtz, *Sofia Gubaidulina: A Biography* (2001/2007)
- Sofia Gubaidulina and Vera Lukomsky, "My Desire Is Always to Rebel, to Swim Against the Stream!" (*Perspectives of New Music*, 1998)
- Sofia Gubaidulina and Vera Lukomsky, "The Eucharist in My Fantasy" (*Tempo*, 1998)
- Sofia Gubaidulina and Vera Lukomsky, "Hearing the Subconscious" (*Tempo*, 1999)

Sofia Gubaidulina: Analyses

- Peter J. Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical* (2009)
- Ivana Medić, "Gubaidulina, Misunderstood" (2012)
- Philip A. Ewell, "The Parameter Complex in the Music of Sofia Gubaidulina" (2013)
- Aleksandra Drozzina, "Schnittke, Gubaidulina, and Pärt: Religion and Spirituality During the Late Thaw and Early Perestroika" (2020)
- Noah Kahrs, "Consonance, Dissonance, and Formal Proportions in Two Works by Sofia Gubaidulina" (2020)

4. *Offertorium* (1980/1986)



Orch. Anton Webern (1935)

J. S. Bach, *The Musical Offering* (1747)

The musical notation is a single staff in G minor (two flats) and 3/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes, with some beamed eighth notes. The piece concludes with a trill marked 'tr'.

muted
trombone

muted
horn

muted
trumpet

muted
horn

muted
trombone

muted
horn

muted
trumpet

muted
violin

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

$\text{♩} = 54$

2 Flauti
I solo 2 6 7 10

2 Fagotti
I solo con sord. 4 5 8 11 12 13 14 18

3 Corni (F)
I sola con sord. 3 9 14 15 16 17

3 Trombe (B)
I sola con sord. 1 3 9 14 15 16 17

3 Tromboni
I sola con sord. 1 3 9 14 15 16 17

mf

Sofia Gubaidulina: *Offertorium* (1980/1986)



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

A single musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The staff contains a sequence of notes and rests. Measure 20 is marked with a trill (tr) above the final note. Measure numbers 1 through 21 are written in red above the staff.

8 **20** **1** Poco piu mosso $\text{♩} = 69$

Cor.

Tr-be

19 **20...**

V-no solo

V-no solo

13

sotto voce non vibr.

A page of a musical score for three parts: Cor. (Corns), Tr-be (Trumpets), and V-no solo (Violins solo). The score is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The tempo is marked 'Poco piu mosso' with a metronome marking of quarter note = 69. The score includes various dynamics (mf, p, f, sf) and articulations (accents, slurs, trills). The V-no solo part features triplet markings and a 'sotto voce non vibr.' instruction. Measure numbers 8, 13, 19, and 20 are indicated. A red '20...' is written above the V-no solo staff.

Sofia Gubaidulina: *Offertorium* (1980/1986)

A single musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. Measures 1 through 21 are indicated by red numbers above the staff. A trill (tr) is marked above measure 20. The staff contains a melodic line with various rhythmic values and accidentals.

133

17 **ritenuto**

3 a tempo
unis.

4 **5** **6** **7** **8** **9** **10** **11** **12**

Arch.

mf unis. f mf f mf f mf f mf unis. mf f mf f mf f mf f mf f mf f mf f

ord. div.

A score for an arch ensemble consisting of five staves (Violin I, Violin II, Violin III, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). The score starts at measure 17, which is marked 'ritenuto'. Measure 18 is marked 'a tempo' and 'unis.'. Measures 19-12 are numbered above. Dynamic markings include mf, f, and unis. Performance instructions include 'ord.' and 'div.'. The notation includes various rhythmic values and accidentals.

Sofia Gubaidulina: *Offertorium* (1980/1986)



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

141

12...

V-ni I
div.

V-ni II
div.

Sofia Gubaidulina: *Offertorium* (1980/1986)

924

2 Arpe

P-no

V-no solo

V-le

V-c.

C-b.

f

mf *rit.*

3

*

This musical score page contains six staves. The top two staves are for two arpeggiated instruments (2 Arpe), with the upper staff in treble clef and the lower in bass clef. The third staff is for piano (P-no) in bass clef, featuring a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a *rit.* (ritardando) marking. The fourth staff is for violin solo (V-no solo) in treble clef. The bottom three staves are for a string quartet: violin left (V-le), violin right (V-c.), and cello/bass (C-b.), all in their respective clefs. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings. A first ending bracket with a '3' is present in the piano and arpeggiated parts. Asterisks (*) are placed in the piano and violin solo staves. The page number '924' is located at the top left.

Sofia Gubaidulina: *Offertorium* (1980/1986)



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

A single musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The staff contains a sequence of notes, with red numbers 1 through 21 positioned above each note. The notes are: 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter), 4 (quarter), 5 (quarter), 6 (quarter), 7 (quarter), 8 (quarter), 9 (quarter), 10 (quarter), 11 (quarter), 12 (quarter), 13 (quarter), 14 (quarter), 15 (quarter), 16 (quarter), 17 (quarter), 18 (quarter), 19 (quarter), 20 (quarter), 21 (quarter). There is a trill (tr) above the 20th note.

1019 **184** $\text{♩} = 84$ *espr.* 21 20 *non espr. s. t.* 20 19 17 17 19 18 16 15 14 13 12 *espr.* 11

V-no solo

1025 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

V-no solo

1031 1 *pp* + orch.

V-no solo

Three staves of musical notation for Violin Solo. The first staff (measures 1019-1024) is marked *espr.* and contains red numbers 21, 20, 20, 19, 17, 17, 19, 18, 16, 15, 14, 13, 12, and 11. The second staff (measures 1025-1030) is marked *p* and contains red numbers 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. The third staff (measures 1031-1032) is marked *pp* and contains the number 1. The first staff also includes the tempo marking $\text{♩} = 84$ and the instruction *non espr. s. t.* above measures 1020-1021. The second staff includes the instruction *p* above measure 1025 and *p* above measure 1029. The third staff includes the instruction *pp* above measure 1031 and the marking *+ orch.* below measure 1031.

Sofia Gubaidulina: *Offertorium* (1980/1986)



*5. Reflections on the Theme
BACH (2002)*

The concluding chorale thus represents a moment of **historical and stylistic reconciliation** among [distinct musical materials] and **between Bach and Gubaidulina**.

—Joseph Straus, “Historical and Stylistic Reconciliation in Sofia Gubaidulina’s *Reflections on the Theme BACH*” (2021)



J. S. Bach, *The Art of the Fugue* (1742–50), No. 20

231

The image shows a musical score for J.S. Bach's 'The Art of the Fugue' No. 20. It consists of four staves. The first staff has a circled symbol Φ above it. The second staff has an orange box around a sequence of notes labeled 'countersubject'. The third staff has an orange box around the letters 'BACH' written in a stylized font. The fourth staff has an orange box around a sequence of notes labeled 'subject'. The score is in G major and 3/4 time.

Die Originalausgabe schliesst sieben Takte früher beim Zeichen Φ . Dagegen bringt das Autograph noch obige Verbindung der drei verschiedenen Themen, bricht dann mitten auf der Seite ab, und schliesst mit der nachstehenden, von C. Ph. E. Bach hinzugefügten Bemerkung:

„NB. Über dieser Fuge, wo der Name
B A C H im Contrasubject
angebracht worden, ist
der Verfasser gestorben.“

1 2

$\text{♩} = 48$ $\text{♩} = 120$ $\text{♩} = 48$

vibr. *f* *p* *pp*

S.P. *p* *s.t.* *pp*

vibr. *pp* *f espr.* *p* *s.t.*

Ab C D

Eb A G

3

tr. massa $\text{♩} = 72$ *Sul A* *non vibr.*

vibr. *p* *f subito* *pp*

ord. non vibr. *pp*

ord. vibr. *non vibr.* *p*

Bb E F#

F Db B

Sofia Gubaidulina: *Reflections on the Theme BACH* (2002)



4

echoes and inversions in canon

5

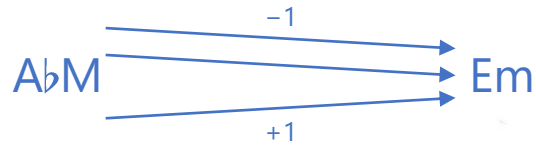
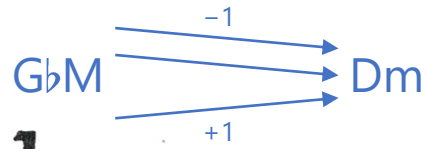
15

Handwritten musical score for 'Art of the Fugue' countersubject. The score consists of five staves of music in G major. The first staff is the original subject (S.S.), and the other four are its echoes and inversions (C.S.). The score includes dynamic markings (pp, p, mp, f), articulation (accents), and performance instructions like 'G.P.' and 'ord.'. A blue box highlights the first two measures of the first C.S. staff. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4.

Art of the Fugue countersubject

Sofia Gubaidulina: *Reflections on the Theme BACH* (2002)





21

79

BACH

Musical score for "Reflections on the Theme BACH" by Sofia Gubaidulina. The score is in 5/4 time and consists of four staves: Violin I, Violin II (ord.), Cello/Double Bass, and Piano. The first four measures of the Violin I staff are highlighted with an orange box. Dynamics include p , f , mp , and pp . Performance instructions include *pizz vibr*, *arco*, and *vibr.*. The score concludes with *G.P.* (Grave) markings.

Sofia Gubaidulina: *Reflections on the Theme BACH* (2002)



Conclusion

“We were taught to learn from pain,” said Teresa Schneidewind, 33, the head of Lützen’s museum. “We care for our memorials, because they allow us to learn from the mistakes of past generations.”

—Anatoly Kurmanaev, Christopher F. Schuetze, and Ekaterina Bodyagina, “‘Learn from Pain’: Why Germany Protects Soviet War Memorials,” *New York Times*, April 28, 2023

Specters of Bach: Hauntology in the Music of Sofia Gubaidulina

Christopher Segall
Associate Professor of Music Theory
University of Cincinnati

segallcr@ucmail.uc.edu

Photo: Young Pioneer Camp, Russia
Rebecca Bathory, *Soviet Ghosts* (2013)

