



P IS FOR PERSONA, PERFORMANCE, POGORELICH: THE PERFORMER'S IDENTITY AS CREATIVE TOOL

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Abstract: P is for Persona, Performance, Pogorelich: the Performer's Identity as Creative Tool

In any process of performing music, no matter how much the performer may try to be faithful to the musical text, there is necessarily an element of interpretation, a subjective modification of the performance's source. That is why a performance, an individual version of the text's meaning(s), is not just a mechanical act of reproduction, but rather a distinctive type of creation, a complex and productive act, through which the creative ideas, insights and convictions of a performer are conveyed.

The process of musical performance, including the personal and artistic choices made by performing musician, is influenced by a rich variety of cultural, social and individual factors. Viewing the phenomenon of musical performance as a species of creative activity, the present article compares the art of the Croatian pianist Ivo Pogorelich to that of selected film directors. Taking into account the pianist's most remarkable interpretations, and analysing both his distinctive creativity as a performer and the development of his public persona, the author investigates how the artistic, personal and social identity of a musician is communicated through performance, and examines the new musical and cultural meanings that are created in this process.

P is for Persona, Performer, Pogorelich: the Performer's Identity as Creative Tool



Ivo Pogorelich at the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Hall, October 24, 2011. Adomas Svirskas photo, courtesy of Culture Live. Further images and audio-visual material and links may be accessed via the online version of this article

Introduction: Significations of musical performance

The process of musical performance is affected by a rich variety of cultural, social and individual factors. Likewise, the musician's personality and the artistic and social choices they make are conditioned by various circumstances that encompass elements ranging from their cultural environment to corporeal selfhood. If approached from a semiotic perspective, hence taking into account the multiplicity of emerging significations, musical performance can be understood as a communication model in which a series of codified messages is sent or enacted and their meanings received or decoded. For example, in theatrical or operatic performance, genres which have for a long time been subject to semiotic analysis and provided the inspiration for music performance studies, the meaning is encoded and transmitted through the various systems of staging, such as set, lighting, costume, music, etc. In addition, rich and complex significations are provided by the performers/actors themselves, their bodies, actions and interpretational choices. All this can be said about the art practised by music performers as well; thus, we cannot think of a musical performance as a mere actualisation of a musical score and, as a result overlook (or consciously deny) the potential density of its meaning production. To generalise, I propose that there exist three main channels, or media, through which one receives, consumes, understands and appreciates the art of a musician – a classical pianist, in the case of the present article. These are: sonic-interpretative, verbal-communicative,¹ and visual-representative.² Each of them, in its own way, conveys certain messages about a given performer, and each deserves a closer look by means of what Leo Braudy suggests labelling not as 'performance' *tout simple*, but rather 'performer studies'.³

In such an analysis of a performer's art, a number of variables of private and public, musical and extra-musical articulation are of research interest. For instance, performers have their own personality and inclinations (as *people*, first of all, not just as musicians); they are exposed to different forms of education and influences (starting from their teachers, but also taking into account their wider cultural environment); they develop certain technical and stylistic abilities; they find certain repertoires more suitable than others; they confront themselves (through the score or, sometimes, personally) with composers and their requests/indications; they have to take account of social demands as these apply to given repertoires (demands which may not only be of strictly artistic nature, but may be related to politics, fashion, historical circumstances, etc.); they also, whether intentionally or not, develop a public persona (consequently generating reputation and social expectations that transcend the mere musical performance); and, finally, and particularly nowadays, they create a number of media interfaces that allow the public to access all the features listed previously (concert publicity, recordings, websites, interviews, etc.). Even when dealing with contextual, extra- or para-musical matters surrounding the art of musical performance, much also depends on and/or requires a generous amount of creativity on the performer's side. The choice of repertoire, the programming of the recital, the marketing strategies, and many more socio-cultural issues reveal a great deal about the creative personality of a performing artist. All this, one may hypothesise, is also reflected in one way or another in the music played.

The performer as meaning-generator the case of Ivo Pogorelich

The focus of this article is on the performative identity of the Croatian pianist Ivo Pogorelich (b. 1958), viewed and discussed as the sum of manifold influences and components that constitute the identifiable semiotic self of the artist.⁴ The choice of Pogorelich's performances as a case-study was primarily determined by the fact that this body of work presents a particular richness from the perspective of analysing the art of performing artists who do not attempt to convey the 'exact' messages from departed composers but, instead, create their own daring soundscapes and significations. Pogorelich, notoriously, is an original and idiosyncratic artist who, for decades, has proved to be very loyal to his own, highly subjective, understanding and rendition of the performed music. This is an artist whose performances are, on the one hand, regularly identified by his critics as 'deconstructive', 'damaging' or 'perverse' while, on the other hand, he is seen by several generations of admirers as a visionary interpreter and an influential, inspiring cult figure. A middle-ground reception of Pogorelich's interpretations is, indeed, hardly possible since, during his performances, particularly the live ones, he draws in front of the listeners' eyes a type of musical imagery that is distinctive, exceptionally individual and often contradictory to the existing canons of interpretation. Interestingly, although many of his critics would struggle to agree, Pogorelich is actually convinced that his eccentric performances (which, since the 2000s, have been often referred to as evolving 'from *weirdly fascinating* to *just plain weird*', according to *The New York Times*' critic Anthony Tommasini⁵) are, in reality, constructed to serve the composer.⁶

Before discussing the pianist's interpretations and the development of his stage persona, it is pertinent here to address briefly the more general issue of creativity in musical performance. If initially seemingly trivial, it turns out to be far from obvious. In fact, in discourses on music, the concept of creativity is commonly applied solely to the composer, the author and 'creator' of a musical work. If the centrality of the 'opus', and of authorship in general, in music aesthetics, analysis and even mythology (what I have in mind here is the myth of the musical 'genius') is not the primary consequence of this perception, it is certainly connected to it. Within this framework, the conceptual transition – which, in most classical

music, also happens to be a chronological one – from authorship to performance becomes synonymous with a transition from a creative process to *something else* and, moreover, to *something of a lesser order*. Sometimes, it seems that creativity is not a quality that plays any kind of prominent role in the process of musical performance. Despite the recent significant efforts to promote musical performance as a primarily creative practice (which, through ambitious research projects, have resulted in studies such as Cook (2018), Rink et al. (2017) and Ramnarine (2018), inter alia), the mainstream approach tends to maintain that the creative process happens *before* the performance which, aside from a limited and contested space for creativity in the act of interpretation, is essentially seen as an act of more or less faithful realisation.

However, it is precisely the creative effort of unfolding the variety of possibilities dormant in written music that is emphasised by so many practising musicians and pedagogues (and in the aforementioned body of musicological publications). The performer's role in the musical process is definitely not a passive one; even the term 'mediation', so often (ab)used to describe performance, provides an incomplete picture of the real and intimately creative nature of the performer's hermeneutics when approaching a musical work. In other words, the metaphor of the performer as vicar (which cunningly implies the status of a god for the author) is hardly an accurate, let alone fair, one.

Significations of musical performance 'P is for...', or the 3P model of the artist's promotion

In an attempt to analyse the creative identity of Ivo Pogorelich, it may be helpful to look sequentially into the qualities of the musician, the person, and the stage persona that provoke such controversial responses from both music critics and audiences. For doing this, I shall employ a scheme that I have used elsewhere as a model to describe a pianist's promotion, but which may well serve in discussing the current case study. By this means, it is possible to analyse Pogorelich, as with any other artist, as Performer, as Product and as Persona. To generalise, one may distinguish three distinct forms of promotion that may work separately and/or in conjunction, and that can be summarised in a 3P model.⁷ When promoting the pianist as a Performer, the attention-grabbing features of the chosen media are designed to convey information and encourage interest in the pianists' playing style, their repertoire, the orchestras/musicians they have played with, etc.; the placement of the pianist as a Product puts the accent on any commercially valuable elements (information on the newest releases, upcoming concerts, etc.); while presenting the pianist as a Persona focuses the attention on the extra-musical world of the musician (manifesting their image in non-concert outfits, enumerating their hobbies, and so on). Since the scheme itself comes from working on pianists' websites,⁸ let us begin by briefly discussing the pianist as Product.

In the case of Pogorelich, we should first mention the exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, which was signed right after the infamous scandal of the 1980 Chopin competition. Between 1981 and 1998, only 14 DG discs recorded by Pogorelich were released, featuring works from the mainstream pianistic canon. The pianist's official discography is exceptionally sparse for a musician of his calibre, which makes the existing recordings even more desirable – that perhaps being the reason why they were re-issued in 2006 in the form of a selected compilation entitled *The Genius of Pogorelich*, followed by the *Complete Recordings* collection in 2015. During the time of preparing this article, the newest CD of Ivo Pogorelich has appeared in 2019, after a break of 21 years, released by Sony Classical and featuring piano sonatas by Ludwig van Beethoven and Sergey Rachmaninov.

The product, however, is not only a material object in the form of the recorded disc, but, in this case, anything that helps in marketing a given artist, such as various media events and appearances. For instance, in September 2013, Pogorelich for the first time launched his personal website. There, the pianist welcomed the visitors in a personalised manner that is rather unusual for a webpage of a classical performer:

Et Voila! Here is my new and first ever website page. As a matter of fact, I was reluctant to participate in forming one for some time. However, I decided not to resist any longer and keep pace with modernity, as it were.⁹

Interestingly, by the time the pianist had decided to ‘keep pace’ with modern times, the most useful online source for retrieving the latest updates on Pogorelich’s pianistic or sometimes personal life (photos from dinners, walks with the dog, etc.) was not so much the personal website but a Facebook page, as well as the closed group *The Cult of Ivo Pogorelich Fan Club*, where his fans rapidly share any type of information they are able to gather. The group is administered by people following the maestro to his rehearsals and concerts; thus, many live recordings are posted there as testimony to the pianist’s creative evolution, as also are paintings by his fans, birthday greetings and other memorabilia, which, in turn, attract new audiences to the concerts or to buy records.¹⁰ In addition to that, the ‘official website of the legendary pianist’ was launched in 2018 as a significantly different version of the webpage, which currently features professionally managed and frequently updated official information.

Returning to the Chopin competition, it indeed marked the beginning of the pianist’s international fame. The controversy surrounding Pogorelich has been ongoing since 1980, when the young pianist was eliminated from the 3rd round of the 10th Fryderyk Chopin International Piano Competition in Warsaw and jury member Martha Argerich withdrew from duty as a sign of protest, naming him a *genius* and thus fuelling still further the public debate around the young pianist’s interpretations. The subsequent launch of Pogorelich’s international career was remarkably sudden and intense for pre-internet times. As another famous pianist, Peter Donohoe, recently wrote, ‘In 1980 the marketing industry, the critics, the media and thousands of young pianists created an artistically suicidal situation for an obviously highly talented but not yet fully developed pianist’.¹¹ What was it, then, that happened, and why did Pogorelich provoke such admiration on one side and such harsh responses from the other?

As the passage on Pogorelich from Harold C. Schonberg’s book *The Great Pianists* goes:

Everything he does is unconventional. That includes his concert dress, which as often as not has been leather clothes. He has attracted a predominantly young audience that adores him, identifying with his rebellious attitude toward the establishment. His tempos have often been completely outside any normal parameters. In his 1985 Carnegie Hall concert he played Beethoven’s last sonata, Op. 111 in C minor. Pianists of an older generation used to bring in the C minor Sonata at about 25 to 27 minutes, playing all the repeats. Clifford Curzon took 25’40’’. Myra Hess, 26’25’’. Rudolf Serkin, 25’50’’. Pogorelich: 31’31’’.¹²

This being an accurate, even if one-sided, representation of what has been going on for the best part of three decades around the figure of Pogorelich, it should be noted that, compared to a number of his recent performances, the interpretations from the 1980s can be considered relatively orthodox.¹³ The passage above, however, speaks not only for the performer’s playing style, but also for him as *Persona* or, rather, *stage persona*.

It is important to acknowledge that certain significations in the art of musical performance arise not only from the notes played and heard. Some are due purely to the performer: their personal characteristics, creative individuality, corporeality, imagination, etc. Collectively, they constitute some kind of a semantic gesture¹⁴ which prevails in all the interpretations by that performer and permits them to be distinguished from other musicians. Some aspects belonging to this realm might be called the ‘performer’s theatre’: emotions conveyed onstage, bodily signs, as well as the factors which go into creating the setting, tension, and atmosphere. Some artists surely have more to offer in this respect than others – e.g. a study of Glenn Gould’s creativity, writings on music, media work, physicality, psychology and ideology may be conducted without even opening the score of the works the pianist performed. Much of debate around the art of Pogorelich has been precisely related to him as a personality, the keyword of the discourse being that of ‘eccentricity’.

To quote Alan P. Merriam, ‘Musicians behave socially in certain well-defined ways, because they are musicians, and their behaviour is both shaped by their own self-image and by the expectations and stereotypes of the musicianly role as seen by society at large’.¹⁵ Paradoxically enough, the bodily behaviour of a performer has quite an important impact on the listeners’ reactions in a concert hall, and there is more than one instance that suggests that a performer risks receiving a rather controversial or prejudiced reception based solely on his seemingly arrogant posture on stage. In this respect, footages of Pogorelich playing at the Chopin competition clearly convey the rebellious message of the *enfant terrible* of the day: in flouting the common-sense rules of how a musician should act onstage, his appearances may well be classified as some sort of ‘misbehaviour’.¹⁶ This, combined with an astounding pianism and daring interpretations, resulted in the pianist promptly becoming the handsome media-sexy piano superstar of the 1980s (which, according to the aforementioned quote by Donohoe, caused him harm in artistic terms).

The accusation of Pogorelich’s deliberately maintaining a controversial image was further strengthened in later decades. The loss of his wife in 1996 caused such a severe trauma to the artist and the man that he withdrew from any public performances for several years, making his comeback to the concert stage only in the early 2000s, the period marked by his most controversial interpretations. It was as if the real-life narrative was transformed into the darkest sonic images of pain and suffering.¹⁷ No less eccentric, although very different from the early days, is his onstage behaviour today. Certain stage rituals, such as improvising or simply practising while the audience is already entering the concert hall, as well as having somebody to turn pages (even though he never really follows the score) make Pogorelich’s public appearances seem ever more idiosyncratic. ‘The Man from the Mountains’ was the title of one of the recent reviews¹⁸ of Pogorelich, referring not only to the extravagant individualism manifested in his playing, but also to his living circumstances.¹⁹

But how is all this reflected in the pianist’s playing, that is, in Pogorelich the Performer?

The performer’s identity: in search of *temps mort*

In Gino Stefani’s theory of musical competence,²⁰ ‘Styles’ are recognisable as ‘individual’ units (e.g., when a performer possesses a style that can be clearly identified as their own), ‘collective’ units (e.g., when the imprinting of a school emerges) and ‘inter-textual’ units (i.e., in the degree of a *dialogue* established with the composition and with the composer’s will). In the vast majority of cases, a style is a combination of such units. Such an exuberant personality as Ivo Pogorelich is certainly recognisable as an *individual unit* (in a league of his own), yet the enormous influence exercised by his teacher (and later wife) Aliza Kezeradze and the Liszt-Siloti school has always been acknowledged (by himself, first and foremost) as

an integral part of his musicianship.²¹ An indebtedness to a ‘school’, that is, a situation where the musician acknowledges belonging to an artistic tradition determined by a certain environment, may be considered as one of the markers of cultural identity of any artist – not least this particular one. When asked about the most important lessons Kezeradze taught him, Pogorelich mentioned the following four aspects:

- First, technical perfection as something natural.
- Second, an insight into the development of the piano sound, as perfected by the pianist-composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, composers who understood the piano both as a human voice ... and as an orchestra with which they could produce a variety of colours.
- Third, the need to learn how to use every aspect of our new instruments, which are richer in sound.
- Fourth, the importance of differentiation.²²

As we can see, three of these aspects are, in one way or another, related to the phenomenon and quality of sound, which is indeed of crucial importance to Pogorelich²³, although this has often led him to extremes in both directions of dynamics, from glass-breaking *fortes* to exquisite *pianissimos*. This sound alchemy, this constant immersion in the beauty of tone that he indulges in, also brings what looks like a ‘deconstructive’ attitude towards a musical work, with extreme tempo choices and painstakingly intensified contemplations of individual episodes, albeit never losing the overall structure of a piece. Separate episodes of the musical work are magnified, thus creating a non-linear structure, the real unity and meaning of which are assembled and revealed as the piece proceeds.

My suggestion, here, is to compare Pogorelich’s playing to the art of cinematography, particularly, and predictably, ‘auteur cinema’, where we might view the pianist as resembling a director who refuses to ‘spare’ his audience. His playing grabs the listener, almost inducing a kind of hypnosis (Valery Afanassiev and Grigory Sokolov of the Russian piano school also come to mind in this context). Indeed, it is tempting to analyse Pogorelich’s working upon the musical piece and his constructing of musical meaning in the terms of film semiotics, where one talks about underlying systems that determine the textual structure of a particular interpretation: the cause-effect narrative logic; the whole process of narrativisation; the spatio-temporal relations between ‘shots’, events or musical passages; the patterns of repetition and difference, and so on. Perhaps the first comparison from the cinematic realm that comes to mind is an insistence upon the elements that are *not* necessarily action, which, for instance, is the quintessential poetics of Michelangelo Antonioni’s filmmaking.

In film, as also in literature, there is a difference between narration and description. As Seymour Chatman writes, the filmmaker may interrupt the story time and make descriptive elements visible by varying the pace, sometimes radically. That is typical of Antonioni, whose filmic signature includes, among other things, an approach to storytelling determined by both camera movement and camera stasis, such that the camera almost comes alive and become an autonomous narrator.²⁴ As Noel Burch explains, ‘the real dimensions [and hence distance] of whatever is visible on the empty screen are impossible to determine until the appearance of a human figure makes the scale obvious’.²⁵ A rather similar strategy of description can be observed in the way Pogorelich appears to enlarge, highlight and ‘freeze’ certain musical moments, enabling the listener to perceive their real narrative function (making it ‘obvious’, in Burch’s words) only after they are seen as a whole.

A remarkable cinematic equivalent of this strategy can be found in Antonioni’s 1975 film *The Passenger*.²⁶ Another kind of explicit description occurs in his *Red Desert* (1964). This time the sense of description is affected not by a deviant camera movement but by an

unaccountable *lingering* of the camera for several seconds beyond what would seem a reasonable duration. For a few seconds, the story time ‘dies’, echoing the expression that French critics apply to the technique – *temps mort*. The effect is described by Chatman as:

[...] so intrusive that if it were not for its recurrence [and, importantly, its beauty! – *L. N.-M.*], we might write it off as a slip in the editing or an anomaly of the print. [...] This momentary halt in the story is an invocation of something timeless, not necessarily “eternal” in the poetic sense but temporally indifferent. As such, it conflicts with our desire to have the story move ahead, the viewer’s hunger for diegetic resolution’.²⁷

In music, the listener’s desire for the musical line to flow is, perhaps, even more fundamental since there is not much else, such as visual stimuli, to hold one’s attention span. Comparable to Antonioni’s *temps mort* is Pogorelich’s ability of ‘pulling’ the time, as if suspending the musical flow in a barely audible *pianissimo* or exposing the audience to the minutest details of a certain episode.²⁸ The pianist seems to reduce ambiguity as an aesthetic device in his performances, increasing the audibility of particular lines, harmonies or separate sounds. This constant close-up, coupled with particularly harsh *fortissimo* climaxes, is an aesthetic that puts the listener in close proximity to the music by its complete removal of distance between subject and object in the process of musical signification. The artistic encounter can then become almost too intense, and some listeners associate such blurred boundaries between the self and the other with a sensation of discomfort. Indeed, as mentioned, many refer to Pogorelich’s playing as feeling as if he seizes the listener in a tight grip, not releasing them until the end of the musical piece.

In relation to such a *discomfort* (the listeners’ perception ranging from utmost fascination to sheer suffering), another cinematic strategy that is worthy of comparison is that of Lars von Trier and his love for torturing the spectator with brutally emotive close-ups. Von Trier is known for taking his audiences through emotional and psychological challenges, often treating his characters bluntly, brutally, yet – and this is also important in the case of Pogorelich – always with purpose. Some of his scenes are particularly controversial, shocking, and visually stunning at the same time. *Breaking the Waves* (1996), *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), *Dogville* (2003), *Antichrist* (2009)... in any of these films there are plenty of disturbing scenes to choose from, through which the director displays, analyses and apotheosizes the rawest human emotions.

Conclusion

While the example of Pogorelich is undeniably extreme, I would maintain that it only demonstrates to a hypertrophied extent the more general proposition that, after a musical work is written and before it reaches the listener, a multi-sided and complex series of endeavours must be undertaken by the performer-interpreter. The interpretation of music reaches far beyond the status of mere reproduction or mechanical re-creation; instead, it ought to be recognised and treated as a distinctive type of creation, through which the creative ideas, insights and convictions of a performer are conveyed. It is the performer’s creative self that is embodied in the process of musical performance and which constantly generates newly emergent meanings. In relation to this viewpoint the work of a musical performer has been compared, in this paper, to that of a film director. The former, through his or her ability to build up a new narrative and manipulate the listeners’ perception with a variety of means, is, in a sense, a director, controlling every aspect of the *mis-en-scène*. The latter, when working on previously existing material (such as a script or screenplay), is, to an extent, a performer of that material, fixing in one particular incarnation a source with potentially multiple manifestations. And, in any case, both are to be treated as creative agents.

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¹ The channel through which a performer conveys to potential audiences their insights, ideas, personality, etc., is referred to here as a verbal-communicative. Given the communicative power of language, this is possibly the most effective and the clearest way to reach out to the listener (although not necessarily the fastest one, as images and graphics may often prevail in this category). Verbal communication helps deepen one's understanding of the nature of a performer's work, such as those aspects concerning performance strategies, decisions about execution, and similar. In addition to traditional face-to-face interviews, nowadays one can find the most diverse contexts of internet communication (such as websites, blogs, social networks, etc.): through posts and threads, not only the performers (or their managers) communicate, but also the listeners can share their experiences online, in place of traditional conversations or musicological reviews.

² The visual-representative channel of performer's communication is the one most rarely encountered within traditional musicological discourses. The focus here is placed on the visual artefacts that nowadays so often serve to promote, or communicate, the sonic art and its practitioners.

³ Leo Braudy, 'Knowing the Performer from the Performance: Fame, Celebrity, and Literary Studies', *PMLA*, Vol. 126, No. 4, special topic: *Celebrity, Fame, Notoriety*, October 2011, pp. 1070–75

⁴ Originally introduced by Thomas A. Sebeok in 1979, the concept of the Semiotic self consists of two essential aspects, namely, an inward and an outward side within the subject. In the case of a musical performer's art, we may apply this concept to the analysis of the balance between subjectivity and culturally-determined standards in the musician's activity.

⁵ Anthony Tommasini, 'After a Decade Away, an Elusive Figure Returns', *The New York Times*, 28 October 2006

⁶ The pianist's own words, quoted on the CD booklet of the famous 1980s Chopin-Ravel-Prokofiev recording (DG CD 463 678-2) are revealing in this respect:

"I would never hurt or harm a composer. People tell me I alter things, deal in distortion for, no doubt, vainglorious reasons, but that is precisely what I do not do. My aim is to clarify and refine, to enliven and vivify what is there." One may suspect – having in mind his latest performances – that at least the recent views of Pogorelich are of a different nature, however, in 2013, the pianist confirms to an interviewer: "As an artist, the best thing you can do is to be a loyal servant to a composer". (Pogorelich, in Bertrand Boissard, 'Ivo Pogorelich: le retour du roi', *Diapason*, 11/12/2013)

⁷ The terms and the methodological strategy are adopted from Dario Martinelli's *Professional/Product/Persona* scheme as used in Navickaitė-Martinelli 2014 and more thoroughly elaborated in Martinelli & Navickaitė-Martinelli 2017.

⁸ Chapter 4 in Navickaitė-Martinelli 2014 is devoted to the analysis of 11 personal websites of Lithuanian classical pianists.

⁹ This personal welcoming passage was initially published on <https://ivopogorelich.com/>.

¹⁰ The concert tour related to the latest CD release, together with numerous interviews and other media appearances, constitute yet another Pogorelich-as-Product campaign.

¹¹ Peter Donohoe, 'Was the Chopin Jury not Right to Eliminate Pogorelich?' - an essay for *Slipped Disc*, 12/04/2015.

Pogorelich himself admits the situation back then was not healthy in terms of him only having begun proper piano studies with Kezeradze at the age of 17, and also working on his own scandalous image 'like a child making a toy'. (Manuel Brug, 'Drinking from a Different Spring', interview with Ivo Pogorelich, 14/09/2006)

¹² Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2006 [1963]), p. 460

¹³ For instance, Pogorelich's recording of Maurice Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit* (Deutsche Grammophon, 1983) is unanimously considered as canonical rendition of the piece due to its distinctive virtuosity, lucidity of textural layers and intensity of musical imagery.

¹⁴ This broad and eclectic concept is used here rather freely. The term ‘semantic gesture’ belongs to the main figure of the structuralist Prague School, Jan Mukařovský, and denotes (in the analysis of the individual aspects of a literary work) the uniqueness and entity of a literary sign.

¹⁵ Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 123

¹⁶ Telling in this respect is the programme in German language featuring Pogorelich’s interviews, various scenes, posings and short performances from the competition. Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAFb9YkjK0g> [accessed 20 September 2019].

¹⁷ There are some non-commercial recordings made in Pogorelich’s concerts that are available online, such as his rendition of Sergey Rachmaninov’s Sonata Op. 36 No. 2, performed on September 3, 2005, in Bad Wörishofen, Germany: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hU7-D8d2sE> (accessed 20 September 2019). The playing here is almost frightening in its intensity and sadness.

¹⁸ The b-flat Sheep, ‘The Man From the Mountains: Ivo Pogorelich at the Royal Festival Hall’, blog entry published on 25 February 2015

¹⁹ The pianist actually lives in Switzerland, by Lake Lugano, and leads a rather solitary way of life, practising and creating jewellery in his spare time.

²⁰ In Gino Stefani’s model, it is argued that musical competence exists at various levels, not only the ‘strictly musical’ or the ‘musical expert’ ones, and that it intervenes in the construction of any discourse around music: from casual listening practices to professional composition. Musical competence, Stefani argues, is articulated on five levels, i.e. the so-called *general codes*, *social practices*, *musical techniques*, *styles* and *works*. More on Stefani’s model see in Stefani 1985 or, as applied to the study of musical performance, in Navickaitė-Martinelli 2014: 53–61.

²¹ Pogorelich received his first piano lessons when he was seven and attended a school in Belgrade until he was 12, when he was invited to Moscow to continue his studies at the Central Music School with Evgeny Timakin. He later graduated from the Moscow Conservatory. In 1976, he began studying intensively with the Georgian pianist and teacher Aliza Kezeradze, who passed on to him the tradition of the Liszt-Siloti school. Pogorelich never mentions that, but he also studied with Vera Gornostayeva at the Conservatory. Be that as it may, it was definitely Kezeradze who exercised the greatest influence on the pianist, both at a professional and a personal level. Even though she was 21 years older, they were married from 1980 until her death in 1996.

²² The original of this comes from the German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*; this translation into English appears in numerous internet sources (see e.g. the review on Pogorelich’s concert in Rome, Buckley 2011).

²³ Pogorelich’s tone range may be indeed considered as one of the most remarkable features of his pianism. Not only when listening to his public performances, but also when observing his rehearsals or masterclasses, one sees how many hours may be spent simply in achieving the right way to produce one single sound (and to *sustain it*).

²⁴ Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 52

²⁵ Cited in Chatman, p. 53

²⁶ The most relevant example, here, is the famous long take during the final minutes of the movie where the character of David Locke (played by Jack Nicholson) approaches the window of his hotel room and the camera very slowly follows his gaze outside and begins exploring, at variable pace, a number of characters and actions that are and are not pertinent to the narrative development at that stage. Upon completing a 360-degree inspection of the outside space, the camera returns inside the room, only to show Locke dead. Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWq9yOiVe8w&t=10s> [accessed 20 September 2019].

²⁷ Chatman, p. 54

²⁸ Among the performances of this type, Pogorelich’s rendition of Sergey Rachmaninov’s *Moments musicaux* Op. 16 No. 1 presents a distinctive example. A live recording from 2001 is available online

at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwfeRTWjaTg>> [accessed 21 September 2019], with a duration of more than 10 minutes, while the one played in 2003, which previously also used to be available on YouTube, takes over 14 minutes. The tempo, of course, is not the only *different* element in Pogorelich's interpretation: it suffices to compare it with any other recording as played by, say, Vladimir Ashkenazy, lasting 7.49 [<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ac8t6l92ALw>>, accessed 21 September 2019], in order to notice the colossal difference in the work's reading.