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Ida Gotkovsky: Insights into Her Artistry, and Seven Notable Works. Exploring the Intertextuality in her Musical World

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This article constitutes a subsequent scholarly endeavour to honour the 90th anniversary of Ida Gotkovsky. The initial part of this commemorative series was disseminated in the preceding edition (3–4(2023), p. 81–84 under the title: Ida Gotkovsky – 90th Anniversary. Her Compositions for Solo Instruments. It is based on a presentation on Gotkovsky's educational compositions in October 2023.

Throughout the interactions between the author of this document and Ida Gotkovsky, she refrained from employing terminology such as 'pedagogical works', 'competition pieces', or discussing pedagogy in a broader context. Her discourses predominantly centred around music and art, leading to the inference that she harboured reservations towards the nomenclature associated with training and pedagogical methods. To date, a comprehensive catalogue of Gotkovsky's oeuvre remains elusive. Her online portal features a compilation that ostensibly concluded in 2005. The Billaudot catalogue⁴ enumerates solely the compositions published under its auspices. Additionally, a corpus of autographed manuscripts exists that has yet to be formalised through publication. Moreover, it is postulated that specific works may be categorised as lost, having vanished from accessible records. What, then, can be said of the compositions crafted for solo instruments and orchestra? Below is an enumeration of several works, accompanied by descriptions provided by Ida Gotkovsky. These elucidations were conveyed through a combination of oral and written communications and, where relevant, are also accessible on her website. Ida Gotkovsky's articulation of her compositional attributes evokes strong parallels with impressionism, offering profound insights into her compositional ethos, marked by an emphatic concentration on tone colour, ambience, and subjective sentiment.

1. *Concerto pour trombone et piano* (1978)

Commissioned by the State (in the words of Gotkovsky: Paris conservatoire?) and published by Billaudot, this Concerto was written in 1978 and consists of three movements:

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|--|---|
| 1 st mvt: <i>Lyrique</i> : | To serve the instrument in all its expressive range, a large <i>legato</i> , <i>agitato</i> and <i>tumultuoso</i> phrase makes up this first movement. |
| 2 nd mvt: <i>Dolcissimo con anima</i> : | The linear second movement employs all the subtle colours of the trombone and its halftones, which continue in the orchestral instrumentation. This is a movement of sonorities par excellence. |
| 3 rd mvt: <i>Final ostinato</i> : | As its designation suggests, the obstinate character of this third movement is one of great technical virtuosity, bringing the concerto to a powerful and dynamic close. ⁵ |

2. *Variations pathétiques pour saxophone et orchestre* (1980)

Premiered by Ed. Bogaard and the Hilversum Radio Orchestra, the *Variations Pathétiques* were commissioned by the *Conservatoire national supérieur et de danse de musique de Paris*

⁴ Gérard Billaudot, *Ida Gotkovsky. Catalogue des œuvres*, Paris: Billaudot 1994.

⁵ Cf. description on the website

<https://www.gotkovsky.com/textes_versionFR/txt_fiches_des_oeuvres/ff_concertotromb.htm> (12/2/24).

and published by Billaudot. The composition encompasses all instrumental challenges and displays of virtuosity.

- 1st variation: The first movement, *Declamando con passione*, is a variation in melody, legato, power and equality of sonority throughout the range.
- 2nd variation: *Prestissimo-Legierissimo* is a movement of clarity, staccato and opposition.
- 3rd variation: The *Lento-Rubato* is linear and fluctuating. It leads to the paroxysm of the *pianissimi*.
- 4th variation: *Rapido-molto legato* is precise in sound and velocity.
- 5th variation: *Con simplicita-anima* is extremely difficult in its stripped-down, contained, interior character.
- 6th variation: *Prestissimo con fuoco* is a whirlwind of fire.⁶

3. *Concerto lyrique pour clarinette et orchestre* (Solo & piano and solo & wind instruments)

The version for clarinet and piano was written in 1982 and a transcription for wind band was added in 1994, both published by Billaudot. This work again was 'commissioned by the State' and consists of four movements:

- 1st mvt: *Intense* – declaimed. The first movement is a great improvisation in which the soloist's part becomes increasingly brilliant, leading the orchestra to extreme lyrical tension, then subsides into a dark, sustained colour.
- 2nd mvt: *Presto* – Fleeting, humorous. The fast, bouncy theme of the second movement alternates between soloist and orchestra before disappearing into a grand *pianissimo*.
- 3rd mvt: *Linéaire – simple*. The third movement, with its unreal atmosphere, unfolds with the help of subtle colours and timbres. It blossoms in the strength of its expression and ends in great gentleness.
- 4th mvt: *Finale – prestissimo*. Virtuosity and rhythm dominate this finale. All the technical difficulties of the clarinet are present. After an impetuous dialogue between the soloist and the orchestra, the work ends in strength and joy.⁷

4. *Caractères pour violon et piano* (1971)

Designation of the six movements: *Simple, Généreux, Nostalgique, Léger, Intense, Sauvage*.

As the composition was crafted in dedication to her sister Nell, published by Chappel, these six concert pieces exhibit a diverse palette of tonal colours. They accentuate the technical, sonic, and expressive capacities of the violin and piano, with each piece sequentially following and enhancing the next, culminating in a movement characterised by robust rhythms punctuated by a grand lyrical phrase. A relentless 'accelerando' propels the work towards its conclusion. The six concert pieces are emblematic of six poetic images, each corresponding to a distinct thematic inspiration.⁸

⁶ Ida Gotkovsky in her own words; cf. also Scott Patrick Augustine, *Ida Gotkovsky's saxophone works: A comparative study of Brilliance, Variations Pathétiques, and Incandescence*, diss. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 2023, p. 49.

⁷ Cf. description on the website https://www.gotkovsky.com/textes_versionFR/txt_fiches_des_oeuvres/ff_lyrclarorch.htm (14/2/2024).

⁸ Cf. description on the website http://www.gotkovsky.com/textes_versionFR/txt_fiches_des_oeuvres/ff_caract.htm (13/2/2024)

5. *Éolienne pour flûte et harpe* (1970)

Five movements: *Lyrique, Intermezzo, Intense, Perpetuum Mobile* et *Déclamatoire*, published by Billaudot. The five movements, which follow one another [whatever this means?], are very different in character. Technical and expressive resources are employed in turn on both flute and harp, ranging from the sustained, lyrical slow movement to the most voluble *Prestissimo*. In this way, the composer wanted to create extremely diverse colours and images, forming a complete work in the service of an essentially poetic language.⁹

6. *Incandescence* (2010)

This work for tenor saxophone with piano accompaniment is in three movements and published by Resolute Music Publications. *Lyrique – Andante – Final*, lasting almost 17 minutes.

The programme notes elucidate that this composition was commissioned by the *Contemporary Tenor Repertoire Initiative*, an American consortium of twenty-five enthusiasts of the tenor saxophone, to augment the repertoire for the tenor saxophone with a seminal work. The composition commences with an extended cadenza, necessitating comprehensive techniques. The third segment emerges as a formidable tour de force, demanding a performer of considerable experience to navigate the requisite technical prowess.

Scott Patrick Augustine posits that the composition exhibits a markedly more stoic character in its measured pace and lyrical articulation than analogous pieces. Augustine argues that, notwithstanding this, Gotkovsky maintains a capacity for engendering musical drama and achieving a profound intensity across the dynamic spectrum.¹⁰ Considering the existence of a clarinet rendition of the piece, Augustine conducts an analytical comparison between the clarinet and saxophone versions. He observes that Gotkovsky assigns the tenor saxophone a foundational pitch of C, in contrast to the clarinet version, which commences a tritone away at an F#. Through comparative analysis, Augustine suggests that the motif of a fluctuating luminosity, emblematic of incandescence, consistently permeates the variations and transitions, ultimately converging on the C note of the saxophone version.¹¹

7. *Brilliance pour saxophone et piano* (1974)

This four-movement work was commissioned as part of a competition organised by the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles and published by Billaudot. Ida Gotkovsky calls the four movements as follows: *Déclamé – Désinvolte – Dolcissimo – Final Prestissimo*.¹²

Jacob Brandenburg explains the connection between *Brilliance* and other instrumental compositions by Ida Gotkovsky, highlighting the recurrent themes of borrowing and intertextuality. Brandenburg articulates that Gotkovsky employs a method of thematic recycling, where she reuses thematic materials, simultaneously evolving melodies and modifying harmonies.¹³ Conversely, Augustine

⁹ Cf. description on the website

<https://www.gotkovsky.com/textes_versionFR/txt_fiches_des_oeuvres/ff_eolienne.htm> (12/2/24).

¹⁰ Cf. Augustine, p. 97.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 84.

¹² Cf. description on the website

<https://www.gotkovsky.com/textes_versionFR/txt_fiches_des_oeuvres/ff_brillans.htm> (12/2/24).

¹³ Cf. Jacob Brandenburg, *Jacob Brandenburg master of music recital abstract*, University of Northern Iowa 2021, p. (sheet) 10, (no numbered pages).

puts forward that Brilliance is distinguished by its intensive application of the variation technique alongside the utilisation of polyrhythms to engender rhythmic tension.¹⁴ Furthermore, Augustine observes that the first movement of Brilliance is titled Lyrique, indicating Gotkovsky's predilection for a declamatory style, a characteristic also prevalent in the first movements of her other compositions, such as the Variations pathétiques.¹⁵

The compositional approach of Ida Gotkovsky in Brilliance and in Incandescence is characterised by a notable predilection for incorporating musical motifs from her oeuvre into new works, a practice emblematic of intertextuality – a concept she frequently employs. The term of intertextuality, originating from literary theory and attributed to Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, encompasses a spectrum of techniques, including quotations, allusions, references, pastiches, parodies, plagiarism, and collage.¹⁶ Intertextuality denotes the complex web of relationships among texts, where each is informed by and in dialogue with preceding and contemporary texts. In musical composition, this phenomenon is exemplified by techniques such as parody (the recontextualisation of existing musical compositions with new textual content) and contrafactum (the alteration of lyrics within an existing song structure). These practices, as observed in the works of J.S. Bach, reflect a deliberate and strategic approach to composition, serving both as a creative method and a means to achieve compositional efficiency. Put casually, it's likely also a method for getting something down on paper when one runs out of inspiration. The question of whether Gotkovsky's compositional technique aligns with this historical practice of intertextuality was not initially posed due to a lack of awareness of her engagement with this method. However, the discovery of Gotkovsky's use of intertextual strategies was later confirmed through insights derived from two recent studies, which highlight the significance of intertextuality in her work. These studies elucidate how Gotkovsky integrates and reinterprets musical material, thereby contributing to the ongoing discourse on the intertextual practices within musical composition.

Intertextuality plays a major role in Gotkovsky's "creation of a universal work." It grants her a unique compositional voice and codifies her works into her own canon. Listeners are able to form connections between her pieces which increases the music's accessibility. In her credo, Gotkovsky expresses a desire to "ensure the unity of musical expression throughout all time," and it is through intertextuality that her oeuvre becomes a microcosm of this ideal.¹⁷

Gotkovsky's employment of self-borrowing engenders a dialogic interconnectivity – or more aptly, a thematic continuity – among her compositions, facilitating the iterative development of melodic motifs across multiple works. This methodological approach contributes to forming a cohesive oeuvre, ensuring a uniformity of musical expression. Moreover, self-borrowing serves as a mechanism for the innovative and occasionally inventive extrapolation of musical concepts previously explored by the composer. This not only unveils previously unexplored capacities within the material but also showcases the compositional prowess with which Gotkovsky navigates her musical landscape.

Broadly speaking, and beyond the scope of the intertextual propensities warranting further scholarly exploration within Ida Gotkovsky's comprehensive oeuvre, the so-called pedagogical compositions, exemplified by works like Incandescence, represent not only a valuable enrichment to existing repertoires but also offer considerable auditory appeal for recital programmes.¹⁸ Notably recognised for their intricate sonority, these compositions are equally commendable for their

¹⁴ Cf. Augustine, p. 92.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 81.

¹⁶ Cf. Julia Kristeva, *Semeiotikè: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, Paris: Seuil 1969.

¹⁷ Augustine, p. 21.

¹⁸ Cf. description on the website

<http://www.resolutemusicpublications.com/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=85> (12/2/24).

suitability as pieces for high-calibre competitions. This characteristic is consistently observable across a wide array of Gotkovsky's works that feature piano accompaniment.

Delineating the distinctions among pedagogical compositions, chamber music pieces, and advanced contemporary concert works presents a significant challenge. Consequently, it becomes pertinent to investigate the degree to which intertextuality between the so-called pedagogical works and larger-scale compositions contributes to an intrinsic coherence within Ida Gotkovsky's entire body of work, thereby fostering the emergence of a distinctive personal style.