

THE KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI
ACADEMY OF MUSIC IN KRAKOW

24 PRELUDIES FOR CELLO AND PIANO OP.47 BY LERA AUERBACH
AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE SEARCH FOR NEW DIMENSIONS
AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY CELLO MUSIC

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in the artistic discipline: musical arts

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Declaration of the Doctoral Thesis Supervisor

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ARTISTIC WORK

PROGRAM

Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes with postlude for cello and piano op.47

Performers:

Jiaqi Zang - violoncello

Eligiusz Skoczylas - piano

Mastering:

Kamil Madoń

The recording was made at the Chamber Hall
of the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Krakow on:

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Introduction

The 20th century was a period of historical change and innovation in human history. Wars between nations profoundly affected people's lives, but at the same time fostered development in all aspects of society. In music, it was a period of creativity and diversity, from impressionism and expressionism to serialism, sonorism, and electronic music. During this period, composers made bold attempts to abandon traditional aesthetic forms and strived for individuality and freedom in musical creation.

After the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union entered the forty-year Cold War¹. During this period, music became an important means of expressing diverse ideological, political, and cultural views, as well as a significant medium for promoting their culture and values. Influenced by ideology, some composers were forced to choose between the two camps, which limited their creative space but simultaneously fostered the further development of their musical styles. Many outstanding artists chose to leave the Soviet Union and pursue their careers abroad, including in the United States.

Russian-American composer Lera Auerbach was born in the 1970s, and social turmoil profoundly shaped her character. Upon arriving in the United States, she was exposed to a diversity of musical styles, which, combined with her own life experiences and cultural background, led her to develop her own unique compositional style. Her aesthetic blends elements of both classical and contemporary music; her works incorporate a wide range of sonic conventions, as well as diverse compositional techniques and forms, yet each of her works possesses a unique musical language.

From the outset, the development of music in the 20th century was associated with challenges and innovations in classical music, especially in the field of instrumental music, where composers boldly experimented and continually explored new expressive and technological possibilities for their instruments. The cello, a musical instrument with rich expressive power, experienced significant innovations in technology and musical language in the 20th century, not only limited to playing the cello but also exploring the possibility

¹ The Cold War - was a period of tension and ideological, political, military, and economic rivalry lasting from 1947 to 1991 between the Eastern Bloc, i.e., the USSR and its satellite states, members of the Warsaw Pact from 1955, and non-European states allied with the USSR, and the Western Bloc, i.e., non-communist states, members of NATO and parallel defense pacts from 1949. The term "Cold War" was first used by British writer George Orwell in his 1945 essay "You and the Atomic Bomb," which appeared in the British left-wing newspaper "Tribune."

of using it as a quasi-percussion instrument. Composers pushed the boundaries of cello performance possibilities, utilizing complex techniques and a unique musical language.

Lera Auerbach's "24 Preludes for Cello and Piano" op.47 was composed at the end of the 20th century. This work not only inherits the innovative spirit of its predecessors but also opens up new expressive spaces for the cello through its unique musical language and profound emotional expression. This work not only demonstrates the technical potential of the cello but also creates a new form of musical dialogue through the interaction between the cello and piano.

In analyzing this work, I will focus on the following issues:

- the musical language and style of the individual preludes,
- the interaction between the cello and piano,
- the demands and challenges of performance,
- its influence on the development of musical language.

To better interpret this work, I will employ the following research methods:

1. A case study – an attempt to understand the composer's musical style and a thorough look at her entire artistic output.
2. An analysis of the cycle in terms of musical structure, harmony, melody, and rhythm.
3. An examination of interpretive possibilities from the performer's perspective, comparing the written musical text with the composer's own performance.
4. A summary of the significance of Lera Auerbach's work for the development of contemporary cello music and an examination of its influence on the future development of this field.

Through this research, I hope to characterize the idiom of Lera Auerbach's cello work. I will also attempt to identify new trends in the development of cello music in the increasingly diverse and unpredictable environment of contemporary music.

Chapter I

Music in the 20th century – A New Look at the World of Sounds

In the 20th century, with the advancement of science and technology and the development of society, many traditional things underwent rapid and profound changes. Music, as a product reflecting ideology, also underwent significant innovation. Some traditional forms of music and way it was created were gradually transformed by new technologies and concepts. Composers, through bold experiments and innovations, broke traditional approaches to musical principles and discovered new, infinite sonic possibilities.

The 20th century was also an era of rapid development in information and technology. This is the largest and most far-reaching scientific and technological revolution in human history, also known as the information revolution². As a key driver of 20th-century social development, the information revolution also played a crucial role in the development of music, particularly its creation, dissemination, and consumption. Here are some of the important influences of this breakthrough on 20th-century music:

Innovations in Music Creation Technology

20th-century music composition techniques underwent a complete transformation, shifting music from traditional forms toward modernity. First, the widespread adoption of recording technology broke the time and space constraints of musical performance, allowing composers and performers to repeatedly record and edit works to achieve greater perfection. The advent of multitrack recording, reverb, and playback technologies allowed creative teams to simulate "live" sound effects even in recording studios, not only improving the quality of music but also enabling post-production³. Furthermore, the emergence of various sound samplers, synthesizers, electronic instruments, and computer software significantly expanded composers' creative boundaries. Traditional approaches to composition, focusing on the acoustic characteristics of traditional instruments, were gradually replaced by electronic timbres and new instruments, enabling musicians to create new sounds and effects simply and effectively. This led to the creation of numerous avant-garde and experimental musical works. Composers can use synthesizers to simulate sounds that traditional instruments can't produce, as well as sounds that can't be captured naturally.

² The 3rd Technological Revolution, also known as the 3rd Industrial Revolution, the Information Revolution, the Digital Revolution, the Information Revolution, or the Technological Revolution, began after World War II. Automated computers increased productivity, and nuclear technology provided greater energy efficiency than petroleum. It's the largest and most significant technological revolution in human history and continues to this day.

³ Johns Hopkins University Press. Music and Technology in the 20th Century.
<https://www.press.jhu.edu/books/title/2010/music-and-technology-twentieth-century>

This multifaceted sonic expression has opened up entirely new possibilities for electronic and experimental music⁴.

Technological innovations not only translate into the transformation of tools and processes, but also drive changes in the concept of musical composition. Composers began to boldly experiment with experimental music genres such as "Glitch"⁵ and "Noise Music"⁶, all made possible by new technologies. Furthermore, digital information exchange facilitated the rapid exchange of musical elements worldwide, leading to the collision of musical elements from different cultures and giving rise to unique 20th-century styles such as rock and folk music.

The development of new technologies opened up limitless possibilities for music creation and laid a solid foundation for future musical developments. Furthermore, the widespread availability of music production software allowed amateurs to boldly engage in music creation and production, lowering the barriers to entry into the world of music. Both professionals and amateurs can now express their musical creativity.

Advances in Music Distribution

At the beginning of the 20th century, the way music was distributed underwent a revolutionary change, transforming audiences and the way it was experienced. Radio technology developed rapidly during the war, and afterward, the widespread use of radio transmission allowed music to easily transcend geographical barriers and spread rapidly around the world. At the time, radio served as a convenient means of communication, playing a significant role in bringing music to millions of homes⁷.

In the mid-20th century, widespread television combined music with images, giving rise to various forms such as music programs, live concert broadcasts, and music videos. These innovations redefined the format of music distribution, offering audiences

⁴ MIDI.org. MIDI History: Chapter 4 – Synths Come of Age 1900–1963.

⁵ Glitch, also known as clicks and cuts, is a genre of electronic music that emerged in the 1990s with the widespread use of digital sound processing. A characteristic feature of this genre is the use of sound samples, usually very short, and effects generated electronically or by distorting the sound wave in place of traditional instruments.

⁶ Noise music (or simply noise) is a subgenre of experimental music characterized by the use of unwanted noise as a primary musical element. The genre has its roots in early 20th-century avant-garde music, but later drew inspiration from industrial and electronic music. It is characterized by a rejection of conventional music theory and traditional song structures, often with little or no melody, rhythm, or harmony. This type of music challenges the conventional distinction between musical and non-musical sound.

⁷ Xu Jingjing (2025). The Evolution of Music Media and Its Societal Impact: From Sheet Music to Streaming. Xuekanba. <https://www.xuekanba.com/lunwen/yishu/10-18604.html>

a dual sensory experience — visual and auditory — thus increasing the appeal of musical performances. As a result, people ceased to be mere listeners and became active spectators.

Thanks to further developments in recording technology, music could be stored long-term and widely distributed. The emergence of new data storage media (tapes, record players, vinyl records, CDs, and digital audio, etc.) facilitated the storage and distribution of music. In the second half of the 20th century, with the development of the internet, music distribution expanded from local regions to international and intercontinental exchanges, enabling faster exchange and integration of music from different cultural backgrounds.

In the 21st century, the invention and popularization of smartphones and mobile devices introduced a completely new experience in music distribution. People now have easier access to music, and the emergence of new media forms such as short films and live streaming has invigorated the dissemination of music, spreading it worldwide via the internet and enriching its diversity, leading to the globalization of music.

In summary, the transformative changes in music dissemination in the 20th century have opened up limitless possibilities for music creation and commercialization, accelerating intercultural and interregional exchange and integration.

The Transformation of Music Consumption

The 20th century saw a transformation in music consumption patterns from traditional record purchases to digital music. Historically, music consumption relied primarily on relatively limited forms such as concerts, vinyl records, and television broadcasts, with physical media serving as the foundation for the entire music industry. With the continued development of recording technology and communication methods, music consumption patterns gradually became more diverse.

Thanks to technological advances, home recording devices and portable radios became widely available in households, allowing people to more conveniently listen to music at home or outdoors. This broke the time and space constraints of traditional music consumption methods. In the second half of the 20th century, the widespread adoption of physical media such as cassette tapes and CDs further accelerated the evolution of music consumption. During this phase, consumers purchased physical records or cassettes to collect their favorite music. During this period, the music market formed a perfect industrial chain

and entered a period of great prosperity. In the 21st century, the development of the internet has once again revolutionized the traditional model of music consumption, which relied on physical media. Online downloading and streaming have become widespread, allowing users to access a wide variety of music resources via smartphone or computer, without the constraints of dedicated music devices. This has made music consumption more flexible and convenient. Traditional physical media, however, have not completely disappeared, existing primarily as personal collections. The subsequent development of online payment systems has led to the emergence of music subscription services, giving consumers access to an increasingly wide range of musical genres.

Contemporary music consumption has closely integrated consumers with the music market. The music industry must constantly adapt to changing trends and implement timely changes to meet increasingly diverse and personalized consumer needs, thus driving the sustainable prosperity of the entire music industry⁸.

Greater Interactivity in Music Creation and Performance

Traditionally, composers typically only establish the basic structure of a piece, such as melody and form, during composition. At most, they might discuss the feasibility and appropriateness of certain elements with the instrumentalists. Finally, the performers perform the piece according to the score, presenting it to the audience. With technological advances, this unidirectional creative model has gradually been disrupted. Music creation and performance are now characterized by greater interactivity and real-time elements, with more frequent exchanges between different actors, thus creating a completely new paradigm of artistic creation.

First, the introduction of electronic devices to live performances has freed them from the constraints of acoustics, integrating electronic synthesis, digital sound processing, stage lighting control, and other elements. The control room behind the stage often houses computers or digital control consoles that process various musical signals in real time, lending multi-layered and multi-dimensional effects to live music. Composers and performers can make real-time changes to a piece based on the original score, creating an improvisational effect that not only inspires the performers' improvisational skills but also provides audiences

⁸ From Vinyl to Digital: How Music Consumption Has Evolved Across Generations. Retroactv <https://www.retroactv.com/blogs/retroactv-blog/from-vinyl-to-digital-how-music-consumption-has-evolved-across-generations>

with a richer and more immersive audiovisual experience. Furthermore, the popularization of the internet has allowed musicians to break down geographical barriers and collaborate online, broadening the horizons of music creation.

Second, with the rapid development of digital music, more and more composers are directly inviting performers to participate in the creative process, communicating and adapting the music at any point during rehearsals and performances, and actively incorporating audience feedback to adapt the music, making each concert unique.

In short, the increased interaction between composition and performance in the 20th century fueled the continuous evolution of musical expression, simultaneously opening new paths for the music industry, thus becoming one of the defining features of contemporary music culture.

Diversification of Musical Styles and Cross-Border Integration

The 20th century's information revolution and globalization have created unprecedented opportunities for the diversification of musical styles. Elements from different eras and regions, such as traditional and modern, Western and Eastern music, have constantly intertwined, causing previously relatively stable musical categories to exhibit a tendency to merge and blend. The emergence of genres such as rock, pop, hip-hop, and electronic music in the 20th century not only posed no threat to traditional music, but also facilitated the integration of various musical styles. Composers combined traditional classical music with modern musical forms, giving rise to new musical styles. This cross-genre fusion not only enriches expressive forms of music but also provides musicians with new creative ideas and inspiration.

Composers have utilized digital technology to seamlessly combine various musical elements, creating highly personalized musical styles. Especially with the development of the internet, musical works from different countries and cultural backgrounds have experienced unprecedented exchange and collaboration. During this same period, the preservation and transmission of traditional elements of folk music also gained significant attention. Many artists integrated contemporary musical elements while retaining the distinctive characteristics of their ethnic music, thus preserving and transmitting history while simultaneously infusing the music with new energy.

Furthermore, in the context of inter-genre fusion, the interaction between music creation and the performing arts, as well as audiovisual images, became increasingly closer. Contemporary musical performances often integrate various forms of artistic expression, such as drama, dance, and imagery, and, thanks to a range of digital technologies, create dazzling stage effects that not only enhance the emotional impact of the music, but also provide it with a broader scope of expression.

The diversification of musical styles and inter-genre fusion in the 20th century fueled continuous progress in musical expression, making music a bridge between different eras and cultures.

Changes in Music Copyright and the Business Model

Music copyright protection and its commercial development have undergone constant modification and innovation with the dynamic development of the music industry throughout the 20th century. This evolution, from the initial single-channel business model of physical record sales to its current multi-channel coexistence in the digital age, has seen both music copyright and business models undergo profound transformations. In the mid-20th century, the widespread adoption of recording and replication technologies marked the official entry of music production and distribution into the commercial era. Record companies became dominant players in this model, providing original musicians and their bands with income and legal protection through control of copyright and distribution channels.

However, as music consumption patterns continued to evolve, traditional copyright laws and business models encountered challenges. The development of the internet brought music into the digital age, enabling the rapid circulation of music online in digital file formats. While this has significantly reduced production and distribution costs, it has also led to problems such as illegal distribution and piracy. Countries are constantly developing and refining a range of measures, including copyright laws and regulations, international copyright treaties, and regulatory mechanisms for music distribution platforms, to protect the intellectual property rights and creative enthusiasm of original musicians and ensure the orderly and dynamic development of the music consumption market. At the same time, the establishment of copyright organizations and industry associations has provided stable and reliable institutional guarantees for the authorization, management, and revenue of musical works.

In terms of business models, the dominant position of physical media has gradually been replaced by digital music and online streaming. Digital platforms calculate revenue based on metrics such as the number of plays and downloads, providing original musicians with a steady stream of income. Furthermore, forms such as individual purchases, subscription services, advertising placement, copyright transfers, and merchandise have enriched the music industry's profit models. Musicians and record labels are also generating greater commercial value through concerts, music festivals, and brand sponsorships. The transformation of copyright and business models in the music industry not only reflects the impact of technological advances on traditional models but also opens up new opportunities for the entire music industry, enabling it to thrive in the digital age.

Reform of Music Teaching and Education

Since the 20th century, music teaching and education have undergone a transformation from the traditional master-student model to more scientific and modern educational models. Early music education was primarily based on family or inheritance, emphasizing the importance of technical skills, while teaching content and methods were relatively monotonous. With social progress, technological advancements, and the improvement of the education system, music education has adopted more scientific and systematic methods, dividing music into main areas such as theoretical knowledge, music history, cultural background, and technical characteristics, enabling music students to learn music in a more scientific and comprehensive manner.

Innovations in modern educational methods have broken down geographical barriers thanks to the internet. Teachers and students can conduct remote learning and interaction through multimedia, video networking platforms, and other software. Teachers can create online courses or record instructional videos and post them online to impart knowledge. Students can independently acquire musical knowledge through video courses, simulated lessons, online resources, and other methods. They can also interact with renowned musicians at home and abroad in real time via online video software, breaking the constraints of time and space. Furthermore, interdisciplinary educational concepts are promoted, integrating music with technology, computer science, and psychology to develop versatile talents that combine art and technology.

Furthermore, practical learning plays a key role in contemporary music education. Various music studios and musical creativity bases provide students with numerous practical

opportunities, allowing them to thoroughly test their theoretical knowledge in practice. Students can improve their performance skills and deepen their understanding of musical composition concepts and styles through group discussions, live performances, and improvisation. They can also showcase their musical talents and broaden their horizons through competitions, art festivals, and international master classes, thus comprehensively developing their personal skills.

In summary, the reforms in music education and teaching in the 20th century preserved traditional musical knowledge while integrating modern science and technology into the global context of the era. This, in turn, contributed to the development of a new generation of diverse and innovative musical talents in society. The diversification of music education and the constant updating of educational content fostered the inheritance and development of musical culture, bringing boundless vitality to society.

From this perspective, it can be seen that the development of music in the 20th century represents an unprecedented, major revolution in its history. From a development perspective, it not only accelerates the progress of music technology but also promotes the diversification and globalization of musical styles. Meanwhile, the information revolution is profoundly impacting the face of music in many aspects of music technology, dissemination, acceptance, social roles, and so on, and is also bringing limitless opportunities for music in the future.

1.1 Novelty and Innovation

Classical music of the 20th century fundamentally transformed human perception and use of sound, creating a new dimension in the world of sound, where music was no longer limited to traditional harmony, melody, and rhythm, but instead discovered and explored the infinite possibilities of sound, creating new modes of musical expression and audiovisual experience. The innovations of 20th-century classical music in the world of sound are reflected primarily in the following aspects:

Tonal Breakthroughs and "Melodyless" Music

Arnold Schönberg initially placed his hopes in "tone-color melodies" (Klangfarbenmelodien), but later completely rejected the traditional tonal system and composed a number of melodyless works. His works "Five Pieces for Orchestra" (1909) and "Pierrot lunaire" (1912) fully demonstrate the expressive power of music, in which melody is no longer centered around a dominant key but freely utilizes all pitches. Schoenberg developed the twelve-tone system in his later works, where each note of the twelve-note scale is given equal weight⁹.

Innovations in Rhythm and Metre

In his ballet "The Rite of Spring" (1913), Igor Stravinsky employed numerous dissonances, experiments with polytonality, constantly shifting meter, and an emphasis on rhythm, representing a departure from Western classical music traditions, where melody and harmony had previously been paramount. In terms of rhythmic diversity, Bartók's "Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta" (1936) employs complex rhythmic patterns and draws on the rhythmic characteristics of Eastern European folk music.

Exploring Color and Sound

In 20th-century music, color gradually became one of the fundamental elements of composers' work, not simply an addition to melody, rhythm, or harmony. This shift reflects profound transformations in musical concepts and technical means during this period. Claude Debussy created unique sound effects through harmonic innovations and innovative orchestration in his work "La Mer" (1905). The mid-20th century saw the rise of electronic music, and Stockhausen's composition "Gesang der jüngerlinge" (1956) pioneered new paths

⁹ Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) str.207-216

by combining electronic music with the human voice. Pierre Schaeffer, the founder of *musique concrète*¹⁰, created new colors by processing any sound material using electronic devices.

High Degree of Freedom in Musical Form and Structure

During this period, composers began to introduce an element of randomness, diversifying the structure and content of music and allowing for a different version in each performance. This relatively free and open form challenged traditional notions of music, providing performers with more space to perform and increasing audience engagement. Similarly, collage music¹¹ enriched musical diversity by combining different musical styles, creating a new musical language. Furthermore, minimalist music achieved a meditative musical effect through the repetition of melodies, allowing the listener to focus on distinguishing subtle changes in the melody.

The Rise of Ethnic Music and the Fusion of Cross-Cultural Music

Nationalism particularly flourished during this period. Composers drew inspiration from folk music from various regions and cultures, combining traditional music to diversify classical music. The melodies, rhythms, scales, and philosophical ideas of Oriental music had a profound influence on composers and fostered the interconnectedness of music. Globalization enabled the exchange and fusion of different musical cultures, resulting in cross-cultural musical styles¹².

High Integration of Music and Technology

The use of electronic devices and recording technology allowed composers to directly control musical effects, while the popularity of computer technology enabled music synthesis and significantly expanded the possibilities of composition. Secondly, the use of sensors and real-time music processing systems made music creation freer and more allowed for real-time interaction with the audience, breaking down the boundaries between composer, performer, and listener.

¹⁰ *Musique concrète* – a movement in contemporary music that, in addition to the sounds of instruments or vocals, utilizes real sounds – sounds of nature, factory noises, street traffic, random human voices, etc. Such sounds are recorded, then prepared and mixed to achieve the intended aesthetic effect.

¹¹ Collage (from the French collage – "gluing" or "covering with paper") – an artistic technique involving the formation of compositions from various materials and substances. Transferred from the visual arts to music, it allows for the free combination of recordings, sounds from nature, and sampling.

¹² Philip V. Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism*, ABC-CLIO, 2004

The Socialization and Political Role of Music

The 20th century was an era of awakening human self-awareness. With the penetration of the information revolution into society, people's material lives improved significantly. During this period, composers expressed their protest against social upheaval, war, and political oppression through music, becoming a driving force and enabler of social change. At the same time, women, ethnic minorities, and marginalized groups also expressed their inner striving for equality and freedom through music¹³. Music also completed its transformation during this period, moving from being the preserve of the upper classes to becoming an important element of popular culture.

Spatiality and the Sound Environment

Composers during this period placed greater emphasis on the spatial distribution of sound, creating stereo sound in their compositions using multi-channel technology. The emergence of ambient music¹⁴ allowed music to transcend the stage and connect with the natural surroundings or humanist architecture, creating an immersive musical experience. At the same time, music is treated as a distinct musical form and combined with visual art, creating a multi-sensory experience.

Overall, it can be seen that 20th-century music completely transformed the world of sound. Through a series of experiments (deconstruction of tonality, rhythmic innovations, exploration of timbre, liberalization of form, cross-cultural fusion, and the use of technology), composers explored the infinite possibilities of sound and opened up new musical paths. Sound was not merely a musical tool but became an independent artistic language, opening up a completely new dimension of auditory and creative experience. During this period, music made its own artistic breakthroughs and innovations, while at the same time, as a means of communication, it profoundly reflected social, political and cultural changes, leaving behind a valuable legacy in the history of music.

¹³ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings*, University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p.5

¹⁴ Ambient – a genre of experimental electronic music, characterized by a departure from the linearly developed melodic line characteristic of classical electronic music in favor of a loose composition of "sound spots"

1.2 Return to the Past

In the development of 20th-century music, musical diversity and innovation were central themes of this period, but the phenomenon of "return to the past" was also present throughout, and both were important elements in the development of 20th-century music, which was not only a simple repetition of traditional musical styles but also a reinterpretation and application of music through the use of modern compositional techniques in conjunction with traditional music. At the same time, the trend of "seeking a model from the past" in the development of 20th-century music exhibited diverse characteristics, with the following main musical genres:

Neoclassical Music

Neoclassical music is a musical style that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century and is also a tribute to pre-Romantic music. Stravinsky's "Pulcinella" is a representative work of neoclassical music, based on the music of Pergolesi and reinterpreting Baroque music using modern musical techniques. The work presents a familiar and innovative musical language, reflected not only in the melody but also modernized the structure of classical music. Neoclassical music emphasized the following characteristics: the use of simplified instrumentation, counterpoint and rhythm, the expansion or innovation of modal harmony, and a focus on absolute music rather than Romantic title music.

The Revival of National Music¹⁵

National music first emerged in the 19th century, when some composers incorporated musical elements of a national and ethnic nature into their works. In the 20th century, wars gave a huge impetus to the development of national music, which became an important means of motivating and inspiring people during this period. Béla Bartók's "Romanian Folk Dances" is a prime example of the combination of national music with 20th-century compositional techniques. The composer delved into folklore, collected local musical materials, and combined them with modern compositional techniques, creating music with distinctive national characteristics and a modern character. This music reflects the strong vitality of national music in the contemporary musical environment and its value.

¹⁵ National schools were a musical movement that emerged in the second half of the 19th century as a response to the influence of Germanic Romanticism and Italian opera. The movement aimed to emphasize and promote the values and beauty of individual nations through folk music and folklore.

Minimalist Music

Philip Glass's "Einstein on the Beach" is a representative work of minimalist music. In his piece, a unique sonic effect is created by the repetition and alteration of simple musical materials, and this simple compositional method reflects profound reflections on the essence of music. The significance of minimalist music lies in the composer's reexamination of the fundamental principles of music composition and the development of new ideas for contemporary music.

New Romantic Music

New Romantic music emerged in the mid- to late 20th century. New Romanticism was a return to the emotional expression of 19th-century Romantic music, in which composers continued the emotionality of traditional Romantic music and reinterpreted it in light of contemporary tonal processing, harmony, and rhythmic changes. Furthermore, 20th-century music displays other manifestations of a return to the past, such as the revival of neo-Gregorian chant, the revival of Renaissance dance music, the revival of the Baroque concert form, the revival of the classical sonata form, and so on. It can be seen that the vintage movement in 20th-century music presents a diverse character that is not only simple melodic imitation or repetition but also a reinterpretation of tradition through the compositional techniques of contemporary music. This practice not only enriches the genre of 20th-century music but also represents an important discovery and idea for contemporary musical creation.

Chapter II

Lera Auerbach -

A contemporary figure of Renaissance

Lera Auerbach is a true contemporary "Renaissance Woman," demonstrating her ability to combine various art forms with a wide range of artistic endeavors. She is not only an outstanding composer, but also a conductor, pianist, writer, and visual artist, and her artistic achievements can be seen in the following areas:

Composition and Performance

Lera Auerbach's compositional work encompasses a wide range of genres, including symphonic, chamber, orchestral, ballet, opera, and vocal music. Her works continue the tradition of classical music while incorporating contemporary elements, demonstrating her bold experimentation and use of new musical forms. As a pianist, she not only performs her own original compositions but also collaborates with the world's leading symphony orchestras and soloists, and conducts herself, interpreting her works from diverse perspectives.

Multifaceted Artistic Explorations

Besides her musical work, Lera Auerbach has achieved considerable success in the field of literature. Her poetry and prose often focus on themes of humanity, time, and memory, and her words, like her music, are filled with emotional and philosophical reflections, creating a unique literary atmosphere. In the visual arts, her work encompasses paintings and sculptures, and she often combines music with imagery to explore multi-sensory artistic experiences. This cross-border experimentation not only broadens her artistic means but also ensures her work remains independent and in step with contemporary developments.

Artistic Innovation and Self-Transcendence

Lera Auerbach's commitment to art is reflected not only in her work but also in her attitude of constant learning and exploration of new areas of endeavor. Her achievements in many fields are the result of this self-transcendence. She believes that "art is part of life,"¹⁶ and her pursuit of beauty and passion for art have allowed her to leave her mark in various fields. As in the Renaissance, when artistic ideas and innovations flourished, she combines knowledge and elements from various disciplines with music, expressing her inner feelings through words and depicting dreams through visual art. Her works often transcend tradition, creating her own artistic language, which has become her calling card in the contemporary world.

¹⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwMhAmcJl_M

2.1 Composer Profile¹⁷

Lera Auerbach, born in the former Soviet Union and currently residing in Austria and the United States, is a multifaceted artist – she is a composer, pianist, conductor, writer, poet, and active in the visual arts. Born in 1973, she grew up in a Jewish family with a rich musical tradition. Her father is Jewish and her mother is a Russian Orthodox Christian, and this interfaith background later became a metaphor for cultural integration in her work. From a young age, she demonstrated extraordinary musical talent. At the age of four, she showed an interest in music, made her first stage appearance at six, performed with an orchestra at eight, and composed her first opera at twelve, which she presented in her hometown. She received her early musical education in the former Soviet Union, and in 1991 was given the opportunity to perform in the United States. Although she didn't speak English at the time, after the concert she decided to stay in this country, studying at internationally renowned music schools such as the Juilliard School of Music in New York and later the Hochschule für Music in Hanover (Germany). This cross-cultural experience had a profound impact on her work, allowing her to fuse music from different cultures and ideas, while simultaneously inheriting the essence of classical music and combining new elements to create a unique musical language.

As a composer, Lera Auerbach doesn't limit herself to a single genre. She creates not only works in traditional forms such as symphonies, chamber music, concertos, operas, and ballet, but also constantly weaves elements of electronic music, installation art, and poetry into her work, creating a unique musical language. Her music has the rigorous structure of classical music, but is also imbued with a modern and experimental spirit, often inspiring reflection on humanity, time, and memory.

Her catalogue includes more than 180 works, from full-evening stage works and large-scale choral scores to chamber music, solo cycles, and pieces that resist ordinary classification. She does not merely occupy inherited forms; she often alters them from within. “The Little Mermaid,” created for the Royal Danish Ballet with John Neumeier, belongs to the world of large-scale ballet, but also to the darker tradition of fairy tale as ordeal. The opera “Gogol” transforms literary obsession, grotesquerie, and doubling into theatrical form. The a cappella opera “The Blind” builds drama from the absence of sight. Works such as Russian Requiem,

¹⁷ <https://leraauerbach.com/biography/>

72 Angels, Arctica, and Vessels of Light reveal Auerbach's attraction to music as a space in which private anguish, ritual imagination, and collective memory may be given shape.

The composer describes herself as: “.. an artist of irony, grotesque humor, tenderness, childlike wonder, myth, virtuosity, and dazzling craft. Her world contains angels and monsters, fairy tales and philosophical wounds, absurdity and lament, discipline and hallucination. It is precisely this range—severe and playful, wounded and theatrical, visionary and exact—that gives her work its singular force”.

Her chamber music forms another essential territory of her work. The string quartets, piano trios, sonatas, solo instrumental works, and cycles of 24 Preludes do not stand apart from the larger symphonic and theatrical scores; they reveal the same imagination under conditions of intimacy. In them, Auerbach's largest questions are compressed into concentrated forms. The miniature in her hands is rarely small. It often contains, in embryo, the force of the monumental.

Furthermore, Lera Auerbach is an outstanding conductor and pianist. She frequently performs her own works with renowned musicians and ensembles from around the world, appearing on renowned stages such as Carnegie Hall, Tokyo Opera City, and Lincoln Center. Her diverse work and cross-border endeavors brilliantly interpret the "Renaissance spirit" and have garnered widespread recognition and recognition in the art world. She is the recipient of the 2005 Hindemith Prize¹⁸ from the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival in Germany, as well as other awards such as the Deutsche Welle Prize, and has gained recognition by performing at major music festivals worldwide.

Lera Auerbach's music not only significantly enriches the expression of contemporary classical music but also sets standards for a new generation of composers. Inheriting and continuing traditional Russian music, Lera Auerbach brings new energy to contemporary music with her remarkably individual approach to musical exploration. Her musical ideas and creative concepts have had a broad and profound impact on the world of music.

¹⁸ The International Paul Hindemith Prize promotes outstanding contemporary composers as part of the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival

2.2 Artistic Versatility

Lera Auerbach is a versatile artist, working in various artistic fields. Her oeuvre encompasses not only numerous musical works but also poetry, prose, and visual arts such as painting, sculpture, mixed media, and installations.

Literature and Poetry

As a poet and writer, Auerbach has also achieved exceptional achievements in the field of literary creativity. She has published numerous collections of poetry and prose, and her works typically explore human nature, time, memory, and social phenomena. These writings complement her musical output and together create her unique artistic world. In 1996, she received the Poet of the Year Award from the International Pushkin Society in New York, and her poems are currently taught in contemporary literature courses at Russian universities. She has published five volumes of poetry in Russian and the collection of poetry and prose "Excess of Being." This is her first book in English, in which, through irony and humor, she uses aphorisms to explore the meaning of "excess" and human nature in depth. The book is interspersed with numerous colorful illustrations showcasing her original work.

Her other works include "Hannover Notebook", "Stairs to Eternity", "Sorokolunie" (Forty Moons), and "MUSIC & LITERATURE" No. 7.

Visual Arts

Auerbach's work in the visual arts is equally extensive and primarily encompasses:

Painting and Sculpture

Her paintings and sculptures are often rich in symbolism and abstract aesthetics, expressing inner emotions and philosophical thinking.

Mixed Media and Art Installation

The series "Rooforisms" and "Menagerie" explore the dialogue between tradition and modernity, interiority and exteriority, through the combination of diverse materials and techniques.

Photography

Photography series such as "Accidental Beauty," "Traces," and "Chiaroscuro" demonstrate her extraordinary talent for capturing light, texture, and the passage of time.

Visual Diary

"2024 Visual Diary" documents her recent exploration of the visual arts and reflects her direct work and the way she thinks in her cross-border artistic practice.

Lera Auerbach's multidisciplinary artistic works reflect her versatility and cross-border spirit as a multifaceted contemporary artist. Her work is not limited to music but also leaves a profound mark on literature and the visual arts. These three main fields complement and inspire each other, creating her unique and rich artistic world. As a visual artist, she exhibited her work in a solo exhibition in Norway in 2013.

2.3 Cello Works

Lera Auerbach wrote many important works for cello, in various genres, such as solo music, chamber music, and concertos.

Among his most important works for cello are:

24 Preludes and Postludes for Cello and Piano, Op. 47 (1999)

This cycle, written at the end of the 20th century, consists of 24 short preludes, each with its own musical language. Written in a cyclical order of fifths, major and minor, it is both coherent and diverse, demonstrating a profound exploration of tonality and emotion. The work concludes with a short Postlude based on Prelude No. 12.

Sonata for Cello and Piano (2003)

This piece has a typical sonata form and is at the same time an important work combining both instruments into a unified whole. In this work, the cello's sound is versatile, employing a variety of playing techniques and full of contrasts. At the same time, it draws on the piano melody, demonstrating both technical tension and lyricism.

In the Sonata for Violoncello and Piano (2002), the cello and piano are equal partners in a conversation that “play contrasting roles and expresses different characters. At times, this co-existence is a dialogue, at times a struggle, at times an attempt to resolve inner questions,” the composer states. The emotional center of the work is the Lament, where a deeply felt Russian cello melody is expanded by increasingly dramatic piano chords that add to the angst.¹⁹

Works for Solo Cello

In the "Solo Various" series, Lera Auerbach composed two solo works for cello: "La Suite dels Ocells," a tribute to Pablo Casals²⁰, and the Sonata for Solo Cello, which further demonstrate her unique understanding of the cello's sound and expression.

Cello Concerto "Diary of a Madman" (2021)

This concerto for cello and orchestra is inspired by Nikolai Gogol's short novel "Diary of a Madman." Thanks to its intense emotional expression and complex structure, this work has become one of her most important works. ‘At the beginning of 2021, I wrote the cello concerto ‘Diary of a Madman’, inspired by Gogol's famous short story about Poprishchin, a government employee who gradually descends into madness. The cello concerto was premiered in January 2022 by the Munich Philharmonic under Giedre Šlekyte with Gautier Capuçon as soloist. Nikolai Gogol (or more correctly transliterated from Ukrainian: Mykola Hohol) was a brilliant writer born in Ukraine, the father of Russian-language literature and a visionary far beyond his time. I have been fascinated by his work all my life. Ten years ago, when I was composing my opera Gogol, I read everything he had ever written over and over again. I didn't think of Vladimir Putin when I was composing the cello concerto. Now, however, an uncanny association suddenly resonates in Gogol's story with it. ‘Notes of a Madman’ is the story of a simple government official government official with an inconspicuous, unassuming personality. In his increasingly demented diary entries, Poprishchin claims that a state ‘cannot be without a king’. In the course of the plot, he becomes more crazier and megalomaniac and finally believes himself to be king on ‘43 April 2000’. (Vladimir Putin was first elected President of Russia on 7 May 2000. Gogol wrote his story in 1835!). In the end, Poprishchin ends up in a lunatic asylum. Perhaps Gogol, the visionary and one of the greatest writers who ever lived, could see beyond the 19th and 20th centuries -

¹⁹ <https://www.audaud.com/lera-auerbach-celloquy-24-preludes-for-violoncello-and-piano-sonata-postlude-ani-aznavoorian-cello/lera-auerbach-p-cedille/>

²⁰ The inspiration for this work was Pablo Casals' composition "El Cant dels Ocells" (The Song of the Birds)

into the heart of the 21st century, where we are condemned to continue the eternal story. Gogol's visions and nightmares become reality, and the whole world turns into a madhouse as the great tragedy takes its course. Who will stop the madman? When I work on large-scale pieces, I usually approach similar themes through visual art - painting or sculpture. While working on the cello concerto, for example, I completed my bronze sculpture 'Totentanz' from the 'Music in Bronze' series. 'Totentanz' is my reflection on death, fire and destruction. The burning music engraved in the body of the sculpture is 'Memento mori'. Working on paintings and sculptures has become an indispensable part of my creative process. Sometimes I joke that I make fine art instead of seeing a psychiatrist. Through visual art, I can approach certain themes from a different perspective and with different means than music.' (Lera Auerbach)²¹

In summary, Lera Auerbach's cello works explore the cello's infinite musical possibilities in all its aspects, including sound texture, tonal tension, tonal transformation, musical emotion, and musical structure. Whether it is chamber music, concertos, or solo works, they all reflect her pursuit of musical narrative and artistic expression.

²¹ <https://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Lera-Auerbach-Concerto-for-Violoncello-and-Orchestra-Diary-of-a-Madman/110860>

Chapter III

24 Preludes with Postlude op.47 for cello and piano – from genesis to reception

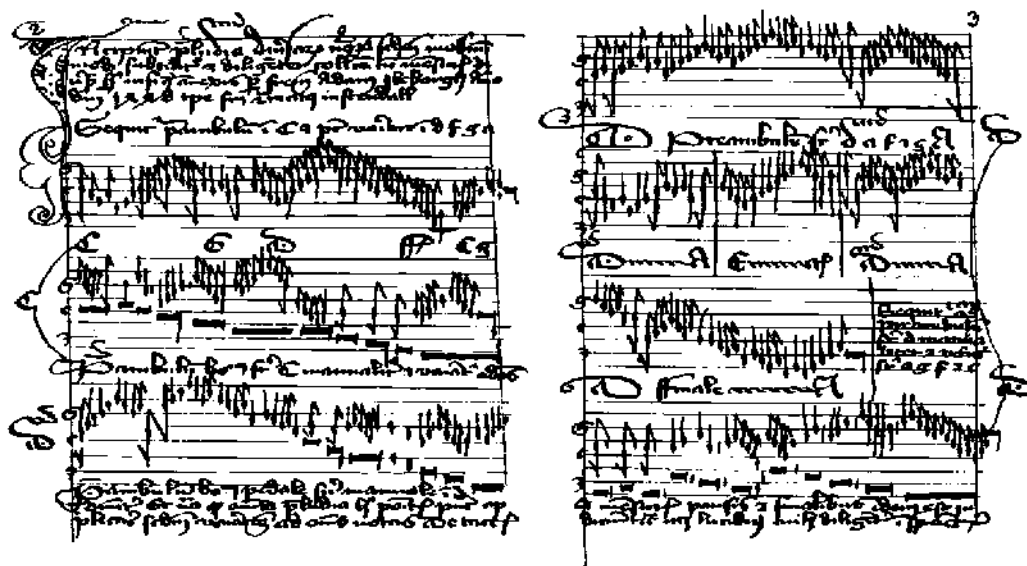
3.1 A Brief Overview of the Prelude

The prelude is one of those musical genres that has had a profound influence on the development of music throughout its history. Originally used as an introduction to a larger musical work (such as a suite, fugue, or opera), it gradually evolved into an independent, short piece with rich content.

The history of preludes dates back to ancient Greece, when the musical system differed significantly from that of later times, and music was closely linked to theater, poetry, as well as banquets and religious ceremonies. In ancient Greek theater, the opening section of a piece was often accompanied by songs or instrumental music to set the mood for the audience. Functionally, they were similar to later preludes, except that they were merely part of a performance, not a stand-alone piece.

During the Renaissance, the prelude's forerunners can be considered short instrumental pieces, improvised on the organ or lute, that introduced vocal pieces.

The earliest known example of the creation of a new genre is the prelude called *preambulum* found in the *Tablature of Adam Illeborgh*²², dated 1448.



Tablature of Adam Illeborgh
Curtis Institute of Music

²² Adam Illeborgh – information about this figure is scarce. He was likely a German musician (organist?) and member of the Franciscan order living in the 15th century, who collected (composed?) eight pieces for organ, five of which are called *preambulums*.

During the Baroque period, the development of the prelude underwent significant changes; it was no longer limited by a specific form but developed into a relatively independent musical genre, short and improvised, typically paired with a fugue or serving as an introduction to a suite. From Bach onward, the prelude underwent significant innovations and evolved into a structured musical work in its own right, rather than merely serving as an introduction to other works.

During the Classical period, sonatas or strictly formal musical structures dominated musical compositions, so the prelude did not develop into a musical genre with an independent structure but appeared only as an introduction to a larger work or between movements, acting as a connecting link.

The Romantic period saw the appearance of a number of collections containing short, twelve-bar "preludes," "introductions," or "preludes," such as Johann Nepomuk Hummel's "Preludes for an Anfänger eines Stückes aus allen 24 major and minor pieces" (Tonartenzum nützlichen Gebrauch für Schüler, op. 67) and Václav Vilém Würfel's "Collection of Exercices in the Form of Preludes from All Major and Minor Pieces."²³ However, Fryderyk Chopin's 24 Preludes for Piano, op. 28, played a particularly important role, establishing a certain creative canon. The preludes were arranged according to the principles of fifth kinship, likely modeled on an earlier cycle composed by Hummel. Each prelude is tonally distinct and has a unique musical character and emotion that inspired later imitators such as Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, Debussy, Szymanowski, Shostakovich, Kabalevsky, Weinberg, Gubaidulina and Auerbach.

In the 20th century, musical creation was no longer limited to a single, specific style but developed in diverse directions. The traditional prelude form continued, retaining the characteristics of a stand-alone work from the Romantic period, but composers began to incorporate unconventional modulations, ambiguous harmonic structures, and asymmetrical rhythmic patterns, creating a modern musical language. 20th-century preludes ceased to be mere introductions to a musical work. Composers considered preludes an important musical form that allowed them to explore new musical languages, express inner feelings, and reflect their times. From the impressionistic music of the late 19th century, through George Gershwin's integration of jazz and blues elements in his prelude works, to the explosion of musical styles in the 20th century, preludes brought new vitality

²³ Mieczysław Tomaszewski *Chopin The Man, his Work and its Resonance*..... p. 447

and limitless possibilities to the development of contemporary music through their innovative and unique styles.

In summary, the prelude, as an expressive musical form within a genre, has developed across many dimensions of music history since its inception in the Middle Ages. This genre not only carried within it the traditional genes of improvised music but also gradually became a vehicle for composers' systematic thinking about music. During the Baroque period, preludes and fugues were combined, creating a rigorous musical system. Subsequently, during the Romantic period, Chopin transformed preludes into independent and complete musical sketches with a distinctive character, while in the 20th century, Debussy's impressionistic music transformed preludes into poetic presentations of sound and imagery. From a performance perspective, preludes from different musical periods exhibit distinct characteristics characteristic of their eras. The organ, as the most representative instrument of the Baroque period, played an important role in the prelude, and the rigor of polyphony, harmony, and texture was evident in the works. Piano preludes from the Romantic era emphasized the independence of music by thoroughly exploring its sound. In the 20th century, composers made extensive use of avant-garde musical language in their prelude works. The bold experiments and innovative nature of preludes in different periods combined to create a diverse musical aesthetic for this genre. These evolutions are reflected not only in the innovation of compositional techniques but also, and more profoundly, in the way composers of different musical periods perceived the prelude as a musical genre—from its practical function as an introduction to its independent aesthetic value as a musical genre in its own right.

3.2 24 Preludes and Postlude for Cello and Piano op.47

The cycle "24 Preludes and Postlude for Cello and Piano" was composed in 1999. It is a collection of short miniatures for cello and piano based on 24 major and minor keys²⁴. This piece is dedicated to the famous ballet choreographer John Neumeier, which suggests that the composer sees great dance and dramatic potential in her work.

The cycle consists of 24 preludes in various keys and a postlude. The first prelude begins in the key of C major and develops in a major-minor order in a cycle of fifths (from C major-

²⁴ Lera Auerbach composed cycles of 24 preludes for different sets of instruments (piano, violin and piano), which shows how much importance she attaches to the major-minor key, as well as her respect for the tradition of this genre

A minor to F major-D minor). Its structure draws inspiration from works by composers such as Chopin, Scriabin, and Shostakovich. Thanks to this rigorous and orderly architecture, the composer not only maintains the relationships between keys but also creates a coherent and contrasting structure. This work combines elements of both traditional and contemporary music. The composer utilizes traditional tonality, form, and harmony, but at the same time, dissonant intervals and chromatic scales appear. The composition is rigorously structured and presents complex and constantly evolving characteristics in terms of musical structure and emotional expression. The strict form and tonal system of the traditional prelude cycle are consistently maintained throughout the work, interwoven with unique compositional solutions in terms of musical layering and emotional expression. Lera Auerbach does not copy her great predecessors, but adds the unpredictability, multi-layered narratives, and diversity of contemporary music to the classical foundation, making this work both traditional and sonically innovative. It is a tribute to traditional music and an active exploration of the development of contemporary music. Through an analysis of all the preludes and postludes, I would like to highlight and emphasize what I consider to be the three most important elements of this work:

Harmonious Ambiguity

When discussing the harmony of 20th-century music, the first thing that comes to mind is dissonance, as it is commonly used in contemporary works. In the 20th century, the need to resolve all dissonances ceased to exist, and dissonance became a fully-fledged part of a musical work. In Auerbach's work, the ambiguity created by dissonance is the secret to her creative intention. To achieve her characteristic sound, Auerbach employed various means, varying degrees of dissonant sound effects, and contradictory ideas to express her musical aesthetic.

Extreme Variety

The musical material in the 24 Preludes is incredibly diverse, combining opposing elements such as arco and pizzicato, single notes and double notes, narrow and wide registers, consonance and dissonance. Even within the same Prelude, without any preparation, Auerbach switches between different sections to demonstrate stark contrasts and express completely different qualities. In many of the 24 Preludes, these dramatic shifts are exaggerated in terms of timbre, dynamics, scale, and movement. Sometimes the contrast is a means of achieving a certain resonance, and sometimes it marks the transition from one movement

to the next. In either case, the use of an unexpected element seems to easily generate a contradictory character, which, in my opinion, is precisely what characterizes Lera Auerbach's music.

The Present and the Past

20th-century composers lived in an era where all kinds of musical genres could be found. Some composers created new musical systems as a rebellion against the past, while others borrowed from older forms and combined them with their own musical idioms, creating their own personal style. Currently, the general trend in composition seems to be moving away from more experimental and innovative approaches toward more traditional ones. Consequently, references to the past can be found in many contemporary works, and these new creative practices and contemporary reflections on traditional elements can also be a response to their predecessors. In Auerbach's 24 Preludes for Cello and Piano, many traditional elements echo her musical practices.

I will also focus on the composer's notation method, particularly the notation of the tempo of each prelude. This discussion is based on a recording of the 24 preludes by cellist Ani Aznavorian and Lera Auerbach, who plays the piano part. The tempo suggestions for several preludes differ significantly from those in the music publication, opening the door to a broader discussion on the importance of closely following composers' suggestions.

This work breaks the boundaries of the traditional prelude genre with an innovative reconstruction, exploring musical narrative through different keys and complex textures in all directions, and constructing an artistic image with a profound emotional and philosophical dimension. This work not only possesses the fundamental characteristics of classical music but also conveys a powerful, contemporary tension through groundbreaking harmonic language and bold experimentation with creative techniques, creating a musical dialogue that transcends time and space.

3.3 Coherence of the Cycle Through Expressive Contrast

To conduct a more systematic analysis of this musical work, the most effective approach is to categorize all the preludes, identify common features, and draw general conclusions. At the same time, it is necessary to establish classification criteria. This can generally be done in terms of stylistic features (musical form, rhythm, etc.), emotional expression (lyrical, playful, exuberant, witty, etc.), performance techniques (specialized approaches, virtuoso displays, etc.), and traditional elements (classical melodic fragments, folk music, etc.). Preludes are typically relatively freely constructed, quasi-improvised miniatures, devoid of rigid formal patterns, requiring a focus on their independent musical ideas. The cycle under examination spans 24 major and minor keys, and the composer strives to construct a complete, logical collection by combining these short fragments into a coherent whole. Therefore, classification must prioritize the tonal pattern, rhythmic markings, musical structure, and emotional character of each prelude. For example, some preludes are characterized by lively rhythms and strong musical motifs, bearing clear characteristics of études; others possess rich, evocative moods, with thematic melodies developing narratively and exhibiting distinct narrative features. Others possess beautiful, almost vocal melodies, while others adopt a looser, more flexible structure with pronounced improvisational features. Furthermore, attention should be paid to dance elements and humorous overtones in the pieces.

Within the above categories, the following types can also be distinguished:

- Scherzo-like: Some preludes are characterized by a light, humorous rhythm, such as Prelude No. 14, which has a distinctly playful and satirical tone. These pieces often employ staccato playing techniques and frequent metrical changes, creating a melody in unexpected ways.
- Dance pieces, such as Prelude No. 16, which has a waltz-like character. The driving force behind these preludes is a strongly rhythmic triple meter, giving them a lightness and dance-like grace.
- Static Preludes: A significant portion of the preludes are slow and heavy, most often featuring the terms "Adagio" or "Largo." They are characterized by extended melodic lines without a strong rhythmic impulse, giving them a meditative and prayerful character. The twelfth prelude, the longest in the collection, cultivates an atmosphere of deep contemplation through an extended melody.

Beyond these categories, we find terms such as "Dialogo" and "Giocosso," which enrich the musical palette of this cycle. Mostly short episodes, the preludes demonstrate extraordinary stylistic diversity. Within the traditional compositional framework, the composer utilizes contrapuntal fugues and folk dances, while integrating a rich, contemporary sonic language characteristic of the era. As music critics have noted, each prelude resembles a poem, possessing its own distinctive temperament. The composer herself emphasized the exploration of interwoven and contradictory styles, seeking to portray the "madness, loneliness, wildness, and nostalgia for a lost time" of contemporary society through a variety of musical means²⁵.

I'd like to present a multidimensional classification encompassing aspects such as tempo characteristics, melodic progression, emotional expression and performance techniques. By assigning each prelude to several analogous categories within these dimensions, I'd like to establish an interconnected, flexible classification system. This multifaceted approach allows for a deeper interpretation of the work and a better understanding of the composer's musical vision. This attempt to better understand and capture the depth of this music is inspired by Professor Mieczysław Tomaszewski's diverse perception of Fryderyk Chopin's Preludes Op. 28, in his seminal work "Chopin: The Man, his Work and its Resonance."²⁶

Preludes No. 1 (C major), No. 3 (G major), No. 6 (B minor), and No. 10 (C-sharp minor) can be called elegiac preludes. Their texture is monophonic, with frequent chromaticism in the melody. The slow tempo and variations occurring in extremely short sections lend the melodies a certain lyricism. Similarly, the composer's flexible approach to tonality is evident, no longer constrained by traditional customs. Instead, she boldly breaks with convention, allowing the melody to develop in unexpected ways.

Numerous preludes possess etude-like characteristics, including No. 2 (A minor), No. 4 (E minor), No. 9 (E major), No. 11 (B major), No. 15 (D-flat major), No. 16 (B minor), No. 17 (A-flat major), and No. 24 (D minor). Each prelude has a distinct character, often employing the agogic structure of Allegro or Vivo. The melodic lines consist of numerous, repeated or similar fragments, developing progressively while maintaining a dynamic reminiscent of constant movement. This gives the entire piece a lively and restless character.

Three preludes – No. 14 (E-flat minor), No. 18 (F minor), and No. 20 (C minor) – can be described as "scherzo-like" preludes. The title "scherzando" for Prelude No. 14 clearly

²⁵ <https://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Lera-Auerbach-24-Preludes-for-Violoncello-and-Piano/>

²⁶ M.Tomaszewski *Chopin The Man, his Work and its Resonance...* p444-459.

indicates its playful nature. Prelude No. 18 uses repeated staccato passages and shifts the same melody through different registers, creating a playful, somewhat provocative musical atmosphere. Prelude No. 20, titled "Giocosso," similarly alludes to its playful nature. Both preludes are characterized by a light, lively rhythm, with melodic twists that sometimes take on an exaggeratedly playful tone. The composer frequently employs staccato techniques, and the extensive use of chromatic intervals further emphasizes the playful musical atmosphere and lends the piece a contemporary sensibility.

In some of the slow preludes, Auerbach uses the terms "Sognando" and "Nostalgico" to emphasize delicacy and nostalgia, making them worthy of the title "song preludes." Examples include No. 12 (in G-sharp minor), No. 22 (in G minor), No. 23 (in F major), and Postludium (in D minor). Prelude No. 12 unfolds at a leisurely pace, presenting a beautiful, romantic theme, while its reprise is characterized by surprising sonoristic shifts. In Prelude No. 22, the cello and piano harmonize with a thematic melody that evokes nostalgia. Prelude No. 23 is the quietest piece in the entire cycle. The use of mutes creates a special atmosphere, accentuated by the use of harmonics. These lyrical miniatures are characterized by lilting melodies and expressive themes, capable of evoking profound emotion.

No. 5 (D major), No. 6 (B minor), No. 13 (G-flat major), and No. 19 (E-flat major) – all four of these preludes possess ballad-like qualities. Their melodies are characterized by dramatic musical expression, ranging from restraint to explosive intensity, and utilize significant dynamic shifts. Prelude No. 5 has an ABA¹ framework, where the A section can be described as improvisation, giving it a lyrical character. However, in the B section, the composer introduces sharply contrasting piano motifs, transforming it into a narrative piece, before returning to the lyrical A¹. In this group of preludes, Auerbach creates tension through distinct dynamic shifts and contrasting themes, reinforced by repeated dissonances.

Improvisation in relation to the implementation of the written rhythm appears frequently in this cycle, as exemplified by Preludes No. 1 (C major), No. 5 (D major), No. 7 (A major), 8 (F-sharp minor), and No. 21 (B-flat major), where the Composer explicitly noted "ad lib." These annotations also share certain common features in their placement:

- during the rests in the piano part, the cello develops melodic motifs
- in passages performed by the solo cello
- during moments of abrupt rhythmic changes, rhythmic improvisation is employed to create a distinct musical atmosphere.

Prelude No. 21, titled "Dialogo," is written for solo cello, in which the instrument imitates a discussion between the low and high registers. To emphasize the freedom of expression, the composer does not use typical bar lines consistent with the work's potential meter, but instead proposes dotted lines separating the dialogue sections. Prelude No. 8 has a rather unique character, being one of the slowest in the entire cycle. Its heavy, expressive narrative is interrupted in the middle section by an *ad libitum* fragment imitating recitative.

Listening closely to the musical narrative, we can discern the composer's tribute to tradition throughout the cycle. Prelude No. 13 alludes to the contrapuntal style of J.S. Bach, while motifs from Prelude No. 11 recall the second movement of D. Shostakovich's Cello Sonata in D minor, Op. 40. Motifs from Prelude No. 14 evoke W.A. Mozart's Overture to the opera "The Magic Flute," while No. 16 incorporates waltz rhythms. In Prelude No. 17, we hear the cello attempting to imitate the sounds of an electric guitar, and in Prelude No. 18, echoes of the classical Gavotte can be detected. The key of D minor, typically used in the Classical and Romantic periods to convey solemnity, tragedy, drama, or profound emotion, finds its expression in Prelude No. 24. Although the first half of the piece is characterized by a faster, more intense rhythm, the composer weaves a sad, expressive melody into the "Adagio" section, paying homage to tradition.

These preludes create a rich, contrasting collage, drawing on a variety of styles—from classical counterpoint to the use of modern sound effects—as music critics have noted: "The interweaving of different styles is not an end in itself, but rather an exploration of our multifaceted era."²⁷

²⁷ <https://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Lera-Auerbach-24-Preludes-for-Violoncello-and-Piano/>

Chapter IV

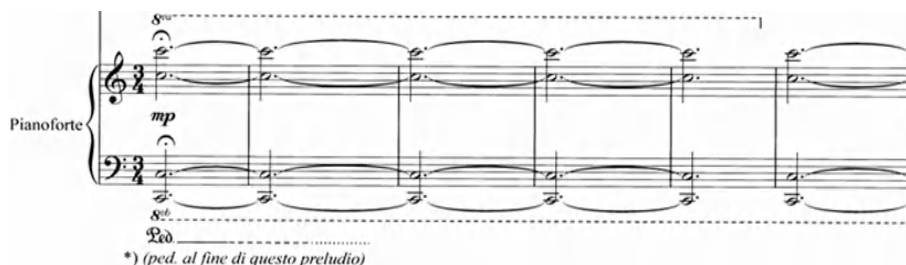
In search of the Idiom – formal and interpretative analysis of the Cycle

4.1 Formal analysis

In researching any piece, formal analysis is a way to reveal the composer's creative thinking and the musical structure of the work. The aim of this chapter is to examine the interactive relationship between traditional musical forms and contemporary musical innovations in this cycle from multiple perspectives, including the overall musical structure, the use of rhythm, tonal-modal relationships, and the development of the melodic element. By comparing the formal features of traditional preludes with the new musical elements that continue to appear in 20th-century music, this study aims to explain the composer's artistic choices between tradition and innovation. The primary goal is to analyze the overall structure of the cycle and the internal connections between the individual preludes. Secondly, the uniqueness of the work in terms of melody, harmony, and rhythm will be examined, and theoretical considerations and practical guidelines for subsequent performance and interpretation will be presented.

Prelude No. 1 Andante (C major)

The cycle begins in the key of C major – or at least that's the initial impression, as the piano begins with a multiplied "C" note that lasts as a sound patch for 13 bars.



Example 1 Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 1 (piano part) Bars 1-6

The form of this miniature develops on two levels. The piano part is the foundation for the entire piece. As the musical notation "pedal al fine di questo preludio" indicates, the piano part should be played with the pedal depressed continuously from beginning to end. Any new chords that appear overlap the sound of the previous chords, creating a continuous and uninterrupted sound layer, yet maintained throughout at a mezzo piano dynamic. Against the piano backdrop, the cello develops its melody initially at a piano dynamic and in a second ambitus. As the dynamics progress to forte, the distance between notes increases until the tenth, after which a return to the initial dynamic and second motifs occurs, creating a typical arch form. The rhythm in this prelude is not form-forming, as the cello, in accordance

with the composer's instructions, plays its part *ad libitum* and then even *molto ad libitum*, creating an impression of improvisation. There's no obvious, traditional, functional harmonic direction. The chords in the lower piano system always remain on the tonic C, while the notes in the upper system use the tonic C as a reference point and create a dissonant effect by using a major ninth dissonance, followed by a minor ninth dissonance, in a very wide ambitus. This, combined with the opening glissandi in the cello part, creates a sense of microtonality.



Example 2: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 1, Bars 28-34

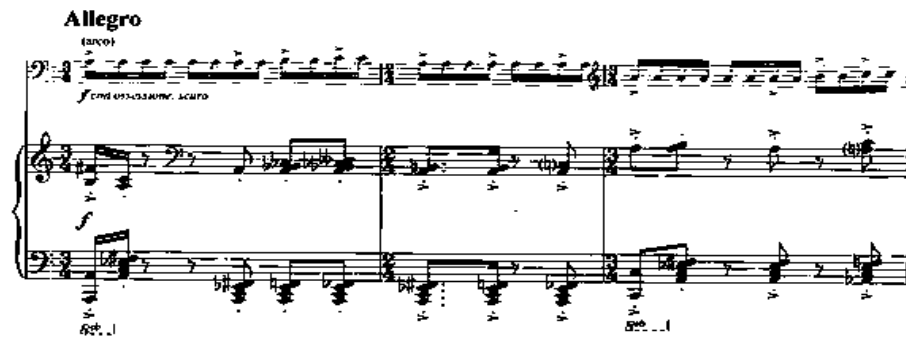
Prelude No. 2 Allegro (A minor)

The second prelude is very short. The tempo marking "Allegro" and the performance suggestion "con ossessione, scuro" imply an energetic, even dramatic, character. To achieve her intended effect, the composer uses a piano cluster technique, metro-rhythmic variations, and alternating small rhythmic values between the cello and piano.

Tone clustering is an idiomatic technique used by composers to create clashing notes on the piano—chords of three or more consecutive seconds. This type of dissonance appears in the works of composers such as Bartók, Charles Ives, and Henry Cowell²⁸. "Tone clustering was used by Charles Ives several years before Cowell explored this technique, but it was Cowell who helped to name, systematize, and popularize this device."²⁹ The use of this technique creates complete harmonic ambiguity within the context of the old major-minor system, and dramatic impact.

²⁸ Cowell's innovative approach was particularly evident in the piano music he composed between 1912 and 1930. Seeking new sounds, he was the first to widely use and develop the technique of tone clusters, which involved simultaneously striking several adjacent keys (e.g., with the forearm). He later used the term "second harmonies" to describe these clusters, as they were based on the consonance of second intervals, in contrast to traditional major-minor harmonics, which are based on a third-note structure.

²⁹ Reiko Ishii, "The Development of Extended Piano Techniques in Twentieth-Century American Music" (DMA treatise, Florida State University, 2005), 14.



Example 3: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 2, Bars 1-3

The metro-rhythmic variability introduces unsettling tension into the narrative, and the rapid dialogue between the two instruments facilitates the intended "con ossessione" (with obsession). The concise form of this prelude is a kind of virtuoso miniature.

Prelude No. 3 Andante misterioso (G major)

If we were to attempt to characterize the cycle of 24 Preludes for cello and piano in a single word, the most apt term would be contrast. This manifests itself not only within the individual miniatures but also refers to the relationships between the individual preludes.

Thus, after the highly turbulent Prelude No. 2 comes the lyrical, mysterious, even impressionistic Prelude No. 3. The composer achieves her intended coloristic effect by maintaining the entire work in a piano dynamic (with small, punctuated *sfp*) and by using harmonics and flautando sound colors in the cello part throughout most of the work.



Example 4: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 3, Bars 16-19

Lera Auerbach employs diverse technical means to create her dissonant musical language. This time, it is achieved not through clusters (as in Prelude No. 2), but by creating a sense of bitonality between the upper and lower piano parts.

Metro-rhythmic ambiguity is another of the composer's hallmarks – in this Prelude, it is achieved through frequent meter changes (every bar) in the middle section of the piece. The simple ABA1 form is defined by the tempos set by the composer.



Example 5: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 3, Bars 10-12

Prelude No. 4 Allegro ossessivo (E minor)

In this cycle, the Preludes are nominally arranged according to the rules of fifths derived from the Romantic era. Why do I emphasize the word "nominally"? For each Prelude, I add a potential starting key, which usually corresponds only to the first note of a given miniature. In Prelude No. 4, we can exceptionally hear the intended key of E minor, for over one bar at the beginning and the last five bars.



Example 6: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 4, Bars 1-2

The constant movement of sixteenth-note values in both instruments brings to mind a reference to a Baroque *toccata*³⁰. Against the background of figurative passages in the piano, the cello acts as an accompanist, reinforcing the harmonic structures with double stops for most of the passage. The rhythmic structure in the notation is consistently symmetrical – 4/4, but irregular accents in both the cello and piano parts interfere with clarity.

³⁰ **Toccata** (from Italian *toccare*, literally "to touch", with "toccata" being the action of touching) is a virtuoso piece of music typically for a keyboard or plucked string instrument featuring fast-moving, lightly fingered or otherwise virtuosic passages or sections, generally emphasizing the dexterity of the performer's fingers.



Example 7: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 4, Bars 19-20

This miniature piece departs from the traditional multi-movement structure of a prelude, relying instead on single motifs throughout. This constant repetition not only enhances the sense of rhythmic dynamics but also underscores the "ossessive" mood.

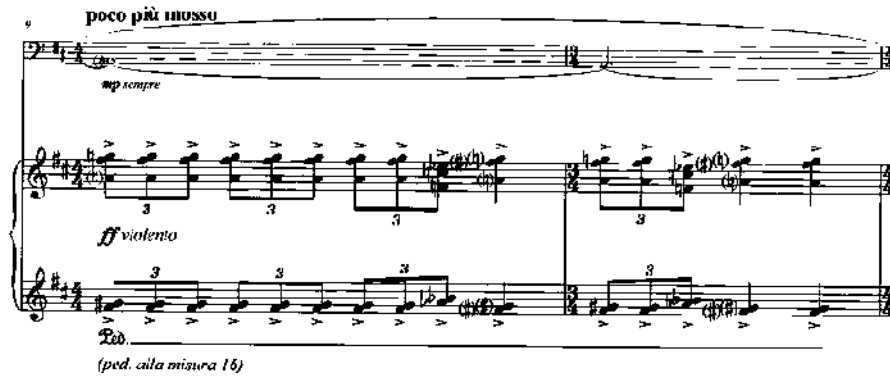
Prelude No.5 Moderato (D major)

This Prelude differs conceptually from all the others. Although the overall form is very standard – ABA¹, the very first section (A) is a solo cello monologue. Two symmetrical four-bar sections evoke a distant association with the antecedent and consequent, and the harmonic relationships are close to the major-minor system.

Moderato

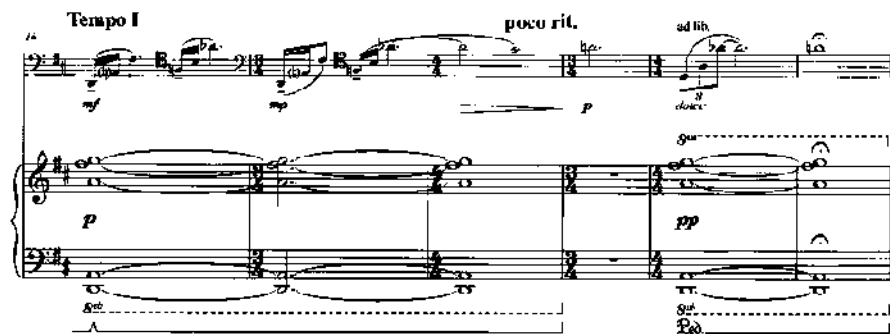
Example 8: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 5, Bars 1-8

In the middle section (B major), the cello acts as an accompanist, while the composer introduces sudden contrasts in the piano part, both dynamic (*ff* against the background of *mp* in the cello part) and harmonic. Dissonant intervals – such as seconds and sevenths and clusters completely break away from the calm beginning. The use of polyrhythm between the upper and lower voices of the piano further disrupts the clarity of the narrative.



Example 9: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 5, Bars 9-10

At the end, the initial melody returns, this time with a more restrained and subdued emotional expression; Dynamic changes also become more gradual, achieving emotional release.



Example 10: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 5, Bars 16-21

This prelude demonstrates the dual qualities of free form and internal unity present in contemporary music. Through thematic variations, rich harmonic development, and rhythmic contrasts, the composer reinterprets the traditional, three-part ABA1 musical structure. While retaining the lyrical melody and aesthetic beauty, he imbues the piece with a dramatic, contrasting quality.

Prelude No.6 Andante tragico (B minor)

In this Prelude, the cello leads simple, narrative phrases, while the piano part is constructed based on a chromatic scale; both parts are relatively independent and not bound by a single key. One gets the impression that the composer uses bitonality, which further expands the range of dissonant techniques used to construct the melody.



Example 11: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 6, Bars 7-11

Another hallmark of Lera Auerbach is rhythmic ambiguity, built through three independent compositional techniques:

- meter variations
- polyrhythm
- accentuation of weak beats

Together, these elements create a sense of aural dissonance, enhancing the sense of musical dialogue.



Example 12: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 6, Bars 20-22

The musical structure of this prelude shares features with the composer's earlier works; drawing on the tripartite form common in the Romantic period, it simultaneously employs characteristic, contemporary compositional techniques such as tonal ambiguity, rhythmic ambiguity, and polyrhythm. It is this collage and fusion that makes it a paradigm of the interpenetration of modern and traditional music.

Prelude No.7 Vivo ma non troppo e agitato (A major)

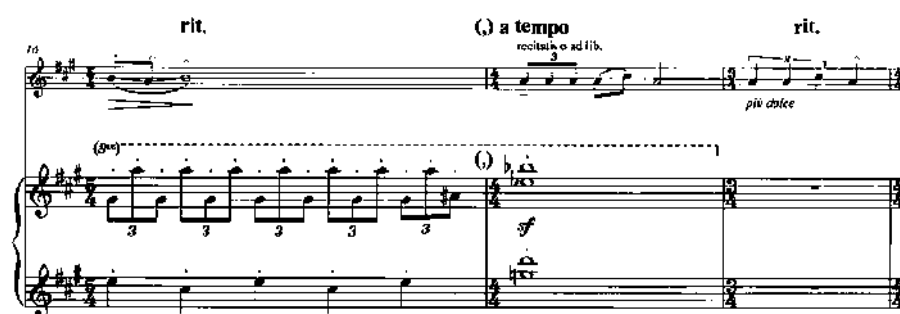
This time, the contrast to the previous Prelude is the texture – in this case, homophonic. In the first movement of this two-part miniature, the cello leads a simple, almost pastoral melodic line against the piano accompaniment, only to create an unreal, colorful atmosphere in the second movement through the flautando effect (the composer allows this movement to be realized using harmonics).



Example 13: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 7, Bars 1-3

Harmonic-wise, the piece doesn't deviate far from the major-minor system. The use of ninth intervals is more of a dissonant coloration than a disruption of harmony.

The rhythm of this miniature is also very clear – the changes in meter are imperceptible, and the use of polyrhythm in the piano part in the second movement of this miniature creates an impression of independence between the two instruments, which is emphasized in the final phase of the cello recitativo.



Example 14: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 7, Bars 16-18

The piece as a whole presents a fluid and harmonious musical atmosphere, with the piano providing structural support with rich harmonic colors and clearly differentiated rhythms.

Prelude No.8 Grave (F-sharp minor)

In this Prelude, the composer presents two quasi-independent planes. In the piano part, heavy cluster chords, played with the pedal engaged, sound like church bells. As the phrase develops, the clusters thicken until they culminate in measure no. 6, where the composer strives to fill the third F-sharp 2-A2 with all possible notes, as if to create a microtonal impression similar to Prelude no. 1.) For only two measures (no. 7-8) does the harmony thin out – the lower piano voice features pure fifths and the upper one a quaver movement, but the harmony is still “dirty” through the use of bitonality.



Example 15: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 8, Bars 1-3

Against this backdrop, the cello leads a simple melody, full of dynamic tension, in the key of F-sharp minor (consistent with the concept of key progression in the cycle). The form develops through tensions in the cello part: first, the melody shifts upward a third, then enriches with sixths (all major), culminating in bar 10, before calming down until the very end.



Example 16: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 8, Bars 10-12

The cello part forms a typical arch, attempting to maintain the key of F-sharp minor almost throughout, against the backdrop of a completely harmonically and melodically independent piano part.

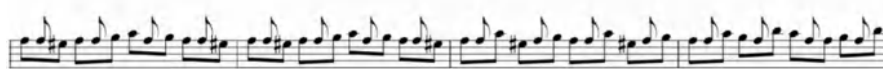
The meter remains consistent throughout, and the rhythm is very clear. Only at climaxes do triplet groups appear, which sound more like a form of rubato than advanced polyrhythm.

Prelude No. 9 Vivace (E major)

Lera Auerbach has a very wide compositional range, both technically and stylistically. In this Prelude, the composer draws on the past, or more precisely, the Baroque era. The constant, dance-like triplet movement might evoke a Gigue, but describing the tonal center of E1 brings us more closely to the Prelude from Johann Sebastian Bach's Suite No. 6 in D major, BWV 1012, especially since the cello leads its solo voice for thirty bars.



Example 17: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 9, Bars 1-5



Example 18: J. S. Bach Violoncello Suite No.6, Prelude, Bars 23-26

The meter is stable – a single change from 3/4 to 4/4 does not disrupt the musical experience.



Example 19: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 9, Bars 13-18

Harmonic-wise, the entire cello part centers around the key of E – alternating between major and minor. Only from bar 31 does the piano slightly disrupt the harmonic clarity with intervals at the distance of a ninth, until the last bar, where the final piano “cluster”; adds an element of surprise to the piece and prepares the ground for the next prelude.

Prelude No. 10 Adagio sognando (C-sharp minor)

In this cycle, the composer not only contrasts the successive preludes but also pairs them based on the principle of parallel key affinity. This occurs in the relationship between Preludes No. 9 and 10. The final chord of Prelude No. 9, a cluster composed of the lowest notes of the piano in a dynamic of F-sharp, gradually fades out and, gently repeated with the pedal depressed, persists throughout Prelude No. 10, not directly interfering with the tonality but rather serving as a coloristic “dirtying” of it.

The cello part captivates with the simplicity of the melody, conducted in the key of C-sharp minor (the key proper to this Prelude). Initially (for the first 5 bars), the piano accompanies the cello, remaining in the key, but then, by adding the note E-sharp, disrupts the harmonic clarity, balancing between minor and major modes.



Example 20: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 10, Bars 5-8

The most important form-forming element of this miniature is its color. The cello part features the first use of pizzicato throughout most of the piece, not as an accompaniment, but as a main melody. The piano part employs an interesting technique, the search for a “glassy sound” (the composer’s recommendation for the *suono di vetro*). All these techniques, along with the slow tempo, make the “dreamlike” *Adagio sognando* achievable and contrasts perfectly with both the preceding and following Preludes.

Prelude No. 11 Allegro (B major)

If we were to briefly characterize this next Prelude, the following associations come to mind: ferocity and aggression. This applies to almost all aspects of performance.

The recommended dynamic throughout the piece is *ff*, tending to *fff* culminating in a *marcatissimo* articulation.

The key of B major is seemingly stabilized by notes in a very broad ambitus – B1FsHcs3fs3h – held with the pedal depressed for almost the entire duration of this miniature. Against this backdrop, the piano part features note completely unrelated to the initial key – we could speak of polytonality. In the cello part, the composer also uses the C strings as drones in the first segment and the D string in the second – notes unrelated to the key of B major. The extensive meter-rhythmic variation (almost every bar) makes it impossible to define the meter, creating an impression of constant movement, building to a climax in bar 10.



Example 21: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 11, Bars 6

After a short piano introduction, the cello creates the narrative and develops the form with alternating four- or six-note repeated motifs. The escalating tension is built by shifting the motifs in the next section up an octave and then in octaves, leading to the climax. The use of second and tritone intervals brings to mind the work of Krzysztof Penderecki.



Example 22: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 11, Bars 8-9

The very long chords in the piano, sounding like a cluster, calm the mood and lead into the next Prelude.

Prelude No. 12 Adagio (G-sharp minor)

This is the most beautiful Prelude in this cycle – its melodic simplicity and harmonic purity (in the first movement) are so charming that the Composer herself decided to use this musical material in the Postlude, which serves as a summary or reminiscence of the entire cycle.

The Prelude’s structure consists of two parts – the cello melody in the second movement is an exact repetition of the first movement, but its tonal color is extremely different. In the first movement, the melody, nostalgic in nature, recalls the melodic simplicity of Sergei Prokofiev’s ballet “Romeo and Juliet”. In the second movement, the Composer recommends the use of a “disturbing sound” – this enigmatic term allows each performer to present their own coloristic vision of this movement.



Example 23: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 12, Bars 1-4

The harmony is also different in both movements. In the first movement, the piano part harmonically supports the key of G-sharp minor with small transitional notes. In the second movement, the lower piano voice accompanies the cello melody, while the higher voice introduces chromaticism, to which tremolos are added, emphasizing the melody's dissonance and giving the piece an intriguing sonic character. Harmonically, we might venture to say that the technique of bitonality is used.



Example 24: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 12, Bars 31-34

The piano's tonal color is similar to Prelude No. 10 – the composer recommends seeking a *suono di vetro* (or “glassy sound”), which gives this Prelude, concluding the presentation of miniatures in sharp keys, a special character.

Prelude No. 13, Andantino grazioso (G flat major)

This is one of two preludes in this cycle intended exclusively for solo cello. The form of this miniature is very clear – ABA1.

I would describe the texture of this Prelude with the term used to describe Johann Sebastian Bach's Suites for Solo Cello – pseudo polyphony, apparent polyphony, or complex melody. Musicologist Laurent Matthys provided a very interesting description of this technique in his article for The Strad monthly³¹.

The Prelude is based on a two-bar motif with a written ornament, which facilitates the implementation of the term *grazioso*, and the constant meter allows for a dance-like interpretation of this miniature.

³¹ In his works for solo cello and violin, J.S. Bach reveals himself as the master of compound melody. This compositional technique, where a single melodic line on paper sounds as two or more simultaneous voices, is an important device to suggest polyphony, especially when used for monophonic instruments with limited polyphonic capabilities. Compound melody - also known as unfolding - is realised by alternating back and forth between (a group of) notes of different implied melodies.
Laurent Matthys A new light on the polyphonic nature of Bach's Cello Suites, Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin. The Strad 16.07.2024



Example 25: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 13(cello part), Bars 1-6

In the middle section, the composer introduces double stops for three bars to enrich the harmony, followed by a motivic work so characteristic of the Baroque period. The piece concludes with a brief return to the initial motif.

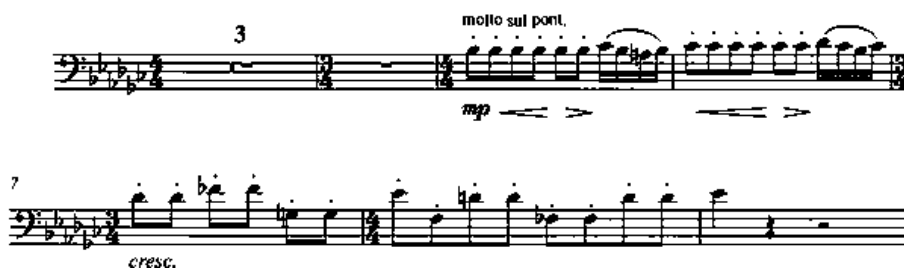


Example 26: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 13(cello part), Bars 16-20

The entire piece is very subdued in terms of expression, and the emotional tone is conveyed mainly through rising and falling melodies. Rooted in traditional music, the piece skillfully combines the melodic style of the old Masters with dissonant elements characteristic of contemporary music.

Prelude No. 14 Allegretto scherzando (E-flat minor)

This Prelude is another piece inspired by the past. The basic motif playfully (scherzando) imitates a fragment of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Magic Flute" overture, and then undergoes variational transformations. The composer bases her transformations on minor seconds (in Mozart's case, these are fourths and fifths), and the use of sul ponticello in the cello serves to enhance this dissonant sound effect.



Example 27: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.14 (cello part), Bars 1-9



Example 28: W. A. Mozart Die Zauberflöte Overture (violin part), Bars 16-21

The form of this miniature is ABA1, while the metro-rhythmic variation disrupts the symmetrical progression of the phrase, often surprising the succession of subsequent motifs.



Example 29: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.14, Bars 17-20

The harmony oscillates around the tonal center of E-flat with a slight dissonant tinge – even the use of clusters does not disrupt harmonic clarity, but rather adds a sense of power and depth to the melody.

Prelude No. 15 Allegro con brio (D-flat major)

Seeking new shades of color, Lera Auerbach leads the cello this time primarily pizzicato, though differently than in Prelude No. 10. The use of an arpeggio with the melody in the upper voice may suggest an imitation of a balalaika, especially since in measure 16 the cello voice is instructed to “*tremolo rapido alla balalaika.*”



Example 30: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.15, Bars 4-6

The form of this miniature is evolutionary, based on the motif introduced by the piano in measure 1. It is based on an alternating dialogue between the instruments.

Harmonic-wise, the melody focuses around the tonal center of D-flat, while the complementary chords are more of a polytonal technique than a cluster.

Metrical irregularity and the use of accents on weak parts of the bar disrupt the clear rhythm of the main motif.



Example 31: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.15, Bars 7-9

This prelude contrasts stylistically with the pieces that precede and follow it. It employs a variety of performance techniques, with rich interaction between the two instruments, combining elements of both collaboration and dialogue.

Prelude No. 16, Tempo di valzer (B-flat minor)

Prelude No. 16 is a waltz-style piece in triple meter. However, it is not a simple imitation, but rather a deconstruction and reconfiguration of the rhythmic elements of triple meter, combined with the introduction of dissonant intervals to achieve a playful musical mood – a wink-wink waltz, imbued with a strong sense of modernism.

To maintain the character of the dance, the composer uses a constant 3/4 meter, but to avoid sentimentality, she introduces variable and highly varied tones in the cello's voice. From the very beginning, the cello should imitate the “effect of sobbing” (as if crying), and additionally, in bars 3-17, it can play its part with slight delays, creating an improvisational effect.



Example 32: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.16, Bars 1-5

Towards the end of the miniature, Auerbach recommends using the col legno technique in an unusual way – achieving approximate pitches with the bow alone by striking it, moving it towards the bridge and back. The cello then plays its sul ponticello phrases, returning to a glissando sul ponticello at the end. This is a surprising wealth of coloristic effects in such a short piece.



Example 33: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.16, Bars 101-105

The harmony oscillates around the tonal center of B flat, but in the more turbulent middle section, the composer uses clusters to increase tension and enrich the timbre.

Dynamically, we are dealing with an arch form – the initial dynamic of *p-mp* develops to a dynamic of *ff* in the middle section, before calming down in the Prelude’s coda.

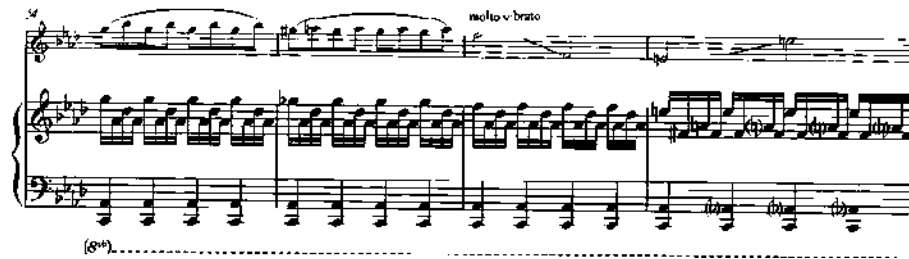
Prelude No. 17 Allegro ritmico (A-flat major)

Rhythm plays a key role in this prelude, and the recurring “ritmico” motif energizes the entire piece. The texture is purely homophonic – both voices are closely intertwined, with the piano creating a rhythm almost mechanically (the composer’s recommendation *meccanicamente*) and attempting to maintain harmony close to the key of A-flat major, while the cello leads the melodic line. The cello develops the initial motifs for the first 25 bars without the piano’s accompaniment, then continues their development in different keys, sometimes creating a sense of bitonality.



Example 34: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.17 (cello part), Bars 1-10

The second significant element of this miniature is the tonal color. The use of the snap pizz technique can be associated with the work of Béla Bartók or with the sound of a struck electric guitar. The simultaneous playing of pizz and arco enhances the rhythm and lends a percussive character to the opening of this miniature. Elements such as sul ponticello, glissando, and inteno vibrato, in the context of a steady, almost percussive rhythm, evoke distant associations with rock music.



Example 35: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.17, Bars 54-57

Dynamically, it is a typical arch form with a major climax in the middle section of the Prelude, where the cello uses double stops and the piano part introduces clusters. The piece ends in a *pp* dynamic – the cello repeats the notes of pizz against a “pure” A-flat major chord.

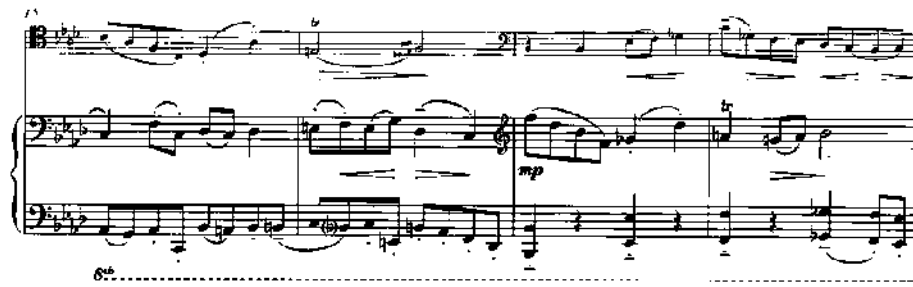
Prelude No. 18 Andantino (F minor)

After the previous four dynamic and emotionally turbulent preludes, this prelude suddenly returns to a somewhat calmer and gentler mood, as described by the musical term “con eleganza” at the beginning of the score. The steady meter, consonant harmonies, traditional modulations with slight dissonances, and a charming two-bar motif evoke a neo- Baroque dance (perhaps a Gavotte?). The eight-bar opening of the Prelude is a perfect example of a nod to the past – it represents a typical antecedent (ending on a Dominant) and consequent (ending on a Tonic).



Example 36: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.18, Bars 1-8

This Prelude has a very clear three-part structure – in the outer sections, the piano leads the melody, accompanied by *pizz* from the cello. The middle section, however, is particularly interesting, as for the first time in this cycle, we have such a clear reference to the Baroque era. The counterpoint technique is used throughout most of this miniature – both voices alternate between the theme and counterpointing motifs.

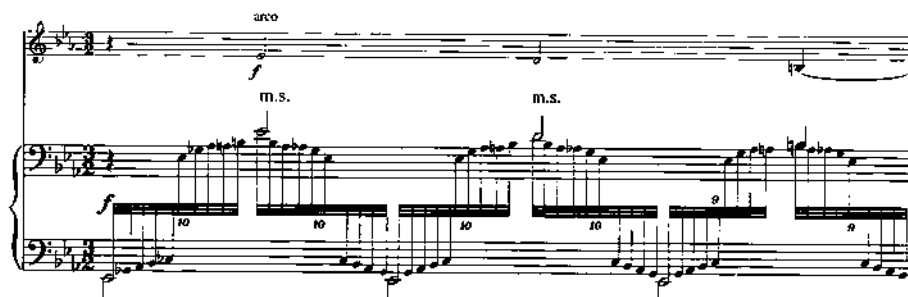


Example 37: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.18, Bars 15-18

Prelude No. 19 Allegro appassionato (E-flat major)

This next distinct Prelude reveals the composer's rich imagination. Against the backdrop of long, melodic notes from the cello, the piano part presents virtuosic progressions throughout the piece (with the pedal depressed)—scales and arpeggios—comprising varying numbers of notes (from 6 to 10). The upper and lower notes of the progressions are written as half notes, suggesting a melodic line in our imagination. Throughout most of the narrative, the cello doubles the piano's top voice (half notes), and at this point we can consider the cello's role:

- Does the cello lead the melody and the piano support it?
- Does the piano provide the melody and the cello sustain the notes (as was the case in the Baroque era with the harpsichord and cello playing the basso continuo).

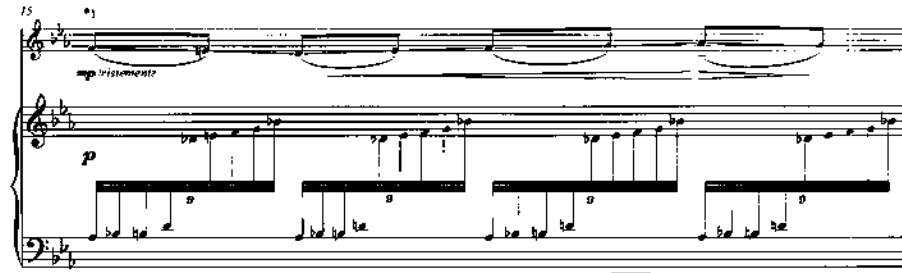


Example 38: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.19, Bars 1

Harmonic-wise, the piece begins in E-flat minor, not E-flat major, and through various modulatory transitions, ends the Prelude in the correct key (E-flat major).

Metrical variation is imperceptible due to the constant movement of the 32nd notes in the piano part.

An interesting coloristic device is the suggestion of glissandi performed by the cello in bars 15-18 with a lowered intonation, which is intended to imitate performances on ethnic instruments. This tuning technique gives the song a slightly primitive, folk style, further enhancing the sad, emotional tone.



Example 39: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.19, Bars 15

Prelude No. 20 *Giocoso* (C minor)

This Prelude should be considered on two levels – emotional and structural.

Expressively, it surprises with its sharp contrasts resulting from the sudden, unexpected use of 32nd notes in the piano part.



Example 40: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.20, Bars 4

In terms of its formal structure, we can attempt to detect distant Baroque influences. The work's narrative unfolds on three quasi-independent levels – in the cello part and in two piano systems. Turning our attention to the lower piano part, we notice an ostinato repetition of the same rhythmic motif and the same articulation. This brings to mind the Baroque form of the *Passacaglia*³². The main two-bar motif of this miniature appears in the cello part in bars 2-3, evolves, and is developed through variations primarily in the cello part, with the piano (the upper voice) playing a counterpointing role. In Measures 13-14, the roles reverse, and the piano briefly develops the main motif, after which the cello reinforces the melodic line with double stops, which, with increasing dynamics, builds increasing tension until the end of this miniature.

³² The variation *Passacaglia* developed in the 17th century is based on ostinato variations (repeating patterns in the bass)



Example 41: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.20, Bars 13

Despite the many secondary and transitional notes, the preservation of the tonal center of C, and even the key of C minor, is felt.

The character of this Prelude is proposed as *Giocoso*, but the additional term “*poco pesante*” in the cello’s voice shifts the interpretation towards a heavier, perhaps even folk dance.

Prelude No. 21, Dialogo (B-flat major)

This is one of two Preludes in this cycle intended for solo cello performance.

Dialogue is the central element of Prelude No. 21; the cello creates a conversation between the two voices, shifting register and imitating the melody. Each measure is precisely described by the composer in terms of both dynamics and articulation. Auerbach does not use bar lines – instead, broken lines appear, suggesting a question-and-answer structure. Because this prelude has no rigid rhythmic framework or imposed tempo, it fully embodies the free and informal nature of recitative.



Example 42: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.21(cello part), Bars 1-5

The form of this miniature is open and evolutionary. It can be said that each change in pitch and dynamics is unpredictable and highly random. The melody frequently uses dissonant intervals, such as seconds and sevenths, which serve to enhance the dialogue between the two voices. Dynamically, an arched form is discernible, with a climax in the middle section, triggered by the fragmentation of the movement down to a progression of thirty-second notes, followed by a return to the initial character.



Example 43: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.21(cello part), Bars 16-24

Despite the frequent use of notes from the key of B flat major, this Prelude is not perceived as highly tonal.

Prelude No. 22 Andante nostalgico (G minor)

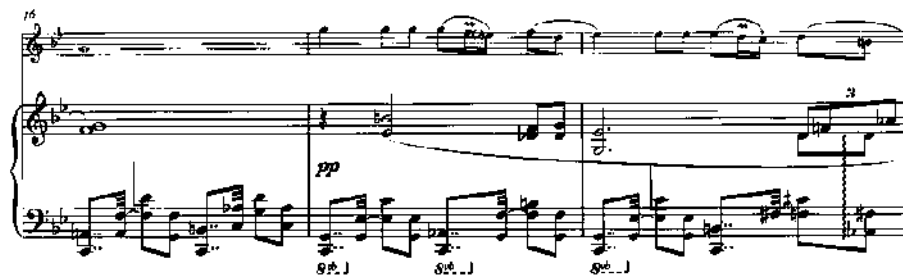
Nostalgia is an emotional experience that arises in response to memories of the past, evoking longing, intense emotion, warmth, and a sense of connection with what has passed. This last theme perfectly captures the character of this Prelude, as we see obvious implications in Baroque music. A simple four-bar motif appears seven times against a (nearly) rhythmically constant four-bar accompaniment in the lower voice of the piano (is this another Passacaglia?). The first two presentations of the theme appear in the upper voice of the piano, suggesting the key of G minor.



Example 44: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.22, Bars 1-3

Subsequent presentations of the theme occur exclusively in the cello. Themes Nos. 3 and 4 oscillate between the keys of C minor and C major, counterpointed by the upper voice of the piano. From bar 17, the fifth appearance of the theme, there is a gradual decrease in tension – first, a reduction in the number of notes in the theme, then a change in the cello's voice to *col legno*³³, and finally, the cello presents the theme using flageolets in a *molto flautando* technique.

³³ The composer 'proposes sul ponticello as an alternative and from an execution perspective it is more advantageous.



Example 45: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.22, Bars 16-18

Both the constant meter and the slightly dissonant harmony, though not far from the tonal center of G, help maintain the calm, nostalgic character of this miniature, and the coloring of the ending beautifully closes it, setting the mood for the next Prelude.

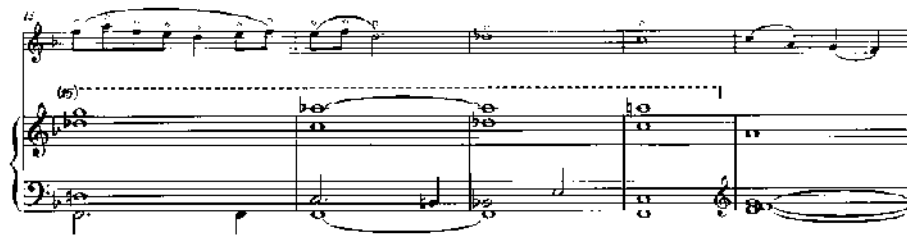
Prelude No. 23, Adagio sognando (F major)

The European modal tradition has a centuries-long history in Western music. In the late 19th century, some composers began to expand their musical horizons to encompass a wider world, seeking to explore more diverse musical styles from different regions; among these, composers often employed the pentatonic scale. In Prelude No. 23, Auerbach employs the pentatonic scale in the melody; the cello line consists of the five notes F, G, A, C, and D in the key of F major, which perfectly fits the structure of the traditional Chinese pentatonic scale. By omitting two intervals of minor second—A–B $\flat$ and E–F—the melody is exceptionally harmonious and elegant.



Example 46: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.23, Bars 1-6

Auerbach occasionally weaves minor seconds, augmented fourth chords, and clusters into the melody to introduce a note of dissonance, thus combining the period's distinctive features with the elegance and harmony of the piece. Therefore, Prelude No. 23 stands out as the most exceptional piece in the entire collection.



Example 47: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.23, Bars 13-17

The composer suggests the desired atmosphere for the performance even in the work's description. *Sognando* – which could be interpreted as “dreams” – is further enhanced by the recommendation of *dolce e legato* (*attraverso le nubi della memoria*³⁴). Lera Auerbach achieves this impressionistic effect using appropriate dynamics and a special articulation technique. The entire miniature is in the *ppp* dynamic, with the cello playing its *con sordino* and *flautando* part, and then *molto flautando*³⁵ up to the *pppp* dynamic.



Example 48: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.23, Bars 18-23

Static, constant time signatures and harmony frequently returning to the key of F major complement the atmosphere full of “dreams.”

Prelude No. 24, Vivo (D minor)

Prelude No. 24, the final chapter, is characterized by sharp emotional contrasts and a distinctive musical structure. The piece is divided into three movements: the first is characterized by energetic semiquaver progressions in a dynamic of *f*, the second is a kind of intermezzo in a slow tempo marked *funebre*, while in the third, the composer draws on themes from all twenty-four preludes. They are concisely interwoven by shortening their melodic lengths. In this condensed form, the essence of each piece is thus presented anew.

In the first movement, *Vivo*, the cello presents rapid semiquaver progressions against a background of stable accompaniment in the lower voice of the piano – the initial motif containing ten notes evolves, creating increasing tension in cooperation with the counterpointing upper voice of the piano.

³⁴ In my translation, “through the meanders of memory”

³⁵ The composer proposes flageolets as an alternative and from the performance point of view it is more advantageous.



Example 49: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.24, Bars 1-3

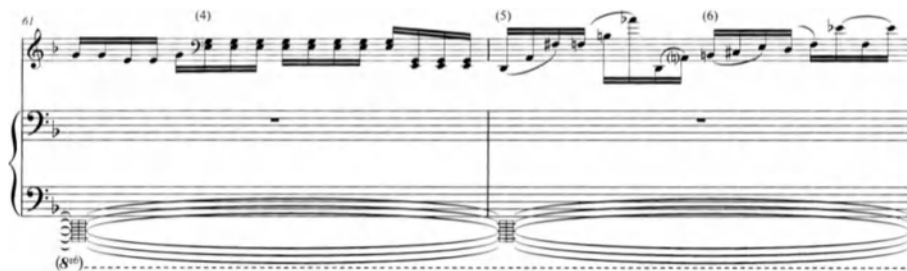
After a gradual calm in the second movement – the Adagio, the cello is also the leading instrument, developing the theme (with the exception of bars 43-44).



Example 50: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.24, Bars 37-39

Summarizing these two movements, we can identify many common elements: the harmony oscillates around the key of D minor, the meter is stable (the brief change from 4/4 to 3/2 is imperceptible), the cello primarily creates the narrative, the upper piano counterpoints, and the lower piano provides a stable accompaniment.

The third movement of this miniature is a masterful synthesis of all the previous preludes, sometimes with a modified rhythm. The earliest preludes are characterized by a greater number of repeated fragments, which are gradually reduced as the tempo increases. Some of these are reduced to mere fragments of notes, yet the characteristic theme of each prelude remains clear.



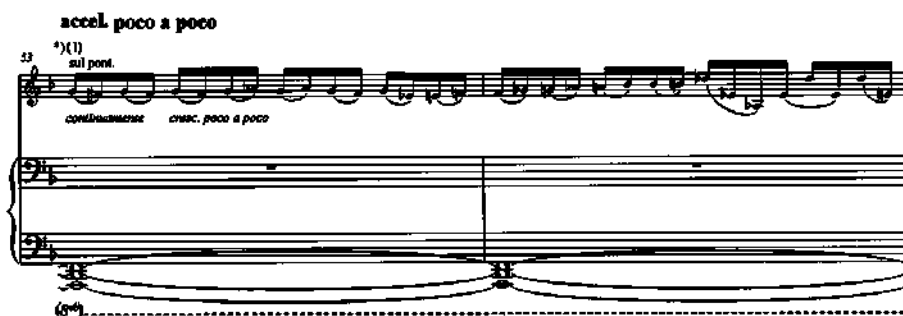
Example 51: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.24, Bars 61-62

In the final section, both instruments use a glissando (or quasi- glissando in the piano) to reach the highest possible notes, concluding the entire cycle as a “Grave grandioso e tragico”



Example 52: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.24, Bars 94-95

Because the third movement of this miniature repeats fragments from all the previous Preludes, we have a review of all the compositional techniques, harmonic relationships, polytonality, clusters, and polyrhythms used so far. The only element distinguishing this fragment from the cited Preludes is the uniform tone color (apart from the *sul ponticello* in the theme of Prelude No. 1).



Example 53: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.24, Bars 53-54

While it is very difficult for the performer to precisely render the individual cited motifs so that they resonate with the audience, the composer intended this extraordinary musical structure to be a wonderful summary and culmination of the entire cycle.

Postlude Adagio assai (G-sharp minor)

Lera Auerbach composed this postludium in 2004, subtitled “Variation on Prelude No. 12 from 24 Preludes for Cello and Piano.”

The subtitle "Variation" should not be considered in relation to well-known variation forms from the past – rather, this miniature should be treated as a derivative of Prelude No. 12 with minor changes. The fundamental difference between these works is the form – in the case of the Postludium, it is ABA1, as opposed to the two-movement Prelude No. 12. In the middle section, the composer introduces a color in the cello's voice – a glissando effect, executed

sul ponticello. An additional suggestion is that the proposed note pitches are approximate – meaning the aim is to create a coloristic effect regardless of the harmonic relationship with the piano theme.

Ein einziges langsames, zusammenhängendes Gliss. (wobei die tatsächlichen Töne unerheblich sind). /
One slow, continuous gliss. (actual notes are irrelevant).

10 *mp*

14 *molto sul ponticello* *mf* *f* *più f* *p* *pochissimo meno mosso*

Example 54: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes Postlude (cello part), Bars 10-18

There is one more difference between the notations - in Prelude No. 12, the Composer suggests searching for *suono di vetro* (i.e. "glassy sound"), while in Postlude no such notation exists. In the recording made by Lera Aurbach together with the cellist Ani Aznavoorian, the Composer herself (!) prepares the sound of the piano to distort its original timbre.

Generally speaking, a postlude serves to summarize and synthesize the entire piece. Referring to the theme from No. 12, the piece is a retrospective reflection, simultaneously emphasizing and reflecting the unity of the composition.

4.2 Performance Issues

This work presents numerous challenges for the performer; not only does the harmony undergo rich variations, but the musical mood also fluctuates dramatically. The alternating preludes differ not only in key but also in tempo and style. The musical atmosphere of several pieces is strikingly different from the others, leaving a lasting impression. Consequently, this work demands not only the highest technical proficiency from the performer but also the ability to grasp its profound musical meaning, so as to interpret the various musical moods and colors appropriately.

After analyzing the cycle of Preludes in terms of performance difficulty, I have decided to divide it into three categories: medium difficulty, demanding, and very difficult. The criteria I have considered are as follows:

- technical difficulty
- expressive difficulty

- length, tempo, and character
- overall complexity of the piece, including the previous criteria

Category: medium difficulty

This category comprises Preludes Nos. 1, 3, 5, 6, 10, 22 and 23. The melodic structure of these seven preludes is relatively simple, with a slow tempo; the cello part contains no rapid leaps or complex double-stop melodies, whilst the piano melody is based on long chords. The challenge presented by this group lies in the rendering of musical color and atmosphere.

In Prelude No. 1, finding a balance between lyricism and subtle tension is crucial, and the appropriate use of rubato serves to emphasize the harmonic color.



Example 55: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.1, Bars 21-27

In Prelude No. 3, the character of the Andante misterioso suggests that the most important element will be the color of the sound. A clear production of harmonics, a balanced progression of glissandi (emphasizing the *lento*), and clear microtones towards the end of the piece should meet the composer's requirements.



Example 56: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.3, Bars 4-5, 20-21

In Prelude No. 5, the principal technical challenges lie in the double-stop passages featuring augmented fifths and minor sevenths in the opening cello solo melody, as well as the clustered notes and syncopated rhythms in the piano part during the middle section. Furthermore, the use of *ad lib.* serves to enhance the work's lyricism, whilst the tension-filled clusters in the piano melody lend the piece a sense of dramatic contrast.



Example 57: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.3, Bars 1-3, 9

Prelude No. 6 is marked ‘tragico’(tragic); the performer should create a tragic atmosphere by maintaining strict legato bowing. Care must also be taken to avoid a sluggish tempo and intonation issues caused by excessive lyricism, particularly in the upper register of the cello.



Example 58: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.6, Bars 7-11

In Prelude No. 10, the challenge lies in using the cello’s plucked technique to contrast with the piano’s distinctive ‘glass-like’ tone, thereby creating a ‘sognando’ (dreamlike) atmosphere. Whilst plucking, the cellist must maintain a vibrato; this gives the melody a sense of breathing, makes the notes sound fuller, and lends the melody a singing quality.



Example 59: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.10, Bars 1-4

In Prelude No. 22, despite its seemingly simple melody, the challenge lies in maintaining a consistent nostalgic character while developing the form in increasingly higher registers. The second movement of the piece contains harmonics, which pose a demanding challenge.



Example 60: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 22, Bars 7, 13, 25

Prelude No. 23 presents similar technical challenges—the increased difficulty stems from the need to maintain a ppp dynamic whilst creating a ‘sognando’ musical atmosphere. When bowing, the right arm must remain relatively relaxed to avoid any trembling of the arm muscles caused by attempting to control the dynamics, which would make the melody sound stiff and lacking in breath.



Example 61: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No. 23, Bars 1-6

It is evident from these preludes that, in Preludes Nos. 1 and 5, Auerbach employs *ad lib.* passages to create a musical atmosphere in which lyricism and tension coexist; in Preludes Nos. 3, 6, 10, 22 and 23, Auerbach has clearly marked the emotional direction for each piece, thereby guiding the performer in their interpretation.

Category: **demanding**

This category includes Preludes Nos. 7, 8, 12, 15, 18 and 19, and the Postlude; Compared to the first category, these works exhibit greater variation in tempo, whilst the melodic contours become more varied. Certain passages in some pieces feature challenging elements such as double-stop melodies, high-position melodies, harmonics, plucked passages and special playing techniques. Furthermore, there are specific requirements regarding the smoothness of phrasing transitions, which require particular attention.

In Prelude No. 7, the character of the *Vivo* should not disrupt the flow of the phrase with asymmetrical bow changes. The harmonics pose a certain difficulty, especially since they must be realized using a *glissando*.



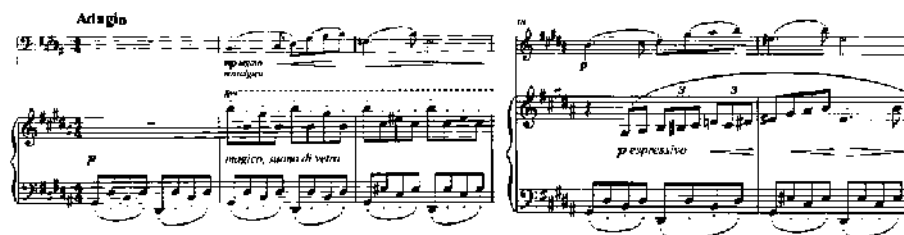
Example 62: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.7, Bars 8-9, 13-14

In Prelude No. 8, the main technical challenge is maintaining good intonation in the sixths, especially since they occur against a background of cluster accompaniment, meaning the cellist has no harmonic support. In the Recitativo, attention must be paid to the proper build-up to the final section of this piece – both dynamically and tensely, by appropriately expanding minor rhythmic values.



Example 63: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.8, Bars 6, 9

Prelude No. 12 is divided into two parts; particular attention should be paid to the intonation of the main cello melody, played an octave higher, as well as to creating a distinctive sound effect in the second part, distinct from the first.



Example 64: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.12, Bars 1-3, 18-19

The Postlude follows the theme of Prelude No. 12; ensuring a smooth transition between the missing melody fragments is a key challenge in this piece.



Example 65: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes Postlude, Bars 1-4

Prelude No. 15 makes extensive use of various pizzicato techniques; in addition to traditional sound production (e.g., with the index finger), chords consisting of three to four notes are played as arpeggios (with the thumb), and finally, a tremolo imitating a balalaika is played alternately (right and left – or, as in musical notation, "up and down") with a group of fingers. The difficulty lies in the fact that chords played with arpeggios contain open strings; the resonance of these open strings can sometimes drown out the main melody. To produce the main melody, the player must minimize contact between the fingers and the open strings while maximizing contact with the melodic notes.



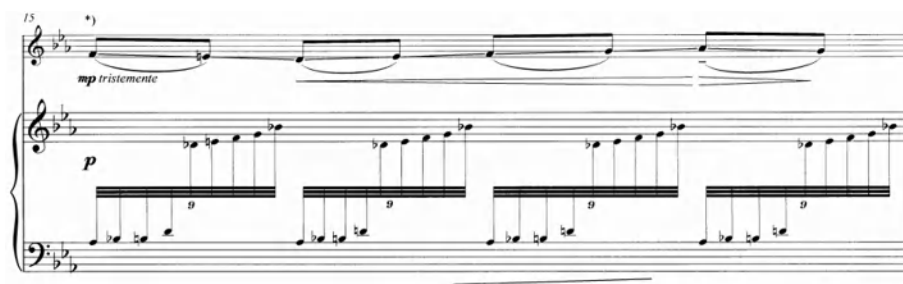
Example 66: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.15, Bars 5-6, 16

Prelude No. 18 is characterized by distinct melodic lines; the main challenge is to ensure clear articulation to maintain the work's lightness and elegance. At the same time, counterpoint techniques feature throughout the majority of this piece; whilst the cello and piano must maintain the horizontal independence of their respective parts, they must also use dynamic contrasts to highlight the theme.



Example 67: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.18, Bars 15-18

In Prelude No. 19, the pianist's primary challenge lies in the passages and runs that run throughout the piece. The cellist should pay particular attention to the glissando in the middle section, which is intended to emulate the sound of folk instruments and evoke the traditional Iranian instrument, the kamancheh.



Example 68: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.19, Bars 15

This category of pieces requires greater attention to intonation. Compared to the previous category, these pieces feature greater melodic variation, present a higher level of technical difficulty and offer richer musical content; however, the overall tempo remains manageable, making them not overly challenging for the performer.

Category: very difficult

The most technically demanding preludes are Nos. 2, 4, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21 and 24. Most of these preludes are extremely fast and highly challenging, featuring extensive use of double-stop melodies, rapid shifts between the upper registers and frequent changes of position. Some preludes incorporate multiple technical challenges simultaneously, placing extremely high demands on the performer's technique. In addition, they require a high standard of articulation in the melodies and connection between phrases.

Prelude No. 2 is a very short, lively Allegro. The cello melody is characterized by frequent, successive transitions from the A string to the G string, as well as rapid changes in ninth intervals.



Example 69: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.2, Bars 4-6, 14-16

Prelude No. 4 is played at a very fast tempo; the cello melody consists primarily of two-note melodies and is characterized by frequent dynamic changes and rapid position changes.



Example 70: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.4, Bars 9-10

In Prelude No. 9, the purity of the sound production in the implementation of the written articulation is crucial – alternating slurred and staccato (similar to the Prelude from J.S. Bach's Suite No. 6 in D major, BWV 1012, for solo cello). The intonation problem for the left hand is the rapid changes between the upper and lower registers.



Example 71: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.9, (cello part) Bars 13-18

In Prelude No. 11, the greatest difficulty is the octave jumps in the cello voice towards the end of the piece.



Example 72: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.11, Bars 8-9

In Preludes No. 13, 16 and 17 the main problem is intonation, related to several factors:

- Demanding key signatures (respectively: No. 13- six flats, No. 16-five flats, No. 17-four flats)
- Changes of register and long distances



Example 73: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.13, Bars 35-36, No.17, Bars 31-33

- Double stops passages



Example 74: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.16, Bars 58-60, No.17, Bars 60-61

Particular attention should also be paid to maintaining strict legato when moving from string to string.

In No. 16 it is important to balance the glissando to achieve the "weeping effect."



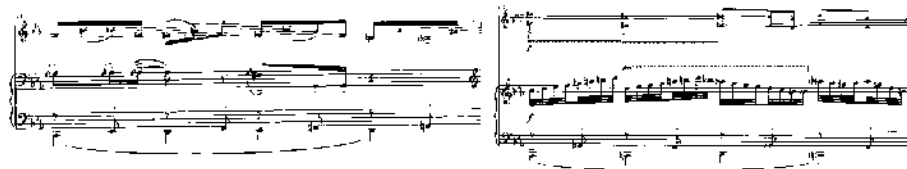
Example 75: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.16, Bars 3-5

Prelude No. 14 is a fast scherzo in E-flat minor, employing spiccato and sul ponticello techniques. Proper sound production (including sul ponticello) is crucial. The double stops should be very well intoned with the piano harmony.



Example 76: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.14, Bars 5-6, Bars 28-30

In Prelude No. 20, attention should be paid to intonation in both the two-note and single passages, especially in the high register.



Example 77: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.20, Bars 14, Bars 17

In Prelude No. 21, the dialogue between the lower and upper registers requires very precise intonation and appropriate fingering. Dynamics play a key role – the composer's notation must be followed with great precision (which also poses technical challenges).



Example 78: Lera Auerbach 24 Preludes No.21, (cello part) Bars 6-15

Prelude No. 24 is a summary of the entire cycle – the composer incorporates motifs from all the previous Preludes into this piece, thus accumulating all the technical challenges that have arisen so far.

4.3 Interpretation and Tempo – Notation and Performance

Interpretation is an integral part of music; it is the process by which a performer, building on their own understanding of the work, gives it a personal, artistic character. Through the understanding and creativity of different performers, the emotions and ideas conveyed by the music come to life in a more vivid and diverse way.

This collection of preludes is stylistically diverse, containing a wide range of musical elements. Although each piece is an independent work, they are not entirely independent of each other. From the perspective of musical interpretation, many of the pieces share many similarities. I have attempted to divide these pieces into three groups to identify common features in their musical interpretation, with the goal of understanding the composer's musical ideas and thus better interpreting the pieces.

"Virtuoso" Preludes

This category of preludes includes Nos. 2, 4, 11, 15, 17, 19, 20, and 24. These preludes are called "virtuoso preludes" because their melodies are characterized primarily by their fast tempos and highly demanding technical passages, with a particular emphasis on technical skill and speed. In these preludes, Auerbach frequently uses musical terms such as "ossessione," "marcatissimo," "ritmico," and "appassionato," often supplemented by a dynamic "*f*" notation, conveying a sense of aggression. The fast and dynamic melodies make these works relatively easy to interpret.

Within this group, Preludes Nos. 2, 4, 11, 15, 17, and 24 exhibit striking similarities in interpretation. The composer frequently used the musical term "ossessivo," and the melodies of these works contain numerous repeated passages that further emphasize this "ossessivo" theme. In the process of musical interpretation, these preludes can draw inspiration from each other, thus facilitating a more effective interpretation.

Preludes Nos. 19 and 20 form a collection in the related keys of major and minor. Auerbach gave both works distinct musical characters: one is a passionate ballad, the other a playful scherzo. Their musical characters are distinctly different, creating a strong sense

of contrast. In both preludes, the piano melody is fast and densely written, acting as a driving force for the musical development, while the cello melody is interwoven with it. Both pieces pose significant technical challenges and are performed in the dynamic of "*f*". From an interpretational perspective, they share certain similarities.

"Characteristic" Preludes

In this collection, many of the preludes have distinct characters; by combining traditional musical material with modern and contemporary elements, Auerbach endowed the work with rich musical variety. Preludes Nos. 1, 7, 8, 9, 13, 16, 18, and 21 are the most representative examples; these preludes are characterized by moderate tempo and difficulty, and the interpretation will focus on the articulation between phrases.

Preludes Nos. 1, 7, 8, and 21 frequently employ "ad lib." Due to this "freedom," the tempo of these preludes can be flexibly adjusted as needed; their melodies are characterized by significant register shifts, making articulation particularly important. Dynamic changes in these four preludes are frequent and occur in waves; The piano melody relies primarily on long chords or arpeggios, which give the cello melody greater scope for expression while also requiring more precise phrasing.

Preludes Nos. 9, 13, and 18 are Baroque pieces. The triplet melody in Prelude No. 9 exhibits distinct Gigue characteristics, while Prelude No. 13 utilizes counterpoint techniques, and Prelude No. 18 is reminiscent of the Gavotte; the challenge lies in correctly interpreting the respective musical styles.

In Prelude No. 9, constant attention must be paid to purity of tone, with particular attention paid to the transitions between higher and lower registers. Auerbach marked the first note of each bar tenuto, which helps to better distinguish phrases from *staccato* passages.

Polyphonic techniques in Prelude No. 13 enhance the narrative character of the melody. The composer uses a melodic arching structure to create subtle divisions in the phrasing; The main interpretative challenge is maintaining the same dynamic intensity during the rapid shifts between higher and lower registers, without disrupting the original musical atmosphere. In Prelude No. 18, the cello and piano alternate playing the thematic melody, clearly demonstrating counterpoint. During performance, both instruments must play each note with clarity; the melodic lines remain independent while maintaining a dialogue-like character.

Finally, in Prelude No. 16, Auerbach introduces a waltz-like style; this piece is written exclusively in triple meter. The main interpretative challenge concerns the glissando sections at the beginning of the piece, where it is necessary to ensure that dynamic changes do not cause the glissando's melody fragments to disappear. Secondly, maintaining a rhythmic pulse throughout the piece is crucial to capture the essence of the dance.

Compared to the previous set, the preludes in this group are characterized by greater diversity in melodic texture, musical style, and rhythm, often referencing traditional musical elements. The key challenge lies in precisely interpreting the distinct musical character of each piece; constant attention to the articulation of the phrases is essential during performance, and preserving the musical individuality of each prelude is paramount.

"Static" Preludes

The execution of the tempo in this piece reveals a complex relationship between the composer's intentions and the performer's flexible interpretation; tempo is not merely a technical requirement but also a key factor in the interpretation of the piece. Auerbach's rhythmic and emotional markings are often precise and nuanced, providing clear guidance to the performer. I want to analyze the relationship between tempo and performance because the performance of a piece is inextricably linked to the composer's creative vision; the way the composer himself performs his manuscript is of paramount importance. By analyzing the differences between the composer's own performance in recordings and his manuscript, we can better understand and interpret the work.

In the recording made by the composer herself, the tempos of some pieces do not match the specifications in the score. This discrepancy prompts us to consider the reasons for the discrepancy between the composer's intention in the score and the actual performance, and how to find a balance between them in her musical language.

The analysis is based primarily on the album "Celloquy,"³⁶ recorded jointly by cellist Ani Aznavoorian and composer Lera Auerbach. This album is considered the definitive reference point; it not only reflects both artists' understanding of musical interpretation but also faithfully captures the composer's original creative intentions for her works.

The table below presents the tempos of each piece and the characteristics of some of them, as well as the standard tempo range and actual tempo of the pieces recorded

³⁶ Lera Auerbach, Ani Aznavoorian. *Celloquy*. Cedille Records, 2013

by the composers themselves, providing a clearer and more intuitive illustration of the differences in tempo:

No.	Tempo	Character	Standard BPM	Actual BPM
1	Andante		70-108	72
2	Allegro		120-168	130
3	Andante	misterioso	70-108	52
4	Allegro	ossessivo	120-168	138
5	Moderato		86-98	48
6	Andante	tragico	70-108	60
7	Vivo ma non troppo	e agitato	132-140	132
8	Grave		20-40	38
9	Vivace		132-140	136
10	Adagio	sognando	66-76	42
11	Allegro		120-168	176
12	Adagio		66-76	52
13	Andantino	grazioso	80-108	92
14	Allegretto	scherzando	112-120	160
15	Allegro	con brio	120-168	132
16	Tempo di valzer		180	200
17	Allegro	ritmico	120-168	176
18	Andantino		80-108	108
19	Allegro	appassionato	120-168	144
20		Giocosio	Free Rhythm	Free Rhythm
21		Dialogo	Free Rhythm	Free Rhythm
22	Andante	nostalgico	70-108	44
23	Adagio	sognando	66-76	40
24	Vivo		132-140	132
Postlude	Adagio assai		66-76	52

Table 1

As the table shows, Auerbach used expressive and interpretive markings in many of her works, which significantly influence the tempo of their performance. A comparison reveals that in almost a third of the pieces, the tempo the composer herself recorded

on the recording differed significantly from the tempo indicated in the manuscript. I believe there are several reasons for this:

- Emphasizing the tone color
- Enhancing resonance
- Creating tension
- Balancing the sound of the individual parts
- Tempo markings as a guide, not a strict instruction
- The authority and individuality of the performer

In Preludes Nos. 3, 10, and 23, Auerbach uses the term "sognando," or "dreamy," to create an ethereal musical atmosphere. Long chords in the piano part create a backdrop, and the right pedal is depressed for a prolonged period, generating deep resonance and reverberation. The cello frequently uses harmonics in the melody to give it a distinctive color. To extend the melodies sustain, Auerbach significantly slowed the tempo in her recording. Prelude No. 23 serves as a prelude to the finale. Auerbach uses the phrase "attraverso le nubi della memoria" (memorial at the moment). As this is the quietest prelude in the work, slowing the tempo facilitates this dynamic requirement, while also further adapting to the musical image and laying the groundwork for the finale.

The composer uses the musical term "nostalgico" in both Preludes No. 12 and No. 22. The melodies of both preludes develop in a progressive structure; to convey the theme of nostalgia, the main melody is repeated multiple times while simultaneously changing register—a technique that perfectly captures the essence of this theme. Furthermore, significant shifts in the melody's register create a sense of contrast. The postlude, a variation on Prelude No. 12, also embodies the "nostalgico" theme. By incorporating glissandi and partially omitting the original melody, it contrasts with Prelude No. 12; listening to the Postlude, the mind unconsciously recalls the omitted fragments of the melody, a manifestation of nostalgia.

The tempos of these three pieces in the recording are also significantly slower than those indicated in the manuscript and are determined by the musical material in the cello's voice. As the cello melody gradually develops, performing it at the tempo indicated in the manuscript would have lost the melody's nostalgic character, leaving only its lyrical character.

In Prelude No. 5, the cello and piano parts are relatively independent. The first section, performed by the solo cellos, is very reflective, further enhanced by a series of fermatas that pause the narrative. Then, the piano melody emerges, rhythmically completely independent,

against the backdrop of sustained cello notes. The two melodies do not conflict with each other, creating a traditional harmonic structure only towards the end of the piece.

The tempo of this miniature on the recording is half (!) slower than in the score. This interpretation was undoubtedly influenced by Ani Aznavoorian, who performed the cello part. Her sensitivity and search for the right atmosphere for the piece led the composer to adopt a completely different approach to her work.

Prelude No. 6 is a piece imbued with a tragic atmosphere. The term "espressivo" is repeatedly emphasized throughout the piece. Although the melody does not fluctuate significantly, the cello line develops primarily through intervals of seconds, while the piano line consists of chords and chromatic scales. The highly dissonant intervals create a sharp clash of frequencies, capable of evoking profound emotions in the listener. Together, these elements create a constant sense of tension and oppression, perfectly capturing the "tragico" character of the piece.

In the recording, the artists slow the tempo from Andante to Adagio; This approach further enhances the effect of the dissonant second interval and the expressiveness of the entire miniature.

The musical motif of Prelude No. 14 is taken from the overture to Mozart's opera "The Magic Flute" and imitated in the "scherzando" style; the cello melody is played primarily staccato. Frequent meter changes throughout the piece, along with sudden shifts in meter that are unexpected for the listener, create a strong sense of parody.

The frequent meter changes make articulation particularly important in this prelude; constant concentration is required to adapt to the constantly changing rhythms. In the recording, the tempo of Prelude No. 14 is noticeably faster than indicated in the manuscript. This corresponding acceleration of the tempo effectively reduces the spacing between notes, further enhancing the sense of dissonance caused by the rhythmic changes, creating a "playful" musical atmosphere. In this group of "static" Preludes, flexible interpretation of tempo is closely linked to the search for the appropriate musical character of the piece. In this case, the evolution from the tempo indicated in the manuscript to the actual performance constitutes a creative process and demonstrates the ability of the performer—Lera Auerbach—to relate to the composer's score. We can therefore conclude that by remaining faithful to the composer's original intention, we are able to take our own, sometimes very different, perspective on the score, in order to extract the full depth of meaning from the music.

From my perspective, when performing these works, I feel closer to the tempos in Lera Auerbach's recording; in Preludes Nos. 5, 12, and 23, I even perform them slower. I slightly lengthen the duration of the sustained notes, allowing the resonance to linger a bit longer, clearly marking the phrases while heightening the listener's tension. Comparing this approach to the Artists' recording, I found that it does not detract from the original musical atmosphere; Instead, it brings out subtle details and offers a new perspective on interpreting music.

Summary

The entire work unfolds in a major-minor sequence in fifths (from C major-A minor to F major-D minor). Although stylistically distinct, the pieces are closely linked sequentially, creating a cohesive whole. The work is both nostalgic and eclectic, combining elements of neoclassicism, expressionism, neoromanticism, national elements, and modernist musical styles, while also employing various contemporary techniques—such as clusters and microtonality—to enhance the pieces' expressiveness. Auerbach's pieces are characterized by Baroque-style counterpoint and harmony, drawing on and adapting classical melodies, and also incorporating elements of modern and contemporary musical styles. Emotionally, the work is rich in color, containing, among others, a tranquil adagio, a playful waltz, a satirical scherzo, and a tense, passionate allegro. The composer compared this piece to a lake in the Urals: calm on the surface, yet concealing hidden depths³⁷. A seemingly ordinary musical motif, treated with the slightest nuance, reveals a completely different side—a key reason why this cycle of preludes is so full of contradictions and twists.

From a technical perspective, this piece places extremely high demands on both the cello and the piano, thoroughly testing the performers' technical abilities and their ability to collaborate in chamber music. The melodies of both instruments venture into extreme registers, encompassing a wide range and characterized by immense expressiveness and tension. Furthermore, the composer emphasizes an "equal dialogue" between the piano and the cello; the two instruments must closely interact, conveying different musical atmospheres. Overall, the performers must demonstrate both lyricism and dynamics, as well as technical skill and mastery of tone color, to convey the work's emotional tension and subtle musical nuances. From the perspective of musical interpretation, this work has not yet gained widespread popularity, and there are no related films, recordings, analyses, or critical essays; therefore, its interpretation remains in the exploratory phase. Nevertheless, the polystylism present in this work offers cellists a framework and interpretive guidance, allowing them to perform it by imitating traditional musical styles.

³⁷ When I think of these violoncello and piano preludes, I compare them to the lake Inyshka in the Urals Mountains, where my family would vacation during the summers of my childhood. The lake looked peaceful, but I knew it was dangerous as it had a double bottom (<https://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Lera-Auerbach-24-Preludes-for-Violoncello-and-Piano/105161>)

In examining Lera Auerbach's cycle of 24 Preludes for Cello and Piano, can we discern an idiom characteristic of this composer's cello music? Unlikely, as this magnificent cycle is more of a kaleidoscope of 25 diverse miniatures, each with its own distinct character and style, and as a result, it is difficult to identify and summarize them comprehensively. However, we can attempt to define the characteristics of Lera Auerbach's work, drawing on the Sonata for Cello and Piano and her latest Cello Concerto, "Diary of a Madman," by distinguishing the following attributes:

- Tonal Centers
- Extreme Emotional Variations
- Musical Collage
- Extreme Colors

The cycle of 24 Preludes for Cellos and Piano opens new horizons in the concept of music written for the cello. By combining multiple musical languages within the piece, the composer allows the cello not only to express lyrical phrases but also to function as a "versatile instrument," capable of presenting complex harmonies and creating unique sonic effects. This polystylism demonstrates that contemporary cello works can encompass a wider range of musical emotions and forms of dialogue. As the composer herself stated: "The uniqueness of these works lies in looking at familiar things from an unexpected perspective and discovering that they are not what they may seem at first glance. The context and sequence of the Preludes are crucial to their understanding"³⁸ As a work dedicated to the renowned ballet choreographer John Neumeier, it may imply intermedia potential and establish a new paradigm for the composition of future cello works.

In summary, this work allows for the discovery of a wealth of innovative elements of musical language and creative ideas. By combining tradition with modernity in a groundbreaking way, the composer has created a new framework for contemporary cello composition. It is therefore reasonable to assume that future works will draw on these unconventional compositional solutions and a diversity of styles, while continuing to explore the cello's timbre and expressive potential in the creative process, enabling it to play a richer and more diverse role in 21st-century musical trends.

³⁸ <https://www.ficksmusic.com/products/auerbach-24-preludes-op-47-sikorski>

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