

Astrith Baltsan
Musician. Artist. Educator. Performer.

A doctoral dissertation in musicology
submitted to the Hebrew University in
Jerusalem
by Dr. Aviva Stanislavsky .

June 2004

PROFILE OF ASTRITH BALTSAN

An excerpt from the Doctoral dissertation:

BEYOND MUSIC:

**A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH
FOR TEACHING MUSIC APPRECIATION
TO ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS**

אל מעקר למוסיקה :
מישח רב-ממדית בהוראת חמוסיקה
למתבגרים ולמבוגרים שאינם מוסיקאים

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Introductory remarks

Dr. Astrith Baltsan is a pianist and performer who shares her talents with the world in the form of a special type of **concert series**—known as “Classical with a personal dimension”, and in the form of **courses**, given together with her husband Dr. Moshe Zorman, in the framework of a private institution which she established, known as the **Music Cathedral** in Tel Aviv.

The **concert series** include guided concerts (which Astrith calls “personal concerts”) about particular composers, such as Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Stravinsky, Shostakovich; concerts around particular themes, such as the Faust legend, Music based on verses from the Bible, the Music of National Anthems; and concerts focusing on different styles, such as Spanish and Sephardic music, Israeli music, and style periods in history (e.g. Classic, Romantic, etc.). These concerts have been in existence since 1990.

A series consists of 5 concerts throughout the year, and these concerts are given in Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem, where a total of 12 series are run concurrently, in order to accommodate for the large number of subscribers (approximately 7000!). All the concerts feature Astrith playing the piano and explaining the concert, and many also involve other performing artists as well (including other instrumentalists, vocalists, actors, and dancers), depending on the topic and the pieces to be performed. There is also usually a multi-media integration in the concerts, which includes the use of video and picture slides when applicable.

The **courses** given in the Music Cathedral, which began in 1996, are an outgrowth of Astrith’s vision of providing non-musicians with musical understanding and appreciation, and enabling them to enhance their knowledge and enjoyment of music in a more systematic way. The number of students in the Cathedral is approximately 700, made up of mostly middle-aged and retired people, and also younger people, especially teachers on sabbatical, taking courses for credit and/or for personal enrichment.

The courses are on a variety of subjects. Each course is 2 hours weekly and spans an entire school year:

- Courses in the “Musical Lexicon”, for learning basic musical terminology, concepts, elements and structures of music (Over the years, similar courses have been called “Aural Comprehension”, “Listening and Thought”, “Muses and Music”).),
- Courses in musical masterpieces, designed to acquaint the audience with the repertoire that is to be played in the concert halls during the current season (including operas as well),
- Courses in music history,

- Courses on specific composers, often grouped together by alliteration. Each year a different course has been offered on a group of composers. For example: "Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Bartok"; "Mozart, Mendelssohn, Mahler"; "Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Schoenberg". The most recent course offered is on the "Giants of Opera—Mozart, Wagner, Verdi, Puccini."

The popularity of the concerts and the Cathedra, combined with Astrith's goal to reach larger audiences, has brought about some more initiatives and innovations over the last few years:

- Concerts "for the whole family" in cooperation with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, guided by Astrith's explanations and commentary, begun in the year 2000.
- Televised concerts from recordings of the above Philharmonic concerts, broadcast on educational television starting from 2002.
- A new series of books in conjunction with CD recordings, which include explanation and analysis of music, as well as pure performance of musical masterpieces. The first of the series—a compact disc on Mozart is coming out in June, 2003.

About the profile of Astrith

Since the "personal concert" is a unique feature of Astrith's contribution to music education, Section I of the following chapter will relate to the contents of one such concert using "thick description" and rich detail, so as to enable the reader to have a vicarious experience of this type of encounter with music.¹ In order not to harm the narrative flow of the total experience of such a concert, interpretation and comments will be kept to a minimum here. Instead, analysis and discussion will be reserved for the end of Section I and for all of Section II, where the salient features of the concert will be extracted and examined in depth. This examination will also go beyond the individual concert to analyze what happens in Astrith's lessons in general, her views on music education for adults and adolescents, and the feedback from her students, obtained from informant interviews and questionnaires.²

¹ The full transcript of this "concert with commentary" is found in Appendix A-1.

² The full interview with Astrith is in appendix A-2, and the feedback from participants in the courses and the concerts are in appendices A-4a—p and A-5.

SECTION I: Vignette-- Astrith in concert

The first concert to open a new series of "*Classical with a personal dimension*" is entitled *Chopin—Always Polish*. The idiom "always Polish" automatically brings us "beyond music", as it is taken from the humorous book by Israeli artist, Yair Garbuz, who tries to explain everything in life using Polish jokes.

The concert hall is filled with hundreds of people, and on the stage is a lone piano, and a large screen. The program notes (appendix A-1a) contain 3 pictures relating to Chopin's life, and list the pieces we are about to hear: 14 out of Chopin's 24 Preludes of Opus 28. This is basically a "one-man show"—a recital featuring Astrith as soloist and narrator. As I look at the program and the lone piano on the stage, I wonder about the level of variety, interest and appeal which a recital devoted to one genre of piano music will have for an audience comprised mostly of non-musicians.

A. Introductory immersion in music

Astrith comes out on the stage, sits down at the piano and immediately begins playing, without announcing the name of the piece. Though we have a program which lists Chopin's preludes, I recognize that this is *not* one of the preludes she is playing, but rather Chopin's *Scherzo in b-flat minor*. Though the audience might not know what they are listening to, they are absorbing the sounds, the atmosphere and passion of this Scherzo, which begins with a dialogue between a mysterious unison pianissimo melodic motif in the low registers, answered abruptly by passionate fortissimo chords in the high register. Relating to the natural schemata analyzed in Chapter 1/C, there are several factors which contribute to the overall dramatic character of this selection:

- a) **deviations from the normal range of occurrence--** extremes at either end of the U-function, in the low and high registers of the piano, and in the dynamics of pianissimo versus fortissimo
- b) **sudden drastic changes** between these extremes,
- c) juxtaposition of contrasts which create a "**zig-zag**" **contour** as they appear alternately.

This segment of dramatic contrasts is followed by a segment that is more light-hearted in character, before the opening theme of contrasts returns. At the return of the opening theme, Astrith begins to speak with a "voice-over" as she continues playing. She begins to introduce the character of Chopin, tying it in with the atmosphere of contrasts that we have heard in the beginning of the Scherzo. Her voice emphasizes the contrasts in each sentence:

"Chopin, the friend of every pianist—the poet of the piano..."

A Polishman---- who lived in Paris;
 a concert pianist---- who hated to play in public;
 a patriot and freedom fighter---- who could not be drafted into the army because he was
 1.74 meters tall, and weighed only 44 kg..."

As Astrith moves into playing a waltz (Chopin's Waltz in c# minor), she continues her vivid voice-over narration in a dreamy, romantic tone of voice:

"He wrote waltzes---- but he never danced a waltz in his life. Yet, he had the ability to inspire even the most sour-faced wall-flower, with the thought that perhaps *tonight*, it will happen. Someone will come, and take her in his arms, and sweep her off her feet..."

B. Chopin's preludes

The fusion of music and story-telling awakens the senses and invites the listeners' attention and involvement, while creating an atmospheric backdrop to the biographical details, even if, at the moment, these details seem somewhat frivolous and superficial. As Astrith progresses with her playing and the voice-over narration, she moves gradually into giving us some more serious detail related to the program of the preludes:

"Chopin's dream was to make a place for himself among the great Classical composers, like Bach and Mozart, to prove that the world in the aftermath of the French revolution, the Industrial revolution and the Marxist revolution, was also a world of 'law and order' of harmony and goodness...Chopin wished to accomplish this according to the organization familiar to us from the study of music theory...as if to say: 'There are an infinite number of [combinations of] notes, but *I* will arrange them in an order—the order that begins with a C Major scale, that creates a world that is full of light.' "

Astrith accompanies that part of the narration with a bit of Bach's well-known prelude in C Major from the Well-tempered Clavier (Book I), and a bit of Mozart's familiar Sonata *Facile* in C Major, saying:

"This is a world of lightness and cheer, a world of order, where every question has an answer..." (demonstrates this as she plays the first two phrases of Mozart's sonata).

"Chopin wants to enter that world...At the age of 27, his dream is to write preludes for the piano in all the keys, following the circle of fifths...simple mathematics..." (She briefly demonstrates the meaning of the circle of fifths, on the piano.)

"He builds his preludes around a classical model, each Major followed by its relative minor..."

(Astrith continues to play—now from Chopin's prelude in C Major, and as she goes along, she shares with us her associations and emotional interpretations of the different musical events of this prelude, using the voice-over technique as she is playing.)

"But the world is not so orderly. Chopin's C Major prelude goes to the deepest registers of the piano, attempts to climb up and up, tries to sing that the world is so beautiful in C Major,

but gets exhausted...it's more stormy than Mozart, it's *agitato*—and asthmatic...Maybe it's difficult to build a world of C Major 80 years after Bach...

And where is he running? Where is this prelude leading? A prelude is an introduction... an introduction to what? It is an introduction to the next prelude ---in G Major..."

Astrith moves on to playing the next prelude, and from there continues to take us through some of the preludes in the Major keys, for each one, narrating her associations. In the G Major prelude, she shows us how

"...the left hand flirts with the right hand...After all, when you play the piano you play with two hands, and each hand can be doing something else. Here, the left hand has expanse and energy, while the right hand hovers like a love-sick swan, dreamily singing...and together they sail to a far-off horizon... and another prelude finishes."

Now Astrith stops for a philosophical interlude, which gives us some food for thought:

"Preludes are introductions. Here it seems like one introduction leads to another introduction. In Bach's music the preludes are introductions to fugues. But in Chopin's music each prelude just introduces another prelude. They seem to introduce but never arrive at the object of the introduction..."

Astrith continues playing more excerpts from the Major preludes and continues with the voice-over:

"The D Major prelude begins without knowing where to go, but along the way, it's 'Let your fingers do the walking', as did Chopin's fingers-- his long, delicate hand, like the hand of a woman, amazingly flexible, traveling to different worlds, and especially to that world of his homeland, to Poland and to the innocence of childhood..."

On this note of simplicity and innocence, Astrith moves dreamily on to

"the simplicity and childlike naiveté of the A Major prelude—the shortest prelude of all, only 16 measures, but with a magical melody. And therefore, this prelude in particular was adopted by the classical ballet, that tries to prove that we are not necessarily riveted to the ground, but we can float in the air, on the tip of the toe of just one foot, as long as our hands are outstretched upward, like wings, or like oars carrying us to a world of dreams..."

After playing the prelude, Astrith shows us a video excerpt of the ballet, *Les Syphides*, where the dancers dance to the music of this Prelude in A Major.

Up to this point, we have heard excerpts of 4 preludes in Major keys, and now Astrith introduces us to the world of minor, playing some forceful chords on the piano and thundering dramatically:

"But man does not live by Major alone...They came into the world together, the Major and the minor, like twins. Behind every Major, is a built-in minor. The minor is built on the 6th tone of the Major scale." (Demonstrates: la-si-do-re-mi-fa-sol-la). The very same notes, the

same “genes”, but what makes the difference is their order. In Chopin’s preludes, each Major is followed by its relative minor...”

Astrith plays the transition from a bright Major prelude to a dissonant minor prelude, as she asks intensely:

“Is this a twin, or a different composer?! Why is this so dissonant? Chopin’s minor is more emotional and more painful. It cannot be explained simply by the rules of music theory. In order to understand something about ‘the minor Chopin’, it is necessary to know something about his life at the time when he wrote these preludes.”³

C. “Man does not live by Major alone”

And so the plot thickens. Now Astrith is taking us deeper into Chopin’s music, his life-story and his soul. At this point, still using voice-over and playing dramatic motifs of the preludes, Astrith introduces a new character in the drama of Chopin’s life: George Sand, the liberated woman of the Parisian salons. Astrith relates details about the personage of George Sand, her habits, her occupation as a journalist, her lovelife and her first encounter with Chopin. She brings to life the way she imagines George Sand inviting Chopin to join her for a winter in Majorca, and Chopin being tempted by the offer:

“I will support you, pay for you, hire you a piano...You can write remarkable music like Beethoven, and you will be with me...” And Chopin, like every good Pole, could not say no, and after all, why not? She’ll support him, and finally he’ll be free to compose...

After he discretely took a leave of absence from his pupils, he made the journey to Palma di Majorca. A young man, expecting a passionate love-vacation with a liberated woman. But, after only one short week in Majorca, the nightmare began...”

Astrith begins playing the prelude in f# minor, which she breaks up into components, as she uses her associations from the musical schemata to build up the description of the scenario:

“Here he is in f# minor. At first, drops of rain (plays single notes from the bass). One raindrop, then another, leading to a nagging rain, pouring rain (left hand figurations). Then incessant howling winds (the melody line from the right hand part), and then a full-fledged storm (stormy playing with both hands and the full agitato figurations). Who ever heard of such a rain in Majorca?!”⁴

There is mould on the walls, and a cold which penetrates to the bone. Chopin falls ill. A first cough, then a high, raging fever. Chopin lies in bed, vomiting, spitting up blood. (The music in the prelude gets more and more turbulent and tragic as the narrative progresses.) The

³ It must be noted that the reasons for the choice of Major or minor are not only a function of the events in a composer’s life, but rather are governed by the aesthetic ideals of a particular style period, which is why the Romantic period has proportionately many more minor compositions than the Classical period, owing to the more passionate and stormy aesthetic of the Romantic era.

⁴ The musical events here are all related to the natural schemata of **intensification**.

doctors come and they say *Con... Con... **Consumption.***" (Silence—Astrith suddenly and dramatically stops playing, and we feel the drama of the sudden drastic change!)

"The hotel owner arrives. 'No consumption patients here. Out!! Before he infects the entire community.'

George Sand goes around searching from place to place. Looking for a hotel, or a hostel, or a room for rent. No! No one will take a consumption patient into their home. No one wants a genius composer with consumption! There's no place to go, and finally only one place left to take shelter, in an abandoned cloister⁵... An odd couple in an old cloister: she, a woman with masculine inclinations, and he, effeminate and delicate, already being called 'the Polish corpse.' "

Astrith goes on to make us privy to the personal perspective of each of the players in this plot, as she reads excerpts from letters written by Chopin and George Sand respectively. She even dramatizes in everyday colloquial language—almost in slang-- a kind of dialogue which she imagined might have ensued between them, when Chopin, in his wretchedness tells his frustrated lover/care-taker: "Nu?! Why are you staying with me? Yalla--Hurry up and move on to your next lover."

And sitting at the piano and playing a bit of the prelude in a minor, Astrith describes-- in voice over---the turning point in this agonizing scenario:

"Only one thing seemed to improve the situation. The piano arrived, and when Chopin sat at the keyboard, he forgot his illness. Sand would sit and look at him and think: 'I have the greatest, most wonderful man in the whole world.'

And it was she, who heard it for the first time—and recognized its genius and modern quality. The prelude in a minor. Full of alienation and estrangement between the two hands, playing at once on the piano. What will unite them? And what will keep the couple together there despite the nightmare? It is art. The beauty of performance and composition, of playing the instrument and creating. These were the qualities that helped George Sand to see the giant spirit of Chopin, and not just the body of the 'Polish corpse.'"

At this point in her narrative, Astrith muses philosophically:

"Sometimes, through art, we can discover who a person really is. People can connect, even when they are in crisis, and when alienation eats at them. But art can carry them beyond themselves."

This philosophical point serves as a bridge for us to view an excerpt of Ingmar Bergman's film, *Autumn Sonata*, which uses the repetition of the Chopin a-minor prelude to

⁵ The program notes for this concert reinforce these images with some art-work that add an additional visual dimension to the story. Included in these notes are: a drawing of the cloister, drawn by George Sand's son, a caricature of George Sand, smoking and wearing trousers, and a painting of Chopin, made by George Sand. (See [appendix A-1a.](#))

comment on the complex estranged relations between a mother and a daughter in an entirely different plot, but having Chopin's music as the catalyst for communication.

After viewing the excerpt of the film, Astrith continues the gripping story of Chopin's winter in Majorca, emphasizing how the lonely cloister served to strengthen the bond between Sand and Chopin, despite the fact that here were two people who seemed so opposite from each other:

"She--- is connected to reality and to the material world, with all her being, as a self-supporting woman and mother. A functional artist, with a column in the newspaper, she writes 20 pages a day, finishes a manuscript overnight, and bombards her publishers with 120 best-selling, very gripping novels, which you can't put down ---like another Irit Linor. Practical and prolific in her writing, she churns out material, with or without inspiration, and her novels fill 3 full shelves in the library, in addition to 40,000 letters.

He—is unable to finish anything. He writes 169 pieces for the piano, which he labors over all his life. Each small idea he writes, he changes, and fixes and polishes, and is never satisfied."

Peeking into the personalities of each of the players, we become privy to another letter of George Sand's, which Astrith reads out loud in order to give us a further perspective on Chopin's struggle with his creative urges, his perfectionism, and his frustration:

" 'His music is spontaneous. It comes to him suddenly, perfect and supreme. But then the desperate toil begins... He makes a series of attempts to recapture the details of the theme which he heard in his head...His disappointment that he cannot recapture the purity of the original idea which moved him, drives him to despair. He shuts himself up in his room for days on end, crying, pacing back and forth, breaking pens, repeating, changing, writing and erasing, and beginning again the next day, with an infinite and desperate persistence. Sometimes he can spend 6 weeks on one page in order, at the end, to write it down exactly as he had conceived it to begin with.' "

Now Astrith becomes philosophical again:

"Somewhere between the Major and minor preludes we begin to discover more and more of Chopin's soul. He yearns for the perfect experience, but lives in the wake of a ticking clock telling him that time is running out."

Astrith continues to speak with voice over, as she plays several preludes with repeating even eighth notes, that sound like the ticking of time.⁶ (Excerpts from the prelude in e minor, the prelude in b minor, and finally the prelude in D-flat Major.)

⁶ Even repetition is also one of the natural schemata that produces tension in the listener.

"The repeating tone throughout these preludes is surprising in its obstinate persistence, in its ability to accompany us-- like the command of fate --throughout an entire piece—through climactic high points (demonstrates) and abysmal low points (demonstrates).⁷

Like the preludes, all our life is always 'just before reaching something', and we never quite know what. But in every artist's life, there is the clock ticking away, the passage of time that is impossible to stop..."

Astrith raises her voice theatrically:

"The clock that says: 'Your time is limited, you have no time for an introduction to an introduction, as the clock pounds away...It's a race against time...'

Chopin, at the age of 27, writes 24 preludes and knows that the last key will also be his end. He is fighting for every note. Not just another waltz, but a chance to express himself during his lifetime..."

After Astrith plays parts of the D-flat Major prelude, there is a short interdisciplinary interlude to view an excerpt of the Kurosawa film *Dreams*, which uses this prelude as background music for a journey into one of Van Gogh's last paintings *The Ravens*. This multi-media mix brings us an interesting juxtaposition of 2 artists whose careers were characterized by a "driving force—an engine of creative energy", and who died tragically young, having been consumed by the fire of their own creativity, which both inspired them and destroyed them. Astrith gives us insight into the imagery of the ravens who descend mercilessly to devour the corpse—which perhaps represents the artist who still wishes to live and to struggle to create.

Aside from reinforcing the listening to one of the preludes and creating an interesting integration of music, painting and cinema, here is another opportunity for some philosophical musing about the artist's plight: his struggle with giving expression to his talent and creativity, his suffering, and the clash with his environment.

"The life of the artist revolves around the sun of creativity, where the sun is a bastion of light, joy, warmth and energy, but also a cause of fire and destruction. Like the sun, the artist burns everyone that gets near, and also himself. The sun is a source of life, but also a source of death. In all his creative work, the artist experiences the mad race against the passage of time, and against death. The artist knows he is burning himself up and lives on the energy which propels him forward, so he can go on creating. The ravens ambush him everywhere, and wait to descend to devour the corpse. Perhaps this corpse represents the artist, who is prey to an environment full of people who do not understand him. But the artist will not succumb. He fights as he feels within him an engine of energy, driving him to create and to make the most of every last bit of talent, with which he is endowed."

⁷ Here, tension is produced by the natural schemata of deviations from normal range of occurrence and their juxtaposition, which creates tension from sudden drastic change.

D. The plot thickens

Astrith relates more about the affair between Sand and Chopin, their return to Paris, the doctors saying that Chopin only had a few months to live, and how, through Sand's devoted care, he lived another ten years.

"She nursed him like a small delicate child. Chopin flourished, the publishers were happy, the public bought his music. He was productive and famous...and [he] recognized the strength of the weaker sex..."

Astrith tells how the relationship between Sand and Chopin became more platonic, and quotes from one of Chopin's letters where he described his feelings toward Sand as that of a son toward a mother. Finally, Astrith tells about the break-off of the relations due to a family feud over Sand's daughter (from a previous marriage), Solange, who chose to have a child out of wedlock, and Chopin taking sides with Solange. Astrith describes the unhappy end of the Chopin-Sand liaison, Chopin's inability to write anything after the affair was over, his subsequent demise shortly afterwards, and the fact that George Sand did not come to the funeral.

Astrith integrates a further literary dimension when she quotes heavily from books written by George Sand—especially her books "*Lucrezia Floriani*" and "*Winter in Majorca*", which are Sand's accounts, using fictitious characters, of much that transpired between Chopin and herself.

Astrith also makes sure to give us the long list of George Sand's famous lovers who came after Chopin, and we become privy to the juicy gossip of Paris, when we learn that Solange, Sand's daughter, subsequently became one of the most expensive call-girls in Paris. And while we're on the subject of George Sand, there is more multi-media integration, as we get a glimpse of several movies about her life and her episode with Chopin, in films such as *Impromptu* and *A Song to Remember*.

E. Preludes to what?

After these interludes, Astrith begins to sum up and get to some deeper messages related to the many contrasts we have seen:

"And so, between the contrasts of the Major and the minor, life and death, love and separation, man and woman, Chopin's preludes for the piano were composed.

What began as a lesson in theory, in the circle of 5ths and Major-minor, becomes an amazing song of life, where Major and minor are two sides to the same coin."

At this point, Astrith ties in more famous literature to strengthen these ideas as she reads from Alterman's *Inn of the Ghosts* – a text which deals with the twin qualities of joy and sorrow in our harried, hurried lives. She ties in the text of Chopin's will, in which he stipulated that his heart be buried in Poland, and uses this anecdote as still another

opportunity to reinforce the message of “Chopin -- always Polish”. Then, with the final point of Chopin’s will, Astrith adds a powerful and poignant perspective on the preludes. Chopin requests that his funeral procession be accompanied by the music of Mozart’s Requiem, written in d minor—which, Astrith reveals to us, also happens to be the key of Chopin’s last prelude.

“Chopin finishes his 24 preludes with the last prelude –in d minor—the same key as Mozart’s Requiem. It is as if Chopin is writing a prelude, an introduction to this requiem.”

Astrith continues to give us points to ponder on the preludes:

“At the age of 27, in one autumn, that should have been an exciting season of love and passion, Chopin discovers that his time is short, and that he is about to die. He writes preludes—introductions –to what? Where are these preludes leading? What are they introducing?”

She recalls Liszt who spoke at Chopin’s funeral, saying, “What is life, if not one long prelude to death...”⁸ This unresolved question, coupled with our understanding of Chopin’s situation of illness and despair, gives us new insights into the significance of the preludes. As we meditate on these meanings and messages, Astrith illustrates portions of the last prelude, using the voice-over technique, as she relates dramatically to the features in the music, and attaches her emotional interpretations of the musical schemata:

“The prelude is dramatic and stormy. The left hand sounds like depths and rapids, which pull us downwards, while the right hand is like the head of a swan, that is singing its last song, as it departs...As we depart from all the keys of Major and minor, the ascending and the descending scales, it feels like an abyss is pulling us down, but we try to keep our head up.” (This narrative is going on as the left hand is playing in very low registers, while the right hand is in the higher registers—again the extremes in the deviation from normal range of occurrence.)

“And so the two hands struggle against each other, and we try wave after wave—to keep our human image, to manage to fulfill some task...And then comes the moment when the idea is finished...it begs for more, just another moment...then a chromatic scale that includes *all* of the notes. Another round, and then the signal that it must end...”

Astrith passionately describes the end:

“What tried to fly high must now return to the ground. The more he dares, the more he must wallow in the dust. In the last wave, the piano reaches its lowest depths, it cannot go any lower. It is as if Chopin is putting the nails in his own coffin... Here, Chopin takes leave

⁸ Liszt’s famous composition *Les Preludes* is based on a text of Alphonse De Lamartine which contains these very words.

with pain and pathos from all the tonalities, the Major and minor keys, the ascending and descending scales."

With this dramatic climax, Astrith ends the preparatory survey of the preludes which comprised the first half of the program, and concludes by quoting a profound human message from a poem by Bialik entitled "And when you find":

"And when you find the scroll of my heart,
Wallowing in the dust
And you will say thus: there was a man, pure and simple,
And tired and weak."

F. Astrith's preludes

In the second half of this "concert with commentary", we hear 14 out of the 24 preludes played in their entirety, with no narration or voice-over---just pure concert. As I ponder the development of this "personal concert" on Chopin's Preludes, I realize that all the musical and extra-musical preparation from the first half of the program is actually a sort of "prelude" to the second half of the program---the concert.

And like the Chopin preludes which lead one to the other in a kind of series, we too have experienced multiple levels of preludes leading one to the other: the musical motifs played on the piano before and during the voice-over commentary were a prelude and a backdrop for the narrative. The details of the composer's life were preludes to understanding the music. Even the frivolous gossip details from Chopin's biography became preludes to the more serious tragic developments which ensued. This dramatic story in turn became a prelude for Astrith's philosophical musings about human situations in general-- creativity, struggle, illness, interpersonal relationships, expectation and disappointment, hope and despair, love and loss, life and death. This orientation towards human experience and meaningful life messages provides a further prelude for our thoughts and the workings of our imagination when we listen uninterruptedly to the 14 preludes which Astrith plays for us in the second half of the program. In short, it is as if the entire preparatory stage-- with its introduction of motifs and themes from the preludes, voice-over narration, emotional associations and multi-media presentations-- as well as the humanistic messages which emerge from them--- are Astrith's preludes which introduce us musically, intellectually and emotionally to her performance of Chopin's preludes. Our ears have absorbed the musical motifs which will now be more familiar. Now, when we hear Astrith's performance in the concert, we will not only recognize the motifs and themes, but will also recall the associations and emotional messages which our minds have received. Our senses are attuned to the sounds, and our minds are awakened to the psychological and philosophical orientation which Astrith has brought to the music.

In essence, with this “personal concert” Astrith has engaged in an act of “worldmaking” (Goodman, 1978). From her creative impulses as artist, performer and script-writer, Astrith creates for us a new way of perceiving the world through this multi-dimensional work of art, containing a novel combination of elements, an ingenious structural organization, a dramatic development and a significant human message. Moreover, the interplay of multi-media aspects stimulates the senses and causes a more complete multi-sensory experience: the voice-over technique fuses the verbal and the musical, and in the films, there is also the addition of the visual dimension. Working together, all these channels reinforce the experience and enhance the picture of the world which is evolving. Nelson Goodman (1978) explains the significance of the multi-sensory interplay in the process of “worldmaking”:

“Music obviously works in like ways upon the auditory realm, but it also participates in producing whatever conglomerate linguistic and nonlinguistic visual version we tend to take at a given moment as our ‘picture of the world’. For the forms and feelings of music are by no means all confined to sound; many patterns and emotions, shapes, contrasts, rhymes, and rhythms are common to the auditory and the visual and often to the tactual and the kinesthetic as well. A poem, a painting and a piano sonata may literally and metaphorically exemplify some of the same features;⁹ and any of these works may thus have effects transcending its own medium. In these days of experimentation with the combination of media in the performing arts, nothing is clearer than that music affects seeing, that pictures affect hearing that both affect and are affected by the movement of dance. They all interpenetrate in making a world” (p.107).

After we have experienced Astrith’s act of “worldmaking” with *her* “preludes” to the performance of Chopin’s Preludes, we then reach the phase of **pure listening** to the music. Now, all the explanations, demonstrations and preliminary analysis are in the background, preparing us for a new stage of perception, which Astrith is aiming for:

“The listener is free to have his own associations as he listens to the music, and is free to discover something new, that has not as yet been presented--perhaps another interpretation or something within themselves. Then, the music becomes theirs, as they relate to it and find themselves in the music” (A-2, p. 10).

According to this view, there seems to be still another level of “preluding”, where the enriched listening experience may serve as a prelude for the personal meaning and life-significant messages which people will take away with them when they leave the concert hall. The result is what Astrith calls “opening up circles of response,” (A-2, p.13) as she

⁹ These same features emanate from the natural schemata common to all the art-forms.

refers to an ever-widening spread of concentric circles in the listening experience. In this case, the circles begin with Chopin's music as the central focal point, around which Astrith weaves her stream of consciousness, adding emotional commentary, psychological insights, philosophical musings, as well as interdisciplinary material which surrounds the music – from the realms of history, biography, literature, cinema, ballet, and even painting (In addition to the film about the Van Gogh painting, there are three works of art illustrated in the program notes--[appendix A-1a](#)).

Then, the circles widen even more as this work of art inspires new waves of experience, which reverberate further, opening up additional imaginative channels in the minds of the members of the audience. These listeners now have their own associations and personal experiences as they connect to all they have heard—in words and music, and all they have seen through the visual media. As they listen to the preludes, they too may be engaged in a type of “worldmaking”, where they expand their inner world through the growth of meaning (Phenix, 1964).

G. Beyond the concert

Interestingly, the musical experience is not confined to the time of performance only. The listeners' “worldmaking” and growth of meanings stemming from the music sometimes have further creative outpourings *after* the concert, in the form of letters and poems to Astrith in the wake of her presentation.¹⁰ These insightful musings and creative repercussions, stimulated by the concert, may be envisioned as the effects of a pebble thrown into a pond. Once thrown into the water, the stone penetrates deeper and deeper, never returning to the place where it once was. And, at the same time, the ripples created from its impact on the water keep getting wider and wider.

Astrith: “I very often receive reactions. People write me letters. I have files full of letters where people wrote me this reminds me of this or of that, etc. In the end they too find the freedom, for as I said, to listen to the music and to listen to oneself, in the final analysis, must be one and the same thing. They too discovered for themselves another interpretation, which flows from their own lives, and that is a wonderful thing. It is wonderful to hear, and it always gives me more ideas. This is a kind of feedback. This is very important to me, that we will reach the moment that what has been played, will be the ultimate truth. That the musical composition, will be “self-containing.” The piece contains all of this, and even more things. Come and listen... I throw the ball to the audience. It's an offer to listen, after I have told them how I have [understood it], now it's their turn” (A-2, p. 11).

¹⁰ Some examples of these letters can be seen in Appendix A-3.

These ever-widening "circles of experience" in the performer and listener are an elaboration of Dewey's (1934) conception of art. Dewey's belief is that our response to a work of art is an interactive process, in which the viewer/listener/participant is creating meanings and thus becoming a partner with the composer in creating the final "work." As noted earlier, Dewey enlightened us to the meaning of words such as "building," "construction" and "work," which refer both to the artist's process as well as his finished product (Chapter 4/D-5). Likewise, even the words "creation," "composition" and "expression" indicate both the process and the product. The dual significance of these words implies that in artistic experience, it is the ongoing activity of these verbs that gives the nouns (the final products) their meaning. In the case of Astrith's concerts, the "composition" which Astrith has fashioned now invites the audience to continue engaging in the "composition" of meanings, as they become involved in the Chopin preludes in a way which they might never have encountered. Each listener may partake in this ongoing activity and thus construct the work of art in his own consciousness, making it personally significant for him and his conception of the world. This is a wonderful example of the move from sub-conscious perceptions to conscious awareness and finally to self-consciousness and introspection which was discussed in the conceptual framework (Chapters 2/E and 4/C-3, 5/B-3).

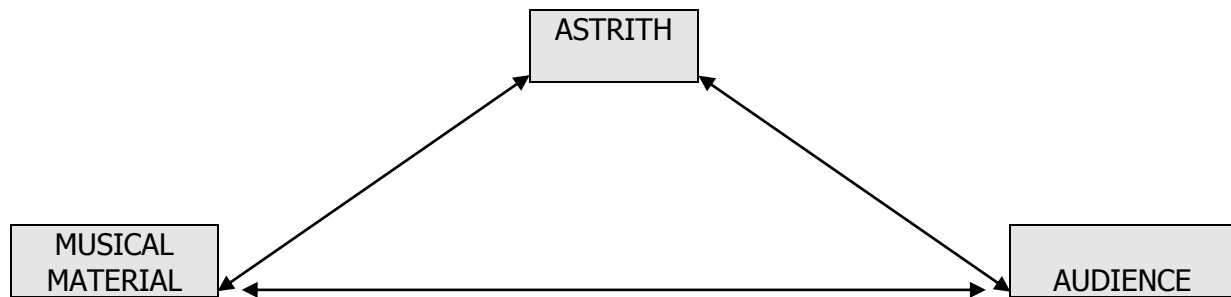
But there is still another link in this ever-expanding chain of events. The audience responses that Astrith receives further inspire her to more creative searching and researching.

Astrith: "...They will write me, and tell me what they have discovered. They write me things that are sometimes compositions in themselves. People create their own things in the wake of these concerts. Someone once suggested that I prepare a concert on texts from *Song of Songs*, and the following year, I organized a concert around this subject, just because of that comment.

I sometimes get poems from people about the pieces they have learned... People send me letters and faxes of their reactions and associations. People tell me that the music reminds them of something, a film perhaps, and then I run out to get the film. From this film, I may take an idea for something else, so it opens up a whole creative process, where I too learn more things after these comments. It is wonderful because it motivates me, and I am even more stimulated as a result" (A-2, p. 13).

There is an interactivity between the audience and the material, and also between the audience and Astrith. Of course, these interactions are in addition to the original encounter between Astrith and her material. Thus, the "eternal" triangle between the teacher, the learner and the subject matter, so often quoted in education, now takes on a

new dimension of interactivity, mutual support and creative dynamism, where each is constantly nourishing the other.



In the final analysis, Astrith's "personal" concert has transcended her private perspectives, by stimulating each individual to engage in introspection and find his own personal meanings. Thus, the concert rises to the level of the "**super-personal**" (a concept from Chapter 3/ B-2c), touching on universal emotions and reaching "to the roots of the human condition" (Reimer, 1970, p. 81). Astrith sums up how she feels about this progression:

"One of the things that is most important that people say, or they may even bother to write, is 'This is not a concert. It is a festival for the soul.' Or they will say: 'This is not a lecture; it is a lesson in life'. This for me is everything" (A-2, p. 13).

It is evident that this type of musical experience goes beyond the confines of a conventional concert, beyond the performance of particular pieces of music, and way beyond Astrith's analyses and personal perspectives. It seems to touch upon some profound aspects of human existence, and to communicate something transcendent that leaves its mark on the listeners.

SECTION II—Beyond the individual lecture:

The principles behind the practices

A. Creativity, composition and communication in the personal concert

Astrith sees herself first and foremost as a pianist and performer, and indeed her career started off as a pianist, giving regular piano recitals and concerts. However, together with the “sublime happiness” (A-2, p.2) which she derived from performing piano literature, Astrith had two other burning needs—to establish a more **direct contact** with her audience---i.e. to create a “living experience –the living concert, the real live contact with people” (A-2, p.2), and to make the concert into an original **creative endeavor**. These two goals actually go hand in hand, for the originality and creativity of the concert derive their inspiration from the goal of establishing better communication with the audience, as we saw in the above “triangular interaction”.

The need for these innovations grew out of Astrith’s disappointment with the constraints of the conventional concert, which she sees as slowly becoming obsolete, because it does not sufficiently relate to its audience.

“I ask myself what is the future of the concert in its present state? I do not see a future for it. The formal traditional concert--- where no words are spoken, with the rigid structure and the only objective of giving a performance of exactly what is written in the score, without any live element of improvisation or contact with the audience, or a new invention in any area, but which only aims to perform what is written in the program--- this concert is passé. I do not see a future for this...” (A-2, p. 9).

Astrith’s aspiration for creativity and communication caused her to develop a different genre of concert --one that is more accessible, comprehensible and enjoyable for the layman or novice who does not necessarily have a formal background in music. She has dubbed these concerts: “Classical with a personal dimension”.

This new genre is a type of “talking concert”, similar to Leonard Bernstein’s guided “Young People’s Concerts” from the 1950s and 1960s. However, Astrith is cautious to stipulate that this is *not* a guided concert, and that her objective is *not* to explain the music.

“...The genre of my concert, I do not see it exactly as a ‘guided concert.’ I do not think of it as such. I see it as something else. I see it as a *personal concert*... Actually, when I speak about how I see what I do, you will actually hear in my voice, that I am talking about a concert, as if it [the personal concert] were a composition. I do not feel that I am coming to explain to people: ‘What did Brahms mean in the chords of the d minor concerto?’ No, that is not what I explain to them. I tell them why the beginning of this concerto makes me jump up to the sky. It is another angle. And at the outset, I take an angle that is personal, and as

you may have noticed, that becomes more and more personal from concert to concert (A-2, p. 5—emphases mine).

The personal angle is characterized not only by Astrith's personal impressions of the music, but also by her own inimitable innovations—in the form of voice-over narrations and abundant multi-media integration. Together, these innovations enable Astrith to create a concert which is her **unique composition**, -- "a living experience", something fresh, alive and vibrant:

"If it is not alive and fresh, who wants it in canned goods? The aim must be to take the concert out of the *conserve*" [*conserve*, being the word used for canned goods] (A-2, p.9).

In the personal concert with its original concept, Astrith communicates to the audience not only with her playing, but with her impressions and associations, with "story-telling", with illumination about the broader cultural and historical contexts of the music, and with suggestions as to the significance of the sounds and their possible emotional meanings. To these embellishments around the piece of music itself, Astrith may add further dimensions from other art forms, which stimulate a variety of aesthetic experiences, as well as extensions to popular music around similar themes—both musical and extra-musical. In a concert based on Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, for example, Astrith finds connections—both in the moonlight and the musical motifs--- to an Italian hit song, *Guarda che Luna* and to John's Lennon's song, *Because the world is round*, which is also an opportunity to show a video excerpt of John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

The multi-media aspect is not only in the use of other art forms in the compass of the concert, but also with the technique of delivery itself-- the "voice-over", which Astrith calls "a kind of multi-media of music with words":

"I can create a kind of multi-media of music with words. This is appropriate for me, and is in any case what I do. Even if I do not talk about it, I hear it in my head, and that will be my composition. So my concert is for me my composition... I will not agree to call these concerts "guided" or "explained" concerts. I do not explain. I tell fantastic stories —some accurate and some not (laughs), about what I think. And from this, there must emerge a certain experience, and if this experience is moving, for me this is my concert. And in my view, it is better, because it is more honest, truthful, because it comes from the place where it is supposed to come from, and it is more fitting and more right for our day and age, moreso than another Beethoven, Brahms, overture, concerto, etc." (A-2, pp. 5-6).

B. In a state of quest

The personal aspect of these concerts actually goes much deeper than the mere external manifestations of titles and techniques. These concerts are characterized by the creativity which results from a private "quest" --a personal search for significance, a stream of consciousness about the music that takes Astrith to unexpected places.

"I am always in a state of quest, always searching. First of all, within myself, as I work alone, until the material starts to speak to me. I have to be convinced, that the material I am working with really inspires me. This is also very personal. It is not enough that it is a Mozart concerto, for it to be able to speak to me, and be right for me" (A-2, p. 2).

For Astrith, the "quest" is a result of a long process, in which she needed to liberate herself from the constraints of her formal music education, and orient herself in the direction of creativity, and trusting her personal intuition.

"The way I was brought up, I was raised on just one kind of listening, which is 'What does the composer want?' And not: 'What do I want? What about me? Will I ever be able, some day to create something of my own?' This question never occurred to my piano teacher. And this question is really one of the 20th [and 21st] century. Because in a little while, there will come a machine which can turn out all the notes perfectly, and there will be no need for players or performers, unless they are creative performers (A-2, p. 5).

Astrith sees the process of creating these concerts as something liberated and open, as true products of the modern world—and draws the analogy to some types of modern music in which each performance is a fresh improvisation, and is never the same. In this way, creating a concert is creating a work of art and a living organism. Over the years, Astrith has developed many different concerts, whose themes were chosen based on her introspective search for renewal and rejuvenation, and on her ever-changing freshness of approach, to avoid repeating herself.

Her "quest", begins with a burning curiosity and need to feel connected to the music and to understanding what's in the music. Astrith likens this need to connect to "falling in love" with the subject matter and feeling inspired and ignited by the material. Astrith says that the moment she feels this spark, she will look for any means to communicate the ideas. She will read extensively about the composer and the pieces of music; she will examine other interpretations and performances, video tapes, material on the internet, until she finds what she is looking for and can say --"this is it!"

"In this respect I am like a teenager. I need to fall in love with the material. The moment I fall in love with the material, it is as though I am 'passionately crazed' by this material. I

become ignited. Everyone who has ever worked with me, or has seen me in a concert, knows that moment when 'Hup, I am ignited, excited, inspired' " (A-2, p. 2).

Astrith looks for material which stimulates involvement and which is interesting and thought-provoking. For her, a potential for a high degree of interest and involvement also qualifies as "falling in love".

"If it is provocative, I can take something that I may not like as much. I can take something as long as it is what you might call 'thought provoking;' if it causes me to have a chain of thoughts, a stream of consciousness. I may not be completely crazy about the music, but I am crazy about the thoughts that it can bring about" (A-2, p. 3).

Astrith sees the search and research process as an adventure, and loves the creativity in the stream of consciousness that the music arouses, and follows these associations, allowing them to carry her beyond music to many other dimensions.

C. Connecting the "intra-musical" and the "extra-musical": "Hands-on" and "voice-over"

1. Piano playing as the prime mover

Despite the quest which may take Astrith quite far afield, the extra-musical aspects never reign supreme without the music as their prime mover. Being a pianist, Astrith begins conceiving of the lecture through a "hands-on experience" at the piano:

"I always look for a situation in which I will be able to play, so I will be inside the material. I look for a way to be really in the thick of it, so it will never be just a lecture. So if there is a singer, I can accompany him, or if there is a choir, I can accompany them, and if it is piano music I can play, or chamber music I can play. If it is orchestral music, I will play a piano arrangement, and if it is an opera, I will do it from a piano-vocal score. I always look for something that I can get a hold of with my fingers. Because I know that I want to delve in deeply to it. And the only way to go deeply in ---for it really to be interesting for me---is to really get to know the piece thoroughly—to really know all the notes. There is no other way" (A-2, p. 3).

Through her connection and complete immersion in her piano playing, Astrith feels that she can take the music apart into its components and literally play with the material as if she invented it. For Astrith, this "hands on" experience is the first step in understanding the music in depth, demonstrating its sounds and interpreting its meanings. For this reason, it seems that Astrith's so called "extra-musical associations" have a validity and a compelling logic because they are actually grounded in the musical material. They seem to stem directly from the musical events, and are actually her associations connected to the

natural schemata, which become more perceptible and apparent as she plays the music on the piano. (This point will be elaborated further as this chapter progresses.)

Being inside the music in this way recalls Copland's (1957) description of how composers and listeners are both "inside" and "outside" the music simultaneously, (Chapter 4/B), where "a subjective and objective attitude is implied in both creating and listening to music..." (p. 19). Continuing Copland's quote in the context of Astrith's "hands on" approach, it would seem that the subjective and objective attitude is implied also while playing and analyzing the music.

2. Stimulating the senses

A typical concert—or lesson—of Astrith's starts off with her at the piano, playing as she narrates something, perhaps some background on the composer or the setting of the piece, her personal associations with this music, or a translation into metaphor and imagery of what the musical motifs represent for her. Using the technique of "voice-over" as she is playing, Astrith creates a multi-sensory impression---an interaction between words and music which is designed "to capture the attention of the audience, so they will really listen" (A-2, p.1), and which is internalized automatically and unconsciously, as a combined experience. In this way, the preliminary stage of acquainting the audience with the themes to be heard does not **require** separate playing time, demonstration time, talking time. It all happens simultaneously--multi-dimensionally---like a counterpoint, which is able to stimulate the **senses** and the **imagination**, as we receive our first impressions of themes that will be heard later on.

"I can play around with the material, as if for a moment, I had invented it. And while I play around with it, I can also talk and play at the same time. I can only do that if I know the music very, very well. If not, I can't. I can save a lot of teaching time because there is no separate demonstration time and explanation time. The spoken word is immediately demonstrated, and the demonstration is immediately explained. It happens immediately and that becomes a counterpoint of its own. It is almost in the same moment. And I have noticed that because it happens so quickly, people do not have a chance to forget the motif, and it is entirely clear. It is so clear because it happens so fast. And I also put it [the motif] in often. Because I like to fantasize and I feel more liberated to fantasize in words than in musical notes, so I take for myself some kind of ostinato, or a certain pattern that I want to penetrate into their [the listeners'] minds, and I make this music into a movie [story]. That is: it now gets a 'voice-over' and even if this comes back 500 times, he [the listener] will not sense that it was 500 times because the words above the music are changing all the time. So the listener is listening to the words, but indirectly, as if *en passant*, he is already singing the melody to himself. Even if the music is very complicated, if I have made it into an ostinato, he [the listener] will learn it. Because it simply comes back many, many times, in

the background. It's like, why do people always remember the theme music of a radio program, because they have heard 50 programs like this, where in each one, the text changed but the music did not. So it was absorbed by them in a different place [in the brain]. And also music is an art which is more dynamic, in that it doesn't annoy you to hear the same thing again and again if it is beautiful, but it would really annoy you to hear the same text over and over again. So I use this [music] to create a kind of interaction. And then it becomes like a method" (A-2, p.10).

Astrith seems to be aware of how people absorb music, and knows that this kind of voice-over addresses the right hemisphere of the brain, which captures a general gestalt, and intuitively perceives the expressive quality of the music (Storr, 1992).¹¹

Moreover, since the natural schemata in the music arouse Astrith's associations, their meaning receives further confirmation with her verbal descriptions. The result is a unique integration of words and music which mutually support each other. The listener is able to absorb their meaning, because both the words and the music actually reinforce one another: the spoken text gives a verbal representation of what the musical sounds may imply or suggest, and the piano playing gives a live concrete musical example of the ideas which are being expressed in words. The result is a complete fusion which creates an integrated sensory experience, stimulating our imagination and appealing both to our **intellect** and our **emotions**.

To appreciate how this works, let us recall the listening model which was outlined in the conceptual framework (Chapter 4/C), which is now reviewed and amended to show the place of Astrith's voice-over:



The voice-over technique directs our senses and imagination almost simultaneously. As we are perceiving the musical sounds, we are also absorbing Astrith's imagery and associations, many of them related to familiar situations from life experience. It is as if Astrith's voice-over narration intercedes in the listener's move from SENSATION to IMAGINATION, making it happen more immediately. It would seem that by sharing her impressions with the audience, she is directing the listeners' imaginations, and influencing the effect on their emotions and intellect. To get some insight as to how this practice

¹¹ Because there are people have different inclinations and propensities, it is important to note that some people might find the voice-over technique disturbing to their listening to music in its pure form. Naturally, there is no one technique which is suitable for everyone at all times.

affects the listener, let us examine the experience of a middle-aged woman participant in the courses of the Cathedra:

"Astrith demonstrates things and illustrates music while she relates to everyday life. For example, she may liken the different registers in the piano to ages of people---the high register, like a child, the middle---like adulthood, and the bass---old age.

She uses imagery which arouses pictures in your mind and you relate to the music differently as a result. I see things in my imagination. All the images leave their mark on me and become part of me. I so much identify with this. Every lesson of Astrith's is an experience. When I come out from there I am not the same person who went in to the lesson. Every lesson brings a change in my personality. I come out of each lesson feeling great excitement, and elation. It is really emotionally moving. I feel I have gained a great deal of insight into music. I have delved into the infinite ocean of music experiences --- where I go in deeply" (A-4b).

From this woman's response, it is clear that Astrith's narrative is able to stimulate the imagination and stir the emotions. However, it seems that the effects are even more far-reaching than an immediate gain in understanding, as this participant feels that the lesson actually inspires a "change in personality" and makes her come out a "different person". In this listener's reaction, there is a "value response" to music which is characterized by growing self-awareness¹² (Swanwick, 1988) and attentiveness to the depths of feeling and human experience, which can promote "emotional intelligence" (Goleman, 1997). Moreover, her attitude demonstrates a level of **self-consciousness** and **introspection** which recall Maxine Greene's (1971) descriptions (elaborated in Chapters 4/C-3 and 5/B-3) of "reaching out for [one's] own authentic being", "sense-making with respect to art", "pondering [one's] own experiences..." and in short, "the changing of a life" (pp. 40-41). All these factors help to bring about the growth of meaning (Phenix, 1964) and the expansion of consciousness (Ball, 1971), which are capable of generating the feeling of excitement and elation which this participant experiences.

This "self-conscious" orientation, inspired by Astrith's lessons aptly illustrates Astrith's world-view on education in general:

"I think that the aim of education is to make a person happier...¹³ And I say at the outset that music education is actually only a part of general education that demands that a person will look not just at himself, but will be capable of relating to what is happening around

¹² The "value stage" in responding to music was discussed in Chapter 2/A and 4/C-3.

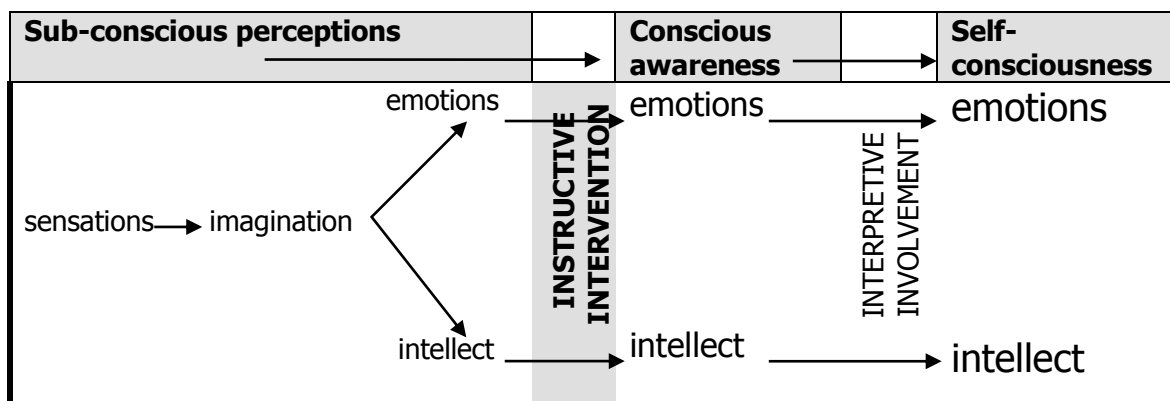
¹³ "Happiness" in life can have its problematic aspects, if one person's happiness is selfish and harms another person's welfare, or if happiness is instant gratification rather than pursuing a greater goodness (Alexander, 2002). However, in light of what Astrith says in the continuation of this paragraph, "happiness" as a goal in life incorporates the concern for other human beings and the ability to relate to the world.

him...I would call it [this education] "humanistic"... part of what I think it means to be a human being, part of the ideal of being a person... I don't know if the goal is only education, but HUMANITY---the human approach as the basic conception" (A-2/p.1).

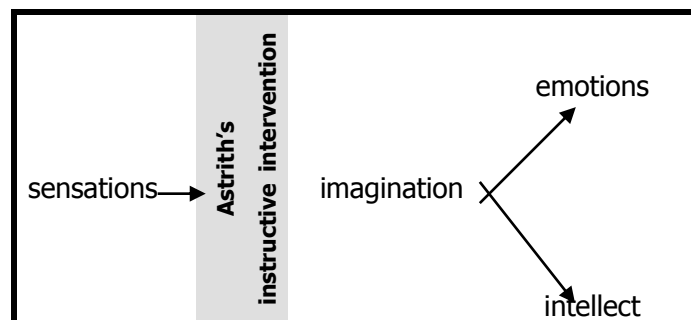
Astrith's notion of "what it means to be a human being" and her goals for education realize Phenix's (1964) definition of humanistic education (elaborated in chapter 2/B), as "the education of persons in their essential humanness" (Ibid., p. 25), aiming "to lead to the fulfillment of human life through the enlargement and deepening of meaning" (Ibid., p. 5).

3. Instructive intervention---productive or prevention?

In the conceptual framework, the model illustrating the **levels of consciousness** in the listening process pointed to the significance of "**instructive intervention**" taking place *after* the stage of sub-conscious perception, and leading to the stage of conscious awareness. In that progression, the senses and imagination were part of the intuitive, sub-conscious phase, and only after these first impressions, did the instructive intervention take place.



However, as was noted above, Astrith's voice-over technique is a kind of intervention which seems to direct the imagination, when the listener is still at the initial stages of sensory perception. With Astrith's voice-over technique, it seems that the intervention is taking place *before* the listener has a chance to form his own impressions. Thus, Astrith's practice causes a modification in the model as follows:



One may wonder if this kind of interference is justifiable or legitimate, since this intervention might seem to be telling the audience what to think or feel about the music. Is this intervention **productive** and helpful in giving the listeners ways to relate to the music? Or does it **prevent** listeners from having freedom of thought and their own personal associations?

Recalling Langer's (1949) opinion about attaching extra-musical meanings to music (which was quoted in Chapter 3/B):

"Where such interpretation is **spontaneous**, it is a perfectly **legitimate** practice, common among musically limited persons, and helpful; but it becomes pernicious when teachers or critics or even composers **initiate** it, for then they make a virtue out of walking with a crutch. It is really a denial of the true nature of music, which is unconventionalized, un verbalized freedom of thought..." (p. 206)

Using her voice over technique, Astrith does indeed seem to initiate and even direct the associative process in the listener, and by verbalizing her impressions, Astrith might seem to be going against the "true nature of music" as "un verbalized freedom of thought." However, Astrith does not believe that this strategy is wrong:

"The minute I call my concerts: *Classical with a personal dimension*, I take full responsibility for everything, and I am proud of it" (A-2, p. 13).

What indeed is the effect of these personal associations in the voice-over technique on the listeners? Is this voice-over technique "pernicious" and does it make listeners rely on a "crutch" as Langer (1949) and other musicological critics might believe? Does the voice-over with its simultaneous talking and music disturb the listener and obstruct the purity of the listening experience?

As with any technique, there are both "pros" and "cons", advantages and disadvantages which exist side by side. Nevertheless, because this technique is so unique to Astrith and so central to the experience of her lessons, it is worthwhile to examine some input from Astrith's audience members, both from her concerts and her courses (in the Cathedra), and discuss the participants' opinions in light of the conceptual framework.

4. "Words to hang your hat on"---Making the music accessible

Rachel, a middle-aged pedagogue, involved for many years in teacher training, who attended courses at the Cathedra, summarizes her view of the voice-over technique:

"The voice-over technique gives a kind of an impressionistic talk about the composer and the musical composition. It's like a type of program notes delivered as the music is playing in the background. Her talking uses the kind of words that will help you understand the music. The talk is impressionistic, poetic and dramatic. It is the dramatic, poetic talk that captures the inner meaning and helps you to understand and remember what you are hearing. It makes

you involved. For the learners it is great because it gives you some words to hang your hat on. She plays it again and again to help you remember it and hear it. It is like learning a language. Astrith helps you to learn the language, and this preparation to hear the piece is like a 'soft landing', which gets you into it gradually" (A-4a—emphasis, mine).

Rachel's opinion raises many pedagogically valid points about the voice-over technique, and shows that far from being a "crutch", which has a negative connotation, it seems to serve as an aid and a facilitator: assisting recognition and recall, preparing the listener for future listening to this piece, helping him understand the music, heightening his involvement, calling attention to possible inner meanings stemming from the connection of musical organization to expressive experience, and enabling him to "learn the language" (which contains natural schemata and their relations to extra-musical associations, which may be helpful in other encounters with music).

The voice-over also has an artistic aspect. Astrith has defined it as "a kind of multi-media of music with words", and its poetic-dramatic language is rich in metaphor and imagery, which together with the music, stimulate the senses and stir the imagination.

The response of a newcomer to Astrith's lectures can shed some more light on the effect of such helpful preparation, as she shares her reaction to the Chopin concert (described in section I of this chapter):

"Since I knew this was going to be a concert on Chopin preludes, I bought them [the sound disc], listened to them, and I am ashamed to say that I did not find them interesting at all. I did not understand them and they bored me. I thought that I must go and hear what Astrith will do with them. And now, suddenly, they have meaning. Each piece has its own story. In the films, you see what is going on, and all of a sudden, you hear the music of the prelude. Suddenly you understand and it's not just a boring collection of sounds, but something that tells a story and has content... [The concert] did so much for me..." (A-5, p. 3--Emphases, mine).

In this participant's comment there is a real change in attitude which is effected by Astrith's innovative explanatory technique. As a result of the total experience ---including the voice-over preparation and the entire concert, something which was previously incomprehensible not only became accessible, but also took on meaning and inspired appreciation.

5. Multi-media with words---an "artistic intervention"

Let us examine more closely the operation of the voice-over technique, which Astrith calls a "multi-media of music with words". As Astrith herself noted, using voice-over saves time by combining explanations and demonstrations together (A-2, p.5). Astrith's belief in

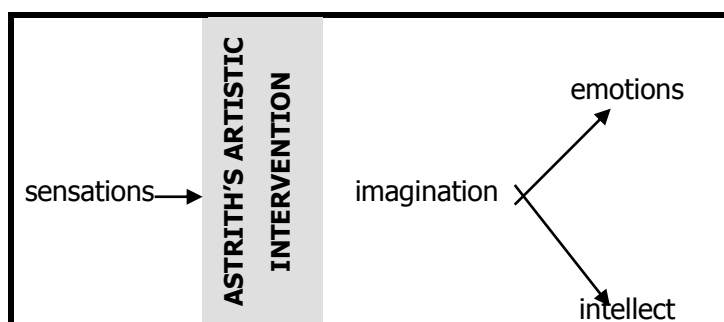
the validity of the approach is reinforced in the following impressions from a young music teacher and pianist who attends Astrith's concerts:

"I love her voice-over technique. It's great because usually we play music and then talk about it. Or the opposite: we explain something and then play the music, but there isn't such an immediate connection which enables the listener to keep the music in his mind. The medium of speech and the medium of music are two different things. This creates a problem. We are always trying to use words to explain what music expresses—a character, a feeling or a situation, and we always do it either before or after the music. Astrith does it *together* and she captures you in her spell when she does this... Astrith succeeds in fusing the two with the optimum overlapping. I am fascinated by the way she does this" (A-5, p.2).

Following this participant's comments, and recalling the notion of "complementary opposites" (Cohen, 1991) which runs through this paper as a recurring theme, it is possible to view the verbal and the musical aspects as "complementary opposites". At first they may seem contradictory. Words can never adequately convey a musical experience, and music must always remain "unverbalized freedom of thought" (Langer, 1949). However, during the learning process, words become necessary, and explanations and music listening may become mutually supportive and go on interactively, as our understanding moves from sub-conscious perceptions to the level of conscious awareness.

With Astrith's technique of voice-over, these complementary opposites achieve a complete fusion. Although this level is not pure unadulterated contemplation of the music with no outside interference, nevertheless, the original narrative spoken over the musical motifs becomes Astrith's "composition", her innovative "invention".¹⁴ The combination of words and music creates a new art-form of two media melded into one single multi-dimensional experience, which now seems stronger and more effective than either medium on its own. Moreover, instead of appearing at a later stage of learning, as one might expect from the fusion phase of complementary opposites, here, the complete integration appears at the outset. It immediately captivates the listener, and holds his attention (A-2, p.1). Thus, Astrith's original invention becomes an "**artistic intervention**" which affects the initial initiation to the listening encounter.

¹⁴ Despite the originality of this technique and the benefits it has for most listeners, as was noted above, there may be people who feel uncomfortable with the voice-over affecting their listening experience. Of course no one technique is appropriate for all learners, and even the most successful innovations can have a degree of controversiality.



As a work of art unto itself, the voice-over combination creates an aesthetic experience which involves the sensory, emotional and intellectual faculties of the listener. And, when this aesthetic experience bears messages of human import, it is all the more effective and compelling.

6. Building bridges between musical organization and expressive experience

The aesthetic experience of fusing words and music seems to build a bridge between the musical masterpiece and the listener, as the music becomes more accessible, and as the listener is invited to be involved in its interpretation. At the same time, there is another bridge being built between the “inward” and “outward” regions where the musical masterpiece may take us.

The conceptual framework (in chapter 2) outlined the following model of “inward” and “outward” directions:



From the content of the voice-over narrative, it may seem that the “outward” direction is most prominent, as expressive meaning and extra-musical contexts seem to receive great emphasis. Yet, surprisingly, the “inward” direction is also receiving attention, because the voice-over narrative takes its inspiration from the schemata in the musical organization. Thus, the voice-over technique is capable of forming a bridge between the musical organization and the expressive experiences which it generates. The remarks of one participant, a psychologist who comes regularly to Astrith’s concerts, show how both these directions are at work:

“First and foremost, I love her personal statement, and also the integration of so many subject areas, and ideas related to life, and to the arts. This combination speaks to me. There is also a combination of ‘then and now’. She always makes these connections to what

is happening today, what does this mean for us today.¹⁵ For me, it is interpreting the music. I do not have any background in classical music, but now I really feel like I am able to understand the music, and not just enjoy it. As a psychologist, it fascinates me to see how theories grow out of people's lives, for all the psychological theories develop on the background of a person's life and times, and it's the same with music. I see how music develops from within the person, from his personality and the period in which he lived, from the conflicts in which he found himself. For example, she began playing something which sounded to me like a split personality [the speaker is referring to the Scherzo in b flat minor]—part wild and part calm. And then when she related the story behind it, you could hear that this was true...it's fascinating" (A-5, p.1).

This comment demonstrates how this participant was indeed impressed by the extra-musical meanings, but at the same time also became aware of the musical organization which created these meanings. It was the **natural schemata** of the Scherzo—in the extremities of low and high registers, and soft and loud dynamics, in the sudden changes and their unexpected juxtaposition, and in the overall zig-zag contour, which gave this listener the associations of a "split personality"—part still and part stormy.

It was these same schemata which inspired Astrith to compose her narration the way she did, for Astrith's associations are not arbitrary or unrelated to the music. As was noted above, Astrith discovers the expressive properties in the music through her "hands on" encounter with the music she is preparing. Getting hold of the music with her fingers, delving deeply inward into the musical compositions, Astrith becomes aware-- both consciously and sub-consciously—of the musical schemata. These schemata inspire Astrith with a "stream of consciousness" consisting of moods, emotions and situations---her own "series of fleeting, largely uncommunicable mental images, feelings, memories and anticipations" (Sloboda, 1985, p. 151—elaborated in chapter 3/B). When she verbalizes these thoughts and impressions as a voice-over the music she is playing, she constructs "a sort of drama" which provides the listener with metaphors and "concrete representational titles" (Sloboda, 1985, p. 191) which help him connect the schemata in the music with the extra-musical meanings.

For example, let us consider the interrelationship between musical organization and extra-musical expressiveness in the following excerpts from the Chopin concert which was described in section I of this chapter:

- "Here he is in f# minor. At first, drops of rain (plays single notes from the bass). One raindrop, then another, leading to a nagging rain, pouring rain (left hand figurations). Then incessant

¹⁵ This comment also attests to a **relevance** which can be found in Astrith's presentations, which is another important theme of this paper.

howling winds (the melody line from the right hand part), and then a full-fledged storm (stormy playing with both hands and the full *agitato* figurations). Who ever heard of such a rain in Majorca?!" (A-1, p.4) (Here, the expressive effects are caused by the **natural schemata of intensification**.)

- "The prelude is dramatic and stormy. The left hand sounds like depths and rapids, which pull us downwards, while the right hand is like the head of a swan, that is singing its last song, as it departs...As we depart from all the keys of Major and minor, the ascending and the descending scales, it feels like an abyss is pulling us down, but we try to keep our head up." (This narrative is going on as the left hand is playing in very low registers, while the right hand is in higher registers.) (A-1, p. 12). (Here, the expressive effects are caused by the **deviation from normal range of occurrence**, where both extremes—high and low-- are being expressed simultaneously.)
- "What tried to fly high must now return to the ground. The more he dares, the more he must wallow in the dust. In the last wave, the piano reaches its lowest depths, it cannot go any lower. It is as if Chopin is putting the nails in his own coffin... Here, Chopin takes leave with pain and pathos from all the tonalities, the major and minor keys, the ascending and descending scales." (A-1, p. 12). (Expressive effects caused by **extremities in the range of occurrence** and **zig-zag contour** of the ascending and descending scales.)

Using the voice-over technique to connect her associations with the music being played, Astrith is making it possible to move "inward" in the direction of understanding how musical organization creates meaning. At the same time, however, Astrith also moves "outward", making connections "beyond music" to the composer's personality, dramatic situations, biographical details, and life experience. In this way, the voice-over technique creates a bridge over which Astrith may move back and forth in both directions simultaneously, thus giving the audience a "multi-dimensional representation of the music" (Sloboda, 1985, p.191).



The way in which Astrith forms a bridge between the schemata in the music and their extra-musical meaning makes her a sort of "music critic", where the voice-over technique functions as a form of "musical criticism". As in all artistic criticism, "Criticism is

an art of saying useful things about complex and subtle objects and events so that others less sophisticated, or sophisticated in different ways, can see and understand what they did not see and understand before” (Eisner, 1991, p.3).

However, this is not musical criticism for its own sake, but rather acts in an **educational** capacity, having a crucial role in helping listeners develop perspicacity, sensitive musical perception and the growth of meaning (Phenix, 1964).

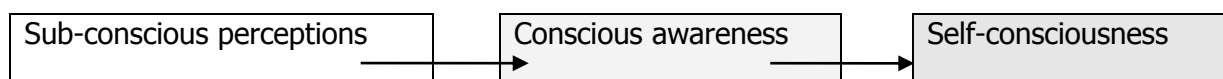
“The ability to interpret sensitively and encourage the musical engagement of individuals is crucial to effective teaching... Far from stereotyping our expectations of what students at any age might musically achieve, an understanding of what music really *is* may go some way to increase the richness of our responses. Essentially the teacher of music is a music critic in the best sense of that term, and needs to acquire a critical vocabulary” (Swanwick, pp. 82-83).

Astrith’s “critical vocabulary” appears in her innovation of the voice-over technique which is her artistic way of communicating musical criticism, and of illuminating the music so that it can be understood and appreciated. In this way, Astrith builds a bridge over which to escort the listener into the world of music. In the words of a concert participant who is herself an amateur pianist:

“It is very important to direct and guide an audience of non-musicians. It opens up channels to people. It walks them down the corridor, enabling them to enter the world of music. In this way people are then able to listen by themselves and understand music better in the final analysis. After people have been guided, they are more likely to arrive at understanding music better on their own” (A-4p).

7. Compressing the levels of consciousness

Interestingly, there is still another level of simultaneity which the voice-over technique achieves, as it affects the LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS model which was discussed in the conceptual framework. Recalling the progression:



Here, however, instead of a **progression** from one to the other, the voice-over technique seems to cause a **compression** of the three levels of consciousness, which will now be overlapping. The voice-over with the musical stimuli appeals to our senses and our imagination on a sub-conscious level, but at the same time, as we become aware of the motifs and themes and understand how they relate to the extra-musical meanings, we are also in a state of conscious awareness. Moreover, the narrative, with its human messages and relevance to life situations may also inspire a self-conscious orientation. Thus, the three levels of consciousness occur concurrently in multiple layers. The voice-over technique

captures our attention, awakens our interpretive involvement, and activates a state of contemplation, which enables us to engage simultaneously in intuitive impressions, inspection and introspection.

Sub-conscious perceptions intuitive impressions	CONTEMPLATION INTERPRETIVE INVOLVEMENT
Conscious awareness inspection	
Self-consciousness introspection	

Keeping us “acutely **conscious** while **affectively** engaged” (Kneiter, 1971) in the music experience, prepares us to then listen on our own when the composition is played in its entirety. Astrith tells of her aim for this final stage of listening:

“This [stage] is supposed to be the moment in which each person will find his own associations, which I have released, so they can find things for themselves...” (A-2, p.11).

With the ultimate listening end in mind, Astrith’s intervention need not be viewed as obtrusive or intrusive. Rather than causing bias or prejudice in the listener, these interpretations are designed to *release* the listener’s creativity of thought when he encounters the music on his own. At the stage of listening to the uninterrupted, unadulterated performance of the musical masterpiece, the listener will indeed be free to have his own flights of fancy. However, rather than floundering or getting lost in a sea of sounds which are unfamiliar and meaningless, the preparatory voice-over initiation into the music has given the listener “something to hang his hat on”. The music is now more familiar and accessible as a result of Astrith’s “artistic intervention” which has enhanced the listening experience and made it meaningful and relevant. As Langer (1953) has told us:

“Anything that helps concentration and sustains the illusion—be it inward singing, following a half-comprehended score, or dreaming in dramatic images –may be one’s personal way to understanding” (p. 148).

D. Personal perspectives and subjective realities

Throughout this profile, there has been a great deal of emphasis on the personal messages and interpretations which emerge from Astrith’s concerts and lectures. This subjective aspect may be open to criticism or controversy, as musicologists and music educators may wonder if giving audiences such a personal perspective is a valid way of construing a concert, and if a teacher’s subjective impressions can have educational value in helping the non-musician to progress to musical understanding. Let us now explore

these questions in terms of Astrith's principles and practices, her listeners' responses, and the conceptual framework of this paper.

1. Music and human experience

Musicologists bent on giving listeners musicological knowledge and analytical ability might raise their eyebrows in surprise when they hear Astrith's credo regarding her goals in the concert, and also in her lectures in general.

"The emotional aspect is much more appropriate for our day and age. It is not so important that the audience understand a particular form, but rather that they grasp the emotion behind the work of music, and understand how feelings are expressed in music. The aim is the expression of feeling, and to create a language of feelings and thoughts through music..." (A-2, p. 7).¹⁶

Astrith's credo puts feelings and human experience first. While this orientation may not please the musicologists who value the analysis of formal musical properties, Astrith's notion of emotion in music emerges from the belief that "music is a tonal analogue of emotive life" (Langer, 1953, p. 27).¹⁷ Moreover, the emotional experience seems to be precisely what draws large audiences to Astrith's concerts and classes in the Cathedra, among them, people with formal musical background as well as non-musicians.

An elderly gentleman who has sung in choirs almost all his life remarked:

"She [Astrith] gives me the vocal expression of my feelings. She translates into words the deepest feelings that I have toward music... Astrith is the professional musician that can explain that which I feel" (A-4d).

A high school teacher of music history, who attends Astrith's concerts, shares her views:

"In most music lectures, I have only gotten material and knowledge, but with Astrith, **I get an experience.** Music history is meaningful in life, and this is what I find in Astrith's lectures...Astrith chooses things that are significant for her, and this is transmitted to me and becomes significant for me. For example, I used to think that Bach was boring. But in Astrith's concert on Bach, we saw a man, we saw his life, his diligence and his didactic approach. Through an experience with a real human connection, the music is never boring...**This is a vision for teaching music history. When you teach a piece of music, the learner has to come out of it with something for life**" (A-4e—emphases, mine).

¹⁶ More and more research is being done on the way specific emotions are perceived in music, and the relationship between the perception of specific emotions and the musical organization which precipitated the particular response (Cohen and Inbar, 2001).

¹⁷ This orientation has been well supported by many theorists who were quoted in the conceptual framework.

From the remarks of a participant in the Cathedra courses, who is a pianist with a college music degree that she earned 25 years ago:

"...It is very enjoyable, and I learn things from a different angle. I love the connections and the different ... tidbits about the life of composers and the period. It gives me more of an understanding and a perspective, and it makes it more human.

I deliberately chose to go to a course meant for non-professionals, because it is given in a more popular way, and they give you the good stuff. The schools are too snooty and snobbish...Astrith psychoanalyzes the composers, and it really makes me appreciate their music more...We are human beings. Music should be treated as a human activity... this really is getting beyond the music... I wish all professors were like Astrith. She tells us something straightforward about life ...The moment you take something about life that has a soul, it means so much more...Sometimes she sounds like a philosopher, a psychoanalyst, a writer...I take away all different aspects of the music as it relates to life" (A-4g).

Very often, the emotional messages of Astrith's concerts and lessons deal with the human experience of struggle. For example: Beethoven's grappling with fate, struggling throughout life and dealing with his deafness; Chopin's suffering from tuberculosis, Schumann's agony with mental illness, Shostakovich living as a victim of Soviet oppression in a restrictive, tyrannical, communist regime, Bartok's emigrating to America, his difficulties with American culture, his illness, alienation and lack of acceptance, Schoenberg's frustration with hostile audiences who did not understand his music, etc.

These examples illustrate how through his art, the artist's pain undergoes sublimation, which is what makes his creation all the more powerful and effective. Recalling the words of the poetess, Zelda, "In works of art, the tear turns into a pearl." Moreover, in the experience of the listeners, a type of sublimation also takes place, as they relate the messages of the music and the composers, to their personal world of experience. For example, a participant in the Cathedra courses, an English teacher by profession, explained how such human messages affect her:

"Some of these composers had a really terrible life, and if they could create such beautiful music, it makes you believe you can accomplish something too" (A-4c).

Astrith's choice of material and teaching orientation seem to favor the emphasis on intense and incisive human experiences, even at the expense of formal musical knowledge.

"If it is moving, in my opinion this is the true concert. And also, if someone came out of the concert and he did not understand that the first movement of the Shostakovich Quintet is in sonata form, so what? He will come out with something that he will remember much better... I want him to remember that there is music of fear. That there is such a

thing. If he will remember this, then for me, it was worthwhile. That even the most negative things in life can undergo sublimation in a genius, and become brilliant music. It doesn't matter if it is the brothels in Brahms' music, or the queue in Siberia, like what we hear in the fugue of the [Shostakovich] quintet. I am sure, I simply feel it in the air, that he [the listener] will remember how the players went, one by one, and went in and barely played 3 notes in pianissimo with sordino. He will remember it, because it is within the realm of human experience. It does not belong [only] to music, it belongs to a human being. And a human being knows what fear is. I do not know if he knows what starvation is, like there was in Siberia, but everyone knows what fear is. And if I succeed---the very fact that music can speak about fear without words, for me that is a lot to teach...

If someone thinks that to teach music today means to teach what is major and what is minor, and that Haydn is a Classical composer, and Chopin is Romantic, why is that important? Isn't all this is just a means to an end? Also the major and minor, all the techniques are just means to an end...

The aim is to express feeling, to create a language of feelings. And we can add to that, because not every music generates feelings in an explicit fashion, **a language of feelings and thoughts**" (A-2, p. 6—emphases, mine).

Astrith's paramount emphasis on feeling brings to mind quotations from some great masters about the value of musical feeling over understanding. Artur Rubinstein said that " 'Understand' is a word one shouldn't apply to music; there's nothing to be *understood*---for me, music must be felt" (Quoted in Cook, 1992, p. 186). And Stravinsky is reported to have said: "I haven't understood a bar of music in my life; but I have felt it" (Ibid.).

2. The language of feelings and thoughts

Besides the musical language which is Astrith's way of conveying feelings and ideas to her audience, Astrith also makes use of verbal language in an artistic aesthetic way. Although the language of musical experience reigns supreme, there is still the importance of verbal language for explanation and clarification.

"...Language is the indispensable mode of conceptualization. Language becomes a powerful tool for increasing aesthetic sensitivity when it is devoted to the refinement of aesthetic perception...(Reimer 1970, p. 87)

Astrith's spoken language is poetic, rich in metaphor, and replete with quotes from the Bible and famous literature. In her Chopin concert, described in the above vignette, she quoted from Alterman and Bialik (A-1, pp.11-12). In a lecture where she focused on Beethoven's struggles, she dramatically referred to the "blows of fate" as she played the opening chords of the Pathétique sonata; and when she played a hesitant questioning motif towards the end of the "*Grave*" introduction, she quoted from the Psalms: "From whence

cometh my help..." Then, when she played in the bass registers she cried out: "From the depths I call unto thee".

At the same time however, the language may also be conversational and even use juicy slang expressions when it makes a point. Referring to a stormy struggling passage in Beethoven, Astrith used everyday language and imagery from a popular movie, when she said: "Here we have *Star Wars* from 200 years ago." She may quote from advertisements (e.g. "Let your fingers do the walking...") political slogans, and popular songs ("Light a candle, or light a kneidl..."), sometimes with humor or even cynicism, to put things in contemporary relevant terms that the audience understands.

Astrith's insights into life situations do not only occur during the voice-over presentation of the material. There is a point in the concert or lecture, where Astrith just talks and shares her philosophical musings about the music we have heard and experienced. These musings connect the music with her thoughts and introspection into the human message behind the music. They seem like "words of wisdom" which emerge from musical characteristics, but go beyond the music to illustrate the drama of life. Even the technical points related to music theory may take on metaphorical meanings or dramatic significance, as was demonstrated in the Chopin concert, especially in the interpretation of major and minor. (The importance of "theoretical" points taking on real human significance was elaborated in the conceptual framework, Chapter 4/A-1.)

The language of these statements may be lofty or earthy, rhetorical or conversational, poetic or pithy. The tone may be theatrical or even humorous. Astrith's use of language can lift us to spiritual, transcendent planes, and at the same time, can make us more keenly aware of the mundane realities in the world we live in. It can make us laugh, or feel moved enough to cry. The choice of language, vocabulary and style of speech is a significant part of Astrith's art, enabling her to penetrate to the heart of the matter, to capture the essence of things, to drive home a point and to communicate the message to the listener in a convincing and compelling manner.¹⁸ At the same time, the participants feel that Astrith knows how to speak to them "at eye level", and is never condescending or aloof (A-4c, A-4i, A-4n), but down-to earth and part of her audience and their world.

3. Relevance: Words of wisdom, lessons in life

It is appropriate here to cite some examples of Astrith's "colloquial wisdom" culled from her concerts and course lectures, which may be considered as "lessons in life" (A-2, p.13):

¹⁸ Listener comments about Astrith's use of language can be found in appendices A-4c, A-4f, A-4h, A-4j, A-4m and A-4n.

- Some examples from the **Chopin** concert, which were described in the first part of this chapter:

- “Sometimes, through art, we can discover who a person really is. People can connect, even when they are in crisis, and when alienation eats at them. But art can carry them beyond themselves.”
- “The clock that says: ‘Your time is limited, you have no time for an introduction to an introduction, as the clock pounds away...It’s a race against time...’”
- “But the artist will not succumb. He fights as he feels within him an engine of energy, driving him to create and make the most of every last bit of talent, with which he is endowed.”
- “And so, between the contrasts of the major and the minor, life and death, love and separation, man and woman, Chopin’s preludes for the piano were composed. What began as a lesson in theory, in the circle of 5ths and major-minor, becomes an amazing song of life, where major and minor are two sides to the same coin.”

- On the contrapuntal music of **Bach**:

“Human thinking is not developed with one line of thought only, but with a dialogue—with 2 hands playing together, and maybe even 2 feet (on the organ)!”

To help us appreciate the complexity and sophistication of Bach’s imitative counterpoint, Astrith drew analogies to the art-work of Escher with its intricate mirror images and optical illusions. The analogy was further reinforced by the visual medium of projecting on a screen both the highlighted scores of Bach’s music and the convoluted art-work of Escher. “The value of any subject is enhanced by an understanding of its relationships with other subjects, and its distinctive features are best comprehended in the light of its similarities and contrasts with other subjects” (Phenix, 1964, p. 4). While making extra-musical connections and analogies to make her points better understood, Astrith also integrates humor. In this Bach concert, Astrith integrated quotations of Bach’s music from cellular phones, and made a comical anachronistic parody on the way Bach conceived of ideas for his compositions from the many cellular phonecalls he received.

- While demonstrating several examples of the tragic color of c minor which occurs in so many of **Beethoven’s** works, and showing how Beethoven seems to keep returning to this key for his self-expression, Astrith thundered: “Old problems do not get resolved. They just keep on coming back in different forms.”

- Analyzing the slow movement from **Beethoven’s** Hammerklavier sonata:

“There are certain types of statements that must have a slow pace in order to be articulated. The Western world is afraid of a slow pace and silence. It [the Western world] goes after

output and productivity, achievement and efficiency... But there are times when we have to stop and say: 'My spirit is stronger than my ambition'. This takes nerve... The composer seems to be saying: 'Even if you don't have time, you must hear me...' This slow tempo gives us the feeling of transcendental meditation... As a pianist, I feel that playing this music is making contact with the 'Holy of holies' ”.

- Speaking about **Shostakovich's** quintet, its dissonance and abbreviated pianissimo fugal theme, Astrith related it to his suffering under Stalin's regime:

"This dissonance is not 'bourgeois formalism', but an existential dissonance in a world where everything clashes with everything else and you cannot tell the truth...The theme of the fugue, full of silences, stammering, hesitating and faltering---the speech of a work-weary downtrodden people, waiting in a breadline for their daily sustenance."

- On the polyphonic and polyrhythmic music of **Stravinsky** in the *Rite of Spring*, where the first accented beat is always missing:

"The ground is pulled out from under our feet. This is life in the 20th century. We have no sure ground, we feel alienated. Like the Beatles' song '*Nowhere Man*', we are all 'nowhere men'. And all the different rhythms going on simultaneously, that is 20th century life---listening to the news, putting up the cooking, remembering to pay your taxes. All the complex rhythms in Stravinsky's music are merely reflections of the complexities of modern life."

- Listening to **Bartok's** music which is sounds like "swarming insects" and seeing the audience's difficulty in connecting to this music, Astrith relates Bartok's plight in America, his feelings of alienation in American society, his lack of acceptance and lack of "popularity". Astrith had both lofty and earthy remarks on the subject. On the one hand:

"One has to die in order to enter eternity. Bartok had to die before his genius and talent could be recognized...Bartok's music is written from the depths of pain. How can we find beauty in pain? It is the task of art to flow with the pain."¹⁹

And on the other hand, an earthy statement, to wake us up and make us realize something about the popular culture:

"He wasn't Elvis. Only those with the best 'ratings' seem to survive."

From here, Astrith went on to describe some of the current "rubbish" on television with high "ratings" that reflects the type of society we live in. Philosophizing further, she raised questions about popularity versus posterity, success versus suffering, and acceptance versus alienation.

¹⁹ This Bartok example is yet another illustration of the power of sublimation to transform pain into art, recalling once again the quote by the poetess Zelda, that in art the tear turns into a pearl.

Astrith's unique interpretations of the emotional meaning behind the music often have a compelling logic, which makes many listeners feel that she is putting into words something which they feel intuitively but have not been able to express themselves. Rather than putting words into their mouths in a negative sense, they welcome the way she elucidates and illuminates truths about life that they have sensed intuitively but never been able to articulate.

Rachel, the pedagogue whom we quoted earlier, stresses the psychological insightful aspect of Astrith's teaching that she believes has such an impact:

"She [Astrith] has a rich emotional and cultural world, knows a tremendous amount of psychology and has a lot of insight into people. What she says touches a chord inside. There is a sudden illumination about personal things and also about social and historical processes. She ties music into the things that happen to people. And she will make references to current events that have significance.

She has incisive insight into the essence of something and the ability to sum this up with an aphorism. This is a trait of Rebbetzins, psychologists, people who serve as role models for others.

She often uses sweeping generalizations, and she has the ability to clarify a complex subject by stating the most essential main point, succinctly and simply. It reminds me of the Alexander Pope quote: 'What oft was thought and ne'er so well expressed' " (A-4a)²⁰.

4. Summarizing the subjective stance from several standpoints

The above discussion, containing the input from Astrith and the feedback of her students, sheds light on the question about the value and validity of the subjective stance in Astrith's concerts and lectures. The support for the subjective stance may now be summarized from three different vantage points: the humanistic, the artistic, and the educational.

The humanistic point of view recalls Reimer's (1970) definition of human feelingfulness, which is the sum total of many subjective realities. According to Reimer's view (elaborated in Chapters 3/B-2c and 5/B-1), "There is no 'real' for humans without the element of the subjective" (p. 35). In Astrith's case, it seems that her subjective, personal perspectives, when shared with her audience, are promoted to a level of something "super-personal" and universal, able to illuminate truths about the human condition in general, and become meaningful to a broad audience, beyond Astrith's private perception.

²⁰ Alexander Pope's quote in simpler English: "What people may have often thought, but never have been able to express so well."

The artistic viewpoint is a further confirmation of the validity of subjective reality, because aesthetic creations are indeed the products of subjective expression (Ibid.). So too, Astrith's concerts and lectures are her personal "compositions". With their voice-over presentations, their performance of music, their picturesque language and philosophical musings in the wake of the musical experience, they qualify as aesthetic creations. As such, I feel it is apt to apply to these original "compositions" the same quote that was applied earlier to musical masterpieces (in Chapter 5/B):

"Greatness occurs [in a work of art] when the sense of feelingfulness is so striking, so 'true,' so revealing of the nature of the subjective human condition, that one who experiences the work's impact feels changed in the direction of a deeper understanding of what it is like to be human" (Reimer, 1970 p. 103).

Here, the aesthetic and the humanistic perspectives merge, showing once again the importance of the aesthetic vehicle in communicating human experience, and the place of human messages in aesthetic creations.

From an educational point of view, Astrith's sharing of her personal thoughts and ideas provide students with an opportunity to explore the issues in their personal lives and to contemplate the value judgments, which help form their outlook on the world. Such contemplation is a crucial part of the "value stage" (Swanwick, 1988), also called the "meta-cognitive" stage of development, which was noted in Chapters 2/A and 4/C-3), and which is truly significant in the education of adolescents and adults.

Again, Rachel, the experienced pedagogue, offers her input on the role of Astrith's lessons in adult education:

"The real-world is a part of those lessons... She refers to contemporary events. [She has] the ability to touch on sensitive topics, not to be afraid to expose them and to put into words what rings true for us...[She has] the ability to help students explore the relationship between their own personal values and the course content, [and] the ability to make students aware of value issues within the subject matter" (A-4a).

Far from remaining her personal and subjective realities, Astrith's insights facilitate the progression in our "levels of consciousness", leading ultimately to the level of "self-consciousness" and "introspection", which has such vital importance in the growth and development of the individual. Moreover, her ideas reverberate further as they inspire others to examine their own perspectives, engage in their own "worldmaking" (Goodman, 1978), and have reflections which can make an important contribution toward the development of their emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1997).

E. The interconnectedness of music: Multi-media mix

One of the outstanding features in Astrith's concerts and lectures is the extensive use of multi-media, enhancing the music with multiple dimensions. In the 28 responses from questionnaires (A-6) which were received from course participants,²¹ there was a unanimous positive, even enthusiastic response to the question:

"What is your opinion of the integration of different subject areas within the music lecture (for example: historical background, biographical material on the composers, information about social climate and *Zeitgeist*, material from other arts, etc.)? To what extent do these extra-musical connections help you to better understand the music, or to what extent do they detract from the musical experience?"

Responses ranged from satisfaction and enjoyment, to actual astonishment and amazement at the way the integration of the multiple dimensions contributed to enriching the experience. There was an overwhelming amount of awareness and appreciation for the way music, as all the arts, developed within a **context of history and humanity**, and for the need for music to be taught integratively in order to be properly understood.

Part of the enjoyment and satisfaction that comes from the use of multi-media seems to stem from the **"something for everyone" quality**, which can arouse a level of identification and connection, where each individual can find something relevant or significant for himself within the many art-forms and subject areas presented. Beyond that, there is also the **enrichment aspect**, where people derive benefit from the acquaintance with subject areas with which they were previously unfamiliar. In addition, there is a sense of satisfaction from the **activation of different senses and faculties** due to the multi-media involved in the learning process. From a participant in the Cathedra, who is a teacher on sabbatical:

"There is a great variety of learning devices: seeing the musical notes, listening, explanation, hearing her playing and demonstrations, singing, video. These all provide experiences from different directions. And there is much repetition from different angles, which helps you to learn it better. All this speaks to different places—to my stomach, and my head. The sensations and emotional experiences –I feel them in my stomach, and the intellectual things like the concepts, are for my head" (A-4h).

Astrith explains her commitment to the multi-media approach as follows:

"I use a lot of multi-media. That is to say, if a certain music were in a film, I will check all the cinemathèques and I will bring them the film. And if it was once in a dance, so I will take out

²¹ Many more questionnaires were distributed, but it seems only 28 people were willing to take the time to fill them out. Because of this problem, I chose the method of informant interviewing, which afforded more direct content and greater cooperation. It seems that people generally preferred *talking* about their experiences to writing about them.

all the films of ballets, and bring this. And if it was a quotation from an opera, it will also be included. Anything that I can bring on video, I will bring. And if someone fantasized about this in literature, for example Milan Kundera, who is a Czech author who writes a lot about music --he is like a kind of Romain Rolland of the 20th century, who writes entire selections which describe music in his own words--- so I will take that too. So this actually becomes like a theme and variations, because the musical masterpiece which is in the center focus, undergoes different viewpoints. So you are learning this piece from several viewpoints, one after the other, quickly. This also helps me with the idea that it is never one thing, but rather it depends who is looking at it. I may say one thing. The film director who uses it in his film shows with it a different scene. An author who is reminded of this as a piece which he heard in his youth-- describes it in another way; and the dancer who dances it, she understands it in still a different way. So in actuality, I have created a repetition, which has in it each time something new. Each time another layer is added. And after some time, what happens is that people will be better acquainted with the material, and *something* of all the things I have brought them , they will remember, because *something* of all these things will speak to them" (A-2, p. 10).

Astrith's attitude emphasizes how the use of multi-media means having an openness to a variety of viewpoints and interpretations of similar themes from different angles. In this way, each art-form and each artist contributes to the richness of the experience which Astrith is trying to convey, and provides us with multiple ways of understanding the same phenomena, which is another important educational principle.

However, multi-dimensionalism has still another aspect which is crucial to the essence of Astrith's approach: **it is relevant to life**. Firstly, multi-media is part of the modern world. Movies, advertisements, internet sites, electronic switchboards etc. all contain multiple stimuli which often include music. But more than just being a "gimmick" to connect us to the familiar and to create variety, the integration of different media reflects the multi-layered essence of our lives:

"A person cannot just serve one thing. He lives his life with several things, several layers, each one of us. A man lives his life. And you cannot make the music geared to one thing, because a man in his life is not geared to one thing. Even if a person is crazy about one thing, it doesn't work that way. One of the things I love about music is that it all goes in counterpoint.²² At one and the same time, more than one thing is happening. There are so many types of things... It is like the language of the nature of man, and within this language, a lot of things are going on. It is better to talk about all the many things going on there, than to talk about only one thing going on..." (A-2, p.7).

²² This counterpoint is related to the aspect of non-concurrence in music, which was noted as reflecting the complexity of life. (See Chapter 1/C-1b.)

With this orientation in mind, the multi-dimensional approach not only shows a high regard for the interconnectedness of music with other disciplines, but also displays an understanding of the diversity and simultaneity of life itself, and the complexity of the human personality, which consists of different layers of experience and different faculties. If art reflects life, then the concert/lecture must embody these qualities as well.

"The concert is never devoted to just one thing. It is a 'composition' which is like a person—multi-faceted. There is a counterpoint in the work of art, just as there is in life—simultaneously, different aspects...There are many facets going on at the same time, just like in a person's life..." (A-2, p. 7)

F. Performance and pedagogy

Astrith is not only a pianist and performer, she is a **teacher**, which is why she is the subject of this study. As such, let us now turn our attention to some reflections on Astrith's pedagogy and the didactic aspects of her delivery.

1. Learning to listen

The human aspect in Astrith's lectures, which has been emphasized to such a great extent, seems to go hand in hand with her educational orientation, and Astrith believes that this education begins first and foremost with LISTENING.

"I think that the aim of music education is to teach a person **to listen. To listen to himself and to listen to others**, which today, is not an easy task. We hear a lot, but we don't actually listen to anything...

This is something we have to learn, because I think that the big problem in our generation is that there is no 'culture of listening'—for anyone. Children do not listen to their parents, parents do not listen to *their* parents; Knesset members do not listen to each other... I think that the aim of education is to make a person happier, and I think that a person who listens, and has a way of connecting to the world, through his listening, he is in the final analysis, a happier person...

I have to say about myself, that one of the things that I find myself educating myself to do is to simply **listen more**. What does another person say, or if it is in a concert what does the audience feel? Where are they? Are they with me or aren't they with me? Or if it is in a class, where are they? They may not always be where I am. But I have to connect to them somehow. So I try through my listening. **I teach listening, not just to music, but to people**. I think that this is what is important" (A-2, p. 1).

In Astrith's view, listening is not only a musical skill, but an important humanistic, communicative skill. Listening is the way we can get in touch with ourselves and develop sensitivity to others—the essence of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1997). From Astrith's emphasis on the importance of listening, there is not only a personal approach, but an

interpersonal perspective. Astrith is an educator who pays enormous attention to the communication with her audience. In this regard, Astrith can be a role-model for both educators and performers.

Many of Astrith's students observe the great respect which Astrith --and her husband Moshe, with whom she teaches in the Cathedra--have for their audience and their students. An elderly gentleman who attends all the courses in the Cathedra and all of Astrith's concerts noted:

"I am deeply impressed with their knowledge of music and their very human approach. What impresses me about Moshe and Astrith is their relationship to what they are doing. They treat people in the course with the highest respect and their attitude towards what they are giving over is very reverent" (A-4d).

(Astrith's respect for her learners was a point which occurred frequently in the questionnaires, and in other informant interviews---for example in A-4a, A-4c, A-4g, A-4i, A-4n.)

Furthermore, Astrith attaches much importance to listening, not only as a musical skill and an interpersonal skill, but also as a cultural transmitter. Listening, according to Astrith, has to do with the **translation and transmission of culture**, which she considers to be part of her job as a teacher. It is interesting that Astrith sees a relationship between the Hebrew word for listening (*hakshava*) and the Hebrew word for **thought** (*machshava*). Thus, the aim of music education is to teach a person to listen, both to himself and to others, and to hear the voices from the past and the world around him, in order to gain **insight and deeper thought** about himself and life in general.

"A social animal is a being that knows how *to relate*, not only to himself. And to learn, not just from himself, but from a whole culture, and from a different generation, from a different situation. It is a whole world that comes into it...(A-2, p.1).

"Listening to other generations... Part of a person's intelligence is his ability to transmit information from generation to generation. That is, not just what is happening today, in the 20th century... The world can be much bigger and much richer, and make me much happier, if it becomes a kind of collective memory of all the worlds...²³ And we know how to think of these worlds through cultures. And music is a part of culture. In short, I think that part of our thinking always was, not only to invent, but also to apply other ideas that came from another time, and also to transfer, to transmit, from someone else's idea... In short, I think that all these things build a fuller person, a happier person, more self-confident, more cognizant of himself and what is good for him. And this is important, because then he can contribute better to the world around him..." (A-2, p.2).

²³ Astrith's idea here recalls the notion of worldmaking (Goodman, 1978).

2. Form and feeling in the music lecture

An important aspect of teaching is not only the emotional human experience, but the transmission of thoughts and ideas in a way that will be meaningful and comprehensible to the learners. The lesson should reflect the qualities of a work of art, in which there is not only feeling, but **organization and structure**, which give the experience its form. On this subject, the participants in Astrith's lectures had much to say about how the organization of the lesson affects their learning.

Rachel (A-4a) who is herself a practiced pedagogue, dubbed Astrith a "master teacher", and enumerated some of the qualities that characterize her expert teaching:

"The clarity of her explanations, the clear introduction, the way she clarifies new terms, her apt word-choice, clear sentence structure. She avoids vagueness. She gives adequate concrete examples, examples which relate to the pupils' experience.

Her voice is used to emphasize things. Also emphasis through gestures, appropriate pauses, and the use of repetition to clarify a point. Main ideas are paraphrased by saying the same thing in different ways. The pattern of explanation is clear...

Her explanations have tremendous clarity. I like the way complex things are explained and can be easily digested and understood. She has wonderful organization. The lesson is constantly moving forward. The subject is dealt with in a variety of ways, and from different angles. She is also a wonderful story-teller. The story is all important. The ability to encapsulate the main idea, grasping the main point and making it clear...

She gives a progressive summary—in the middle and the end, giving us points of recap—like various stations as we go along. The pace and the level are adjusted for the need of the learners. She also checks to see whether the main ideas have been grasped, and seeks pupil comments. The skill in wrapping things up before moving on to another topic, like a recapitulation which concludes a whole topic, giving a feeling of closure. It is important because it gives the learners a sense of accomplishment" (A-4a—emphases, mine).

In this participant's response, the repetition of so many words related to clarity, organization and recapitulation seem to emphasize the importance of lucidity and intelligibility in the success of Astrith's lectures.

Other people involved in the field of education have made similar remarks about Astrith's didactic skills:

- "The lesson is always well structured. In the beginning there is often a challenging question, and then at the end of the lesson they [Astrith and Moshe] always 'pay the debt' in full. This is the way to build a methodical lesson" (A-4j).
- "First of all, it is very organized, and it flows. They [Astrith and Moshe] also have wonderful expertise and knowledge. They demonstrate everything. Also the multi-media—the

video, the lecture, the piano playing, the illustrations. All the senses are involved in the lesson" (A-4k).

– "The lesson is actually a work of art. It has a construction and a composition of its own. The more intellectual you are, the more you will enjoy it and appreciate it. Every other realm of art integrated in this experience will enhance the others, and will increase the power of the analogy. In the makeup of the human mind, it is important to build structures and form patterns of organization. For me, this is a reason for living" (A-4m).²⁴

From the comments of these participants, and many more too numerous to elaborate here, it is evident that *how* something is taught is no less important than *what* is being taught (Cohen, 1991)—i.e. the "**form**", the way of teaching, is crucial in conveying the **content**, just as in a work of art.

Moreover, these comments indicate that **understanding** is a very important component in the feeling of satisfaction which learners can derive from a lesson. People coming to a learning experience (especially an elective one) are engaged in a search for understanding and meanings, for "building structures and patterns" in their mind (or for understanding the schemata that were there subconsciously), which seems to be an important human need (Phenix, 1964). Just as Astrith defines herself as being in a "state of quest", so too, her learners seem to be in a state of quest for meaning in life, which seems to be one of the reasons for their coming to these lectures.

The learners' "quest" takes place on several levels—seeking to understand themselves, to understand the music, to understand connections and interrelationships, and to gain insight into the world at large. It seems that Astrith's ability to organize the experience for the learner helps to promote the growth of meaning (Phenix, 1964) on these different levels and to provide the feeling of satisfaction which goes along with it. Recalling the features of the meta-cognitive (or "value") stage²⁵ (Swanwick, 1988), adult (age 15+) learners have a growing need for understanding and self-awareness and a need to articulate and reflect upon their processes of feeling and thought.

Here is the way one participant expressed her "value response" (Ibid.) to Astrith's lessons:

"Music does the most wonderful things for me. I was really curious to see how it works--- how music manages to affect my soul... Each time I learn music I come out with other

²⁴ This participant's comment also recalls Phenix's (1964) insight quoted in chapter 7: "The special office of education is to widen one's view of life, to deepen insight into **relationships**...in short, to engender an integrated outlook...The value of any subject is enhanced by an understanding of its relationships with other subjects, and its distinctive features are best comprehended in the light of its similarities and contrasts with other subjects" (Phenix, 1964, p. 4).

²⁵ See Chapters 2/A and 4/C-3.

questions. It is a wonderful circle, and the route to **self-knowledge** through music. I begin to understand **what the music does to my soul**.

Astrith does a wonderful thing with the music. Music is so abstract. I have noticed how certain intervals—like 3rds and 6ths make me feel a certain excitement, a certain feeling of sweetness in my heart. Dissonance makes me shudder. It is interesting to see what music does to me and why.

Astrith is very structured, logical, methodical and organized. In her lessons there is a continuity, a development, a logic, and a clear feeling of beginning—middle—end. She uses imagery which is very concrete—from the world of reality. Her illustrations are very good...

I am able to comprehend more easily. I understand better when it is more structured than when it is episodal. From a didactic point of view, she [Astrith] is very good. The material is very serious, thorough, and straightforward. She wants to impart knowledge and [make] us love the music and she does it with all her heart...

Music was written by people. It expresses feelings and thoughts of real people. I am able to reach **the depths of feeling**, and I find my **self expression**. It is very enriching for my emotional world. **The moment a person understands himself better, he can also understand his environment. I am into trying to understand myself and the world I live in**" (A-4b—emphases, mine).

Analyzing this response, it is apparent that this participant derives satisfaction on several different levels, parallel to the levels that Copland (1953) noted for music listening (elaborated in Chapter 4/B), indicating that the experience of the lesson has many things in common with the musical/artistic encounter:

- the sensual—such as in discovering how musical intervals affect her (i.e. becoming more aware of the learned schemata),
- the emotional—reaching the depths of feeling,
- the intellectual—with increased self-knowledge and understanding her environment,
- the spiritual—in seeing how music affects her soul, and in feeling the transcendence from an experience which transforms her and transports her beyond where she was initially (Huebner, 1999).

Such a response recalls Astrith's words about the many-faceted aspects of a person, and illustrates her ability to address these many faculties. Moreover, this response illustrates the importance of structure and organization in conveying the experience. It seems that people in search of meaning and order in the world are likely to feel appreciation and satisfaction with a lesson that reflects **order and clarity**. It is as though the lesson becomes a world, and the teacher becomes a "worldmaker" engaged in

"worldmaking" (Goodman, 1978), helping the learners to form patterns that will give them a better understanding of life (Phenix, 1964). Clarity and organization lead to greater understanding, and the more one understands—in learning, in lessons and in life-- the more one is able to feel a sense of fulfillment.

Moreover, it seems that the satisfaction from this organized experience is even greater when it works upon us in multi-dimensional ways, because then it reflects all the more the organization and unification of complex worlds. Music, which is in itself based on organization, actually acts in a similar fashion:

"Music creates order out of chaos; for rhythm imposes unanimity upon the divergent; melody imposes continuity upon the disjointed, and harmony imposes compatibility upon the incongruous." (Yehudi Menuhin, quoted in Storr, 1992, p. 33)

3. Transcendence

When the lesson, like the music, is a work of art which contains multiple levels of stimulation (sensual, emotional, intellectual), a convincing form and a pervading sense of unity, there is a feeling of wonder and exhilaration which ensues from "the joy of revelation, the vision of a world wholly significant..." (Langer, 1953, p. 405).

The feeling is one of a "spiritual" transcendent experience (Huebner, 1999) ---a flash of understanding and insight into the clarity, coherence, completeness and connectedness of things, and even a sense of communion with the universe, which ignites in us a kind of inspiration and illumination.

Understanding the spiritual nature of this experience can help us appreciate the responses of participants to a question which was frequently asked in the interviews, and which also appeared in the questionnaires (sample in A-6). To the question: "What other benefits (besides music) do you derive from these lessons?", comments often went beyond the frequent responses of "enjoyment" and "pleasure", and contained superlatives:

- "The most beautiful moments of my life" (Q).
- "I am discovering the beauty of life in every corner—without exaggeration" (Q).
- "I went to take this class because I needed something for my soul... For a neophyte—a novice—this is eye-opening. I really feel the wonder of things. " (A-4c).
- "From a didactic point of view, it [the Cathedra course] is outstanding. It opens your ears, your eyes, your heart and your soul. They connect us to something wonderful. When we come there [the Cathedra], we enter other spheres. It is a haven from our daily troubles, but it is more than just a distraction. It is an experience for the soul" (A-4f).

- "The moment you take something about life that has a soul, it means so much more" (A-4g).

Many participants expressed their exhilaration by explaining that Wednesday was their favorite day of the week because of the Cathedra, and described how for days afterwards they were still being nourished by the experience. Here's how several different participants, three of whom are teachers by profession, each summed up their special Wednesdays at the Cathedra:

- "Everyone has a day of the week he loves most of all, and I love Wednesdays because of the Cathedra. It is an escape from our mundane daily cares. It is a holiday for me, and **I find this to be like a shrine—a temple, where I go to get my spiritual renewal**... Everyone approaches everyone else with love. Everyone is in love with the material they are learning...Now I listen differently. I have real listening skills. Every Wednesday I get richer and richer with new treasures" (A-4m—emphasis, mine).
- "When I come to these courses, it is 4 hours of clearing my mind; immersing myself in something without the world interfering... Every Wednesday for me is a celebration. The same excitement which I felt as a child when I was going to my first concert-- that is the same excitement that I feel every Wednesday when I come to the Cathedra. This is such an important part of my life. Today I feel that life without music would only be half a life" (A-4c).
- "For me, because of these courses, Wednesdays are a real high. For 2 days afterwards I keep thinking about it. And then the next week I wait for it. It gives me wonderful energies and I really feel excited by it" (A-4k).
- "Since I have been coming to these courses, Wednesdays are a celebration—a holiday for me" (A-4h).

Astrith herself understands the thirst of her audience and relates to their needs:

"They come to me and they say, 'We are coming to you because our souls are empty, we need content. We are sick of television. In a regular concert, after a half hour, we are looking at the ceiling and do not know what to think.' They see me coming to them from the same place that they are coming from..." (A-2, p.14).

4. Accessibility: Out of the "ivory tower"

It is evident from the large attendance in the courses of the Cathedra, and the growing number of subscribers to the concerts (7000!), that this type of musical encounter is answering a need, a thirst for something aesthetic and humanistic in the midst of our rapidly advancing technological society.

"The human need for depth of experience, for a sense of meaningfulness and self-knowledge below the surface of everyday life, remains as pressing as it always has been, with clearer realization that this need will not be filled by technological advances. The

contribution of the arts to the quality of human self-understanding can be at least as important now, if not much more so, than at any time in history" (Reimer, 1970, p. xi).

The need for an aesthetic experience can be met in a variety of different ways—going to the theater, concerts, museums, etc. Astrith's *Classical with a personal dimension* and her courses in the Cathedra rank among those aesthetic experiences which can fill this need, especially since the conventional concert often falls short of establishing communication with the audience.

In this respect, Astrith has made a significant contribution to the adult music education scene in Israel, and she believes that the impact of this contribution can be seen in the changing format of other concerts and courses which are opening up more and more in the last few years.

Astrith: "Even though I did what satisfies me, nevertheless, I see that it has an impact on the public. The moment I did these concerts, the landscape of concerts in Israel looks different. There are many more guided concerts, and there is more awareness that explanations are necessary. The orchestral concerts often have pre-concert lectures, and the orchestras look for someone who will communicate with the audience. In my own individual way, I feel that I have caused a revolution (A-2, p.13).²⁶

Astrith continues to have a vision about how music education should look in the future, taking into consideration the problems of popular culture being removed from classical music, and recognizing both the bane and benefits of our modern technological society:

"It is clear to me that today, more than ever, we can teach music in a way that is a real adventure. Because of the multi-media, and the video... We have everything. All the performances, all the videos, all the films. The use of music. Classical music is everywhere. It is on the electronic switchboards, and on the little horse in Burger Ranch, when you put in a coin. It is on the baby mobiles that play Brahms' lullaby... It is in every Hollywood movie... You just have to look. There is no one that will not like this. The world is full of this and these are materials from our surroundings. Something that people really love, is to meet something familiar in music. If you bring them something they are familiar with, they will immediately enjoy it and connect to it. And if you bring them something they are unfamiliar with, they may feel threatened. But we have the tools today to come to them with things they have heard... So you give it to them. Then, in exchange for this, I will give them 50

²⁶ It is possible that the proliferation of guided concerts is a function of responding to a growing need, which is felt by other artists as well. Thus, it may be that other attempts to make music accessible are occurring parallel to Astrith's innovations, and not necessarily as a direct result of them.

minutes of something they don't know, and I will at least have the backing for this. Otherwise, what do I want from them? If I remain in my little cubicle in my ivory tower there, among the PhD's and the professors, and they are in their cubicle in front of the television watching channel 2, how will we reach one another? And he is bored there, and I am bored here. It is elementary ABCs of human interrelations to communicate. Is this not so?"

Astrith has set her main goal of music education to communicate with her audience. Both as a performer and a pedagogue this priority is paramount. People appreciate the fact that Astrith has provided them with a framework where they can learn music and enjoy concerts in a way that is meaningful to them:

Malka: "Astrith did a great deed when she left the formal concert halls to bring music to a wider audience. For us this is a wonderful school in which to learn" (A-4m).

Eti: "The approach is to break the myths around classical music. They [Astrith and Moshe] prove that everyone can enjoy classical music and understand it. It is bringing music to the masses and they see this as an important value. Not just for a small group of people, but to break out of this limited circle and bring music to large numbers of people (A-4i).

Uri, an experienced pedagogue teaching in a teachers college, summed up his appreciation with an interesting analogy of the "*Zaddik in pelz*":

"In Hasidism, there is a term: "*A Zaddik in Pelz*", which means a righteous person in his furs. That means a person who is only concerned about himself. If it is cold, he is content to be wrapped in his furs, and not concerned with anyone else. But there is also the *zaddik* (righteous person) who lights a fire when it is cold, so that it can be warm for other people as well. Astrith and Moshe are like those who light a fire and make it possible for others to share in the experience of the music. They are not sitting in an ivory tower, and playing for an audience of aloof connoisseurs. They have lighted the fire for everyone, and are reaching a large audience. That's what I love about them" (A-4n).

Astrith began with her conception of concerts and courses as "*Classical with a Personal Dimension*". However, her attitude towards her audience and her sensitivity and caring to communicate with them, has gone beyond the private domain to becoming an **interpersonal dimension**. Moreover, by illuminating meaningful messages and truths that transcend her personal perspectives, Astrith has indeed reached a "**super-personal dimension**", capable of inspiring her audience to relate to music and to life in a significant multi-dimensional way.

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