

Interview With Zhania Aubakirova Almaty, Kazakhstan, 2004

This interview was conducted after a casual dinner at Zhainia's house in Almaty, Kazakhstan, at the end of my visit there. This transcription was taken from the words of the interpreter, a friend of Zhania's.

SB: I would like to hear some of your thoughts about why music and mathematics should be involved together on an educational level, such as in the work that I have been doing.

ZA: I share with you the same idea that the whole world is very complex, but linked, and as for me, as a pianist, it is absolutely evident that all the things in this universe are linked. When I am working on some musical text, for me it is absolutely evident that you should make a construction, you should make an architecture of this musical building, and in this construction, you should use some mathematical rules or laws. I don't share this opinion that music is, sort of, entertainment, that you can play everything absolutely easily. As for me, music is hard work, work of your mind and work of your soul. Of course, I am talking about so called "classic" music. Classic music is very complex music, but at the same time there is evidently light music where you should entertain and you can do it easily. We are talking about classic, basic music. I think that the current situation for everyone now is that the whole human kind begins to understand that everything is linked and you should research, you should try to find out these maybe secret links of the many elements of this universe, and in music it's absolutely clear . . . I'm talking about the emotional side of, say for example, science. As we know, great scientists, when they're making some research, they have the same feelings as musicians, the same inspirations, the same pleasure of some mathematical or scientific research. And for us, for musicians, it's the same thing. We are not feeling only pleasure of some feelings, but we have some pleasure of construction, of the architectural.

SB: Given that, and obviously I agree with you on all these points, then going to the issue of education for young children, how would you articulate, or what would you say to maybe a skeptic, about the benefits of immersing children at a young age in training that moves in this direction?

ZA: Concerning the education of young children, I say to everybody that before entering the school, the child is living in a complex and very linked universe and when he comes to the school, all of a sudden the universe is divided and separated into non linked elements. Its not good, you should reconstruct the same thing, the elements of the universe of the child should be linked. In several contemporary educational systems, they are trying to make contacts of different stratas, unfortunately its not the mainstream of education, that's why everybody now is seeking something that should be linked, for example mathematics and painting, biology and physics, and so like the first universe of the child, everything should be linked.

SB: That's obviously a big motivation of mine in the interdisciplinary work I've been involved in education, but there's another level I'm curious to ask you about. Besides generating a deeper sense of meaning and a whole sense of the world and the universe for children, do you think that the actual technical aspects of studying rudiments, mechanics and language of music and mathematics can help the students understand the basics of each discipline more deeply if they are combined?

ZA: I think that the complexity of the whole universe, of the whole life, is more interesting for the child than the easiness of the divided world, and he might be more motivated to find

out what is the complexity of the world. Because I think that for every child its not natural-- a world that is divided into several stratas, not connected and they are seeking more natural senses. . . I am no specialist at all, I have no formal experience in education, its only my perceptions, and all that I have said is based on my own music experience.

SB: Yes, I shared the exact same perceptions six or seven years ago, and that's when I began putting this together. So the last piece then. I have been working in your school for the past two weeks, and I have been working in schools in the United States for the past ten years. In moving toward this vision, we recently discussed how people thought I was crazy and rebel of sorts in the United States for working on these ideas. What I am getting at is that this is a very huge and long term project to make this real in any significant way in an educational system.

ZA: Quite frankly, the educational system, maybe here and maybe in the United States, is very conservative and not flexible.

SB: Absolutely.

ZA: And we find many conflicts and almost enemies of our research. That's why I wish you good luck in moving in this direction. I am absolutely happy to keep contact with you, and to find the persons who make the same things that we are making here, because for us, I repeat, it is absolutely obvious that the world and the universe is linked . . .

SB: Yes, I have experienced many of the same struggles in my country as I have perceived with some your teachers here. But I think that in any transformation of thinking and paradigm of thought, that as soon as visionaries connect the work can move very fast, and I am very optimistic about the future.

ZA: I believe the same thing. In the last several years I have made a lot of miracles . . .

SB: You've made? Met? Say more, what do you mean exactly?

ZA: Everything is possible now . . .

SB: Yes, Yes, fabulous. I think that's great. Thank you very much . . . Bayshuez spayciba