

Title: A Novel to be Heard: Musicality in Sasha Sokolov's *Shkola dlja durakov*  
Author: Tony Lin, University of California, Berkeley

When one reads Sasha Sokolov's *Shkola dlja durakov*, one does not merely read the words; one also hears them. Sokolov uses literary means to imply, evoke, imitate, and otherwise indirectly approximate actual sounds and music. Even though Sokolov himself has acknowledged the importance of sound in his works, few critics have investigated the references to music and descriptions of sounds in the novel. One exception is Ludmilla Litus, who claims that "words in *Shkola* are important in themselves... for their sound quality, rhythm, and even for their visual appearance" (Litus 102). I will argue that Sokolov has written a richly musical text that seems to be on the one hand playful, but on the other hand eager to defy silence and attain freedom. The text, even with the limitations imposed by the nature of words, seems incapable of suppressing expressions of sound and music. The result is a highly evocative text that demands to be heard.

Traditional scholarship on musicality in literature often focuses on structure. My analysis will consider this and additionally discuss the narrative using musical concepts such as improvisation, repetition, dynamics, and dissonance. The paper will address Sokolov's attempt to transcend the limitations of text by expanding its auditory repertoire for evocative effects, such as emotion. The instances of musicality throughout the text, especially when one considers the oppressive Soviet context, compel the reader to consider the novel as an attempt to be heard.

### **Works Cited**

Litus, Ludmilla. "Intertextuality in *Shkola dlja durakov* Revisited." *Russian Language Journal* LII (1998).