

"Lonely Voice" Concerto for Violin and Orchestra

Mikhail Bronner's catalog of instrumental compositions includes eleven concertos. In addition to the one presented here are his: *Saxophone's Gospel* for saxophone and chamber orchestra, *Juda-Passion* for bayan and orchestra, *Heaven's Gates* for violin and orchestra, and *Dreams from far away* for clarinet and orchestra.

As is characteristic of the composer, the concerto is fashioned in a single movement. The main motive consists of a minor third and a major seventh, and the entire work grows out of this combination of sweet consonance and sharp dissonance. The structure of the concerto combines features of sonata form (a clear tonal plan and development sections) with those of a rondo (a series of returning episodes). In this work the solo violin does not compete with the orchestra; instead it carries on a dialog in which the composer attempts to find answers to the moral questions: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we heading? Are we on the right path? How should we live? What is the meaning of human existence, and will we continue to exist after this life? This concerto was premiered in 1992 by the Bolshoi Theater Orchestra in Moscow, with Levon Ambartsumian as soloist and is dedicated to Mr. Ambartsumian.

Mikhail Bronner graduated from the Moscow Conservatory (High School of Music) where he studied composition with Tikhon Khrennikov, and then completed his postgraduate studies in 1981. He became a member of the Union of Composers in 1979 and since 1997 he has served as Chairman of the Select Committee on membership of the Moscow Union of Composers. In November 2000 he was elected a Secretary of the Russian Union of Composers.

Mikhail Bronner attracted public and professional attention in the early 1980s when he offered a number of brilliant works performed at various festivals and concerts. Among these works were such highly praised compositions as the dramatic legend *The Dowry* (verses by Dmitri Kedrin), the choral work *The Heather Honey* (after William Blake), and a song cycle, to the lyrics by Anna Akhmatova. Notable landmarks in his career are the premieres of his ballets *An Optimistic Tragedy* (1985) and *Taming of the Shrew* (1996) both presented at the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theatre in Moscow. Reviews of these works noted the high quality of the music – "emotional, succinct and very danceable. logic and proportion in the combination of musical elements differing in style and genre, vivid melodies, imaginative rhythms and, finally, expert orchestration ... all this expressing the composer's unerring sense of theatre" (Elena Kurilenko, Soviet Music Journal).

Mr. Bronner prefers to write music for the theatre and makes extensive use of theatrical elements in other genres, for example in his choral work *The Heather Honey* in which he reveals new perspectives for the choral theatre. The *Jewish Requiem* has become a turning point in his career. In this monumental work for soloists, two choirs and orchestra he has set a poem by Chaim Bialik in Yiddish, alongside prayers, the address of Maimonides (in Hebrew), fragments from the *The Diary of Anne Frank*, poetry from the *Song of Songs* as well as various Psalms. The *Jewish Requiem* was

performed in many cities in Germany including Berlin in 1994, and found great success. "None could resist the power and fascination that came from this splendid fresco. It was wonderful, and the long ovation began not immediately after the last note but after seconds of complete silence in the concert hall. And then, for the composer there were well deserved exclamations of Bravo! (Jurgen Otten, BERLINER ZEITUNG). "Although Mikhail Bronner wanted to create a musical monument to the Jewish culture in Europe, his idea was broader than just to show the chain of pain and martyrdom of a nation persecuted for centuries. The *Jewish Requiem* is in opposition to violence and calls for appreciation and respect for human rights." (Regina Doblies, WESTFALLEN BLATT).

Besides the *Jewish Requiem*, Mr. Bronner has written several works which reflect on the tragedy of Jewish history, including: *Jew: Life and Death* for cello and piano, and *Jacob's Ladder: Angel of Love, Angel of Sorrow* for four cellos. Mr. Bronner has also written many compositions inspired by images, themes and the characters of The Old Testament. Other works have paid much attention to the philosophical and metaphysical poetry of Akhmatova, Brodsky, Mandelstam and Tsvetayeva. His chamber works are characterized by subtle differences of timbre, complex rhythmic polyphony, and metrical and rhythmic mobility. He has also written many works for children that are highly regarded by both young performers and audiences alike. Moscow Magazine "Muzykalnoe Obozrenie" (Moscow Review) named Mr. Bronner as the composer of the year 2002 for his Violin Concerto *Heavens Gates*.

"Distant Dreams of the Childhood"

Concerto for Violin, Viola and Chamber Orchestra.

This work concludes a group of three spiritually-related compositions by Alexander Tchaikovsky that also includes a Concerto for Violin and one for Viola. All three are deeply tragic. The central musical idea in all of these works is the conflict between the individual and society.

The main inspiration for the *Distant Dreams* is the irrevocable passing of childhood, the putative happiest time in the life of a human being. An important influence of the composer during the writing of this concerto was Nikita Mikhalkov's film *Several Days from the Life of Oblomov*, which is based on the novel by Ivan Turgenev.

The musical development in this concerto could be described as the story of a love-hate relationship between the two solo instruments. The violin and viola are fiercely competing with each other, joining in a love duo, or combining forces to confront the orchestra. The first movement is an introduction to the upcoming drama. The real action starts in the second movement which proceeds "attacca" into the finale, which is musically the most important part of the work. Both of the solo parts are extremely virtuosic, and the viola part is especially difficult since it is written mostly in the high register. The concerto received its premiere in Moscow in 1990 by the ARCO Chamber Orchestra with Levon Ambartsumian, violin, and Guennadi Freidine, viola, as soloists.

Alexander Tchaikovsky was born in Moscow February 19, 1946. He studied at the Music College of Moscow and from 1967 until 1975 at the Moscow Conservatory (piano - under Heinrich Neuhaus and Lev Naumov, composition - under Tikhon Khrennikov). He has composed in various genres, including operas: *Three Sisters* after A. Chekhov (1994), *Tsar Nikita and his forty daughters* after A. Pushkin (1996), ballets *Inspector* (1980), and *Battleship Potemkin* (1988), 3 Symphonies, two Piano Concertos, a Concerto for Two Pianos, 3 Viola Concertos (premiered by Yury Bashmet), 2 Violin Concertos (premiered by Levon Ambartsumian), Choral Music, Chamber Music and incidental music to theatre and film productions. He is currently the Artistic Director of the Moscow State Philharmonic, and Professor/ Director of the Composition department at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory. Among his awards are: First Prize at the International Forum of Composers Hollybush Festival in the US in 1985; Merited Worker of Arts of Russia (1988) and Composer in residence at the Mariinsky Theatre (St. Petersburg). In 1995, he was appointed as Principal Composer at the Nova Scotia Festival in Canada. In addition, he has taken part in numerous international music events and has toured Europe, America and Japan.

Musica Dolorosa (Music of Grief)

This work was completed in 1983, shortly before the death of the composer's sister, to whose memory this work is dedicated. The work has become Vask's most known and frequently performed composition to date. The composer called this composition "my most tragic opus where there is no optimism, no hope - only pain". The work starts with mournful melodic lines, plucked notes in the low strings resembling heartbeats. The music gradually grows in its intensity reaching an astonishing climax, chaotic and dissonant. Perhaps the strongest musical gesture is introduced in the last section of the piece: a wailing cello solo, full of personal lament.

The music of Latvian composer Peteris Vasks and each individual work is a "message". Vasks resolutely addresses, preaches, advocates, therefore his music is not classical but programmed in a literary sense: in conjunction with an idea, a moral and emotional frame of reference. Peteris Vasks has always composed for the listener. This fact became most apparent after 1990, when, thanks to the Schott Publishing Company (Germany) his scores became readily available, CD's began to be recorded and released and such renowned musicians as violinist Gidon Kremer, Finnish conductor Juha Kangas, cellist David Geringas and the Hilliard Ensemble began to take notice. A whole new world was also opened for Vask's music through the Bill T. Jones Dance Troupe (U.S.) and the Netherlands Ballet Theater.

Peteris Vasks was born in Aizpute, Latvia on April 16, 1946. The son of a minister and with its ensuing stigma in the former Soviet Union Vasks finally found a safe haven for his budding talents in neighboring Lithuania. Finishing his musical education in 1970 as a double-bass player, Vasks became a member of the Latvian National Opera orchestra, the Latvian Symphony Orchestra and chamber orchestra. In 1978, after graduating the Latvian State

Conservatory's Composition Class, Vasks began his (still ongoing) career as a pedagogue. Many of his pupils are now noted Latvian composers in their own right. His initial compositional forays were noted for their unconventionality. In utilizing the new aleatorical approach and forging new avenues, Vasks followed the lead of his mentors Lutoslawski, Penderecki and Crumb. By the 1980's, Vasks had found his unique "vocabulary" in string, brass and piano music, consolidating his unchanging "pro", even calling his dramatic piano trio, *Episodi e canto perpetuo*.

Through daily dramas and conflicts, there is always a path to the eternal and the merciful that can be found in life's primitive, natural order. A pastoral scene seen from afar as constant and familiar, upon closer visual (and aural) examination becomes live matter with strong inner currents and gradual vertical ascention. To understand the music of Peteris Vasks is to understand the Latvian language and spirit. The smallest segments in musical language - intonation, phrasing and accents to an all encompassing historical and emotional experience of the Latvian people are contained in Vasks' works, especially in *Litene, Latvia, Lauda and Voices (Balsis)*. Just as to understand the Estonian vernacular through Part, the Polish vernacular through Gorecki and the Georgian through Giya Kancheli, all of whom Vasks considers his contemporaries in music and soul. Peteris Vasks is the 1996 recipient of the Vienna Herder Award and the 1997 Latvian Grand Music Award (*Liela muzikas balva*) for his *Concerto for Violin (Tala Gaisma)*.



Ukrainian born violist **Guennadi Freidine** graduated from Lvov State Conservatory. After winning the Ukraine National Viola Competition in 1968, he went on to complete his musical education at the Leningrad State Conservatory under the direction of the renown Professor of Viola; Yury Kramarov. Mr.Freidine has held principal viola positions with several leading Russian orchestras including: the Kirov Opera of Leningrad, the Moscow State Orchestra, and the Moscow Soloists Chamber Orchestra. As a soloist and chamber player he has performed at many prestigious festivals including: Moscow Stars, Sviatoslav Richter's December Nights, and the City of London Festival. He has appeared in major concert halls such as the Barbican Hall in London, the Musikvereinsaal in Vienna, and the Bolshoi Hall of the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory. Mr. Freidine has performed with such distinguished musicians worldwide as: Maria-Joao Pires, Janos Starker, Yuri Bashmet, Natalia Gutman, and Valery Gergiev, and he has given master classes in the USA, South Korea, France, and Finland. The French magazine "La Gazette" named him as one of the world's finest violists. Guennadi Freidine performs on a viola by Boris Bratichev 1990.

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