



Northern Flowers

ST. PETERSBURG MUSICAL ARCHIVE

# Leningrad Ballet Music

## Archimandritov • Slonimsky • Okunev

Mariinsky Orchestra  
Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra  
Chivzhel, Gamaley

МУЗЫКАЛЬНЫЙ АРХИВ ПЕТЕРБУРГА

## LENINGRAD BALLET MUSIC

### **Boris Archimandritov (1932-2009)**

1. *Toulouse-Lautrec*, choreographic poem (1970) 11:21

### **Sergey Slonimsky (1932-2020)**

*Icarus*. Music of the ballet (1971)

2. Icarus's dream 3:43  
3. Forging the wings 4:25  
4. Solitude 13:03  
5. Flight 12:43

### **German Okunev (1931-1973)**

6. *The Overcoat*. Music of the ballet (1973) 26:40

Total Time - 72:15

## **Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Edward Chivzhel**, conductor (1, 6)

## **Mariinsky [Kirov] Orchestra**

**Yuri Gamaley**, conductor (2-5)

Recordings of the Saint Petersburg (Leningrad) Recording Studio.

1: live at the Leningrad Capella Hall in 1984

2-5: at the Leningrad Philharmonic Grand Hall in 1976

6: at the Leningrad Philharmonic Grand Hall in 1977 (6)

Sound engineers: **Gerhard Tzess** (1) and **Felix Gurdzhi** (2-6)

English liner notes translation: **Sergey Suslov**

Design: **Anastasia Yevmenova**

Cover photo: Leningrad. **Boris Smolov**

**Boris Ivanovich Archimandritov** (1932-2009) was born in Tbilisi, Georgia. He studied at the Tbilisi School of Music, and later at the Leningrad Conservatory, from which he graduated in 1962 (Composition, class of Boris Arapov). From 1971 he worked for many years as an editor of the Leningrad branch of Sovetsky Kompozitor, a major music publishing house. In the 1990s, he worked at the St. Petersburg Herzen University teaching courses of creative music-making, composition, fundamentals of integrated musical thinking, and innovative processes in the 20th century music.

Boris Archimandritov's music covers virtually all genres, both vocal and instrumental: the operas *Aesop* and *The Idiot*, two symphonies, cantatas to poems by Pushkin, Lermontov, Brecht, Blok, and Aseev, vocal cycles, and multiple chamber instrumental pieces.

Prevailing in the general imagery of Archimandritov's music are epic attitudes, and their gamut is rather broad, from contemplative and detached to powerful and life-affirming. Elements of folk music, which he actively studied while staying in Armenia, Georgia, Uzbekistan, China, and Korea are important in the composer's works.

The choreographic poem *Toulouse-Lautrec* was written in 1970. The opus was intended for staging a small one-act ballet, therefore the prevailing traits of the music are the descriptive approach, some conventionality, or even sketchiness typical for scenic compositions. The human image of the opus's "main character Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, (a famous French artist of the late 19th century, eccentric and

prone to debauchery in Paris's red-light district), served as the basis for creating a grotesque opus filled with dance motifs, very diversified in its rhythms, with elements of "mass" art interspersed in the score.

Boris Archimandritov's interest in analysing folk music can be heard in this opus too. The authentic modes refer us to French folk music. The author uses a large group of winds very interestingly and diversely. He needs them both for creating powerful tutti sounds and for detailed melodic and supporting-voice work. Strings often serve only for rhythmic support, especially in ostinato rhythms, at the moments of enhanced sound.

**Sergey Mikhailovich Slonimsky** (1932-2020), an outstanding Russian composer and pianist, was born in Leningrad, and graduated from the Leningrad Conservatory in 1955 in Composition (with Professor O. A. Yevlakhov) and Piano (Professor V. V. Nielsen). Since 1959 he had been teacher, and since 1976, Professor of Composition of the Leningrad (St. Petersburg) Conservatory.

Slonimsky wrote the operas *Virineya*, *The Master and Margarita*, *Mary Stuart*, *Hamlet*, *Visions of Ivan the Terrible*, *King Lear*, and *Antigone*; the ballets *Icarus* (Bolshoi Theater, 1971), *The Magic Nut* (libretto and staging by M. Shemyakin, Mariinsky Theater, 2005), over 30 symphonies, *Requiem*, the cantatas *The Songs of Outlaws*, *A Voice from the Chorus* (to words by Alexander Blok), 11 concertos for various instruments with orchestra, a piano sonata, two violin sonatas and a

cello sonata, a trio, the quartet *Antiphones*, a quintet, 24 preludes and fugues, songs to verses by Akhmatova, Mandelshtam, Tsvetaeva, Kushner, Rein, Brodsky, Akhmadulina, V. Soloviev, and other poets; soundtracks to the films *The Republic of Shkid*, *The Intervention*, *Before the Tribunal of History*, and *My Life*; choral works, piano pieces for children and youths, amongst over 2000 compositions.

Sergey Slonimsky was one of the most interesting and original composers of our time. A brilliant erudite and intellectual, he created easily, knowingly, and even seemingly without effort in any style or genre, belonging to different epochs, trends and movements, and it's hard to say if there is anything he has not learned or "tasted" creatively.

The ballet *Icarus* was composed over quite a long time, from 1965 till 1971. The antique myth of Icarus underwent serious changes in the ballet's libretto. Icarus is obsessed with a dream of flying like a bird. But for Archon, the ruler of the land, this means challenging the Gods, destruction of the customary way of life, and maybe a threat to his power. He seized the wings from Icarus, then in an attempt to return his thoughts to normal things he subjected the youth to all earthly temptations. Being unable to break the audacious spirit of the hero, he decided 'Let Icarus try to fly. He will punish himself; his flight is impossible, and he would perish anyway. And that would be edifying for people. But when Archon saw that the miracle was happening, and Icarus was flying as a bird, he began to shoot at him.

*Icarus* as created in the initial phase of the creative career became,

similar to the *First Symphony*, a kind of program and foundational composition for the subsequent creative work. The brevity and clarity of the ballet's drama make it symphonic in an utterly concentrated way.

The ballet's drama develops from the broad, extensive, and unhurried confrontation of images at the beginning to their dramatic collision at the end. In the process, the image spheres are gradually concentrated, your hearing gets accustomed to distinguishing them well, and they are recalled to make all of the instruments of the performance act in harmonious unity in the culmination.

Sergey Slonimsky's *Icarus* has established itself in many theatres' repertoire; it ran at the Kirov Theater in Leningrad, at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow, in many cities of the Soviet Union and abroad.

**German Grigorievich Okunev** (1931-73) was born in Leningrad. He studied at the Music School of the Leningrad Conservatory (in particular, during the Siege of Leningrad). In 1944 he was awarded with the medal For the Defense of Leningrad for participation in multiple concerts for soldiers and the wounded. After school he entered the Leningrad Conservatory where he studied composition with Orest Yevlakhov and piano with Abram Logovinsky. He perfected himself as a post-graduate with Dmitry Shostakovich (from 1961). He taught at the Conservatory, and wrote two symphonies, Concerto for Piano and Chamber (1972), several chamber opuses, among which the four-movement *Suite for Two Pianos and Percussion "On the Festive Neva"*

became popular, and also his music for children. The most important work of the last period of his life was the ballet *The Overcoat* after Gogol, which was unfinished. He died in a car accident.

*The Overcoat* is one of Nikolai Gogol's Petersburg stories published in 1843. It became a part of the history of Russian literature as "a manifesto of social equality and undeniable rights of the individual of any class or rank." The story's main character is Akakiy Akakievich Bashmachkin, a poor titular councillor. He performed his duties earnestly, but in fact his role in the Department was quite negligible, and therefore young officials often played jokes on him. One day, Akakiy Akakievich noticed that his threadbare overcoat became altogether unfit for use. He brought it to a tailor to have it patched over, but the tailor refused saying a new one had to be made. Akakiy Akakievich then cut down his costs: he stopped drinking tea in the evening, tried to walk on tiptoe to avoid wearing away his shoes, gave his washing less often to the laundress, and wore only a morning gown at home so to not overwear his clothes.

And so one frosty morning Akakiy Akakievich entered the Department wearing a new overcoat. He was in a perfect state of mind. On his way home the same day, "some men with mustaches" tore the overcoat from his shoulders – Akakiy Akakievich was robbed.

Next day, he reported to the Department wearing his old overcoat. Many felt pity for him, and the officials advised him to apply for help to an "important person." The "important person" shouted Akakiy

Akakievich down, and in a way that he “walked outside hardly remembering anything.” The weather was windy and biting in Petersburg at that time, and his overcoat was decrepit, so when he got home, Akakiy Akakievich took to his bed. He was unable to recover, and died in delirium a few days later.

German Okunev had no time to finish the ballet *The Overcoat* after Gogol’s story; the orchestration was completed by Okunev’s disciple, Leningrad’s composer Vladimir Sapozhnikov. *The Overcoat* became the last, and one of the most important compositions in the oeuvre of German Okunev, that talented disciple of Shostakovich. A critic called the ballet “a terrible confession, without hiding the main point – hatred to oppressors.” The ballet’s music is written in a vivid modern language; the author inventively uses the winds and percussion instruments, whose role in the score is very important.

Given below is the composer’s pattern, which he used when writing the ballet’s music, as it is the key to understanding the items and their sequence:

1. Snowstorm. It’s cold, passers-by shift feet, Akakiy Akakievich among them.
2. Department. Person, Toadies. Derision of Akakiy Akakievich
3. Favorite. Dream. Overcoat
4. Party. A. A. wearing the new overcoat.
5. Adagio
6. Struggle.

7. Requiem for the Overcoat.

8. Search for justice – towards the weakness of death.

9. Snowstorm. Death of A. A.

10. Department. The place of A. A. is vacant. Everybody’s laughing.

11. Epilogue. Department. A gigantic Overcoat is standing in the doorway. Officials’ nightmare. Their horror. Plea for mercy. Retaliation.

— **Northern Flowers**

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