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# Nikolai PEYKO

## Complete Piano Music Volume One

**Sonatas Nos. 1 and 2**  
**Sonatina No. 2**  
**Variations**  
**Ballada**  
**Bylina**  
**Concert Triptych**

**Dmitry Korostelyov, piano**  
**Maria Dzhemesiuk, second piano**

FIRST RECORDINGS

## NICOLAI PEYKO: A RUSSIAN MASTER REMEMBERED

by Yuri Abdokov

Twentieth-century Russian culture evolved against a backdrop of cataclysm: the collapse of imperial rule, devastating revolutions, bloody wars and a rejection of its own national foundation, against which the technological advances of Soviet Russia – not least its pioneering space-programme – seem empty gestures. The Soviet assault on the Russian cultural heritage would seem to bear out the observation of Archbishop John (Shahovskoy) that ‘the holier a place is, the more terrible is the abomination of desolation in it’.<sup>1</sup>

All major Russian artists born at the turn of this epoch – at the decline of the Russian and genesis of the Soviet empire – faced a difficult choice. There was no point in attempting some impossible union between past and present; many attempted, instead, to construct an inner world where the thousand-year history of the nation and its intimate Orthodox image did not have to be denied for the sake of the new social system. Modern criticism which simplistically classifies Russian art as pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet thus ignores this hidden continuity of Russian culture. In the nineteenth century, the ‘Golden Age’ of Russian culture, for example, you can easily find elements that chime with Soviet sensibilities (the Decembrists,<sup>2</sup> Dobrolyubov,<sup>3</sup> Chernyshevsky,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop John (Shahovskoy) of San Francisco, *Philosophy of Orthodox Ministry*, Troitse-Sergieva Lavra Publishing house, Sergiev Posad, 2007, pp. 16–17. Archbishop John, who died in Californian exile in 1989, was born Prince Dmitry Shahovskoy in Moscow in 1902 and served in the White Army during the turmoil that engulfed Russia after the October Revolution. After escaping from the Soviet Union he studied in Belgium (1923–26) before joining the priesthood. He moved to the United States after the Second World War, serving first in New York and then San Francisco.

<sup>2</sup> The Decembrist revolt took place in December 1825, when 3,000 troops in St Petersburg refused to swear allegiance to the new tsar, Nicholas I, and were mown down; an allied revolt in the Ukraine was suppressed at the same time.

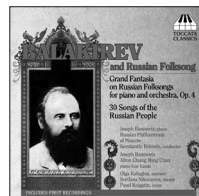
<sup>3</sup> Nikolai Dobrolyubov (1836–61) was a critic, poet and radical democrat.

<sup>4</sup> Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828–89) was a revolutionary socialist who argued for the overthrow of autocratic rule and its replacement by a collectivist society based on peasant communes.

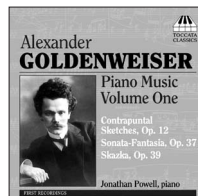
Since 2007 she has been working as an accompanist in the trombone class of Victor Batashev in the Conservatoire, and since 2004 she has been teaching chamber ensemble and accompaniment at the State College attached to the Conservatoire.

In 1998 Maria was a co-founder of the Consonance Quintet and played in the group until 2009, performing in many concerts and festivals in Russia and abroad; they were prize-winners at the Second Taneyev Chamber Music Competition and at the International Bellini Competition in Italy; and they made recordings for Russian radio and TV. Maria now plays in a number of different ensembles, among them the Moscow Virtuosi, Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra, Russian National Symphony and Russian National Philharmonic Orchestras, with the violinist Mikhail Gotsdiner and other musicians.

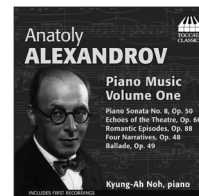
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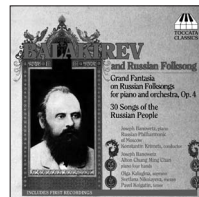
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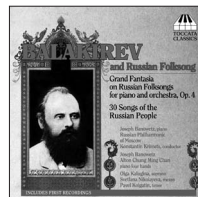
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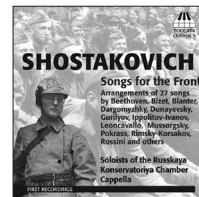
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**Dmitry Korostelyov** was born in 1979 in Volgograd and took his first piano lessons there. He graduated from the Moscow State Conservatoire in 2003 (from the composition class of Alexey Nikolayev). In 2005 he completed his composition studies in the postgraduate course of the Moscow State Conservatoire in the composition class of Valery Kikta; in the harpsichord class he was assistant to Tatiana Zenaishvili. Since 2005 he has worked as an accompanist in the percussion classes of Valentin Snegiryov and Victor Grishin. He was awarded a special diploma as 'Best Accompanist' in the Rimsky-Korsakov Wind and Percussion Instruments Competition in St Petersburg in 2005. As a pianist, he has performed with the Russian State Symphony Orchestra, Volgograd Philharmonic Orchestra and Russkaya Conservatoria Chamber Capella. He appears as pianist and harpsichordist in many Russian cities, including, in Moscow, the Conservatoire and the International House of Music. In 2012 he performed in the Irish-Russian chamber-music festival 'From John Field to the 21st Century' in Moscow. He has made several recordings of chamber works of contemporary Russian composers, including Yuri Abdokov, Vassily Nikolayev and Fyodor Stepanov. His first recording for Toccata Classics was of song-cycles by Mieczysław Weinberg (TOCC 0078).



**Maria Dzhemesiuk** (second piano) – who also plays under her married name of Orlova – graduated with honours from the Moscow State Conservatoire in 2002, from the piano class of Irina Plotnikova. From 2002 to 2004 she was a postgraduate student of the Conservatoire, in the chamber-music class of Alexander Bonduryansky. From 2002 to 2005 she worked as an accompanist in the violin class of Irina Bochkova, and as an accompanist she played with Bochkova students in such competitions as the International Henryk Wieniawski Youth Competition (2003), Yehudi Menuhin Competition (London, 2004), and Paganini Competition (Moscow, 2005).



Belinsky,<sup>5</sup> Herzen<sup>6</sup>...). And at the beginning of the 21st century, now that the fog of Soviet dissimulation has dispersed, the few composers in whom that cultural continuity was maintained are being rediscovered. It would not be right to call them 'anti-Soviet'; instead, they are rooted not so much in a class as in the land since, as a rule, they are descendants from aristocratic, military or peasant milieux.

Nikolai Ivanovich Peyko (1916–95), one of the most important figures in twentieth-century Russian music, is such a non-Soviet, profoundly Russian composer. Together, the quality of his music and his importance as a teacher (at the Moscow Conservatory and Gnessin College) place him at the summit of Russian cultural life, and yet he spent a large part of his life in voluntary inner retreat. At the height of his activity as composer, teacher and performer (conductor and pianist), Peyko was communicative and sympathetic, always open to a friendly conversation – and capable of fierce argument, sparing neither rank nor insignia. His qualities made him the centre of attraction for serious musicians, other intellectuals and, especially, young people. Although like his teacher Myaskovsky, he was often surrounded by numerous students, admirers (both sincere and opportunist) and grateful performers and listeners, he kept his distance from anything superficial, showy and false. He was above all a thinking artist, an intellectual of the highest rank. I am proud to say that I was his last student in Gnessin College (I graduated from there in 1992) and his friend.

Peyko was a native – or autochthonic, as he preferred to say – Muscovite, born on 25 March (12 Old Style) 1916. His initial education came from within his cultured Orthodox family. His first instruction in music came from his father, Ivan Ignatievich Peyko (1886–1937), a former officer, a man of wide knowledge, a lawyer and an excellent musician. Music was heard in Peyko's home nearly every day, when two of his father's friends – a violinist and a cellist, both professional musicians – came round, and their music-making would last for many hours, with performances of Mozart, Beethoven, Glazunov, Glinka, Schumann, Schubert and many others. Young Nikolai's musical talent was discovered very early on. His creative gift showed itself first of all in a phenomenal musical memory (a capacity he retained all his life) and a natural ability at the keyboard. By the age of fifteen he knew from memory both volumes of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, an impressive range of classical symphonies, Glazunov's quartets and many of Rimsky-Korsakov's operas – music that enchanted him from a young age. Musicians who came into contact with Peyko in later years were astonished by his encyclopaedic knowledge not only

<sup>5</sup> Vissarion Belinsky (1811–48) was a self-taught literary commentator, an individualist and a fierce critic of the existing order in Tsarist Russia.

<sup>6</sup> The writings of Alexander Herzen (1812–70), sometimes called 'the father of Russian socialism', helped stimulate the demand for social change in Russia; treading a fine line between the radicals who thought him too conciliatory and the liberals who found him too shrill, Herzen warned – ultimately in vain – against the subjugation of the individual conscience to grandiose ideologies.

of music but also of great literature. But although he was one of the best educated musicians of his time, he never paraded his learning; instead, while he could recite prose by Goncharov, Leskov or Platonov, poems of Alexei Tolstoy and much else to his students for a couple of hours by heart, what he primarily communicated to his listeners was his amazement and delight in the workings of the creative mind.

Peyko was ten when he started to compose, writing little piano pieces and songs to lyrics by Lermontov, with titles like *Waves and Humans*, *Amidst the Exuberant Feast Thoughtful He Sat* and so on. For a time B. V. Pomerantsev, a well-known piano-teacher, guided the young composer's musical studies, but most of Peyko's early education was unassisted. His father was very attentive to what his son was learning. For instance, having noticed Nikolai's interest in logic and construction, he explained to him the elementary rules of chess, and from that moment music and chess remained the main interests in Peyko's life. Much later, when Peyko faced the dilemma of choosing a career, music gained the upper hand, but he used to find a kind of second wind in his chess duels with Sergei Prokofiev or, much later, in games with a chess computer.<sup>7</sup> Throughout his life, chess helped him to regain peace of mind and concentration.

Peyko finished his seven years of secondary school in 1931. It may seem odd that such a gifted youth should then continue his education with a factory apprenticeship and finish it with a job as a machine turner, but such aberrations were not uncommon in the Soviet Union. The reason was simple: his father, a former White Guard officer and thus an evident outlaw in the 'new' Russia, was already in danger and, although a former officer and qualified lawyer, Ivan Peyko had to forget about working in his profession. It was music that saved them: Ivan served as a music-teacher in Moscow's Secondary School No. 302 – although, in 1931, he had only six years of life ahead of him to see his son's first professional success as a composer.

As Nikolai recollected, what happened to him next resembled a dream. Employed in the workshops of the Kazansky Railway Station in Moscow, he wounded his hand badly. During his enforced sick-leave, by chance he met some teachers from the musical 'technicum' (something like a high school, later called a college) of the Moscow Conservatoire. They were struck not only by his natural abilities but also by his unusually serious attitude to everything related to music and, most of all, by the colossal amount of academic knowledge he had already acquired on his own. He was therefore enrolled in the musical technicum of the Moscow Conservatoire, where he took two main subjects, composition and piano.

<sup>7</sup> From his childhood, Peyko had still another non-musical gift. He was an excellent and enthusiastic sportsman. He played lawn tennis until the age of 70. Unlike Shostakovich, who tried to excite his younger friend and colleague with his rapturous enthusiasm for football, Peyko preferred sports (such as tennis and volleyball) where, as he said, contestants do not come into direct and 'rough' contact with one another. Of contact sports, his preference was for fencing: as a young man he took professional fencing lessons with a master who had instructed young officers in pre-Revolutionary days and barely escaped the purges of the 1930s.

reflected in the left. The Toccata is written as a rondo with one episode. The theme is two parts with a short reprise, the second part echoing the chords of the Prelude although this time they are already included in the onward motion of the Toccata. The sole episode of the rondo consists in its turn of two sections, the first a march-like tread strung into the continuous toccata motion, and the second a bridge to the refrain. The refrain is followed by a dynamic repetition of the Prelude leading to a rapid coda. The second-movement *Nocturne* [14] takes a three-part concentric form. The austerity of the outer sections is remarkable: a minimum number of notes, the registers expanded as widely as possible to create an atmosphere of sacred inner silence. In the second panel, a semblance of canon appears, but it is not strict. The middle section begins with material the origins of which are can be traced back to the *Bylina* of almost a decade earlier. In the subsequent development of this movement, the vivid theme of the outer parts in D minor is sounded in a 'cinematically' accelerated fast tempo. Tritonal opposition is a feature of the complex tonal plan of the *Concert Triptych*. The culminating statement of the 'Bylina' theme in C major seems to be 'illuminated' from inside with a double bar in *forte*. The tension of the reprise of the first theme originates from the tonal relationship of D major and A flat major. The third movement, a 'Waltz-Poem' in C major [15], takes the form of a rondo with three episodes. The first two follow with a short bridge where only a hint of the accompaniment texture can be guessed at. Both episodes are based on transformed material from the first movement. The first episode (in B minor) is based on the episode bridge, and the second (A flat minor) on the refrain of the Toccata. The third episode (E flat major-G flat major) is built upon transformed material of the main theme of the *Nocturne*, which evolves into a whimsical ternary march. An unexpected turning-point comes with a magical reappearance of the Prelude theme in *piano* and, just as unexpectedly, the work is completed in a fast C major coda.

*Yuri Abdokov (born 1967) was a student of Nikolai Peyko and Boris Tchaikovsky. On their initiative, in 1996 he was invited to teach at the Department of Composition of the Moscow Conservatoire, where he is currently a professor. As well as teaching an individual composing class, he is the head of the course in History of Orchestral Styles for composers and operatic and symphonic conductors and the orchestration class. He is the chairman of the commission for the creative and literary heritage of Nikolai Peyko and the keeper of his archive. Parallel to his activity in the Conservatoire, he was from 2000 to 2007 chair of composition in the Academy of Choral Art and, since 2001, has been Professor of the Moscow Academy of Choreography. He is the Director of the international creative workshop 'Terra musica' (which takes place in Russia, Italy and Germany) and the author of over one hundred scientific papers on the theory, history and practice of orchestral writing and orchestral styles.*

provide a kind of answer.

The Sonatina No. 2 in C minor (1957) is an emotion-laden, dynamically developing lyrical diptych. The first movement, *Moderato con moto* [7], is a miniature sonata, and the second, *Allegro energico* [8], a rondo with two themes. The primary material of the first movement is echoed in the coda.

The *Bylina* (1965) [9] exposes this Old Russian epic song – which praises the deeds of distant historical figures – to the transformative power of Peyko's imagination, subjecting its basically static premise to considerable motoric development. Formally, it is highly inventive, being a rapidly evolving toccata-like fugato preceded by a tripartite introduction, the outer sections of which are diatonic and the central panel, which is developed, pentatonic, on the black keys. At the same time Peyko retains elements of the epic *bylina*, not least the trichordal repetition of melodic formulas, and the opening *bylina* tune is occasionally recalled as the work proceeds; the toccata material, too, uses brief motifs in statement and answer that are typical of Russian folk-music. In the final bars, the opening *bylina* tune returns *staccato*, like a solemn proclamation, balancing the structure, but the lack of harmonic resolution seems to suggest that the music could continue indefinitely.

The large-scale Sonata No. 2 (1972–75) was written thirty years after the First and from the first note to the last is deeply imbued with a sense of magic, the atmosphere of the Russian *skazka*, or fairytale. Although Peyko does not use original folk-material, the music contains features typical of the Russian epic song and folk-music in general, most obviously in the complicated rhythms of folk prosody and trichordal formulas. The work fuses a severe archaic element and an elated lyricism, the continuous thematic development of the material playing out the tension between the two extremes of epic stasis and dramatic action. Ethnographic elements – stern narrative, battle cry, touches of folk humour (such as a minstrel-clown dance-tune) – take place within the narrow range of thirds and fourths; bell-sounds, especially, are archetypically Russian. Aspects of 'folk-epic' material can be heard cross the work, in the first movement [10], the outer sections of the second movement [11] and in the refrain and first episode of the final rondo [12]. The dramaticisation of the 'folk epic' line, though interesting in its own right, also throws the lyrical characteristics of the Sonata into relief, and they dominate in the middle episodes of the second and third movements, with the cantilena melodies expressively tinged with Lydian and Dorian modal colour. The second episode of the rondo becomes the culmination of the lyrical line, here achieving a kind of 'triumph of the light' in the teeth of struggle.

Peyko's masterly *Concert Triptych* for Two Pianos (1986) is one of the most popular works in the Russian piano-duo literature. The first movement, a Prelude and Toccata in D minor [13], has a concentric mirror form. The initial chords are stated in one of Peyko's favourite patterns, with the right-hand part

He finished the technicum in 1937 and entered the department of composition of the Conservatoire in spring that same year. Nikolai Myaskovsky, who became Peyko's mentor at the Conservatoire, insisted – highly exceptionally – that he be admitted directly to the third year. Myaskovsky did not conceal his admiration for Peyko, who maintained his artistic and professional dignity rather than flirt with the concerns of the age. Later on, Myaskovsky made Peyko his assistant in the composing class and insisted that he be promoted to high-level teaching. When Peyko's First Symphony was performed in the Grand Hall of the Conservatoire in 1945, Myaskovsky delightedly exclaimed to the musicologist Pavel Lamm, his closest friend: 'This is how symphonies should be written!' That recollection was told to me by Lamm's adopted daughter, Olga Pavlovna Lamm – whom I last saw in the Church of the Resurrection in Uspensky Vrazhek (in central Moscow) in early July 1995, at Peyko's funeral. I recall clearly what Olga Pavlovna told me in conversation then:

I remember how reverently Myaskovsky regarded Nikolai Ivanovich – with tenderness, with great love. He saw him as his continuation both in teaching and in music. You know, in November 1937 I saw Myaskovsky, on an errand from Daddy, just at the moment when Nikolai Ivanovich came to the Conservatoire right after the night arrest of his father. Someone has already told Myaskovsky what had happened. When Nikolai Ivanovich entered the classroom, Myaskovsky stood up quickly, came up to him also quickly, with a sure step, and embraced and kissed him in front of everyone, including the 'biographers and observers'. Without words... They looked into each other's eyes for a long time, in complete silence.... Myaskovsky regarded Nikolai Ivanovich as his son, especially after 1937.

Ivan Ignatievich Peyko did not long survive his arrest: it later became known that he was executed on 27 November 1937<sup>8</sup> as a public enemy and 'British spy' (he spoke English well, and French and German, too). This tragic episode was not the last ordeal faced by the composer and his family.

His young age notwithstanding, Peyko was by common consent one of the most reputable and sought-after teachers at the Conservatoire. Apart from composing and orchestration classes, he gave lectures on the history of music. It is telling that Dmitry Shostakovich who became a professor of the Moscow Conservatoire, sadly only briefly,<sup>9</sup> asked Shebalin, its director and later Peyko's closest friend, that Peyko be made his teaching assistant.

Peyko married as soon as he turned nineteen. There are biographies where such a detail is merely a

<sup>8</sup> He was one of over 20,000 political prisoners shot and buried in the Butovo Range south of Moscow.

<sup>9</sup> After the notorious 'Zhdanov resolution' of 1948, Shostakovich was accused of 'formalism' and the 'corruption' of young musicians and dismissed from the Conservatoire.



circumstantial fact hardly deserving special mention. In Peyko's case it is quite different. When his wife, Irina Mikhailovna Peyko-Obolensky, died in 1988, the normally far-from-sentimental Peyko wrote to me: 'I have lost my luminous guardian angel, whose love was a phenomenal gift of fate to me'. He was to outlive her by seven years, struggling against illness all the while. Irina Mikhailovna had blue blood: she came from the Obolensky family on the paternal side and from the Moussin-Pushkin family on the maternal side. For many decades, the Peyko home was a refuge and haven for a host of aristocratic relatives, often impoverished and unsettled, trying to escape persecution by the Soviet authorities. Peyko and his wife, and later his children (especially his daughter, Tatiana Nikolaevna), cared for these marvellous Obolensky, Trubetskoy and Moussin-Pushkin aunts and grannies who spoke the language of holy Russia, a language everyone else had lost, as Peyko himself noted. They were fragments of a Russia that was gone forever, and it was this Russia, retained in prayers and attitudes, that determined the atmosphere in Peyko's wonderful home.

Peyko began to reveal the most tragic details of his life only in his last years. One episode is representative of many. The composer's mother-in-law, Princess Obolensky, whose husband was executed in 1937, and whose son was tortured to death in a Soviet concentration camp in 1941, lived in misery somewhere near Mozhaik, to the west of Moscow – 'Minus 100', as they used to say in those days.<sup>10</sup> She was severely ill. The young couple did their best to relieve her hard existence. When in 1946 the princess died, not even the planks for a coffin were available, and so they had to make one themselves from the door of their room, and in the driving rain these two young people carried the coffin to the local graveyard on a hearse – also improvised, from a pram.

One important element in Peyko's artistic life was stimulated by an ethnographical expedition to Yakutia – a huge expanse of territory in north-eastern Siberia<sup>11</sup> – in 1939 with the musicologist Yakov Shteiman. That fabulous land had a lasting impression on him. The melodies of the epic *olonkho*<sup>12</sup> and Yakutia's breathtaking natural surroundings enchanted him. The result was his first large orchestral work, the symphonic suite *From Yakutian Legends* (1940–41), an example of specific, and original, Russian orchestral impressionism. The suite was an instant success and was often performed in the Soviet Union by some of the most prominent conductors – before 1948. The score somehow found its way also to

<sup>10</sup> Soviet citizens deemed a security risk were prohibited from settling in, or close to, large cities.

<sup>11</sup> Yakutia, now called the Sakha Republic, covers an area that, at 3.1 km<sup>2</sup>, is only slightly smaller than India and yet it has fewer than one million inhabitants. In Tsarist and Communist times it was used as a place of exile, but has latterly become important because of its mineral wealth.

<sup>12</sup> *Olonkho* is the epic verse of the Sakha (or Yakut) people, each generally running to between 10,000 and 20,000 verses (the longest reaching 36,000). An *olonkho* can take up to seven nights to sing in its entirety, by specialised narrator-singers.

### Peyko's Piano Music

Peyko's piano works are, with few exceptions, large sonata and sonata-variation compositions. Peyko believed that sonata thinking was the most perfect form of musical expression, one which was unfailingly renewable, and the piano works he wrote throughout his life bear witness to that belief. His piano music demands considerable pianistic ability, and he is unusually demanding of the left hand. His innate pianism meant that he could often produce an effect of four, even eight, hands at the keyboard.

Although Peyko wrote fewer compositions for piano than for orchestra, they form a spontaneous cycle of a novel type, with sonatas, sonatinas, the *Sonata for the Left Hand*, two large-scale two-piano works and other pieces in various forms. Furthermore, they supplement one another, making manifest the stages of his creative progress and building up, when viewed as a whole, a kind of piano epic. The piano music is independent of his orchestral music but it does reflect his symphonic aims. As a rule, he composed piano music in brief spells of 'rest' between work on large symphonic scores, and often even simultaneously with work on symphonies. The symphonic characteristics of his piano music are not limited to his architectonic skill and sophisticated polyphonic thinking. Virtually any of his piano works is a detailed orchestral draft. Indicatively, both sonatinas were orchestrated by the author, becoming his *Sinfoniettas* Nos. 2 and 3. Shostakovich wanted very much to orchestrate the *Sonatina-Skazka* (1943),<sup>22</sup> as well as the song-cycle *Broken Lines* (1944) to words by Chinese poets; regrettably, Peyko talked his older friend out of it. The *Concert Variations* (1983) and *Concert Triptych* (1988), Peyko's two works for two pianos, are outstanding examples of piano symphonism, in terms of both design and timbre.

The *Ballade* in B minor (1940) [1] is an example of piano 'painting' typical of Peyko, applying subtle impressionistic development to material related to the intonation of Yakut mythic poetry. The music reflects the impressions of Peyko's visit to Yakutia and his hearing the *olonkho* epic during his ethnographical expedition. The theme of Yakutian song appears in the central section of the composition, which is an original variation-cycle with the form A-B-B1-B2-A.

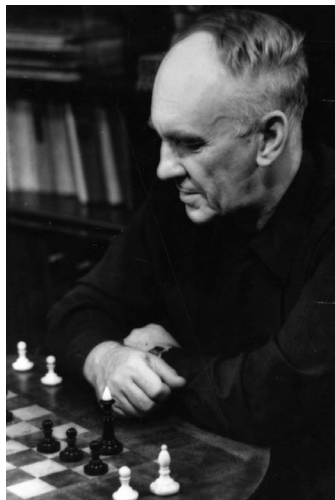
Although the four-movement Sonata No. 1 in E minor (1946–54) appears highly contrasted, with rebellious drama in the *Allegro con agitazione* first movement (which follows a *Moderato* introduction) [2] and introspective lyricism in the *Allegro* fourth [5] – enclosing the *Allegretto* scherzo [3] and brittle *Andante sostenuto* chorale [4] which form the middle movements – it is unified in the shared thematic roots of all four movements. It shows Peyko's ability to adapt and expand the classical sonata framework.

The Variations in E minor (1957) [6] form an intriguing essay in compositional rhetoric: the ascetic, serially derived theme on which they are based poses a question to which the five variations and coda

<sup>22</sup> To be released on the second Toccata Classics volume of Peyko's piano music, TOCC 0105.

young people from the Institute of Physics and Technology or the Moscow University came, too. For many of them, Peyko's last lessons are among the brightest memories of their youth.

He was not a man for grandiloquence and self-promotion. A month or so before he died, he talked to me about it quite calmly and assuredly a month before the event itself, and in the days immediately before he died he seemed to become insubstantial and somehow transfigured – in a way hardly imaginable even by those who had known him for decades. His creative fire, clear mind, his humour and ironic view of himself, and his surprisingly strong memory did not fail him, right to the end. He died quietly, without complaint, in his office-apartment in Kamergersky Lane, in the very heart of Moscow, on 1 July 1995. Several hours beforehand, he asked his daughter to play him a recording of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Snow Maiden*. Having listened through to the end, he said several times: 'I love and I'm melting away',<sup>18</sup> quoting from the opera he had adored since childhood. The priest-doctor who came a little later, unaware of what had gone before, said: 'Don't bother him, he is melting away...'



A few days earlier, in the presence of students conscious of his unusual physical weakness, he recited by heart from *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*<sup>19</sup> in Zabolotsky's translation<sup>20</sup> for well over an hour and, after a brief rest, from his favourite *Rubruck in Mongolia*;<sup>21</sup> after that, he gazed at the pattern of a 'standstill' composition on the chess table.

<sup>18</sup> In Act IV of *The Snow Maiden* Snegurochka, the Snow Maiden, finally realises she loves the merchant Mizgir and steps from the shade to declare her love – and melts away in the glare of the sun.

<sup>19</sup> The Georgian national epic, written by Shota Rustaveli (1172–1261) and first published in 1712.

<sup>20</sup> Nikolai Zabolotsky (1903–58), modernist poet, translator and children's writer, and a co-founder of the avant-gardist arts collective Oberiu; Peyko, a friend of his, valued his poetry very highly.

<sup>21</sup> Unfinished poem of Zabolotsky. The Flemish William of Rubruck (c. 1220–c. 1293) was a Franciscan missionary charged by Louis IX of France to convert the Tatars to Christianity; in 1254 he reached as far as Karakorum in Mongolia, the seat of the court of the Great Khan of the Mongol empire. His account of his travels is considered one of the masterpieces of Mediaeval geographical writing.

the west, where Stokowski conducted it, as well as another early symphonic masterpiece of Peyko's, the *Moldavian Suite* (1949–50).

The onset of Peyko's creative maturity coincided with his graduation from the Conservatoire in 1940 (his graduation work was the *Sinfonietta* No. 1 for symphony orchestra). The Patriotic War of 1941–45<sup>13</sup> changed his fate abruptly. In 1942 he was conscripted to the army, into a school for assistant doctors which provided medical qualifications. What the young cadet witnessed in front-line hospitals became what he called a school of active compassion, which at the same time taught him self-possession and patience. The ethical and moral experience of war was reflected in many of his works, the early ones being the *Dramatic Overture* (1941), the suite *From War Days* (1941–43) for voice and orchestra and the First Symphony (1944–45).

The campaign against 'formalism' launched in 1948 was a blow not only to well-known composers like Myaskovsky, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Khachaturian and Popov, but also to their best students. Many of Peyko's works – in particular the splendid vocal cycle *Harlem Night Sounds* to lyrics by American poets (1945) – were banned from performance by the Repertoire Committee. Peyko's stand during the shameful dismissal of Shostakovich from the Conservatoire won him his colleagues' respect, but was noted by the 'apostles' of cultural supervision and so he, too, was expelled. The composer Karen Khachaturian<sup>14</sup> told me on several occasions that Peyko's dismissal was no less harmful to the Conservatoire than the discharge of Shostakovich. Indirectly, this change entailed the establishment of a unique composing department in Gnessin College, which is where Peyko then went. Of course, composition had been taught there before he arrived (by its co-founder Mikhail Gnessin to begin with, as well as by Aram Khachaturian, Shebalin and others), but that department acquired its genuine, unconventional face only under Peyko's leadership, which I would dare describe as 'monarchic', in the best sense – not haughty, absolute rule, but an aristocratic nobility of regard for the teachers and students. A few did oppose him: for some teachers his presence imposed what they condemned as exorbitant professional and ethical requirements, and some of the students complained that his standards restricted their 'free' choice. In total, over one hundred composers, conductors and musicologists from various countries obtained their degrees under his aegis; and countless more attended his seminars, many of whom went on to become well-known musicians.

<sup>13</sup> In Russia the Second World War – which for the Soviet Union began when Hitler launched 'Operation Barbarossa' on 22 June 1941 – is generally referred to as the 'Great Patriotic War'.

<sup>14</sup> Karen Surenovich Khachaturian (1920–2011), nephew of the better-known Aram Khachaturian, student of Shostakovich and Myaskovsky, professor of the Moscow Conservatory, composer of four symphonies, concertos for piano and cello, the ballet *Cippolino* and oratorio *A Moment of History* and a number of chamber pieces, *inter alia*.

Peiko successfully combined his composing and teaching with active concertising as conductor and pianist, performing mainly his own music. As conductor he made a number of splendid recordings with the Large Symphony Orchestra of the USSR Radio and Television (of his Fifth Symphony and the *Symphony-Concerto*, for example), and as pianist he performed all of his own works for piano solo and chamber works with piano, among them a remarkable account of the Piano Quintet with the Borodin Quartet. His music was taken up by the country's best musicians, among them Rudolf Barshai, Alexander Gauk, Arvids Jansons, Natan Rakhlin, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Evgeny Svetlanov, Viktor Tretyakov, Algis Žiūraitis, the Borodin, Shostakovich and Prokofiev Quartets, and many others. First performances of Peiko's music in the Large and Small Halls of the Moscow Conservatoire, Tchaikovsky Hall, Hall of Columns of the House of Unions and elsewhere became mileposts of Russian cultural life.

Among the colleagues close to Peiko personally as well as professionally, as well as Myaskovsky, Prokofiev, Shebalin and Shostakovich, I should mention Revol Bunin, Herman Galynin, Karen Khachaturian, Gavriil Popov, Boris Tchaikovsky, Andrey Volkonsky and Mieczysław Weinberg. In his youth, Peiko was also on very friendly terms with Georgy Sviridov. Peiko's astonishing sight-reading abilities were 'exploited' by many people – Shostakovich, who liked live playing at his lessons, among them – and Peiko was a constant partner in eight-hand sessions in Pavel Lamm's house, where many musical novelties from home and abroad were played in an ensemble with Myaskovsky, Shebalin and Svyatoslav Richter.

Peiko was above all an outstanding symphonist, a master of exquisite and unconventional orchestral writing. His nine symphonies (1944–45, 1946, 1957, 1965, 1969, 1972, 1980, 1986, 1990) and *Symphony-Concerto* (1974) constitute a symphonic cycle unique in the history of Russian music because of Peiko's approach to the genre as a whole, the individual form of each symphony, perfect orchestration and, not least, the high ethical tone of the music. The Fourth and Fifth Symphonies especially, the 'oratorio-opera' *A Night of Czar Ivan* (1968–78) and the Piano Quintet (1961) deserve a place in the international mainstream. Peiko's huge output also includes many other large works of different forms and genres, among them the ballets *The Winds of Spring* (1950), *Joan of Arc* (1953–56) and *The Birch Grove* (1964), a Piano Concerto (1942–43), three *Sinfoniettas* (1940, 1955, 1957), a *Fantasia Concertante on Finnish Themes* for violin and orchestra (1953), four string quartets (1962, 1965, 1976, 1987), an amazing Decimet (1971) and the *Quintet Variations* for string quartet and piano (1990), much music for voice and piano, and many instrumental and chamber works for a wide range of forces.

Music for theatrical productions and radio broadcasts based on Russian, European and American literature and drama takes a major place in Peiko's output: he wrote over forty such scores, the best known

among them being his music for productions at the Maly Theater by Igor Ilyinsky<sup>15</sup> – Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Gogol's *The Government Inspector* and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. Boris Livanov, prominent actor and director of the Moscow Art Theatre, invited Peiko to write for his production of Chekhov's *Seagull* and other plays. Stage-directors liked to work with a symphonic composer who could perfectly orient himself in theatre.

Peiko also had a serious literary talent. His very speech was an example to follow, and not only because he was a superb story-teller in the Dickensian manner. His language used the vocabulary of Russian humanist culture largely lost in Soviet times. It was noble, and full of aristocratic dignity. His impressive literary heritage gives ample proof of his literary and analytical talent. It includes multiple recollections of Myaskovsky, Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Shebalin and memoirs and diaries not yet published.<sup>16</sup> His published essays, which are well known in Russia, are brilliant in their observations, though they cover a very wide range of music, from Berlioz and Rimsky-Korsakov to Messiaen and Lutosławski.

The last decade of Peiko's life was one of self-sacrifice. A series of strokes left him partially paralysed. He had barely recovered before he began to compose, research, conduct and teach again. His last, extraordinary orchestral work, *Twelve Aphorisms and Postludium* (1993), scored for a large orchestra, and the *Sonata for the Left Hand* (1992) were written by a man who was virtually motionless. He remained cheerful enough to make puns at his sudden feebleness; for instance, he wrote 'Stroke greetings!' in his letters instead of the usual 'Sporty greetings!'<sup>17</sup> I had to decode his much-changed handwriting, making clean copies of his new scores. Like others, I was amazed at the boldness and youth freshness and brightness of the creative ideas of an artist who, physically, was fading. His last ordeal was irradiation in the oncology hospital in Kashirka, in south Moscow. After a week's stay in the hospital, Peiko started taking taxis home on the days when he was not required to be there and began teaching again – an arrangement which lasted for almost two years! I often brought friends, composers, pianists and conductors from the Conservatoire and Gnessin College to these lessons – and often not only musicians:

<sup>15</sup> Igor Vladimirovich Ilyinsky (1901–87) began his career as an actor on stage and then in silent films, joining the Maly Theater in 1938 and remaining there for almost fifty years; he began to direct from the mid-1960s, *Madame Bovary* being his first production.

<sup>16</sup> Peiko kept diaries throughout his life. At his own request, his daughter and I destroyed most of them not long before his death. The chess notebooks and main sheet-music archive of his manuscripts were handed over in full to the Glinka Museum in 1995. Since 1996 I have held some of the diaries and the major part of the memoirs dictated by Peiko to his daughter Tatiana Nikolaevna in 1994–95 and edited by himself, as well as many other documents. My experience in publishing the memoirs of some important figures in twentieth-century Russian musical and literary life tells me that the time to bring out Peiko's diaries and memoirs has not yet come.

<sup>17</sup> In Russian, инсультпривет (insul'tprivet) instead of физкультпривет (fizkul'tprivet).