

Leningrad Symphonies

Northern Flowers


Yevlakhov • Falik • Slonimsky

Leningrad Philharmonic

Orchestra

Jansons

Dmitriev

Gusman

ST. PETERSBURG MUSICAL ARCHIVE

МУЗЫКАЛЬНЫЙ АРХИВ ПЕТЕРБУРГА

Leningrad Symphonies

Orest Yevlakhov: *Symphony No. 3, Op. 35* (1967)

1 I. Andante sostenuto - II. Allegro marcato	12:33
2 III. Andante - IV. Andante maestoso ma con moto	15:53
3 V. Andante	6:27

Yuri Falik: *Light Symphony* (1971)

4 I. Allegro assai	4:31
5 II. Andantino	4:56
6 III Allegro bravura	2:40

Sergey Slonimsky: *Symphony No. 4* (1982)

7 I. Allegro scherzando - II. Andante	9:24
8 III. Allegro marziale	4:53
9 IV. Marcia funebre. Andante	13:55

Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra

1-3 **Arvid Jansons**, conductor

4-6 **Alexander Dmitriev**, conductor

7-9 **Israel Gusman**, conductor

Orest Alexandrovich Yevlakhov was born in Warsaw in 1912, into the family of Alexander Mikhailovich Yevlakhov, professor of Roman and German philology in the Warsaw University, and Ermionia Nikolaevna, a graduate of the Moscow Conservatory where she studied piano with Knobstabin Igumnov. After the German troops occupied Warsaw in 1914, the family moved to Rostov-on-Don. The future composer who had absolute pitch and excellent memory began to study music, and piano under his mother's direction. In 1923, they moved to Minsk, and in 1925, to Baku. Yevlakhov finished ten-year school there, and entered the Technical College of Music, and in 1930, the theoretical department of the Baku Conservatory. It was in Baku, in the Radio Committee orchestra, that he got first serious orchestral practice; he worked as the orchestra's librarian, he played percussions and piano in it, and he was in charge of various orchestra groups as assistant conductor.

Yevlakhov felt that the Caucasus was getting too 'small' for him, and in the summer of 1932, he went to Leningrad. In 1936, Orest Alexandrovich finished college and entered the Leningrad Conservatory, to study composition with Dmitry Shostakovich who was beginning his teaching activity at the Conservatory. In 1947, Yevlakhov began teaching composition and orchestration at the Conservatory, and achieved amazing results in his legacy. From 1960 and up to his last day, he headed the chair of composition and orchestration. Among his many students were B. Tishchenko, A. Petrov, S. Slonimsky, G. Okunev, S. Banevich, I. Schwarz, and B. Gavrilin. Orest Yevlakhov died in Leningrad in 1973.

The composer's heritage includes the ballets *The Day of Miracles*, *The Little Willow Tree*, and *The Bronze Saga*; the vocal symphonic cycle *Leningrad*; three symphonies; five suites for orchestra; Piano Concerto; Poem-Concerto for violin with orchestra; Piano Trio; Piano Quintet; *Suite on Folk Themes* for string quartet; Piano Sonata; Sonata for

Violin and Piano; Ballad for Cello and Piano; compositions for chorus, pedagogical compositions, and music for theatre and cinema. His *1st Symphony*; *Night Patrol* etc in on NFPMA 9988 (also 'wartime music').

The Third Symphony created in 1967 is one of the most impressive, important, and perfect works of the composer. Yevlakhov, who had experienced the terrible siege years himself, dedicated it to the resistance of Leningrad. To an extent, the events of that heroic time were also reflected in Yevlakhov's first two symphonies. But it was in the *Third*, written much later than his other works on the war themes, that the composer was the deepest and most convincing embodying all he had endured in the blockaded City under siege.

The first movement (Andante sostenuto) is perceived as a small introduction, which tunes our perception to a dramatically excited narrative. The symphony's main thematism is formed here, and here, too, is the nature of the further development defined. The leading theme of the Third Symphony is the main character of the whole drama. Yevlakhov called it the people's theme, but its figural content is not limited to just this definition. This theme holds great potential for development, and it is on its basis that a manly, sternly heroic theme of struggle and resistance emerges, that will play a serious role in the last two movements.

The second movement (Allegro marcato) is a grotesquely accentuated scherzo, with ominous images dominating in it. Its start is the symphony's leading theme as reconceived and modified in timing and rhythms. Passages of low-pitched strings and bassoon run by like visionary rustles. Some deadness is felt in the mechanistic ostinatos. The movement's large section of an offensive march nature evokes ominous associations with the Nazi invasion.

The third movement (Andante) is an intermezzo, a lyrical excursion. It is full of deep emotions. After the dynamic scherzo, the harps' octaves pulse surprisingly quiet and

cadenced, like metronome clicks, a symbol of the troubled days and nights of the siege. The action is abruptly retarded. The heartfelt, grief-laden monologue of muted violins sounds like a talk with oneself.

The Symphony's dramatic centre is its fourth movement (*Andante maestoso, ma con moto*). This part also performs the function of a finale, since it is here that the turn of the tide appears in the dramatic action development, it is here that the conflict of opposing forces is settled. It is the pivot and culmination of the drama. The idea of perseverance, the idea of determined rebuff against the enemy is asserted in it. The large complex architecture of this movement is subdivided into several episodes, each consistently developing the idea of resistance. The tempo change factor has a great role here. The music of this movement is infused with heroic and dramatic spirit, which can be felt from the very first bars: the ascending motif in fourths chanted by the entire orchestra sounds like a warning bell, like an incitement to struggle. The movement's central section is a fugato. Nearly all of the leading theme's elements are involved into powerful punchy motion. Invoking motifs of fourths sound especially persistent in the "multi-tier" architecture. The entire development dynamics of the fourth movement is based on opposition of the struggle theme and the aggressive march from the scherzo. At the climax of the 'encounter', the thematism of the march falls apart, while the struggle theme is stated forcefully.

The final fifth movement (*Andante*) is a kind of summing up, the author's last word expressing pain of loss and joy in victory. The emotional violin solo evolves into a final trumpet call with the struggle theme, as a symbol of Leningrad's courage and endurance.

Yuri Falik (1936-2009) belongs to a generation whose creative and artistic consciousness was formed in the 1960s. He was a man of the era of Khrushchev's Thaw.

Falik cannot be irrevocably attached either to innovators or

to traditionalists; he did not invent a new sound system, but he was not chained with traditions, either. An excellent maestro possessing all kinds of composer's technique, he was selective in his attitude towards newly-invented techniques – he accepted them for the purposes of his artistic conception only. He looked for, and found, latent reserves in traditional genres and forms. The things in the foreground always were vibrancy of concept, persuasive power of solutions, thrilling plot and suspense of musical development, and beautiful sound.

Yuri Alexandrovich Falik was born in Odessa, a city famous for its musical traditions, on July 30, 1936. His father Alexander Falik was a musician in Odessa's Opera Theater, and used to take his son with him to performances. The gifted boy was absorbed in music from his childhood. Everything promised an early ascent of his talent, but the war destroyed that beautiful world. Father perished, and mother and son were evacuated to far Kirgizia, and isolated from music for several years. The depth and complexity of emotions in the early childhood affected not only the personality, but also the art of Yuri Falik.

In the postwar years, his fate was favorable to him. He triumphantly completed his education at the Leningrad Conservatory, first as cellist (studying with Alexander Shtrimer and Mstislav Rostropovich), and later as composer (in the classes of Yuri Balkashin and Boris Arapov). A brilliant career of virtuoso soloist was laid open before him (he won the first prize of the international competition of cellist in Helsinki), but he gave up this career of an instrumental musician for the sake of creativity as a composer. For the larger part of his life Yuri Falik was a professor in composition and instrumentation at the St. Petersburg (Leningrad) Conservatory. Falik successfully combined composition and teaching with work as a conductor. He was widely known in and outside Russia. He looked like a successful person, he was very charming, and he loved success. But first and foremost, he always was a

profound artist.

Among the many other works of Falik on Northern Flowers are: *First Concerto for Orchestra*, a second one ("Symphonic Etudes"), The Violin Concerto, Concerto della Passione (cello and orchestra), In Memorium Igor Stravinsky, and four of his eight String Quartets, and many more exist in Symphonic, Concerto, Choral and Chamber music styles.

The **Light Symphony** was initially called *Children's Symphony*. The first movement is a re-work of *Sinfonietta* composed in the days of youth, before entering the conservatory, while the second and third movements are based on material from the soundtrack to the ballet film *Theme and Variations*. In that film, whose characters are leading ballet stars of the Kirov (Mariinsky) Theater, the well-known ballet master Georgiy Aleksidze demonstrated a lesson of ballet. Although the symphony is made up of different compositions, it is a tight-knit cycle, for the material of previous opuses was now handled by a mature master.

The first movement is written in a sonata allegro form. The melodic material of the main and second theme is stylistically closer to Prokofiev's music. It is a fluid agile tune shooting out in fresh sprouts of unexpected modal and rhythmic turns. It's easy to imagine the similar theme in Prokofiev's *Seventh Symphony* as a rhythmic antecedent of the second theme, however it's in an absolutely different environment, accompanied by a signature scherzo march, and has no hymnal shade as in Prokofiev's, but rather a humorous one. The form also has Prokofievian traits, such as multiple display of themes in various aspects, or varied statements of the main and second theme in the exposition. The reprise has a peculiar solution where the main theme is 'drawn' into the development, and the second theme into the coda.

The second movement, *Andantino, a ballet lesson*, is written as a five-part rondo. The refrain is sustained in the spirit of

Prokofiev's lyrical female characters (Juliet and Natasha Rostova). The episodes are not much in contrast with the refrain. Still, new shades appear in them, a more expressive one (as in the first episode) and a more intensely characterised one (as in the second episode). The uniting principle is the common rhythmic pulse of a slow march.

The finale is also a march but quite different - vigorous and festive. It combines the lightness and energy of the finale of Prokofiev's *Seventh Symphony* and the bravura of the second theme of the *Ninth Symphony* of Shostakovich. But while with Shostakovich it is a parodic and grotesque march, this march is a vibrantly theatrical act.

Sergey Mikhailovich Slonimsky, a prominent Russian composer, was born into the family of the well-known writer Mikhail Slonimsky in 1932. He graduated from Leningrad Conservatory in 1955 in Composition (with Yevlakhov) and Piano (with Vladimir Nielsen). Since 1959, he has been teaching composition at Leningrad (Petersburg) Conservatory.

Sergey Slonimsky started his creative career as a champion of Western avant-garde techniques. Back in the early 1960s, he was one of the first in the Soviet Union to use dodecaphony, aleatorics, quartertones, micropolyphony, and elements of instrumental theater. Prominent among his compositions of that time are the flamboyant *Concerto Buffo* for chamber orchestra (1964) and *Antiphones* for string orchestra (1968). Slonimsky's music of later years, somewhat more conservative, has been marked by amazing diversity in genres, looking for new means of expression, and a unique interpretation of Russian folk music.

Slonimsky is the author of such operas as *Virineya* (1967), *Master and Margarita* (1972), *Mary Stuart* (1980), *Hamlet* (1990), *Visions of Ivan the Terrible* (1995), and *King Lear* (2001); the ballets *Icarus* and *The Magic Walnut*; 33 symphonies; two piano concertos, a violin concerto, a cello concerto, an organ concerto, an oboe concerto, and an electric guitar concerto; 24 preludes and fugues, sonatas,

and concert pieces for piano; a violin sonata and a cello sonata; the cantatas *A Voice from the Chorus* to poems by A. Blok and *Songs of Freeman*; songs to lyrics by Lermontov, Akhmatova, Mandelshtam, Rubtsov, Gorodnitsky, Brodsky, Kushner, and Rein, and *Merry Songs* to poems by Harms; and music to the films *The Republic of ShKID*, *The Intervention*, *Before the Trial of History*, and *My Life* (after A. P. Tchekhov), and to the stagings of *The Government Inspector* and *And Quiet Flows The Don* by G. Tovstonogov.

Symphony No. 4 is dedicated to the memory of the composer's father Mikhail Slonimsky. The first movement is defiantly short. Its laconic brevity and sculptural harshness of outlines were dictated by a very unusual first theme, which is later given the function of the symphony's main theme; unexpected as such, clear-cut in its triad attitude, biting, imperative, absolutely memorable, it also has melodic elements typical for Slonimsky – minor-major contrasts, and the indivisible combination of a traditional and non-traditional time. This scherzo ends in a soft reprise of the first theme against the light ostinato grumble of kettle-drums, proceeding in *attacca* to Andante, the second movement. The English horn theme opening this movement starts as if from the middle of an utterance. The smooth melodic development is interrupted by quiet but menacing acutely dissonant calls in fourths. This image is not incidental here, for it is to become a keynote of the symphony. But in opposition to it, a new lyrical theme is crystallized, a broad and free one. At the culmination, this theme runs into the symphony's first triad-march theme. This time it sounds not in a harmlessly light and trim scherzo, but in a theme of fate – fortissimo marcato by unison brass. The fate also shows itself in the coda, softly and closely in the basses, as in the first movement's coda.

The symphony's third movement, Allegro marziale, despite its brevity, is dynamic as the arena of struggle of accumulated internal conflicts and contradictions. At its

start, a menacing and biting sphere breaks out, accompanied by unison configurations of piano, xylophone, and woodwinds including intonations of the lyrical themes; they seem to be vigorously protesting. Through the thick of the tempest, a trumpet voice breaks with a straight, beautiful and resolute theme. Absorbing the intonations of previous lyrical themes and transforming them into a vigorous march-like parade with stubborn and determined syncopes, it is perceived as a theme of hero or credo. Taken up by bassoons, and then by low-pitched strings, it then passes to woodwinds, and then to tutti. It is here, in its full bloom, it is doomed to a collision with hostility, similar to the lyrical theme in the second movement. The growing strain leads to a culmination. This culmination is dedicated to the hero theme; the hero's image as sounded the last time still remains beautiful, strong, and live. However, the theme of fate crowning the life saga takes us back to reality.

All that has been heard so far in the three movements is in fact an entire symphony, with a finished and dramatic concept where the whole abundant world of images is uncovered, compared, and evaluated. The finale's funeral march is a requiem: grief, memory, lamentation worthy of a hero. The march is built up on a theme long as a final journey whose parts now continuously follow each other and then are broken into separate episodes. Needless to say that Slonimsky's musicianship and fantasy of orchestral thinking enabled him to create not only a live picture of the parade but also a well-balanced dynamic form. Without avoiding the theme in its unflinching integrity, the composer bravely ventured at its inevitable sharp turns. However, none of these was excessive. In the last culmination, the march theme is vertically combined with a chorale, not so long but powerful. Without doubt, Slonimsky found here an amazing line between applied genre proper and a high level of its symphonic generalization.

— *Northern Flowers*, translated by **Sergei Suslov**



Orest
Yevlakhov



Yuri
Falik



Sergey
Slonimsky

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