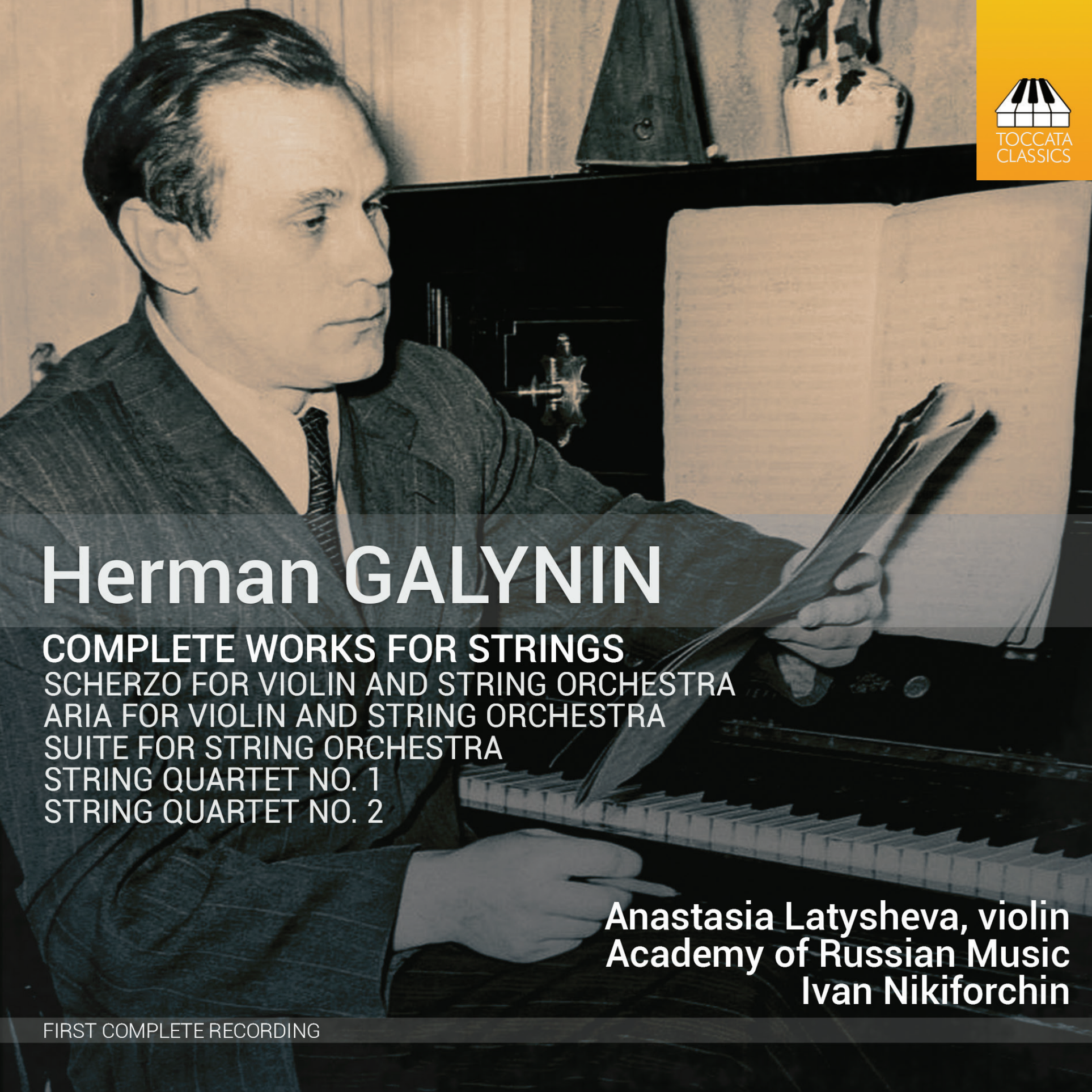

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HERMAN GALYNIN – A CANDLE BURNING AT BOTH ENDS

by Yuri Abdokov

The history of Herman Galynin – a musician considered a natural genius by his teachers Dmitry Shostakovich and Nikolai Myaskovsky – could provide the basis of a tumultuous novel, and this despite the fact that he lived for only 44 years, with the larger, and the more important, part of his output composed during the short time he spent as a student.

Herman Hermanovich Galynin[1] was born on 30 March 1922 in the ancient city of Tula, located in the north of the Central Russian Upland near the Upa river, 200 kilometres south of Moscow. Tula has long been famous for three diverse crafts that have become historical symbols of the city: weapons, samovars and gingerbread production.[2] The future composer came from a family of skilled workers at the Tula arms factory. He lost his parents at the age of seven[3] and, like hundreds of thousands of children after the Civil War in post-revolutionary Russia, became homeless. For two years, the boy wandered with a group of ragged and impoverished children of more or less the same age, earning his bread in street brawls, which often ended in the death of street children or their disappearance without trace. Herman was the fourth child in his family; the fate of his siblings is unknown. It is possible that the trials that befell him during this period of starved vagrancy fatally affected his life many years later.

In the mid-1930s, thousands of orphanages were opened across the country, thanks to which many orphans were not only physically safeguarded but also raised

[1] In some positions the Russian letter Г (ge) is conventionally transcribed into the Roman alphabet with an H. For Russians Galynin's first name and his patronymic both begin with a hard G.

[2] Tula is also famous for its Kremlin, a stone fortress in the centre of the city, an architectural monument from the sixteenth century.

[3] What happened to them is unknown.

with some degree of dignity. Many of the teachers in these boarding schools had begun their careers in the high schools of the Russian Empire and were people of considerable humanitarian culture and spiritual nobility. It is difficult to imagine how Galynin's life would have turned out if he had not come to the 'Lenin' orphanage in Tula in 1931. Here he not only had a roof over his head and regular food but the opportunity for the first time really to listen to himself, to what from his earliest years – inexplicably and persistently – was for him the main form of communication with the world around him: to the animated sound images that had haunted him for as long as he could remember. The composer Karen Khachaturian,[4] a friend of Galynin's from his conservatoire days, told me that Galynin, who had a photographic memory, reproduced in detail not only pictures of the homeless, and then of orphanage life, but was very proud that during his early formative years he was surrounded by wonderful people – as he said, they 'resounded with pure tone' in his soul throughout his life. The teachers at the orphanage strongly encouraged his interest in music and art, and the young Galynin painted a lot and with passion. Ivan Mikhailovich Maltsev, the head of the children's folk orchestra at the orphanage, became the boy's first and lifelong favourite musical mentor. Galynin independently mastered the piano – and how he mastered it! – as he also mastered almost all the instruments of the school orchestra. It is in this gift that something inexplicable, almost miraculous, is hidden. The idiosyncrasy of Galynin's pianism during his student years at the Moscow Conservatoire amazed everyone who had the opportunity to hear or see him at the piano. As Khachaturian recalled,

> It was breathtaking when Herman played his piano compositions, and especially the first concerto for piano and orchestra! Huge hands, some kind of anti-academic, unique hand-positioning and a phenomenal orchestral palette under these hand-wings. The technique is fantastic, incomparable and at the same time the most subtle nuances, those of jewelry. Thus, perhaps, Liszt could play. Of course, among the composers-students of that time

[4] Karen Surenovich Khachaturian (1920–2011) was the nephew of Aram Khachaturian and a student of Nikolai Myaskovsky, Vissarion Shebalin and Dmitry Shostakovich. He was a professor at the Moscow Conservatoire, where for many years he headed the department of orchestration. It was Karen Khachaturian (among many applicants) whom Igor Stravinsky chose as his secretary during his tour of the USSR in 1962.

there were other grandiose pianists – such as, for example, Herman's closest friend, Boris Tchaikovsky.[5] But Boris, who possessed tremendous natural talent, had from his youngest years studied with the greatest pedagogue-pianists; first with E. F. Gnesina,[6] and then with L. N. Oborin.[7] And Herman was, one can say, self-taught in everything that concerns playing the piano. Yes, Herman was self-taught, but he made himself the greatest professional – not only in playing the piano. This is an extraordinary rarity....[8]

Many of Galynin's piano pieces, including a wonderful 'March' he wrote as a teenager, are still included in the children's repertoire of music schools in Russia.[9]

The sensitivity of the teachers at the orphanage was also shown in the fact that they helped Galynin to show his first compositions to the leading teacher-musicians of the country. Maltsev himself took the fifteen-year-old to Moscow. The teachers of the Music College[10] did not like the young man very much at first, but Maltsev considered this response unfair and arranged a meeting between Galynin and Igor Sposobin.[11] He was one of the most outstanding and, in his own way, most colourful teachers of his time, someone who knew how to balance the unique qualities of each student with the rigorous demands of the profession. With inimitable wit, he turned even the most boring task of mastering the 'rules of the craft' into an exciting creative

[5] Boris Alexandrovich Tchaikovsky (1925–96), one of the most important orchestral composers of the twentieth century, was a student of Myaskovsky, Lev Nikolayevich Oborin, Shebalin and Shostakovich, and a professor at the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music.

[6] Elena Fabianovna Gnesina (1874–1964), Russian pianist, teacher and sister of the composer Mikhail Gnesin, was one of the founders of the Gnesin Institute (now the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music) in Moscow.

[7] Lev Nikolayevich Oborin (1907–74), one of the most important Russian pianists of the twentieth century, was a student of Catoire, Gnesina, Igumnov and Myaskovsky. He was the winner of the First International Chopin Competition (1927) and subsequently a professor at the Moscow Conservatoire. Oborin often performed in a trio with David Oistrakh and the cellist Svatoslav Knushevitsky. His students included Boris Tchaikovsky, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Gennady Rozhdestvensky.

[8] These words were spoken to the author of this essay in 2009 during a series of conversations of an autobiographical nature. Khachaturian's will stipulates that the full transcription of these talks cannot be published until after 2025.

[9] The first (and so far only) recording of Galynin's complete music for solo piano was made in 2008 by Olga Solovyeva for Toccata Classics (TOCC 0076).

[10] Currently, the Tchaikovsky Academic Music College at the Moscow State Conservatoire.

[11] Igor Vladimirovich Sposobin (1900–54), musicologist and teacher, was a student of Reinhold Glière and Grigori Konyus. A professor at the Moscow Conservatoire, he was the author of textbooks on the theory of music, harmony and musical form, most of which are still recognised in Russia as classics.

process. He hated school dogmatism, but graphomania was firmly suppressed, too. It was Sposobin who saw the extraordinary – not only natural, but, first and foremost, artistic – talent of Herman Galynin, and thanks to his enthusiastic letter of reference and his efforts, the Tula prodigy was accepted by the composition department of the Music College of Moscow Conservatoire in 1937, with adequate provision made for his material welfare in the big city.

From then until the end of his life, Galynin was a Muscovite – even, I would say, a devout Muscovite, who was in love with the ancient capital of Russia, as one might be with a real person. In this city, the foundations of his most inspired compositions were laid. Moscow very soon raised the young composer to an extraordinary height; indeed, his early success was phenomenal, and widely recognised – but in due course this same city, I think, destroyed this incredibly strong and pure man with a naked soul, incapable of falseness and moral ambiguity. In his first months there he explored the huge metropolis, discovering things about some of the houses and streets of which many his friends – 'natural' Muscovites – were unaware. He studied the facades of houses and the twists and turns of old alleyways for a long time and with love – as if they were human faces, as if he were listening to them. Galynin's mentor in composition during these two-and-a-bit pre-Conservatoire years was Genrikh Ilyich Litinsky,[12] who had recently been dean of the composition faculty at the Conservatoire. Litinsky was never a brilliant composer, but he was an experienced professional in everything related to the skills of his craft. For the impetuous young Galynin, inclined to musical mischief, the dryness and rigidity of Litinsky were beneficial rather than detrimental, especially since there was Sposobin at hand, who more than once had to defend his protégé in the most difficult circumstances. Galynin often told his schoolfriends that Sposobin was his guardian angel and that without him he would not have been a musician and a rounded person.

[12] Genrikh Ilyich Litinsky (1901–85) was a Russian composer and teacher, and the author of textbooks on counterpoint. At the beginning of his teaching career, he led the composition class at the Music College at the Moscow Conservatoire. Most of his life was spent as a professor at the Gnesin Institute (now the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music).

After graduating from the Music College in 1941, Galynin entered the Moscow Conservatoire, in the composition class of Nikolai Yakovlevich Myaskovsky (1881–1950), the most important Russian symphonist of the first half of the twentieth century and the universally accepted leader of the Moscow school of composition. Between teacher and student there immediately developed not only a professional regard but also human affection. Myaskovsky often invited Galynin to classes at his home – in a small apartment on Sivtsev Vrazhek (a historical 'academic' corner of Moscow, near Arbat). Present at several of these meetings was one of Myaskovsky's best students (his and Shostakovich's assistant at the Moscow Conservatoire), Nikolai Peyko,[13] according to whose memoirs these meetings held little resemblance to the usual lessons. Galynin was aware of the importance of the person with whom he was communicating and was always very flustered. But amazingly, the excitement and a kind of almost childish shyness did not constrain his creativity; on the contrary, it spurred him on, helping him to work wonders at the piano. Myaskovsky could also be noticeably agitated. He changed practically nothing in Galynin's compositions, being inspired by his originality and independence. The highest praise from the restrained Myaskovsky was 'You have your own tone', and Peyko heard him say it only twice, to Herman Galynin and to Boris Tchaikovsky.

When war was declared in 1941, Galynin was one of the first from the Conservatoire to volunteer for the front, but fortunately he was deployed in an artistic capacity, directing amateur activities and writing incidental music for small dramatic productions. On his return to civilian life and the student's workbench, in the shortest possible time (from 1946 to 1950) Galynin created several masterpieces that put him, still a student, on a par with the country's leading composers. The premiere of his Piano Concerto No. 1 in 1946 had the effect of a musical explosion – its success was tremendous. Two years later, the Concerto was severely criticised for its 'formalism', along with works by Shostakovich,

[13] Nikolai Ivanovich Peyko (1916–95) was a student of Myaskovsky before becoming one of the leading symphonists of the Moscow school. He was the first and only assistant to Shostakovich at the Moscow Conservatoire. In 1958, he was dismissed from the Conservatoire at the request of party officials. From the 1950s to the end of his life, he was a professor at the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music, where for many decades he headed the department of composition and instrumentation. In the 'purges' of the 1930s, almost all of Peyko's relatives died, including his father and his wife's relatives, who came from the families of Prince Obolensky and the Count Musin-Pushkin.

Herman Galynin plays his Epic Poem *to Nikolai Myaskovsky in Myaskovky's Moscow flat*

Prokofiev and Myaskovsky – and yet shortly after Galynin's death, the Concerto was awarded the Glinka State Prize. Tikhon Khrennikov[14] assiduously participated in exposing the 'vicious foundations' of the music of Shostakovich and Galynin, although after Galynin's death, rather than express regret, he denied his role in the persecution of the young composer. Everyone in musical circles, including Khrennikov himself, was well aware that this denigration had the most adverse impact on Galynin. The extraordinary language, the Mozartian purity of the palette and the pristine timbral drama of the Concerto placed this student work among the major works of the global musical canon. It shows the kind of artistic perfection with which few among the chosen complete their journey in art, let alone begin it. The same can be said about the First String Quartet (1947) that followed, the Piano Trio (1949) and the Suite for String Orchestra (1949). One of Galynin's last works at the Moscow Conservatoire was the *Epic Poem* for large symphony orchestra, composed in 1950. The title of this outstanding

[14] Tikhon Nikolaevich Khrennikov (1913–2007), Soviet composer and Party official; from 1948 onwards he was Secretary General of the Union of Soviet Composers.

work was suggested by Myaskovsky, who did not hide his admiration for it. In 1951, shortly after its premiere, the *Epic Poem* was awarded the Stalin Prize – at that time the highest state award of the USSR. Of course, it does not follow that all the artists who were awarded the Stalin Prize were ardent supporters of Stalinists: Galynin was no more so than other recipients of the Prize, among them Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Myaskovsky, Oistrakh, Mravinsky and Peyko.

In the post-*perestroika* era, I had to deal with crass and unsubstantiated assumptions that it was the receipt of this highest state award and an incredible creative surge that allegedly 'went to the head' of the young musician, and adversely affected his fate. Some overzealous people spread shameless nonsense about how Galynin, who had spent most of his life in strict self-restraint and was now suddenly rich (the Stalin Prize brought with it a large cash award), became afraid that his money might be stolen and thus, so to speak, was driven round the bend. The testimonies of Galynin's closest friends and contemporaries refute such speculation. By 1950 he was not a plaything of fate but a war-hardened, ascetic artist focused on ascetic work. According to the memoirs of Peyko and Tchaikovsky, he parted easily with any money that came into his hands, distributing it to needy people, sometimes even to complete strangers, rather like Dostoevsky's purest heroes.

The tragic breakdown in Galynin's life came in the early 1950s, when he was struck by a terrible illness – it seems that he was judged to be suffering from either schizophrenia or bipolar disorder – that led him to a psychiatric hospital, and later brought him to his grave.

The memoirs of Rudolf Barshai say a lot, both on the surface and between the lines:

> I had a good friend, Herman Galynin. He came to study at the Conservatoire right from the front. Demobilised and appeared in a soldiers' overcoat at the composers' faculty, became a student of Shostakovich. Soon, the entire Conservatoire knew that a new genius was learning. What he wrote did not leave anyone indifferent. Herman was an outstanding pianist. At one time, we lived together in a hostel on Trifonovka,[15] near Riga Railway

[15] Trifonovskaya Street, located in the north-eastern part of Moscow, was named after the late fifteenth-century church of St Tryphon in Naprudny, a pearl of ancient Moscow architecture.

Station – I don't remember why I had to stay there temporarily – and in the evenings we played a Haydn trio with one of our friends. This is absolutely incomparable music, simple, as if naive, natural, as happens with folk music. […] Herman and I decided that we would perform all the Haydn trios, and there are a lot of them – a hundred or more. They really were played, and every evening at the door of the room where we performed, the guys gathered and listened. Herman too, as a student of Shostakovich, began to be destroyed for 'formalism'. Herman lost his mind. Once in the cold, without putting on a coat and hat, he went to Gorky Street, entered the Central Telegraph building, looked around and shouted loudly: 'Stalin and Zhdanov are murderers!' He was seized, of course, and then put into a madhouse. The smartest thing they could do. He stayed there for several years. His wife, his faithful Natasha,[16] nonetheless stood by him throughout. One day, the doorbell rang – I open it, and she is standing on the threshold: 'Rudik, Herman was released, let's go to him soon'. We met, hugged. It was believed that he was cured. I said: 'It's amazing, right now we are rehearsing your Suite with the orchestra. Do you want to go to listen?' – 'Of course, of course I want to.' We went; the rehearsal was at the Philharmonic on Gorky Street. He listened, gave some advice, then on foot went back home. He says: 'Thank you, Rudik.' – 'What are you, thank you for such wonderful music.' – 'You know, when you play, please watch carefully that the enemies have not ruined anything. They are all around, all around, Rudik, just waiting....[17]

The rest of his life (and it was a short, or an infinitely long, period of fifteen years) was for him a struggle against his devastating disease – although the younger Galynin had also had to overcome the seemingly insurmountable. Everyone who had the opportunity of close communication with him in his last years (and I spoke about this matter with Boris Tchaikovsky, Nikolai Peyko and Karen Khachaturian) noted that his courage was equal to his talent. He actually won back (Peyko's phrase) his remissions, which were then completely given over to music. And in this struggle he came out victorious.

[16] Galynin's wife, Natasha Shumskaya, was a musicologist.

[17] Oleg Dorman, *The Note: The Life of Rudolf Barshai, as told in the film by Oleg Dorman*, AST, Moscow, 2013, pp. 115–16.

Of course, the intensity of his compositional activity decreased substantially, but also in the few works he composed under this 'sentence' – such as the *Aria* for Violin and String Orchestra (1959), the *Youth Festive Overture* (1951), String Quartet No. 2 (1956), *Sonata Triad* for Piano (1963), Second Piano Concerto (1965) and the Scherzo for Violin and String Orchestra (1966) – there is so much power, light, sincerity, a primordially expressed sense of the meaninglessness of human existence, not to mention their artistic perfection, that any supposition of creative decline seems false, even offensive. The brightest and most ambitious Galynin score – an oratorio called *Death and the Maiden* (1950), based on the eponymous poem by Maxim Gorky – remained incomplete, since it was not orchestrated. An orchestrated version by the Soviet musicologist Yuri Alexandrovich Fortunatov (1911–98) was performed in 1963, but Boris Tchaikovsky considered it to be thoroughly unsuccessful and 'fake-professorial', as he put it. However, even presented with piano, the work is a revelation. I once asked Tchaikovsky why he did not take up the orchestration himself (although I knew that such a question was indiscreet), and received a completely satisfactory answer: 'Let it remain so.... Incomplete is not always bad. On the contrary. And what Herman Hermanovich did himself is enough to remain an artist in musical history, of which there are few'.

I consider it neither morally acceptable nor necessary to explore all the external causes of the tragic rift in Galynin's life. Do we really need to see the medical records of Schumann or Bruckner to be able to analyse their musical revelations? In any event, there were too many shocks in his life – enough for a dozen flint-hard men. But one of them does require consideration, especially since it eloquently characterises Galynin's personality and his spiritual evaluation of what was happening around him. Russian musical culture was destroyed in 1948, shortly after the so-called 'historical decree' (Myaskovsky called it a 'hysterical decree') issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party condemning 'formalism' in music. In 1946 Shostakovich was invited to be a professor at the Moscow Conservatoire and asked Nikolai Peyko, then a young composer and one of Myaskovsky's favourite students, to be an assistant in his class; Galynin was introduced to Shostakovich through Peyko. When Myaskovsky

became seriously ill with stomach cancer, he asked Shostakovich (in the last year of his work at the Conservatoire) to take Galynin into his class. Their association lasted for several months, but even this short time was enough to establish a friendly relationship between Shostakovich, already a 'living classic', and the young musician. Galynin loved Shostakovich's music, like most young composers of that time. But few – including Galynin and Boris Tchaikovsky – managed to avoid duplicating the style of their great mentor, even though Shostakovich's creative impulses were very close to Galynin's.

The Shostakovich class of that period of that period included Boris Tchaikovsky, Alexander Chugaev[18] and Karen Khachaturian. By and large, Shostakovich believed that there was nothing to teach Galynin, whose every attendance he enjoyed as if it were a holiday. Peyko told me that often after classes with Galynin, Shostakovich would say: 'Well, Herman Hermanovich came. The day was not in vain'. After Galynin's death, Shostakovich said to Peyko (who told me during the course of one of my lessons with him): 'I really valued communication with Herman Hermanovich. This is unforgettable'. I suppose he remembered not only the music of an exceptionally talented pupil but also the courage shown by him during the ignominious expulsion of Shostakovich from the Conservatoire in 1948.

One story I heard from a first-hand witness, Karen Khachaturian. He and Boris Tchaikovsky were summoned to the office of the new rector of the Conservatoire, Alexander Sveshnikov.[19] The former director, Vissarion Shebalin,[20] an outstanding musician and a man of honour, had by that time seen his reputation dragged through the mud. Former students of Shostakovich (when the order for his dismissal was already signed) were required to denounce him publicly; a prepared text was even given to them

[18] Alexander Georgievich Chugaev (1924–90), another student of Shebalin, taught at the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music and the Moscow Conservatoire for many years. One of the leading specialists in polyphony in Russia, he was the author of the classic *Features of Bach's Clavier Fugues*.

[19] Alexander Vasilievich Sveshnikov (1890–1980) was a decorated Soviet choral conductor, party dignitary, rector of the Moscow Conservatoire (1948–1974) and, from 1950, a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – although at the beginning of his career he had worked as a church regent for some time. Sergei Prokofiev, during his chess battles with Oistrakh, and later with Peyko, called Sveshnikov 'a mediocre regent with a party ticket in his pocket'.

[20] Vissarion Yakovlevich Shebalin (1902–63) was a student of Myaskovsky. During the war years, he was director of the Moscow Conservatoire, from which he was expelled after the 1948 decree. He taught a galaxy of outstanding musicians.

to ensure consistency in the condemnation, as Party cultural officials sought to crush Shostakovich, if not physically, then at least morally.

What happened to their teacher was perceived as a personal tragedy also for Tchaikovsky, Galynin and Khachaturian, and the impact on Peyko, as the assistant to Shostakovich and Myaskovsky, was appalling, too, although the authorities dealt with him a little later. There was a momentous meeting in the Conservatoire dedicated to the 'exposure' of Shostakovich and other 'formalists'. On the podium were people with 'stony faces' and 'cobblestone jaws' (Peyko's expression). In the hall was the best of Russian musical culture – Oistrakh, Oborin, Neuhaus – and yet Shostakovich was no longer there. He had been fired. The text prepared by the administration and its party officials began with the words 'Thanks to the party and the government ...'; and then 'thanks' for the timely dismissal of Shostakovich for 'corrupting students', and so on.

On the night before the meeting, the 'Shostakovich trinity' – Tchaikovsky, Galynin and Khachaturian – met at Tchaikovsky's house. They composed the text of an 'appeal', well understanding what this démarche could mean for them. The next day, when the tall, thin Tchaikovsky, stammering, said 'thanks to the party and the government', some professors (noted musicians) bowed their heads – they understood the tragedy that was unfolding before their eyes. The Party was not only annihilating Shostakovich's career; it was also destroying something more – the professional conscience of the best young musicians of the country. And then, after a bewildered 'thanks to the party and government ...', Tchaikovsky loudly and distinctly continued: '... because we had the opportunity to learn from such a musician and person as Dmitry Dmitrievich Shostakovich!' The Presidium was furious and soon took revenge on all of them, none more so than Tchaikovsky, but this battle was nevertheless won. Shostakovich always remembered and appreciated the nobility of his students.

It still amazes me that this confrontation, retold dozens of times to different audiences by Karen Khachaturian and other witnesses, including Mstislav Rostropovich, is steadily ignored by the chroniclers of the events of 1948; and so it is good to have

the memoirs of the musicologist Marina Sabinina,[21] who was present at one of these meetings and sat in the hall next to Galynin. When Shostakovich was once again vilified from the stage, Galynin grabbed a chair and rushed to attack the speaker; he was forcibly restrained. Galynin experienced the campaign against Shostakovich as a monstrous crime, as a mockery of the truth, as a personal insult, requiring immediate repudiation. Everyone experienced the events of 1948 differently, of course, and here many factors come into play, from temperament to ambition. Galynin may never have recovered from the impact of those events and he paid for it dearly.

Galynin's death was a kind of martyrdom, one spread out in time. I do not presume to judge now the effectiveness of the medical procedures of the day. The recollection of friends suggests that Galynin never assumed the guise of a 'suffering artist', as some do in such cases. During the period of his illness, what I used to call 'the nakedness of the soul' increased in him. He was always a musician and a hard worker. In his artistic world there was not even a hint of bipolar damage; on the contrary, even in the most terrible circumstances, his music embodied the integrity of a granite monolith, and that in itself is a miracle. An excerpt from Peyko's memoirs recounts one of the tragic episodes of Galynin's life:

> There was one evening I will never forget. Herman at that time was in the hospital; we often visited him. It got dark. Suddenly a bell rings. I open the door and see on the threshold Herman – in a hospital gown, without shoes.... Irina and I were stupefied – he somehow managed to escape from the hospital. From the neighbours I called Galynin's wife, Natasha. There they were already alarmed, asking with all their might to detain the fugitive until the morning. We washed and dressed Herman, who was meek as a baby. That evening, we took away the photos, there were a lot of pictures on the table and in albums. Herman asked to see them. And suddenly, from a variety of photographs, he selected one and peered at it for a long time, not letting it go from his hands. It was a photo of a smiling girl in the gymnasium uniform. Irina later told me that it was a photo

[21] The musicologist, critic and journalist Marina Dmitrievna Sabinina (1917–2000) was a doctor of arts, professor at the Moscow Conservatoire and a member of the Art Council of the Bolshoi Theatre. In addition to volumes of criticism and composer studies, she left memoirs of the events of the 1940s.

portrait of a childhood friend from a famous aristocratic family, made in happy times for her. Much later, she died of her own free will after the arrest and death of all her relatives during the 'purges' of the 1930s. What did he see in the eyes of this unhappy girl? The night seemed very long. In the morning, Natasha called and said that the car had already left. But how to tell this to Herman? He suggested a walk in Central Park, which we often visited in the old days. Already in the car, Herman realised that we were going back to the hospital, but he was very quiet, meek. And only when the latticed door of the hospital box slammed shut behind him, he turned and quietly said: 'Kolya, what about the park, will we go there? ...'. I tried to say something encouraging. I felt the death of Herman as a great sadness. He was irreplaceable – both in music and in life.[22]

To conclude this brief biography, I would like to quote the words of his friend Boris Tchaikovsky – a friend of his youth whom he honoured until his last days. This passage is taken from an article that was supposed to be published in the main newspaper of the USSR, *Pravda*, in 1976, but it was rejected by Tchaikovsky himself, because he refused to allow the censorial changes that the editors intended to make to it. Nor did he permit its appearance later, when the publishing house Sovietsky Kompositor was preparing an anthology dedicated to Galynin. It may be the most important statement ever made about him:

G. Galynin's talent was not physiological. This is not a talent similar to the abilities of a child prodigy, striking because of an ear for music or memory, and from which often nothing subsequently emerges. Galynin showed his artistic talent from a young age. He knew what he wanted to say, and knew how to articulate it in his artistic statements. Several years have passed since the death of the composer and many years since the creation of his best works. Now his music is being heard differently, not as the music of a highly gifted student, but as a master who has left a beautiful and particular legacy. Not only has his work not faded with time; on the contrary, it now seems much more significant than previously imagined. That legacy is small in quantity, but very high in quality. Galynin had little time to speak in his short life, but what he had to say is bright and weighty – this is

[22] Yuri Abdokov, 'Nikolai Peyko: ... having fulfilled his mystery..', Publishing House of the Moscow Patriarchate, Moscow, 2019, p. 236.

enough to retain a place in musical history. His music is now recognised, although even wider recognition lies ahead.[23]

Galynin died on 18 July 1966 in Moscow and was buried in the Vagankovsky cemetery, the ancient necropolis of Moscow, in which many prominent representatives of Russian culture and science are buried. His son – Dmitry Hermanovich Galynin – became a pianist and a professor of the chamber-ensemble department of the Moscow Conservatoire. The name of Herman Galynin was given to the Tula Art School, in the city of his birth.

Scherzo for Violin and String Orchestra (1966)

This Scherzo [1] was Galynin's last work; he never heard it in concert. There is every reason to believe that he considered it part of a diptych, alongside the *Aria* for similar instrumental forces, composed seven years earlier. Perhaps no other work of this composer expresses so clearly the ecstatic tension of someone overcoming pain, trying to break out of restraining shackles. In this compact composition, cast in a rather complex three-part form, the timbre of each instrumental line is clearly exposed. The relationship between the violin and the orchestra is hardly traditional: the solo instrument does not dominate the orchestra as self-sufficient colour but electrifies it in a peculiar way, graphically thinning the orchestra. A current of the highest voltage permeates the fabric of the whole work – all nerve-endings seem to be laid bare. In this vortex, this phantasmagorical kaleidoscope, every impulse is a pressure point. The central episode, which by stretching convention can be called 'lyrical', does not reduce the emotional intensity. In its melodical turns one can hear features of Spanish melos and rhythm. Indeed, 'Spanish' motifs can be found in many of Galynin's works, not as 'ethnographic pictures' but as expressions of Galynin's own personality. In the exalted middle section, there is a somewhat surreal, dreamy episode, which enhances the expressive, impulsive tone of the piece as a whole. These contrasting episodes do not in the least reduce the intensity of movement, which is subordinated to the unity of continuous development.

[23] From the archive of the Boris Tchaikovsky Society.

Aria for Violin and String Orchestra (1959)

In Galynin's elegiac *Aria* [2] a complex three-part form unfolds in a series of broad-breathed cantilena episodes, representing the links of a single chain. Whereas the Scherzo is characterised by extreme concentration, even a kind of compression of musical time, the *Aria* overcomes time in a different manner. The orchestral phrasing here is subordinated to the idea of extended singing, with a sense of time that is typical for Russian song. There is in twentieth-century Russian music the genre of the 'orchestral aria', as witness the remarkable *Symphonic Aria* for cello and large string orchestra by Gavriil Popov,[24] composed in 1945. Galynin knew Popov's *Aria* well and was very fond of it, but his own approach to the genre is completely original. The composition is not static or meditative; instead, the movement of the solo violin, spatially elevated and so removed from the orchestra, is extremely free, although rhythmically aligned with the orchestral texture. Although the solo violin undoubtedly dominates, the orchestra is not limited to the function of accompaniment; indeed, the relationship of violin and orchestra is not so much that of a solo line above the ensemble but rather closer to that of a voice emerging from a choir. The lyrical centre of the composition (in F sharp major) is one of Galynin's most subtle revelations, in which unsteady silence is voiced – air and light are orchestrated. A dramatic recitative shatters the silence, and thereby sets off a new wave of light and exalted contemplation. The reprise returns movement to the full-flowing wide stream, and the microscopic coda highlights the main symbolic imagery of the *Aria* – silence over time.

Suite for String Orchestra (1949)

This cyclical composition, cast in four movements, is unified by the development of a single idea. In fact, in this work the usual way of forming a suite, as a *divertissement*, was transcended; instead, the quality of the material and the integrity of the structure suggest that the score embodies more the idea of a sinfonietta or chamber symphony than a

[24] Gavriil Nikolaevich Popov (1904–72) was a Russian composer whose early works (especially the Septet) were much appreciated by Paul Hindemith. The composer of major orchestral and choral compositions, Popov was the first Russian composer to be ostracised by the authorities, even before the devastating criticism of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* in 1936.

traditional suite. As Somerset Maugham observed, it is much more attractive when an author calls a novel a short story, and much worse when the opposite happens. No part of Galynin's Suite could be extracted from the cycle without disturbing the balance of the work as a whole. Galynin was not only an outstanding master of orchestral painting; he was also an excellent dramatist, and this work – like his own life – resembles a candle burning at both ends.

The opening *Adagio* 3 is the exposition of the cycle as a whole. A peculiar rhythmic-melodic idea of the composition is the conjugation of sharp dotted rhythm and triplet figures. The instrumental lines of the *Adagio* have their roots in Baroque music, recalling the vivid expression of the string scores of Purcell and Handel. Here, too, the melodic lines express the idea of instrumental singing. The bass lines are rich and densely resonant, not only as the basis of the harmony but also as one of the main melodic elements of the texture, and this saturation of the bass – and this applies to all parts of the Suite – leads to a considerable amplification of the mass of sound, with the result that a small string ensemble can embody the power of a huge orchestra. Galynin's asceticism brings a laconic quality, where everything superfluous is cut off. The culminating point is a *tutti* octave episode (a single bar!) in the approach to the reprise-coda. It ends with a chordal explosion, after which the sound of a solo string quartet is perceived as a kind of release of singing voices from 'tutti captivity', rather as faces and figures are released from marble blocks in some of Michelangelo's 'unfinished' works.

The Scherzo 4 brings an obvious but contrasting development of the main rhythmic and melodic ideas of the first movement; the triplet figure is continuously deployed. The sheer fleetness of the Scherzo suggests that it might be a *perpetuum mobile*, but there is nothing mechanical about it. Episodes are dominated by *détaché* and short bowing, alternating with sections where the wide breadth of the melodic line seems to expand the orchestral palette. There is a feeling of flying, of soaring over a vast space. In spite of these constrictions and expansions of movement, in spite of the constant modifications of the density of the sound, the fantastic speed remains unchanged and the music continues to unfold irrepressibly. The ecstatic agitation of the Scherzo is emphasised in episodes where, instead of the motoric triplet movement, the orchestra is grouped in

double-beat, closely grouped lamentations, which, though they form a kind of barrier, do not slow down the movement, surprisingly enough, and, rather, give it a sense of titanic resolve.

The restricted palette of the string orchestra takes on symphonic dimensions when the ensemble is clearly divided into bowed and plucked groups. Having *pizzicati* violas, cellos and double basses in one group and all the violins in another produces the effect of hearing independent orchestras. Galynin creates a miracle of instrumental polyphony when he combines melodic lines and textural elements into a single space that had previously been heard as solos. In the reprise, time seems to be concentrated, as if everything were directed towards a dénouement; instead, the movement breaks off at the grand crest of an orchestral wave.

The crepuscular Intermezzo [5], despite the innocent title, brings a fully fledged symphonic development of the melodic, rhythmic and plastic ideas stated in the first movement. The triplet takes on new properties here. The role of the bass lines is extremely important, almost as if they formed a separate orchestra. The orchestral sound reaches its maximum intensity in the symmetrical octave *tutti*, and the weight of sound is not reduced even where the orchestra is divided into expressive soprano and percussive bass blocks.

The Finale [6] is an obvious reprise and summation of the entire cycle. Each of the melodic, textural and plastic elements of the previous movements are taken up. Sharp dotted rhythms and triplet figures again determine the nature of the orchestral texture. This final movement not only completes the essence of the whole work but also balances the cyclic formation. The mass of sound is amplified through the combination of symmetrical groups, powerful unisons and exaggerated accentuation. In the final bars the instrumental *détaché* becomes multi-tone. The striking flash of light (in A major) in the last two bars is unexpected but undeniably haunting.

String Quartet No. 1 (1947)

Galynin's First String Quartet is one of his most important and complex instrumental compositions – the complexity arising not only from the chronometric scale and the texture, which is incredibly difficult for the performers, but also from the combination

of apparently unconnected elements within the composition. It is difficult to imagine that such a palette was the work of a novice student rather than a grey-haired master: there is no hint of apprenticeship in the craftmanship of the work.

The opening unison of the first movement (*Andante maestoso*) [7] conveys the character and strength of a trumpet fanfare. The virtuoso use of double notes, string chords and other sounds expand the instrumental boundaries of the composition. Sometimes it seems there are not only brass and woodwind but also percussion instruments present. Galynin organically combines sonata and variation in a type of morphogenesis, boldly mixing polar opposites, pushing the elegiac, cantilena elements with aspects of a march and a toccata. Colours change kaleidoscopically with the transformations of volume, acoustic balance, density and mass of sound. And within this kaleidoscope each instrumental part has its own identity.

In the *Vivace* second movement [8] there is something extravagant in the images and its palette which recall Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat*. The sound is stark, sometimes deliberately uncomfortable.

The following *Andante* [9] is a set of variations, almost a 'novel in a novel' within the Quartet, which establishes it as the dominant movement in the composition as a whole. With the grace of Fabergé,[25] Galynin interweaves the outline of the famous folksong 'Song of the Volga Boatmen',[26] so symbolic of Russian music, into a melodic pattern of variations. Each of the variations brings a cardinal change in mood and alters the instrumental palette strikingly. For the era of 'aesthetic positivism' in which the Quartet was composed, this imaginative independence was truly risky. Dreamy, surreal episodes alternate with grotesqueries, in which lyrical revelations encounter biting humour. Wagner's Valkyries enjoy three bars of flight, when all the instrumental lines in turn 'take off' against a background of shrill trills. This kaleidoscope ends unexpectedly by

[25] Karl Fabergé (1846–1920), the famous Russian jeweller, was the head of the eponymous dynasty.

[26] The song of the Volga barge hauliers has attracted the attention of composers at different times. The most famous arrangements of this folk masterpiece were made by Glazunov and Stravinsky. It became very popular through Fyodor Chaliapin's performances in the first decade of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the 2000s, at the request of the choir of the Moscow Sretensky Monastery, I made a transcription, *Yo, heave ho*!, for male choir and large symphony orchestra.

melting away before a three-bar coda, in which a veil seems to fall from the eyes and consciousness returns to reality.

The sound-world of folklore, studied by Galynin in his childhood, comes to life in the biting images of the unique dance that forms the *Presto* finale 10 – a real sound festival. The change in speed at the very end (from *Presto* to *Prestissimo* and *Prestissimo possibile*) is achieved not by mechanical acceleration but by compression. The two-bar *Andante* coda, with its sudden recollection of the 'Song of the Volga Boatmen', allows the listener to stand back and contemplate the vast Russian space that generated this music.

String Quartet No. 2 (1956)

Galynin's Second String Quartet was his last chamber composition: the premiere was held in the hospital ward of the clinic where he was being held at the time. The conjuncture of this fact with the content of the music suggests what his restless and pure soul was striving for at the beginning of this last period of his life. The language of the Quartet is simple and restrained in its external means. But it is a simplicity that comes from strength, from a powerful inner will and a sense of artistic truth gained at high price. The Quartet can fairly be called retrospective – not looking back over Galynin's earlier music but reaching into the depths of memory, recalling images of times past, especially of childhood.

The opening *Adagio* 11, despite the restricted musical time, suggests a limitless expanse of space. The small scale notwithstanding, Galynin manages to embody an epic type of musical dramaturgy, characterised by an emphatically vocal, recitative/aria type of melody, within a specifically choral type of texture.

The *Allegretto* second movement 12 strikingly contrasts with the first, and yet at the same time is perceived as its natural and organic continuation. The ability 'to connect the unconnected' is a trademark of Shostakovich's style. His influence on Galynin can be seen, first of all, in a similar type of dramatic pacing and, to a much lesser extent, in the musical language used, although it is in the instrumental writing of the Second Quartet that the closeness of Shostakovich's and Galynin's type of inspiration is most clearly evident. It is not a question of emulation, more one of mutual resonance, of a special relationship of like-minded souls.

In the following *Andante* – in effect, a *bylina*[27] – a solo voice and the accompanying ensemble embody the image of unhurried, singing storytelling against the background of the strings 13. The *pizzicato* chord accompanying this chant is, without a doubt, a poetic metaphor for the sound of an old gusli.[28] But Galynin is far from creating a popular *lubok*[29] or image, and the short dramatic recitative in the centre of the movement leaves no doubt that this is the view of a modern man.

The closing *Moderato* 14 continues and significantly enhances the atmosphere of the second movement of the Quartet. My suspicion is that this movement is intended to reflect the ecstatic emotion and the tragic grotesquerie of the world of the homeless. Elements of 'slang' street folklore become overgrown with fateful elements in a series of freewheeling variations, where images of pain and light, boldness and anxiety, rage and tenderness confront and collide in a manner characteristic of Galynin – none of it disjointed, but firmly soldered into a single onward drive. The final F minor chord unexpectedly interrupts its progress – perhaps the last questioning glance of the dying.

A characteristic and unique feature of each movement is the unexpected interruption of the narrative – a gesture of poetic incompleteness of striking psychological insight. In 1957, the Second Quartet was awarded the Gold Medal at the All-Union Competition.

***Yuri Abdokov**, Ph.D., born in 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 at 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, operatic and symphonic conductors and the orchestration class. He is also the scientific supervisor of dissertation projects on the theory of composition, orchestral writing, musical theatre, conducting and pedagogy. Parallel to his activities at the Conservatoire, he was from 2000 to 2007 the chair of composition at the Academy of Choral Art and, from 2001 to 2016, a professor at the*

[27] The *bylina*, one of the main forms of Russian folk poetry, is an old, epic folksong about heroic events in national history and often praised the feats of real and mythical heroes. In music, this genre was developed differently by many composers, including Rimsky-Korsakov (in the opera-epic *Sadko*), Borodin, Prokofiev, Medtner and Peyko, amongst others.

[28] The gusli is an old Russian plucked string instrument resembling a zither in its structure.

[29] The *lubok*, or popular print, is a type of folk woodcut, concise in technique, with bright colours, sometimes with a detailed explanatory text.

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. Yuri Abdokov is the chairman of the Artistic Council of The Boris Tchaikovsky Society, the chairman of the commission for the creative and literary heritage of Nikolai Peyko and the keeper of his archive. As a composer, Yuri Abdokov is the author of a number of operas and ballets, as well as of symphonic, chamber and vocal works.

GALYNIN FROM THE PERFORMER'S PERSPECTIVE

by Ivan Nikiforchin

It was Yuri Borisovich Abdokov, my teacher and professor at the Moscow Conservatoire, who introduced me to the music of Herman Galynin, an indisputable genius. Galynin then became a kind of mentor *in absentia* not only for me but also for all the musicians of the Academy of Russian Music orchestra, and essentially the ideological inspiration for the ensemble. My very first sight of Galynin's scores fascinated me with the brightness of his imagination and originality of thought. It is incredible that this music should have been forgotten. Since then we have performed it on the main concert stages in Moscow, with continued success. I had the opportunity to make sure that his music truly touches the hearts of modern listeners. It is not a museum rarity but a living, exciting art. As Yuri Abdokov affirms, this music is timeless.

When I first encountered the music, I naturally wondered why such perfect compositions were excluded from the repertoire of the leading Russian orchestral and chamber ensembles. In addition to the fact that Galynin was very young when he died and wasn't really concerned about the advancement of his works, the primary

reason, it seems to me, lies in the fact that his few scores require much commitment and time to prepare them for performance. These days, the luxury of rehearsing 'till you sweat', as Rudolf Barshai and his Moscow Chamber Orchestra used to achieve, is something few can afford. But you can't perform such music 'sight-reading' – and so we worked, honing every phrase, every measure, every movement….

It was a fantastically interesting, creative process. Galynin's works, for all their clarity and brightness, are phenomenally complex in terms of practical music-making. Performing and recording some of his compositions for the first time, we encountered a number of seemingly insurmountable difficulties. In the published scores, the tempo, bowings and dynamics are often indicated, but they do not always correspond; worse, they sometimes monstrously contradict the musical content – not because of any confused instructions by the composer but because of numerous 'corrections' by various external proof-readers. To obey these 'changes' is to destroy the music, which, alas, sometimes happened, for when scores were published after the death of the composer, a simplified 'editing', often poor or basic, was visited on them. Apparently, the editors were enjoined to simplify and unify Galynin's impetuous, free temperament in everything related to the types of movement, tempo and dynamic palette. All these questions had to be reconsidered, which added further complications to our performances. In fact, without editing or changing a single note, bar, tempo or movement, we returned to the original versions of Galynin's compositions.

I hope that over time, the scores of all the works of Galynin we have performed will be republished, without any editors contradicting the composer's intentions. Hearing and performing Galynin's creations were a real revelation for me. Our future plans include the performance of Galynin's compositions for large orchestra and, above all, his amazing *Epic Poem*, which at one time captivated Myaskovsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovich.

Ivan Nikiforchin, born in Moscow in 1995, graduated from the Academic Music College at the Moscow State Conservatoire (the choral conducting class) and from the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatoire (opera and symphonic conducting class). His extensive repertoire includes music from many different periods – from Bach, Purcell and Mozart to Elgar, Hindemith and Schoenberg – and he has given the Russian premieres of works by Elgar, Hindemith, Holst, Respighi and many other composers. In September 2019 he was awarded the International Boris Tchaikovsky Award for outstanding achievements in the interpretation of twentieth-century Russian music. Two months later, as the best graduate conductor of the Moscow Conservatoire, he received a scholarship from the renowned Russian conductor Alexander Sladkovsky, Chief Conductor of the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Tatarstan, and an invitation to work with his orchestra.

The violinist **Anastasia Latysheva** was born in 1998 in Novy Urengoy (a city in the northern part of western Siberia). She graduated from the Academic Music College at the Moscow State Conservatoire, as a student of Vladimir Mikhailovich Ivanov (who is also head of the Violin Department there), and is now a student at the Conservatoire. She is the laureate of several festivals and music competitions in Russia, Belarus, Austria, the Czech Republic and Spain. She has been a soloist with the Academy of Russian Music and its principal violin since the founding of the ensemble. Her solo repertoire includes music by a wide range of composers, from Bach, Biber and Pisendel to Karen Khachaturian, Nikolai Peyko, Boris Tchaikovsky and Mieczysław Weinberg.

The **Academy of Russian Music**, founded by Ivan Nikiforchin in 2016, combines a chamber orchestra and a choir. A distinctive feature of the ensemble are the performances of outstanding works of Russian music of the twentieth and 21st centuries. The basis of the Russian part of its repertoire are the scores for chamber orchestra by Russian composers of different generations: Yuri Abdokov, Revol Bunin, Herman Galynin, Nikolai Myaskovsky, Nikolai Peyko, Gavriil Popov, Dmitry Shostakovich, Georgy Sviridov, Boris Tchaikovsky, Galina Ustvolskaya and Mieczysław Weinberg. A special place in the repertoire is reserved for the string-orchestra transcriptions of Rudolf Barshai (Bach, Prokofiev, Shostakovich). The main concert venues in which the Academy of Russian Music performs are the Great Hall, the Small Hall and the Rachmaninov Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire.

First violins
Anastasia Latysheva
Svetlana Fedotova
Arevik Dzhalalyan
Serafima Lvova
Donara Egoyan

Second violins
Arina Minaeva
Alexander Fyodorov
Alexandra Gribanova
Sofya Fyodorova
Victoria Borisova

Violas
Anastasia Bencic
Pyotr Savelyev
Anastasia Rastopchina

Cellos
Anna Scherbakova
Domir Gareev
Victoria Kordikova

Double basses
Herman Danilov
Karina Lizen

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Artistic direction and recording supervision: Ivan Nikiforchin (String Quartets) and Yuri Abdokov (*Aria*, Scherzo, Suite, String Quartets).
Production direction and co-ordination: Igor Prokhorov, The Boris Tchaikovsky Society

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HERMAN GALYNIN Complete Works for Strings

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Arina Minaeva, first violin 7–10, **second violin** 11–14
Anastasia Bencic, viola 7–10
Kseniia Kharitonova, viola 11–14
Anna Scherbakova, cello 7–14

TT **65:12**

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