

# Ivan SOKOLOV

**CHAMBER AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC**  
THIRTEEN POSTLUDES FOR VIOLA AND PIANO  
REMINISCENCE FOR PIANO, FOUR HANDS  
SONATA NO. 2 FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO  
ELEGIE FOR SOLO VIOLA

**Karen Bentley Pollick, violin, viola and piano**  
**Ivan Sokolov, piano**

# IVAN SOKOLOV: CHAMBER AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

by William Melton

Ivan Glebovich Sokolov was born in Moscow on 29 August 1960 into a cultured family: his father, Gleb Ivanovich Sokolov, was an historian of ancient art. The boy took early piano instruction from Nikolai Stanischewski and Nathan Fishman, which was augmented at the age of eight with composition lessons from Georgy Dmitriyev. At twelve he began piano study with Lev Naumov (1925–2005), a former pupil and last assistant to the fabled pedagogue Heinrich Neuhaus<sup>1</sup> and himself mentor to many of Russia's most talented pianists, including Andrei Gavrillov. Sokolov later called Naumov 'The dearest person in my life':

He immediately struck me with a special light that emanated from his eyes. [...] He was completely alien to the worldly bustle and madly loved all his students, treated us like his children, was a teacher-educator. And at the same time [...] we communicated as if on an equal footing. Meanwhile, he was a man of incredible musical erudition and performing culture.<sup>2</sup>

At the Gnesin Music College Sokolov was handed over to the pianistic care (1974–78) of Naumov's wife, Irina Naumova, after which he attended the Tchaikovsky Conservatoire until 1983. His teachers there were (again) Lev Naumov, Inna Barsova (b. 1927; score-reading) and the unconventional Edison Denisov (1929–96; orchestration), and he took counterpoint and analysis with both Konstantin Batashov (b. 1938) and the musicologist Yury Kholopov (1932–2003), the latter adding harmony and theory. Composition was taught by Nikolai Sidelnikov

<sup>1</sup> Neuhaus' other pupils included Sviatoslav Richter and Emil Gilels.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Ivan Sokolov, 'Our improvisation is lacking' (<https://daccha.ru/en/ivan-sokolov-ne-hvataet-nashei-improvizatsionnosti-ivan-sokolov-muzyka/>).

(1930–92), and after a stint in the army Sokolov became Sidelnikov's teaching assistant, from 1984 until 1986.

Nikolai Sidelnikov was widely read in the worlds of philosophy and religion, and his musical knowledge and influences showed the same broad reach, encompassing the gamut from Monteverdi to Debussy, and from blues and jazz to Arvo Pärt. He produced a multitude of gifted pupils, including Vladimir Tarnopolsky. Far from prescribing a rigorous scholastic method, Sidelnikov valued his pupils' individuality, and used a disparate approach for each of them. As Ivan Sokolov was already a fine pianist, his teacher brought him into direct contact with carefully guided selections from the vast piano literature. Sokolov recalled:

Students were more important for him than the music they wrote. He 'got the feel' of each student. For him, there was no bad music as such. There was music that did not reveal students' individuality. That is why all musicians he taught found themselves. He sometimes said to me, quoting Stanislavsky: 'I don't believe you.' That is, my music appeared insincere to him although I wrote it experiencing genuine feeling. He found it to be not mine.<sup>3</sup>

The professor exhorted his charges to 'Listen to yourself. Come to appreciate the uniqueness of your personality. You all are absolutely unique creatures, and you must create your own individual, inimitable style.'<sup>4</sup> If a pupil submitted work done under the sway of another composer, Sidelnikov would reject the cribbed technique:

For instance, if a person started writing dodecaphony. Not for any other reason but just because it is easy to hide oneself behind dodecaphony. Or if a person started writing à la Sviridov.<sup>5</sup> He said: 'It's not your face. You hide behind Sviridov. It's a mask. It's easy to hide behind a mask and forget your individuality. Try to find yourself'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Margarita Katunyan, 'Nicolay Sidelnikov's School of Composition', *Lietuvos muzikologija*, Vol. 19, 2018, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> Georgy Sviridov (1915–98), Neo-Romantic composer and Russian nationalist, whose choral music in particular was much influenced by Russian Orthodox chant.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

In contrast to many of his academic peers, Sidelnikov would reject the smooth replica, but the coarse original found acceptance. For Ivan Sokolov, this was the path to artistic freedom.

After postgraduate studies, Sokolov taught composition from 1986 until 1994 at the Academic College attached to the Conservatoire and composition and improvisation at the Children's Music School. In 1987 he was accepted into the Composers' Union and in 1988 he became an instructor in score-reading and orchestration with the Conservatoire orchestration department. Political changes after *perestroika* also meant changes for fledgling composers. 'Since the Soviet collapse,' wrote Richard Taruskin, 'there has not been an official propaganda machine to bring Russian music to the world's attention, and deteriorating economic conditions have vastly inhibited publication and recording.'<sup>7</sup>

In 1995 Sokolov began dividing his life between Moscow and Germany, moving first to Cologne and, as of 2003, to Bornheim, near Bonn. Since 2005 he has been attached to the Department of Interdisciplinary Specialisations of Musicologists in Moscow, where he teaches the course 'Theory of Musical Content' to performers and theorists. From 2006 to 2011 he also taught at the Gnesin Music College and since 2007 he has led the Faculty of Piano Music of the 20th–21st Centuries. Sokolov the writer has published articles about Bartók, Denisov, Satie, Schnittke, Sidelnikov, Skryabin and Ustvolskaya.

In parallel with his academic duties, Sokolov maintains a strenuous schedule as a pianist in concerts spread from the Øresund to the Bosphorus, and from the Volga to the Pacific Coast of North America. Russian music forms the bedrock of his concertising, and he regularly performs Denisov, Gubaidulina, Korndorf, Musorgsky, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov, Schnittke, Shostakovich, Sidelnikov, Silvestrov, Skryabin, Stravinsky, Tarnopolsky and Ustvolskaya<sup>8</sup> (with first performances of works by several of the above)<sup>9</sup> – and yet his repertoire is broad enough to include a wide swathe of foreign-born

<sup>7</sup> Richard Taruskin, *On Russian Music*, University of California, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2009, p. 381.

<sup>8</sup> In 1996 Sokolov recorded Galina Ustvolskaya's complete Piano Sonatas and Preludes (two CDs on the French label Triton, 17014).

<sup>9</sup> This listing continues with Borodin, Ekimovsky, Firsova, Garayev, Karetnikov, Muravlev, Myaskovsky, Rabinovitch-Barakovsky, Raskatov, Rimsky-Korsakov, Shebalin, Smirnov, Vustin and others.

composers as well. Several centuries of piano classics (Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, Debussy, Satie, Bartók and Schoenberg<sup>10</sup>) have benefited from his often idiosyncratic approach in an attempt to illuminate the music in new ways. For example,

in December 1993 he played Mussorgky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, crowing three times during the 'Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks', and in 'Bydło (Cattle)' – without interrupting his playing – rhythmically thrusting the grand piano forwards and pulling his piano chair with it. He accomplished all of this with inimitable mastery and without the slightest deviation from the musical text.<sup>11</sup>

Sokolov also offers verbal commentary to his audiences, prefacing his concerts and even improvising remarks during performances.

His pianism has often been displayed at festivals such as Alternativa and the Sokolovsky Festival in Moscow, the Heaven and Earth International Multimedia Competition at the Moscow Conservatoire (each of which was co-founded by Sokolov), Moscow Autumn, December Nights, Roslavetz Festival, Andrey Sakharov Festival (Nizhny Novgorod), Luzerner Festwoche, Schleswig-Holstein Musikfestival, Copenhagen Kulturhavn Festival, the Almeida Festival in London and the Shostakovich Uncovered and Icebreaker Festivals in Seattle. His collaborators have spanned the generations, from Gennady Rozhdestvensky and Martha Argerich to Daniel Hope, Sol Gabetta and Patricia Kopatchinskaja, and he has performed with the Russian-German Composers Quartet,<sup>12</sup> Kronos Quartet and Ensemble Modern. These festivals also feature Sokolov the composer. His enduring curiosity in contemporary trends (Boulez, Crumb, Kagel, Feldman, Schnebel, Stockhausen and his especial favourite John Cage) colours both his pianism and his compositions. 'As a composer Sokolov uses a wide spectrum of resources', wrote Inna Barsova; 'He is particularly drawn towards instrumental theatre,

<sup>10</sup> The roster of non-Russian composers in Sokolov's repertoire goes on with Byrd, Rameau, Couperin, Froberger, Mendelssohn, Grieg, Satie, Ravel, Kodály, Webern, Berg, Honegger, Hindemith and Messiaen.

<sup>11</sup> Svetlana Savenko, 'Freiheiten des Klangs. Zur Lage der Neuen Musik in Russland', *Osteuropa*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (*Macht Musik: Kultur und Gesellschaft in Russland*), 2009, p. 98.

<sup>12</sup> Sokolov co-founded the group with Alexei Aigui, Dietmar Bonnen and Manfred Niehaus.

conceptualism, minimalism and polystylism. In recent years he has become interested in the idea of possibly greater liberation from a specific stylistic trend.<sup>13</sup> Elena Dubinets elaborated:

Sokolov is one of the most interesting representatives of experimentalism in Russia. In his earlier works, he tried out different types of musical expression, including cryptic encodings and graphic notation. Most of his music is written for piano or for chamber ensembles including piano, and he usually performs it himself, in the manner of a theatrical presentation. His innovations were rooted not only in John Cage's legacy but also – and mostly – in the art of such Soviet poets of the early twentieth century as Daniil Kharms (1905–42) and Aleksandr Vvedenskii (1904–41), with their humorous, bitter, and philosophical approach to reality.<sup>14</sup>

Another characteristic of Sokolov's style is the fusion of other arts with music. 'Musicians come later than poets and artists to new phenomena in art', he wrote, noting of one of his inspirations that 'This natural lag is reduced to zero in the case of Erik Satie, who perceived the new trends in art very sharply.'<sup>15</sup> In this vein Sokolov has participated in the exhibitions of the sculptor and artist Vadim Zakharov.

'Music history in the West', observed Richard Taruskin, 'has traditionally been written from an elite modernist perspective, with stylistic complexity and technical innovation valued as the chief earner of cultural authenticity [...]. But there is a need to challenge its status in conventional historiography as the site of a golden age or an authentic avant-garde.'<sup>16</sup> By the late 1990s Sokolov had wearied of his own early avant-garde, conceptual manner. A postmodern approach that he termed 'natural', 'simple' or 'pure' appeared in the early 2000s in which he felt the clothing of music, the style, should

<sup>13</sup> Inna Barsova, 'Sokolov, Ivan Glebovich', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 23, ed. Stanley Sadie, Macmillan, London, 2001, p. 627.

<sup>14</sup> Elena Dubinets, 'Music in Exile: Russian Émigré Composers and their Search for National Identity', *Slavonica*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2007, pp. 63–64.

<sup>15</sup> Ivan Sokolov, 'Thoughts on Satie' (<https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=27166604>).

<sup>16</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1977, pp. 91–92.

not be the absolute focus. Earlier methodologies were replaced by more traditional forms in opera, chamber and vocal music, which revisited older aesthetics in melody, tonality and strophic construction. In a surprising change for a trained academician to make, accessible emotions like sentiment and melancholy replaced novelty and nuance.

Sokolov's émigré experience had undoubtedly influenced the stylistic change. 'When the person rejects the monopolistic powers of a nation state', Dubinets commented, 'and is propelled into global or private arenas while seeking new financing and societal options, a new type of relationship between an individual and a territory transpires. [...] Through its abilities to conduct a productive extraterritorial dialogue, diaspora exposes the nation-state's values to a broader world'.<sup>17</sup> In Sokolov's case, it was only after his move to Germany that he turned to Russian lyrics for his songs, setting more than 150 romances to verses by Russian poets between 1996 and 2004. Dubinets explains further:

After decades of working in all kinds of non-traditional genres including cryptic encodings and graphic notation, since emigrating Sokolov has arrived at a stylistically different postmodern concept: an 'outdated' Romantic music which he calls 'pure music'. For Sokolov, the path from experimentalism to this pure music lay through composing song settings of the Russian poetry that he read as he strove to anchor himself after leaving Russia: 'I tried to stimulate, preserve, and feel a native, home spirit in myself'. Recently he has been writing large chamber works in classical forms with beautiful melodies and extremes of emotional expression, finding stylistic inspiration in the works of, among others, Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, and Glazunov.<sup>18</sup>

'Sokolov's aspiration to dialogue with composers of his childhood and youth in a new manner', Natalia Ruchkina observed, 'can be interpreted as a slowdown or [...] an

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<sup>17</sup> Elena Dubinets, 'Which Place is Called a Musical Home? Hyphenated Identities of Russian Émigré Composers', in Christoph Flamm, Roland Marti and Ada Raev (eds.), *Transcending the Borders of Countries, Languages, and Disciplines in Russian Émigré Culture*, Cambridge Scholars, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2018, pp. 321–22.

<sup>18</sup> Elena Dubinets, 'Defining Diaspora through Culture: Russian Émigré Composers in a Globalising World', in Patrick Zuk and Marina Frolova-Walker (eds.), *Russian Music since 1917: Reappraisal and Rediscovery*, The British Academy, London, 2017, p. 352.

escape from patterns of success imposed by the world.<sup>19</sup> Elsewhere Ruchkina elaborated on Sokolov's new style:

It is paradoxical that Sokolov, a musicologist, as a sophisticated researcher, delving into a large number of details, associations, symbolizations, encounters Sokolov, a pianist who hears sonority in a certain large smear, striving primarily for the articulation of form.<sup>20</sup>

The composer's style consists in appealing to the semantic-syntactic musical structures of the romantic era of the world musical art, relying on the conceptual ideas of 'new simplicity'. This approach provides an opportunity for the so-called 'secondary primary' (N. B. Mankovskaya) creativity, which is largely trusting, touching and naive, which unconditionally fits into the modern context of the fundamental convention of the diversity of artistic ideas.<sup>21</sup>

The new freedom of expression that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union opened the path, Sokolov's move away from his homeland allowed him the personal latitude, and the freedom of pluralistic choices included engaging freely with his past. In descriptions simplistic but meaningful, 'The extravagant pianist and composer Ivan Sokolov'<sup>22</sup> 'is often referred to as a latter day Rachmaninoff'.<sup>23</sup>

Sokolov's estimable body of works includes the opera *Cryptophonika* (1995), orchestral works (*Short Messages and Thinking About Them*, 2010), music for chorus (*Margit* for male chorus to the text of an ancient Greek poet of Homer's time, 2007), roughly 200 songs to Russian texts, works for percussion ensemble (*In the Museum of Primitive Art*, 2010) and piano pieces (*Gospel Paintings, 31 Preludes, Recitations and Epilogues*, 2012). Perhaps his most common genre is chamber music, ranging from solo

<sup>19</sup> Natalia Ruchkina, "'Natural' Music by Ivan G. Sokolov: the Sonata for Cello and Piano", *3rd International Conference on Education, Language, Art and Inter-Cultural Communication (ICELAIC 2016)*, Vol. 40, 2017, p. 433.

<sup>20</sup> Natalia Ruchkina, *Compositional Works of I. G. Sokolov: Formation of a 'Simple' Style*, Abstract of Dissertation for the Degree of Candidate of Art History, Music Theory Sector of the Performing Arts Department of the Federal State Budget Scientific Research Institution 'State Institute of Art Studies' of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, Moscow, 2017, p. 15.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>22</sup> Anton Rovner, 'An Interview with Mark Belodubrovsky', *21st Century Music*, Vol. 7, No. 8, August 2000, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Kimberly Nicoletti, 'Concert Series Continues ...', *Summit Daily*, 3 November 2011 (<https://www.summitdaily.com/news/concert-series-continues-with-composer-known-as-the-latter-day-rachmaninoff/>).

works like *At the Walls of the Ruined Temple* for bassoon solo (1993) to sonatas for violin, viola and cello with piano, two trios, a piano quartet and a piano sextet (*Six Parting Words*, 2004). Sokolov often blurs the lines between genres, adding voices and even actors to chamber ensembles, which then verge on theatre or chamber opera, like *The Poor Horseman* ('A miracle loves to warm his heels'; A. Vvedensky) for singers, percussion ensemble and piano (2000) or *The Monkey and the Golden Ball*, a children's tale for piano and ensemble of musicians and actors (2004). His continued interest in combining music with other arts spawned the multimedia project 'Earth and Sky' (2018), in which Sokolov's *Gospel Paintings* for piano are intertwined with a like-named series of 70 visual works by the artist-writer Konstantin Sutyagin.

The violinist Karen Bentley Pollick first met Ivan Sokolov during the Seattle Chamber Players Icebreaker II: Baltic Voices Festival in 2004, during which the two had the occasion to play through Dmitri Shostakovich's *Viola Sonata*. That session served as the inspiration for Sokolov's *Violin Sonata No. 1* ('Solnechnaya'/'Sunlight'), which revisited Glazunov and birdsong.<sup>24</sup> Another product of this collaboration is the **Violin Sonata No. 2** (2018), which begins with an *Allegro moderato* ( $\frac{4}{4}$ )  $\square$  that features a questing, rising third and subsiding theme in the violin that delineates the A major tonality. The violin is answered in the next bar by a piano arpeggio in quavers that launches three octaves upwards. The opening material expands further, supported by facile modulations, but A major is briefly revisited. Sokolov writes of the exposition, 'The pastoral first part is the time of dawn, day and evening in nature,'<sup>25</sup> and the quiet contrasting theme at *cantabile, commodo*, its profile descending an octave and a fourth, may well convey twilight relaxation. An accumulation of triplet quavers in the piano then leads to a lengthy development, and modulations that range far afield (including a C major appearance of the opening theme) crest in a *fortissimo* plateau. The recapitulation in A major (prepared by a quiet *misterioso* with violin *pizzicato* and harmonics) entrusts the theme to the piano, while the violin contributes the motoric energy of quaver triplets,

<sup>24</sup> Further music-making with Bentley Pollick resulted in three albums over the next decade: *amberwood* (Ariel Ventures, 2007), *Homage to Fiddlers* (Ariel Ventures, 2010) and *Russian Soulscapes* (Ariel Ventures, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Ivan Sokolov, 'Notes on Repertoire', e-mail from Karen Bentley Pollick, 25 January 2020.

*détaché* (with separate bow-strokes). A nine-bar coda brings a progressive deceleration, as the original opening quavers in the violin slow first to crotchets, then to minims before the last fermata-held A major chord.

An *Adagio molto* ( $\frac{8}{8}$ ) [2] starts with initial, hesitant E crotchets and *molto ritardando* before acting as the dominant of A minor into the main *Adagio* in bar four ( $\frac{4}{4}$ ). This section begins with layered textures of arpeggios in the piano left hand, rhythmically brittle octaves in the right and a soaring, long-breathed melody in the violin. The movement is styled by the composer as 'a nocturne. A thunderstorm is approaching'.<sup>26</sup> The squall threatens the rhapsodic middle section, *poco a poco accelerando*, where the violin contributes an eerie *tremolo sul ponticello* (bowed near the bridge) before the music grows slowly louder. A slew of keys is traversed before a return of A, this time in major, and a repeat of the initial hesitant E crotchets leads to a final nine-bar coda reaffirming A major.

A third movement, *Andante moderato* ( $\frac{3}{4}$ ) [3], provides a soothing dialogue between violin and piano right hand, the left hand accompanying in widely spaced crotchets that outline the key of F minor. Sokolov called this 'a lullaby, a mother cradles a child'<sup>27</sup> which, Karen Pollick observed, 'requires a delicate touch with no excess emotion in the *sognando dolcissimo* mood'.<sup>28</sup> F minor is dislodged by modulatory wandering, but returns twice before remaining until the *pianissimo* close.

The finale, *Allegro molto* in common time [4], opens with quaver triplets emphasising E, and lands in A minor (bar 9). The *détaché* violin serves as a persistent rhythmic motor before a romp through myriad tonalities, surging to *fortissimo*. Pollick terms it 'symphonic in scope with both instruments in duo concertante mode',<sup>29</sup> whereas the composer sees 'a night thunderstorm and a sudden morning sunrise'.<sup>30</sup> Rondo-like returns of A minor occur twice, first in original thematic garb, and then in a cyclical

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> E-mail from Karen Bentley Pollick, 17 May 2020.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Sokolov, 'Notes on Repertoire', *loc. cit.*

return to the main theme of the first movement, with solemn minim chords in the piano, before closing *fortissimo* in A major through the last five bars.

The ***Reminiscence for piano, four hands*** (2013) [5], opens in D minor, with the *seconda* contributing a pattern of crotchets in the bass and harmony-filling quavers before the *prima* enters with the melody in octaves. D minor repeats twice, divided by chordal sections and tracts of rhythmic and harmonic turmoil. According to Sokolov, 'The calm main theme becomes more excited in the middle – but all this is only echoes of past storms.'<sup>31</sup> After the lowering threat is past, D major holds serene transcendence (bar 183) until the *pppp* finish; the composer's direction is 'At the end, we hear a bell ringing in the sky.'<sup>32</sup>

The ***Thirteen Postludes for viola and piano*** (2018) are brief mood pieces written in keys covering the first half of the circle of fifths – from C major (I) to F sharp major (XIII).<sup>33</sup> They demonstrate that Sokolov, like his illustrious predecessors Rimsky-Korsakov and Skryabin, is a synaesthete who hears keys as colours, with minor keys 'seen' as the 'night colours' of their parallel majors. The following listing of the *Thirteen Postludes* includes Sokolov's labels of mood as well as his sense of the hue of each key:

- I *Andante molto*, common time in C major [6], angelic, red;
- II *Prestissimo*,  $\frac{3}{4}$  in A minor [7], jovial, green (night);
- III *Andante tranquillo*,  $\frac{12}{8}$  in G major [8], pastoral, orange;
- IV *Drammatico/Religioso*, common time in E minor [9], religious, light blue (night);
- V *Elevato*, common time in D major [10], Mahlerian, yellow;
- VI *Andantino*, common time in B minor [11], Brahms dedication, medium blue (night);
- VII *Misterioso*, common time in A major [12], mysterious, green;
- VIII *Allegro molto*, common time in F sharp minor [13], Rimsky-Korsakov, violet (night);
- IX *Andante*, common time in E major [14], lyrical, light blue;
- X *Andantino con moto*,  $\frac{12}{8}$  in C sharp minor [15], fugato, violet (80% reddish, night);

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Sokolov's *Twelve Postludes for cello and piano* (2018) picks up the cycle from F sharp minor, taking the circle of fifths to its C major conclusion.

XI *Lento misterioso*, common time in B major [16], transcendental, medium blue;  
XII *Andante*, common time in G sharp minor [17], 'All is finished', 60% violet  
(40% red, night);

XIII *Moderato*, common time in F sharp major [18], 'Thanks be to God', violet.  
The moods and tempos of the pieces are as varied as the colours, though most begin quietly before yielding to more emphatic intrusions. Further differences – IV opens with a short introduction, X remains harmonically unstable and proceeds *attacca* into XI – are secondary. As Sokolov observes, 'The nature of the music is calm, with rare flashbacks of past cataclysms'.<sup>34</sup>

In an article about Shostakovich's Viola Sonata, Sokolov observed from his own experience:

When an artist is touched by something [...] he immediately and firmly identifies with whatever it is that has touched him. Shostakovich responded acutely to the injustices of this world. Sometimes I have the sneaking suspicion that all the persecution, pain and suffering that Shostakovich endured during his lifetime actually served him as inspiration.<sup>35</sup>

The biographical connection is germane to Solokov's *Elegie for solo viola* (2001) [19], which depicts 'the completion of a large and eventful life. At the end of the [piece, the] hero dies – we hear the soul exiting the body, meeting its guardian angel'.<sup>36</sup> The striving and beauty of life are well-suited to solo instrument portrayal, of which Karen Pollick found 'proportional dynamics and fine-tuning the shapes of the phrases are key to the interpretation'.<sup>37</sup> One section of *pizzicato* notes isolated by rests reoccurs through the piece, but five bars before the end *pizzicato* is altered to *klopfen* (knocking). Pollick continues: 'The final sustained high G is played with the finger underneath the A string to enable the left hand *pizzicati* below. The final percussive effects have the strings

<sup>34</sup> Sokolov, 'Notes on Repertoire', *loc. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> Sokolov, translated by Elizabeth Wilson, 'Moving Towards an Understanding of Shostakovich's Viola Sonata', in Alexander Ivashkin and Andrew Kirkman (eds.), *Contemplating Shostakovich: Life, Music and Film*, Ashgate, Farnham, Surrey, 2012, p. 79.

<sup>36</sup> Sokolov, 'Notes on Repertoire', *loc. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> E-mail from Karen Bentley Pollick, 17 May 2020.

dampened with the left hand and the bow *col legno* moving from the fingerboard to the tailpiece for the last utterance.<sup>38</sup> ‘The last sounds,’ Sokolov adds, are ‘blows of clods of earth on the coffin lid.’<sup>39</sup>

Natalia Ruchkina might be entrusted with a last word:

The creative evolution of Sokolov is not finished, and thus his art remains an open object, available for further study and other interpretations. The concept of an individual style, which began to change intensively under the influence of new philosophical and aesthetic ideas of the postmodern era, also remains open.<sup>40</sup>

**Karen Bentley Pollick** is one of America’s leading contemporary musicians, performing a wide range of solo repertoire and styles on violin, viola, piano and Norwegian Hardanger fiddle (*hardingfele*) to extend the boundaries of the concert experience, from the Baroque to cutting-edge contemporary music and live improvisation.

A native of Palo Alto, California, she began piano lessons at age five with the Armenian pianist Rusana Sysoyev. She then studied violin with Camilla Wicks in San Francisco, performing in the master-classes of Nathan Milstein, Jean-Jacques Kantorow and Glenn Dicterow, and studying with Rostislav Dubinsky, Josef Gingold and Yuval Yaron at Indiana University, where she received both Bachelors and Masters of Music Degrees in Violin Performance, with a cognate in Choral Conducting.

Her recordings include *Electric Diamond*, *Angel*, *Konzerto and Succubus* and *Ariel View*, for which she received three music awards from Just Plain Folks, including Best Instrumental Album and Best Song. On her own record label, Ariel Ventures, she has produced music featuring chamber works by Ivan Sokolov on *amberwood*,



<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Sokolov, ‘Notes on Repertoire,’ *loc. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> Ruchkina, *Compositional Works of I. G. Sokolov, op. cit.*, p. 25.

*Homage to Fiddlers* and *Russian Soulscapes*; recorded solo-violin music by the Swedish composer Ole Saxe on *Dancing Suite to Suite and Peace Piece*; and filmed Dan Tepfer's *Solo Blues* for violin and piano for one performer simultaneously. She has also recorded for Albany, Blue Coast Records, Bridge, Camel Productions, CRI, Innova, the Lithuanian Music Centre, Mode, Neos, Numinous, RCA, Sony and Tzadik. Her first recording for Toccata Classics featured the two violin concertos of Hermann Grädener (TOCC 0529) and was universally well received: 'Karen Bentley Pollick is at her very best here', the reviewer for MusicWeb International reported; and *Fanfare* judged that 'violinist Pollick plays with rare purity and radiance of tone, and with deep concentration of emotional expression'.

She has served as concert-master of the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie Kammerorchester and the New York String Orchestra, and performed in the June in Buffalo and Wellesley Composers Conferences, as well as at music festivals that include Olympic Music, Tanglewood, Amelia Island, Next Generation, Canberra, Permainu Muzika, American Spring, Music Olomouc, Bowling Green State and Huddersfield, where she gave the UK premiere of David Felder's *Another Face* for violin solo with Delcom video walls, and in Nayarit, Mexico, at the San Pancho, Chacala and Sinergiarte music festivals. She has toured with the New York Philharmonic, Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project, Erick Hawkins Dance Company and the Bolshoi Ballet. She was a guest artist with Tatiana Grindenko's contemporary-music group Opus Posthumous from Moscow, Seattle Chamber Players in their *Icebreaker II: Baltic Voices* Festival and with the Ensemble for the Romantic Century in New York. She premiered Ole Saxe's *Dance Suite* for violin and orchestra with the Redwood Symphony.

She received a Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham 2008 Interdisciplinary Grant to Individual Artists towards the creation of 'Quips and Cranks' with percussionist John Scalici and choreographer Teri Weksler. She was awarded a grant from the Alabama State Council for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts for her March 2010 'Solo Violin and Alternating Currents'. She launched 'Violin, Viola & Video Virtuosity' with the New York video artist Sheri Wills in April 2012, which now comprises dozens of videos projected onto and behind the violinist. With the Paul Dresher Double Duo she toured Australia in May 2013 and has performed with the Paul Dresher Electro-Acoustic Ensemble since 1999.

While living in Vilnius, she first performed the programme 'Resonances from Vilna', with the pianist Jascha Nemtsov, in May 2014 and 'Nothing is Forever' with the actor Aiste Ptakauske in December 2015; and she premiered David A. Jaffe's violin concerto *How Did It*

*Get So Late So Soon?* with the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre Orchestra under Robertas Šervenikas in August 2016.

She received a Seed Money Grant for Disseminated Performances from New York Women Composers towards solo concerts with electronics at the Wayward Music Series in Seattle, the Stanford University Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics, CINETic and the George Enescu Museum in Bucharest, and the Female Composers Festival at SPECTRUMNYC in spring 2018. She is a founding member of Virtuosos de Cámara in Puerto Vallarta and currently serves as concert-master of the Valse Café Orchestra in Seattle, and Principal Second Violin and Festival Artist with the Colorado MahlerFest Orchestra in Boulder. She performs on a violin made by Jean Baptiste Vuillaume in 1860 and a viola made in 1987 by William Whedbee.

*www.kbentley.com*



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Producer-engineer: Holger Urbach  
Piano: Steinway D-274, courtesy of Schoke Flügel & Pianos, Cologne

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## IVAN SOKOLOV Chamber and Instrumental Music

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<b>Violin Sonata No. 2 (2018)</b>	<b>24:12</b>
1 I <i>Allegro moderato</i>	7:02
2 II <i>Adagio molto</i>	7:11
3 III <i>Andante moderato</i>	5:01
4 IV <i>Allegro molto</i>	4:58
5 <b>Reminiscence for piano, four hands (2013)</b>	<b>6:31</b>
<b>Thirteen Postludes for viola and piano (2018)</b>	<b>31:50</b>
6 I <i>Andante molto</i>	2:17
7 II <i>Prestissimo</i>	0:48
8 III <i>Andante tranquillo</i>	2:46
9 IV <i>Drammatico/Religioso</i>	3:01
10 V <i>Elevato</i>	3:25
11 VI <i>Andantino</i>	1:28
12 VII <i>Misterioso</i>	2:07
13 VIII <i>Allegro molto</i>	1:06
14 IX <i>Andante</i>	3:50
15 X <i>Andantino con moto</i>	1:40
16 XI <i>Lento misterioso</i>	3:39
17 XII <i>Andante</i>	2:49
18 XIII <i>Moderato</i>	2:54
19 <b>Elegie for solo viola (2001)</b>	<b>6:20</b>

**Karen Bentley Pollick, violin** 1–4, **piano** 5 and **viola** 6–19  
**Ivan Sokolov, piano** 1–18

**TT 68:54**

FIRST RECORDINGS