

Autobiography

The Beginning: Education

I consider myself a lucky man. Many people at age of 50 start to weigh and balance their lives by dwelling on their past activities and achievements, resigning themselves to the idea that their most fruitful years are gone. I don't want to follow them, for I strongly believe that my most exciting projects still lie ahead I am actively planning for the future. The projects, the plans, and the future all have to do with my participation in the development and dissemination of musical culture.

My involvement in this culture has been inspired by the music of my great compatriots: Russian classical composers Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and Alexander Gretchaninov, to name just a few who have made immortal contributions, not only to Music, but to the American cultural life in general and who have become part and parcel of this country's musical history. My professional experience is firmly grounded in their great works. I feel I am in a position to carry forward their mission and to convey, through performance and composition, the magnificent traditions of the Russian classical music to the next generation of students who have chosen the noble and difficult trade of music.

I was born in Russia and received my musical education in Moscow. I obtained my B.A., M.A. and the Doctoral degree in Piano Performance from the Gnesin Institute of Music where I studied with the extraordinary Russian pianist Anatoly Vedernikov.

After completing my Doctoral degree in Piano Performance, I took an M.A. in Composition from the Moscow Conservatory. My mentor there was Tikhon Khrennikov, one of Russia's greatest living classical composers. At 93, this remarkable person is still running his composition studio at the Moscow Conservatory and continuing his work as a composer. I was taught Theory of Music by Yuri Kholopov, whose books on musical theory and lesson collections have been translated into many European languages, and they are used by students in Germany, Italy, Sweden and Great Britain. I studied Instrumentation and Orchestration with Professor Nikolai Rakov, one of the best experts in the field. In short, I was blessed to receive my professional training from great musicians and remarkable human beings.

Early Career (1974 – 2000):

Piano Performance, Awards and Membership, and Recordings

With the benefit of such a privileged music education, my professional career started early and successfully. In 1973, when I was 18, I made my first trip abroad to participate in the International Festival of Modern Music in the former Yugoslavia. The next year I performed Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto in the same country with the Zagreb Symphony Orchestra, one of the finest orchestras in Europe. In 1977 I won the Russian National Piano Competition, where the competition was extremely fierce.

After that, my career began in earnest. I started performing as a soloist, ensembler and accompanist all over the world: in Germany, France, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Cyprus, Finland, Italy as well as China, Taiwan, Australia and the USA. I visited some of the best concert halls in these countries. I travelled to and played in nearly all the regions of my own country, including the former Soviet Republics.

In 1988 – 1990 I performed on Russian Television. The highlights include a world premiere of my teacher Khrennikov's *Sonata for Cello and Piano* and the second-ever performance of Poulenc's *Romances and Songs for Soprano and Piano*. In addition, I also played in shorter programs 3 – 4 times a year throughout the 1980s. Though playing on TV was not my goal, I could not afford to decline such prestigious invitations. I also regularly performed on the radio in 1993 – 2001. The musical channel Orpheus taped all my music; the shows are accompanied by my oral lectures, and they have been aired many times ever since.

My performing activities in 1986 earned me a membership in the Moscow State Philharmonic Society, an honor society that had been in existence for more than 70 years and which had among its members the most famous soloists living in Moscow. As a member, I played all my recitals under the Society's label. But my absences from Moscow due to my trips to the United States and activities at the University of Georgia's School of Music were not viewed favorably by the Society chair and I was asked to either be a full-time performer in the Society or quit my membership. Under these circumstances, in 2002, during my second year in the United States, I resigned my membership. In 1997, I was awarded the Medal of the Government of the City of Moscow, and in 1999, the title of the Honored Artist of the Russian Federation, which is awarded for outstanding achievements in the fine arts.

Recordings

I have made 16 recordings to date. Three were recorded as LPs, in 1984, 1986 and 1987, two as accompanist to vocal music and one as an accompanist to violin — for the former USSR's major label, Melodia. Since 1990s, I have recorded CDs with labels including Russian Disk (the former Melodia), Boheme (the leading Czech label), Olympia in the U.K., Phoenix in the United States, and Angelok¹, a small new label. My CD recordings are evenly divided among solo, ensembles and accompaniments. I have three more forthcoming CDs: Richard Strauss and Bela Bartók's *Sonatas for Violin and Piano* (to be released later in 2006), *Music for Clarinet and Piano* (also for release in 2006), and Hindemith's *Three Sonatas* (scheduled for release in 2006 – 2007).

Compositions, Membership in the Composers Guild of Russia, and Honors

Beginning in the 1980s I have written a considerable number of compositions, mainly for voice, because I consider the human voice the primary instrument. But I also composed a few works for symphony orchestra, for violin and piano, and for percussion ensemble. Some of these compositions have been published, and all of them have been performed.

My future composition plans include works for brass instruments. As everyone knows, very few original compositions have been written for these instruments.

In 2001 the Composers Guild of Russia accepted me as a member. I completed my Masters degree in Composition in 1988, but only in 2001 I was honored with membership in this prestigious and highly selective association. I had to pass a very challenging examination, present my recordings, play my works, and obtain recommendation letters from well-known composers. One of the highest honors I have received as a composer is a dedication by my great teacher Tikhon

Khrennikov, who dedicated his *Fourth Concerto for Piano for String Instruments and Orchestra* to me.

Other Interests

There is a Russian proverb that the gun shoots far because it aims narrowly, but I strongly disagree with it. I believe musicians should extend their professional activities to different fields and not restrict themselves to, say, playing the piano or playing works from a particular period, or to composing solely for the piano, or just to composing. In fact, though my main instrument is piano, I played the harpsichord as an accompanist in one CD recording and many times in concerts. I also sang in a folk-music ensemble for three years as a bass soloist in the Pokrovsky Ensemble in Moscow, and even now I sing in the Orthodox Church in Moscow when I return there for summer vacations. I know Russian church vocal music and its traditions very well.

American Career (2002 to the present): Performing, Musical Collaborations, Recordings, and Future Plans

I first visited the United States in 1993, and then several times in 1994 – 1995 as a member of the Pokrovsky vocal folk ensemble. We performed in prestigious halls in Seattle, San Francisco, Hollywood, Boston, as well as several places in Vermont. Beginning in 2000, I have been performing solo piano in the US. I have played at the Carnegie Hall in New York City in 2003, twice in 2004, and then again, in 2005. In 2002, I began my collaboration with the University of Georgia (UGA) in Athens, Georgia, coming initially to perform, and then, from 2002, to perform as an artist-in-residence.

I am glad to say that here I almost found immediately a perfect environment and a rich ground for realizing my dreams of the musical exchange between our two countries. My colleagues are excellent and very interested in me. I have established many professional and friendly relationships with them, and these have brought forth a burst of joint musical activity and plans for more collaboration.

The highlights of my activity at the UGA include performances of all ten *Sonatas for Piano and Violin* by Beethoven with members of Professor Levon Ambartsumians studio and two recitals with the UGA music faculty including all the *Sonatas* by Paul Hindemith for piano and wind instruments. It was a real joy to find a common ground with the traditions of my American colleagues. Everybody knows the best wind players in the world are American because of the long and deep tradition of the band culture in this country. It was particularly exciting to collaborate with them in these recitals. My plans for the future include the recording of Beethoven's ten sonatas. There is no question that this will show case my own performance skills and those of my UGA colleagues. At the same time, it will provide publicity for the School of Music in general and will, hopefully, favorably impact student recruitment. The schools quality and the talents of its faculty members are best known through the faculties recordings.

More on Recordings

As I mentioned above, collaboration with my UGA colleagues has also resulted in recordings. Four of my CDs were recorded here: Igor Stravinsky's piano works, solo piano; (2) Shostakovich's *Sonatas* for violin and piano, with Ambartsumian; Antonio Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* and *Concertos* for violin and orchestra, as a harpsichord soloist, with Ambartsumian and his students; *American Music*

for Tuba, Something Old Something New, with Dr. David Zerkel (Professor of Tuba), a recording of first rate performances of modern American music. My work in progress includes, besides a solo CD of Hindemith's *Sonatas*, the sonatas by Richard Strauss and Bela Bartók (in collaboration with Levon Ambartsumian), and another joint project, *Music for Clarinet and Piano*, with Mr. D. Ray McClellan.

Compositions and Dedication in the US

During the academic year at the UGA I am very busy with daily work for students, recordings and recitals, and I have no time and energy for composition. But I do have summer vacations. And vacation is a great time for my own work! That is why most of my composition takes place in summer. For example, last summer I wrote a quartet for four trombones. This was commissioned by Professor Philip Jameson, and was immediately included in the student repertoire, and it has already been performed several times by students. Since brass instruments lack an original solo repertoire, I am planning to compose a few works just for brass trombone, tuba, euphonium and horn.

I am also happy to say that Professor Roger Vogel, the Chair of Music Theory and Composition, has included me in the dedication to one of his chamber compositions.

The above includes but a fraction of the projects and ideas crowding my brain. I strongly believe that all my plans will be realized with the strong support of my colleagues and with my own resolve. I am a very stubborn man, and once I get an idea in my head I know that I will realize it — sooner or later. It may take me a year, or five years, but I will get it done.