

Between Tradition and Modernity

Sergei Vasilenko and His Unknown Works for Viola and Piano

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A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD in Performance Practice

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Volume 1

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Signed Declaration

I, Elena Artamonova, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: Elena Artamonova

Date: 12 January, 2014

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This thesis would have not been possible without the help and support of many people.

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Musical Culture, Tchaikovskii House-Museum, the Composer's Union of the Russian Federation, the Russian State National Library, the British Library, the Library of the London School of Economics and Political Science, Goldsmiths Library and Special Collections, the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress that greatly contributed to the formation of this thesis by providing access to invaluable published and unpublished archival material for this research.

I would like to express thanks to the Music Department and Research Committee at Goldsmiths College that generously supported me on my research trips to Russia, the experience of which has been vital to this project.

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Relation between the written component and the recital programme

The research objective of this written component and the final recital is to assess the contribution of Sergei Vasilenko to the development of the viola solo repertoire in the twentieth century. The recital programme brings together the viola compositions of Vasilenko and also of Grechaninov and Roslavets, who were not only connected in their compositional and teaching activities but were influential for each other. The choice of the viola and compositional elements in their previously unknown and little-known works illustrate the line of succession passed from the older to the younger generation of Russian composers, who skilfully elaborated and transformed their language.

The two works of Vasilenko are included in the recital as they represent him as a master of composition and instrumentation with a diversity of stylistic and instrumental approaches, harmonic and rhythmic language, an exquisite palette of sound colour and a considered approach to the form, articulations and dynamics. The unknown and unpublished sonata for viola (or clarinet) and piano op. 161 of Grechaninov is a fine illustration of the musical rhetoric that made an impact on Vasilenko, including his appreciation of Russian songs that contributed to the emphasis on the melodic outline in his works. Vasilenko's interest in the modern trends of the time and experimentation with a one-movement sonata structure are evident in the sonata for viola and piano, 1926, of his student Roslavets, who followed in the steps of his Professor but broadly used his own compositional idioms. These characteristics closely link these composers and their viola compositions that represent the general rise of the viola as a solo instrument in Russia in the first half of the twentieth century. These works demonstrate the viola

with a depth of musical intimacy and expression combined with a virtuosic technical potential, thus putting it on a par with the violin.

Programme of the Final Recital

Aleksandr Grechaninov (1864-1956),

Sonata for viola (or clarinet) and piano, op. 161, 1940

1. *Allegro*. 2. *Canzona*. 3. *Vivace*

Nikolai Roslavets (1881-1944), Sonata for viola and piano, 1926

Allegretto moderato – Allegro vivace – Tempo I – Molto vivace

Interval

Sergei Vasilenko (1872-1956), Sonata for viola and piano, op. 46, 1923

Allegro moderato - Andante amorevole - Fughetta. Molto energico –

Tempo del commincio (Allegro moderato)

**Sergei Vasilenko, Four Pieces on the Themes of Lute Music of the Sixteenth-
Seventeenth Centuries, op. 35, 1918, for viola (or cello) and piano**

No. 1 *Pavane*, No. 2 *Madonna Tenerina*, No. 3 *Serenade for a Lady of my Heart*,

No. 4 *Knights*

Artists

Elena Artamonova, viola

Nicholas Walker, piano

Transliteration Note

The Library of Congress transliteration system for Russian with the soft sign (') is used in this thesis. In order to maintain consistency, even well-known names are spelt in the same form as other Russian names. The only exception is made for the name of Tchaikovskii, which would be hard to recognise in its correct form as Chaikovskii. The foreign names of persons, who lived in Russia and the Soviet Union, are spelt as transliterations from Russian; for example, the renowned music publisher Petr Iurgenson, instead of the standard Jurgenson, and the musicologist Teodor Miuller, instead of Theodor Muller. However, the titles of English and American publications retain their spelling for easy of reference, for example Skriabin is spelt in some sources as Scriabin or Skrybin.

Both a transliterated form in italics and its English translation in square brackets are given for all Russian titles of works, organisations, archival documents and published sources only once, when they appear in the text for the first time. Subsequently, the recurring reference details of Russian originals remain in footnotes in the transliterated form only and the recurring titles in the main body of the text are spelt using English translation or abbreviation. An analogical approach will be followed with the titles of archival funds in the footnotes. Both a transliterated form in italics and its English translation in square brackets are given for all foreign titles of works, archival documents and musical scores in the Bibliography. All quotations and extracts from Russian archival sources and Russian publications used in the text were translated by the author of this thesis, Elena Artamonova.

Abbreviations

The *opis'* [inventory] and *edinita khraneniia* [document indexes] of funds will be given using the abbreviation of 'op.' and 'ed. khr.' respectively following the standard system of archival catalogues in Russia.

Abstract

Sergei Vasilenko has been perceived as a conformist and inconsequential Soviet composer in post-Soviet Russia. The recent discoveries of unpublished documents reveal Vasilenko to be a talented musician whose search for a niche within the culture of Soviet music forced him to keep his true musical writings secret from the public in a drawer of his desk.

The author of this thesis was fortunate to find a number of his unknown and unpublished compositions for viola and piano. In view of the paucity of music for stringed instruments in Russia in the first decades of the last century, Vasilenko's seven compositions for viola, which are all different in style, mode and technique, assume especial importance. The analysis of these works shows that Vasilenko equally combined the elements of many diverse and often contradictory musical conceptions of the time, including the Silver Age, Neoclassicism, Romanticism and the Avant-garde. His innovative style – expanding the technical and sonorous potential of the instrument, and the rhythmic and harmonic resources of Russian music – launched new standards in viola performance and expanded its repertoire. This thesis investigates the language, performing issues and the reasons for the neglect of his viola works as well as their stylistic roots that spanned from Vasilenko's interest in the Baroque to Russian liturgical music.

The aim of this study is to re-evaluate the role of Vasilenko in the enhancement of the viola as a solo instrument in the twentieth century and bring his works to a concert platform. The analysis and discussion of these subjects rely heavily on unpublished and little-explored materials on Vasilenko from the archives in Moscow. This PhD submission has practical and written components that consist

of the written thesis, edited musical scores and the first complete recording of Vasilenko's compositions for viola and piano released by Toccata Classics.

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Sergei Vasilenko. Complete Music for Viola and Piano. First Complete Recording.

Elena Artamonova, viola, and Nicholas Walker, piano. Toccata Classics, TOCC 0127, compact disc.

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Introduction

The aim of this study is to re-evaluate the role of Sergei Vasilenko in the enhancement of the viola as a solo instrument in the twentieth century and bring his works to a concert platform. This PhD submission has practical and written components that consist of the written thesis, edited musical scores and the first complete recording of Vasilenko's compositions for viola and piano. The author of this thesis was privileged to work with Vasilenko's archives, research his early publications in libraries in London and Moscow and was fortunate to find a number of his unknown viola works. This research work took place in Moscow at the archives of the Russian State Archive for Literature and Art (RGALI), the Glinka National Museum Consortium of Musical Culture (GNMCMC, the former Glinka State Museum of Musical Culture), the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), the State National Library, the Library of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation, the Library of the Moscow Conservatoire, the Tchaikovskii State House-Museum in Klin (GDMC), Goldsmiths Library and Special Collections, the Library of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and the British Library in London in April 2008 - August 2013. The result of this research is the first ever complete list of compositions for viola and piano by Sergei Vasilenko, as well as the first complete recording of his viola music performed by Elena Artamonova (viola) and Nicholas Walker (piano) on the Toccata Classics label (TOCC 0127) released in September 2011.² None of the compositions are well known; some are not even included in any of the published

² Sergei Vasilenko, "Complete Music for Viola and Piano. First Complete Recording," *Toccata Classics*, <http://www.toccataclassics.com/cddetail.php?CN=TOCC0127> (accessed May 15, 2013). The complete list of Vasilenko's viola compositions is given in the second chapter.

catalogues of Vasilenko's music. Only the Sonata was recorded previously, first in the 1960s by Georgii Bezrukov (viola) and Anatolii Spivak (piano),³ and again in 2007 by Igor' Fedotov (viola) and Leonid Vechkhaizer (piano);⁴ the other compositions received their first public recognition and recordings due to this research. The author of this thesis has also given recitals; published articles based on her recent archival findings and presented research papers at international musicological conferences.⁵

³ Melodiia CM 03687-8. The LP has no issue date, which was typical for the time, although the coding indicates that it was produced in 1961-1969.

⁴ Sergei Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano op. 46*, from *Soviet Russian Viola Music: Kryukov, Vasilenko, Frid, Krein, Bogdanov-Berezovsky*. Igor Fedotov (viola), Gary Hammond and Leonid Vechkhayzer (piano), Naxos 8.572247, 2007, compact disc.

⁵ The concert programmes of selected recitals are enclosed in Appendix 1. Research articles: 1. Elena Artamonova, "Unknown Sergei Vasilenko and His Viola Compositions: Recent Discoveries in Russian Archives," *Journal of the American Viola Society* 1, vol. 28 (2012): 33-47. 2. Elena Artamonova, Liner Notes, *Sergei Vasilenko and the Viola*, 2-11. In *Sergei Vasilenko. Complete Music for Viola and Piano*, Elena Artamonova (viola) and Nicholas Walker (piano), Toccata Classics TOCC 0127, 2011, compact disc. Research presentations: 1. Elena Artamonova, "Sergei Vasilenko and the Old Believers" (paper presented at the International Conference and Festival 'Orthodoxy, Music, Politics and Art in Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe', Goldsmiths, University of London, March 16-17, 2013). 2. Elena Artamonova, "Sergei Vasilenko and the Viola" (lecture-recital and the launch of the *First Complete Recording of Vasilenko's Viola Works* presented at the Royal Academy of Music, London, October 24, 2011, and at the Centre for Russian Music, Goldsmiths College, University of London, June 14, 2011). 3. Elena Artamonova, "Unknown Sergei Vasilenko and His Viola Compositions" (paper and the final recital of the festival presented at the International Conference and Festival 'Music in Russia and the Soviet Union: Reappraisal and Rediscovery', Durham University, July 11-14, 2011). 4. Elena Artamonova, "The Birth of Modern Viola out of the Spirit of Russian Music. Why the Viola?" (Paper presented at the International Conference 'Music for Stringed Instruments: Music Archives and the Materials of Musicological Research in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', Cardiff University, June 23-24, 2010). 5. Elena Artamonova, "Nikolai Roslavets. A Violinist and His Dream of the Unheard World of Sounds" (paper presented at the Centre for Russian Music, Goldsmiths College, University of London, November 17,

The research question regarding Sergei Vasilenko will confine itself to evaluating the contribution of his output to the enlargement of the solo viola repertoire at the beginning of the twentieth century. This discussion is divided into five parts: the opening two chapters examine the political and cultural circumstances that shaped Vasilenko's career, his interest in the viola and the reasons for the neglect of his published compositions that enabled Vasilenko to write for the viola again only in the early 1950s and keep his newly written works in a drawer of his desk. The third chapter offers an analysis of Vasilenko's arrangements of early music and their instrumental peculiarities. The fourth chapter is a study of Vasilenko's sonata for viola and piano and its performance issues. The final chapter concludes the discussion of Vasilenko's viola compositions with a review of their stylistic roots and issues, the importance of understanding these for performers and Vasilenko's legacy. The analysis and discussion of these subjects rely heavily on unpublished and little-explored materials on Vasilenko from the archives in Moscow.

The reading list of existing musicological publications on Vasilenko and his compositions in Russian and English is very limited and outdated as the latest articles about Vasilenko in these languages were published in 1979 and 1970 respectively.⁶ The majority of these publications underwent severe censorship, because they were published in the Soviet press, with only a few surviving articles dated before 1917, when critics did release objective reviews. Thus, the bibliography

2010). 6. Elena Artamonova, "Russian Viola as a Reflection of the Traditional and Modern" (lecture-recital presented at 'A Study Day (M)Other Russia – Researching and Performing Russian Music', Centre for Russian Music, Goldsmiths College, University of London, February 14, 2009).

⁶ This list does not include the articles of the author of this thesis, which are listed in footnote 5.

on Vasilenko in Russian consists of occasional brief articles in popular and scholarly periodicals about the premiers of Vasilenko's new works, a monograph about the composer written by his biographer Georgii Polianovskii that was published in 1947 and 1964, and the music guide with the list of Vasilenko's works compiled by Georgii Ivanov that was published in 1973.⁷ In addition, there were two publications of Vasilenko's memoirs in 1948 and 1979 in Moscow, the objectivity of which is evaluated in detail in the first chapter of this thesis.⁸ There are only two articles about Vasilenko in English with a very brief outline about his compositional style that were written by Stanley Dale Krebs and Rena Moisenko in their books on Soviet composers that were published in 1970 and 1949 respectively.⁹ Besides, the sources of these two authors were limited to Soviet publications as they did not have access to Soviet archival materials. For these reasons, the archival materials supported by personal interviews and correspondence conducted by the author of this thesis with leading contemporary scholars are vital for a thorough re-evaluation and understanding of this composer and his music today.

⁷ 1. Georgii Ivanov, *Sergei Vasilenko. Notograficheskii spravochnik* [Sergei Vasilenko. Music Guide] (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1973). 2. Georgii Polianovskii, *Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko i ego tvorchestvo* [Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko and his Creativity] (Moscow: Muzyka, 1964). 3. Georgii Polianovskii, *Sergei Vasilenko* (Moscow-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1947). The full details of articles are given in the Bibliography.

⁸ 1. Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia* [Memoirs], ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979). 2. Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* [Pages of Reminiscences] (Moscow: Muzyka, 1948).

⁹ 1. Stanley Dale Krebs, *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970). 2. Rena Moisenko, *Realist Music. 25 Soviet Composers* (London: Meridian Books Ltd., 1949).

The full list of published and unpublished archival sources as well as sound recordings that has been used in this thesis is given in the Bibliography. The political atmosphere and severe censorship played a decisive role in the public perception of Vasilenko as a loyal Soviet composer and public figure. The extended list of unpublished archival documents and musical scores introduced in this thesis reveal Vasilenko to be a versatile, resourceful and inspirational musician deeply devoted to Russian culture. The limitations of Soviet 'Socialist Realism' and Vasilenko's formal compliance with the regime obliged him to conceal his true interests and compositions from the public.¹⁰ Due to Vasilenko's broad scope of interests in music, art, literature and history, and their interaction in his compositional pursuits, the published sources used for this research comprise books, articles and periodicals that review the modern artistic, philosophical and musical trends of his time that were influenced by the political and cultural changes in the country. These publications range from those written by Vasilenko's contemporaries in the USSR and abroad to the most recent findings of twenty-first-century scholars based on previously unknown archival materials. This approach gives one a comprehensive overview of the issues that researchers evaluated in the past but are now re-evaluating. Taking into account the diversity of Vasilenko's musical language in his compositions for the viola and the aim of this thesis to combine its research findings with performances of the discovered compositions, the issues of interpretation of musical texts have also been an important focus in this thesis. The awareness of historical authenticity and meaning, modernity and spontaneity,

¹⁰ For further reference to Socialist Realism and the political restrictions of the time see the subsection 'Reasons for the neglect of Vasilenko's viola works during his lifetime' in the second chapter.

instrumental refinement and clarity of expression, the interplay between the technical and the artistic, the production of tone and the emphasis on rhythm are vital for the analysis and performance of Vasilenko's compositions. Therefore, a number of entries in the Bibliography refer to issues of string performance and contemporary interpretation.

The methodology of this thesis has been primarily based on researching unpublished archival materials and documents, studying unpublished musical scores and interviews with leading musicologists, performers and composers. The search of archival collections provided access to original documents relating to Vasilenko and the music industry in Russia in the first half of the twentieth century that have been preserved from censorship. In addition, this access gave the author of this thesis an opportunity to broaden the research in order to explore the archives of other Russian composers of the early twentieth century, including Aleksandr Grechaninov, one the first teachers of Vasilenko. The unknown and unpublished *Sonata for Viola (or clarinet) and Piano op. 161* written by Grechaninov became another special find of this study.¹¹ This sonata was listed as a sonata for clarinet and piano in some monographs on Grechaninov, though Grechaninov wrote a part for the viola as well as one for the clarinet.¹² The finding of the musical manuscripts of Vasilenko and

¹¹ Aleksandr Grechaninov, *Sonata for viola (or clarinet) and piano no. 1, op.161*. A microfilm of the sonata is housed in GNMCMC, fund 22 (Grechaninov Aleksandr Tikhonovich), ed. khr. 132-133. The manuscript is housed in the New York Public Library.

¹² Further reference in: 1. Ol'ga Tompakova, *Pevets russkoi temy. Aleksandr Tikhonovich Grechaninov* [The Singer of the Russian Theme. Aleksandr Tikhonovich Grechaninov] (St. Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2007), 120. 2. Iurii Paisov, *Aleksandr Grechaninov. Zhizn' i tvorchestvo* [Aleksandr Grechaninov. Life and Work] (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2004), 555. 3. Iurii Aleksandrov, *Aleksandr Tikhonovich Grechaninov. Notograficheskii spravochnik* [Aleksandr Tikhonovich Grechaninov. Music Guide] (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1978), 16.

Grechaninov that took place during the course of this research led to the preparation of their performing editions. This undertaking has proved to be a challenging task as the author of this thesis had to interpret and decipher the handwritten manuscripts of the musical scores, some of which were almost impossible to read. Taking into account that the majority of works for viola and piano by Vasilenko, which have been discovered during the course of this research remain in manuscript with neither bow markings nor the fingering essential for their performance, the author of this thesis made editions of the *Zodiakus I.A.S. Suite after Unknown Authors of the Eighteenth Century*, *Oriental Dance op. 47*, *Sleeping River*, *Lullaby* and the *Four Pieces for Viola and Piano* that are enclosed with this thesis.

Finally, personal correspondence and interviews with leading contemporary researchers, composers and performers have been an important additional source of information and methodology for this study. Thus, in April 2012, the oldest living Russian composer, Grigorii Frid, shared his memoirs on the musical life of the Moscow Conservatoire circles in the 1930s and his personal encounters with his teacher of instrumentation Sergei Vasilenko; Evgeniia Stoklitskaia recalled the teaching and performance approaches of her Professor of the viola, Vadim Borisovskii, who was the leading Russian viola soloist in the 1920s-1960s and a dedicatee of a number of viola works written by his contemporaries, including Sergei Vasilenko.¹³ Inna Barsova, Larry Sitsky and Elizabeth Wilson provided the author of this thesis with some interesting information about research sources relating to other distinguished Russian composers who wrote for the viola during this period such as Nikolai Roslavets and Aleksandr Mosolov. The exchange of

¹³ For further information on Borisovskii see the second chapter.

views and information with these and other scholars, the majority of whom are listed in the Acknowledgements, and the extensive work at the archives of the author of this thesis has helped to focus this study on the development of the viola as a solo instrument in Russia specifically in the period of the first half of the twentieth century and on the viola works written by Sergei Vasilenko rather than on those by Mosolov and Roslavets. The preference and need for this particular research topic in musicology and viola performance is explained below.

The start of the transformation of the viola from a neglected orchestral instrument in Russia occurred soon after the Socialist Revolution of 1917 and the following Civil War that resulted in rapid political and social changes, which consequently influenced the aesthetic and musical conceptions of the time. The particular musical languages of Mosolov, Roslavets and Vasilenko are most interesting for the evaluation of the enhancement of the viola as a solo instrument in Russia during this period. Roslavets and Mosolov were composers with very modern and often radical ideas that they implemented in their compositions. Vasilenko, on the contrary, equally combined the elements of many diverse and often contradictory musical conceptions of the time, including the Silver Age,¹⁴ Neoclassicism, Romanticism and the Avant-garde. The Avant-garde movement took its first inspiration from the individualism of Russian Symbolist composers of the Silver

¹⁴ The term Silver Age is applied to a number of artistic movements in the first two decades of the twentieth century, which announced the idea of transforming the world through art, and in which only the individuality of an artist seemed to be accounted artistic merit. The movements were unified by irrationalism, mysticism, eccentricity, and the eradication of logic in favour of intuition and 'cosmic consciousness'. This term is attributed to a Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev (1874-1948), though it was recognised by scholars only in the 1960s. More information on the Silver Age may be found in the subsection 'Symbolism' in the fifth chapter.

Age, Scriabin in particular.¹⁵ However, the Avant-garde moved further, with extreme experimentation in form, rhythm and language, including synthetic chords,¹⁶ twelve-tone rows and free atonality.¹⁷ The radical innovations and new trends of the Avant-garde were led among others by the young Roslavets and Mosolov from the 1890s until 1932, when the movement clashed with the state decree '*O perestroike literaturno-khudozhestvennykh organizatsii*' [On the

¹⁵ A discussion of the influence of Scriabin may be found in the fourth and fifth chapters.

¹⁶ A *Sintet-akkord* [Synthetic Chord] is the central six-tone harmony of Roslavets's harmonic invention called the '*Novaia sistema organizatsii zvukov*' [New System of Organised Sounds], which he introduced in detail in his unpublished lecture with the same title at the Musical-Vocal Courses named after Stravinskii in Moscow on 3 December 1926: '[...] A synthetic chord works as a substitute for a tonality and exists within certain rules. [...] The repositioning of this chord on a fifth up or down employs a formula similar to Tonic-Subdominant-Dominant (T-S-D). Unfolded in the melodic layout these three synthetic chords T-S-D give a twelve-note chromatic scale. [...]' Nikolai Roslavets, *Novaia sistema organizatsii zvukov* [New System of Organised Sounds]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2659, op. 1, ed. khr. 72, p. 16.

¹⁷ For further reference to the Avant-garde see: 1. Leonid Maksimenkov, ed., *Muzyka vmesto sumbura. Kompozitory i muzykanty v strane Sovetov, 1917-1991. Dokumenty* [Music Instead of Muddle. Composers and Musicians in the Land of the Soviets, 1917-1991. Documents] (Moscow: Demokratiia, 2013). 2. Marina Frolova-Walker and Jonathan Walker, *Music and Soviet Power, 1917-1932* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012). 3. Andrei Krusanov, *Russkii avangard: 1907-1932. Istoricheskii obzor v trekh tomakh* [Russian Avant-garde: 1907-1932. A Historical Review in Three Volumes] (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2003, 2010). 4. Amy Nelson, *Music for the Revolution: Musicians and Power in Early Soviet Russia* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004). 5. David Haas, *Leningrad's Modernists. Studies in Composition and Musical Thought, 1917-1932* (New York, Bern, Berlin Frankfurt am Main, Paris, Wien: Peter Lang, 1998). 6. Larry Sitsky, *Music of the Repressed Russian Avant-garde, 1900-1929* (Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1994).

Reconstruction of Literary and Art Organisations]¹⁸ that marked the start of the epoch of Socialist Realism; from then on art was thoroughly controlled by the state.

The author of this thesis has undertaken thorough research into the personal archival documents, unpublished manuscripts and lectures of Roslavets that are kept at the Russian State Archive for Literature and Art (RGALI) and the Glinka National Museum Consortium of Musical Culture (GNMCMC) in Moscow.¹⁹ The viola legacy of Roslavets consists of two completed and one unfinished sonatas for viola and piano. The completed sonatas written in 1926²⁰ and in the 1930s²¹ respectively were published by the Schott Music publishing house, and have been recorded and evaluated in a few dissertations.²² The unfinished sonata of 1925²³ was

¹⁸ The Party Resolution of 23 April 1932 'On the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organisations' liquidated existing literary-artistic organisations and established new unions with a compulsory Communist faction that ensured the absolute control of the Party.

¹⁹ Housed in RGALI, fund 2659 (Roslavets, Nikolai Andreevich). Housed in GNMCMC, fund 373 (Roslavets, Nikolai Andreevich). This research work took place in July 2008-July 2013.

²⁰ Nikolai Roslavets, *Sonata for Viola and Piano 1926*. Manuscript housed in RGALI, fund 2659, op. 1, ed. khr. 31, pp. 1-21.

²¹ The precise date of the second sonata is unknown. The manuscript of this sonata that is housed in RGALI (fund 2659, op. 1, ed. khr. 39, pp. 1-29) is undated.

²² The scores were published in: 1. Nikolai Roslavets, *Sonata for Viola and Piano no. 1, 1926*, ed. Marina Lobanova (Mainz: Schott Music, ED 8177). 2. Nikolai Roslavets, *Sonata for Viola and Piano no. 2*, ed. Marina Lobanova (Mainz: Schott Music, ED 8178). Sound recordings in: 1. Nikolai Roslavets, *Sonatas for Viola and Piano*, from *Nikolai Roslavets: Chamber Music, Piano Trio no. 3, Sonatas for Viola and Piano no. 1-2, Piano Sonata no. 5, Cello Sonata no. 1*. The Moscow Trio, Andrei Gridtchuk (viola) and Alexander Blok (piano), Natalia Pankova (piano), Sergei Sudzilovski (cello) and Andrei Diev (piano), Brilliant Classics 9174, 2010, compact disc. (This recording was originally released in 1992 by Harmonia Mundi IDC 288 047. Further reference to this recording may be found in footnote 24). 2. Nikolai Roslavets, *Sonata for Viola and Piano no. 1, 1926*, from *Les Nouveaux Musiciens. Ligeti: Sonate pour alto seul, Prokofiev: Roméo et Juliette, Roslavets: Sonate pour alto et piano no. 1, Takemitsu: A Bird Came down the Walk*. Lawrence Power (viola) and Simon Crawford-Phillips (piano), Harmonia Mundi HMN 911756, 2001, compact disc. 3. Nikolai Roslavets, *Sonatas for*

completed by the composer Aleksandr Raskatov in 1988 and recorded by Iurii Bashmet on the viola, and Mikhail Muntian on the piano.²⁴ These undertakings,

Viola and Piano no. 1-2, from *Nikolai Roslavets and Dmitrii Shostakovich: Sonatas for Viola and Piano no. 1-2, Sonata op. 147a*. Victoria Chiang (viola) and Randall Hodgkinson (piano), Centaur CRC2450, 2000, compact disc. Selected dissertations: 1. Inessa Bazayev, "Composing with Circles, Spirals, and Lines of Fifths: Harmony and Voice Leading in the Works of Nikolai Roslavets" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2009), 1-229. 2. Mary C. Watson Harrah, "The Sonata for Viola and Piano (1926) of Nikolai Andreyevich Roslavets: A Historical Examination, Analysis and Performer's Guide" (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2005), 1-58. 3. Charles Monroe McKnight, "Nikolai Roslavets: Music and Revolution" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1994), 1-232. 4. Anna Ferenc, "Investigating Russian Musical Modernism: Nikolai Roslavets and his New System of Tone Organisation" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1993), 1-170.

²³ The uncompleted manuscript of this sonata is housed in RGALI, fund 2659, op. 1, ed. khr. 30, pp. 1-2, 5-11.

²⁴ Aleksandr Raskatov, email message to author, December 29, 2012. Iurii Bashmet, interview by the author, London, February 10, 2012. Bashmet (b. 1953) is a former student of Vadim Borisovskii and Fedor Druzhinin, a Russian conductor, violist and the Head of the Viola Faculty at the Moscow Conservatoire. Bashmet is one of the leading viola soloists, who performs around the globe and is a dedicatee of many contemporary viola compositions, including works by Shnitke [Schnittke], Denisov, Kancheli, Tavener, Ruders and Previn. Sound recording in: Nikolai Roslavets, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, from *Glinka, Roslavets, Shostakovich: Sonatas for Viola and Piano*. Yuri Bashmet (viola) and Mikhail Muntian (piano), RCA/Victor Red Seal BMG Classics, BM650, 1992, compact disc. The score of this sonata is available on loan from the Sikorski Verlag, Hamburg, and is listed in the catalogue as follows: Nikolai Roslawez, *Sonata no. 1 (1925/1989-1990) für Viola und Klavier*. The scholar and editor of the two completed sonatas for viola and piano of 1926 and the 1930s by Roslavets, Marina Lobanova, who titled them no. 1 and no. 2 respectively, disapproved of this edition by Raskatov. In her opinion, this completed sonata cannot be fully attributed to Roslavets, because Roslavets left his sonata of 1925 unfinished and its manuscript survived in the form of inconsistent sketches. (For further details about the manuscript see footnote 23). This dispute led to a lawsuit in Hamburg in 2009 and caused the inconsistency of titles in the recording of the sonatas for viola and piano by Roslavets released by Brilliant Classics 9174, which is listed in footnote 22. The sonatas of Roslavets that are titled there no. 1-2 are in fact the sonata of 1925 and the sonata of 1926. For further details about this dispute see: Marina Lobanova, *Nikolai Andreevich Roslavets i kul'tura ego vremeni* [Nikolai Andreevich Roslavets and the Culture of his Time] (Moscow: Petroglif, 2011), 19-20.

publications²⁵ and recordings considerably limit the scope for further findings and research on Roslavets within the field of his viola music.²⁶

The manuscript of the only *Sonata for Viola Solo op. 21a* by Mosolov written in the 1920s was irretrievably lost during the Soviet purges and has not yet been found.²⁷ Unfortunately, this sonata was never scheduled for publication and, therefore, no other copies of this composition exist. The only other known viola composition by Mosolov is a set of *Three Lyric Pieces op. 2 for Viola and Piano* written in 1922-1923. Like the sonata, this work has never been published and the location of the manuscript remains unknown.²⁸ However, the author of this thesis found evidence that this work was performed in public - but only once. A single programme leaflet of the concert that was organised by the Association of Contemporary Music (ACM) in Moscow on 29 October 1924 has survived and is kept in RGALI. This concert consisted of works written by Mosolov and Vissarion

²⁵ For further reading about Roslavets see: 1. Marina Lobanova, *Nikolai Andreevich Roslavets i kul'tura ego vremeni* (Moscow: Petroglif, 2011). 2. Marina Lobanova, *Nikolaj Andreevic Roslavec und die Kultur seiner Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997). 3. Richard Taruskin, "Restoring Comrade Roslavets," in *On Russian Music*, Richard Taruskin (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2009), 294-298. 4. Detlef Gojowy, *Neue sowjetische Musik der 20er Jahre* [New Soviet Music of the 1920s], ed. and trans. Natal'ia Vlasova (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2006), 127.

²⁶ The author of this thesis has found a number of misprints in the Schott publication of the Sonata for viola and piano sonata, 1926, by Roslavets that were overlooked either by its editor or publisher and consequently performers. Regrettably, these misprints were repeated in the CD recordings of this sonata listed in footnote 22.

²⁷ Inna Barsova, email message to author, June 16, 2011. Inna Barsova, a musicologist and Professor of Music Theory at the Moscow Conservatoire, has undertaken extensive research on Aleksandr Mosolov in Russia. For further information on Mosolov's works see: Nina Meshko, ed., *Aleksandr Vasil'evich Mosolov. Stat'i i vospominaniia* [Aleksandr Mosolov. Articles and Memoirs] (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1986).

²⁸ Inna Barsova, email message to author, June 16, 2011.

Shebalin, including the *Three Lyric Pieces* by Mosolov performed by Vadim Borisovskii on the viola and Mariia Mirzoeva on the piano.²⁹ Nevertheless, due to the absence of the musical scores it is unfeasible to undertake a full assessment of Mosolov's contribution to the viola repertoire at present. The viola heritage of Sergei Vasilenko however needs to be researched for the first time in detail as his newly discovered compositions prove his interest in the viola throughout his lifetime. The following chapters provide an insight into these works, their origins, significance and performing issues.

²⁹ *Programmy kontsertov, organizovannykh Assotsiatsiei Sovremennoi Muzyki* [Programme Leaflets of Concerts Organised by the Association of Contemporary Music]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2037 (Kochetovy), op. 3, ed. khr. 63, p. 3. The organisers of the concert paid little respect to accuracy as the titles of these pieces were printed with some spelling mistakes: *Plainrte* (most likely instead of *Plainte*, which translates from French as 'complaint'), *Epicexion* and *Epoxe* (most likely instead of *Epode*, which was the third and final part of an ode in Ancient Greece performed by a choir). The meaning of the second title is unknown. One may only guess that perhaps the intended word was *Epicedium*, which translates from Greek as 'funeral ode or dirge'.

Between tradition and modernity

Chapter One

Sergei Vasilenko and the unknown details of his career

1.1 The unpublished biographical documents as the most reliable up-to-date source for the reassessment of the role of Vasilenko in Russian-Soviet music

Vasilenko lived through the most rapid, dramatic and brutal political and social changes of Russian and world history, including the First World War, the February and Socialist Revolutions of 1917 that were followed by the Civil and Second World Wars. These conflicts, in particular those that overturned the constitutional and civil structure of the country, changing it from Imperial to Bolshevik Russia and then transformed it into the Soviet state, had a major impact on the life of its citizens, including Vasilenko. In order to survive and continue his professional activities Vasilenko conformed to the Soviet constraints and abandoned some of his compositional desires and aspirations, including his music for the viola, of which more in the following chapters. Vasilenko's roots in the Russian aristocracy, which potentially could have had fatal consequences in the new proletarian society, and the need to provide for the family and maintain its social status, obliged Vasilenko to avoid unnecessary political risks. As a result of Vasilenko's formal obedience many

facts about him have been either misinterpreted in publications or kept under wraps until recently.³⁰

For this reason, this chapter is dedicated to the unknown details of Vasilenko's biography, including his family background, career engagements and published memoirs as well as some of his compositional accomplishments, which were primarily shaped and determined by the political demands of the Soviet rule and its state commissions. Among them was a commission to orchestrate the National Anthem of the USSR in 1943. This fact has neither been widely publicised nor researched, though Vasilenko prepared an in-depth article for the press that illustrated his meeting with Stalin and the members of the Politburo, who authorised Vasilenko's orchestration for the national radio broadcast.³¹ In addition, due to the disinformation in the Soviet press, Vasilenko's name has been associated with the fabricated case against the conductor Nikolai Golovanov in 1928. The archival documents reveal Vasilenko's faithful attitude towards Golovanov, of which more in the separate subsection below.³²

³⁰ A detailed discussion of Vasilenko's memoirs may be found in the separate subsection 'Vasilenko's memoirs' below and a discussion of his publications in the subsection 'Vasilenko's publications on music as a reflection of his compositional pursuits' in the second chapter. Most recent references on Vasilenko were written by the author of this thesis and are listed in the Introduction and Bibliography of this thesis.

³¹ Further discussion of Vasilenko's orchestration and his meeting with Stalin may be found in the separate subsection 'Orchestration of the National Anthem of the USSR'.

³² Further discussion of the Golovanov case may be found in the separate subsection 'The Golovanovshchina'.

Vasilenko has been perceived as a conformist and inconsequential Soviet composer among his colleagues and in post-Soviet Russia.³³ The recent findings of the author of this thesis help one to comprehend Vasilenko's motivation and efforts to satisfy the official censorship and to compose music that illustrated and fulfilled its socialist ideology. Moreover, the unpublished documents reveal Vasilenko to be a decent man and a talented musician whose search for a niche within the culture of Soviet music forced him to keep his true musical writings secret from the public in a drawer of his desk. The analysis and discussion of these subjects rely heavily on unpublished and little-explored materials on Vasilenko from the archives in Moscow.³⁴

³³ The 140 Birthday Anniversary of Sergei Vasilenko in 2012 went almost unnoticed by the authorities and the public in Russia with only a single concert organised by the conductor Stanislav Kalinin and the Choir of the Moscow Conservatoire on 15 October 2012 at the Rakhmaninov Zal [Hall] of the Moscow Conservatoire. The concert programme listed only some of Vasilenko's choral works. Further reference in: <http://www.classicalforum.ru/index.php?topic=7004.0> (accessed August 28, 2013). Further reference to the perception of Vasilenko in Soviet Russia may be found in: Stanley Dale Krebs, "Sergei Vasilenko," in *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), 82-85.

³⁴ The personal archive of Sergei Vasilenko was donated by his family after the death of the composer and is kept at the GNMCMC, fund 52. Vasilenko was a member of the 'Obshchestvo druzei' [the Society of Friends] of the Tchaikovskii State House-Museum in Klin in the 1920s and donated a few of his documents to its archive. (Dr. Ada Ainbinder, email message to author, January 14, 2013. Dr. Ainbinder is the Chief of the Department of Manuscript and Printing Sources of the GDMC in Klin). The archives of RGALI and of the National Library have collections of documents, manuscripts and publications relating to Vasilenko that belonged to the archives of his friends and colleagues, and to state institutions. These collections are registered within different funds, which will be indicated in this thesis.

1.2 Vasilenko's background and first appointments

Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko had a long and distinguished career as a composer, conductor and pedagogue based in Moscow in the first half of the twentieth century. He was born on 30 March 1872 into an aristocratic family. Vasilenko's brief biography can be found in various music dictionaries. However, many interesting details about his formation and professional experiences are still confined to Vasilenko's unpublished personal reminiscences and documents. They were only partly published in his memoirs in the USSR.³⁵

Largely because of his family upbringing and wealth, Vasilenko received a brilliant education. However, his interest in music was very unpredictable and rather capricious in his early childhood. He started to play the piano from the age of six, but gave it up a year later though he eventually resumed his lessons. In his early-teens, in 1886, after two years of tuition on the clarinet, he likewise gave it up in favour of the oboe. The turning point came in 1887, when Vasilenko began to study music more conscientiously in private music lessons with some of the best musicians of the time, including theory with Richard Nokh and then with Aleksandr Grechaninov, harmony with Sergei Protopopov and composition with Georgii Konius concurrently studying at the best private boarding gymnasium for boys founded by Frants Kreiman in Moscow.³⁶ Although, music making was an important

³⁵ A detailed discussion of Vasilenko's memoirs may be found in the subsection 'Vasilenko's memoirs'.

³⁶ Vasilenko's archive has four 'End of Year School Certificates' dated 1886-1890, when Sergei was in his fourth-seventh year groups. According to the grades and remarks on these certificates, he was not an excellent, but a diligent pupil with good behaviour. Sergei Vasilenko, *Lichnye dela* [Personal Documents]. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52 (Vasilenko, Sergei Nikiforovich), ed. khr. 972-980, pp. 1-4.

part of the family life, Vasilenko's father³⁷ did not consider it a suitable profession for his son. For this reason, Vasilenko read law at Moscow University in 1891-1896 and graduated with a first class degree in forensic medicine.

Nevertheless, Vasilenko's dedication to music grew stronger and, from 1895, he concurrently studied composition at the Moscow Conservatoire under Sergei Taneev and Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov and took private piano tuition from Vasilii Safonov. In an unpublished letter dated 8 June 1895 addressed to Sergei Taneev, Vasilenko expressed his deep gratitude for offering him a place at the Conservatoire. Due to illness, Vasilenko missed the official admission dates and was examined at a later date.

[...] I would love to devote all my energy and abilities to the art of music. I allow myself to explain this to you, because I would like to emphasize the importance of your great kindness towards me and to express my sincere appreciation. [...]³⁸

Vasilenko did indeed fulfil his aspiration and in 1901, at the age of 29, graduated with a big gold medal and the title of a 'Free Artist', which paved the way

³⁷ Nikifor Ivanovich Vasilenko (1821-1899), an amateur violinist and a keen music lover, was born in Gorodnia, Chernigov region (Ukraine), the son of a general of the Napoleonic War of 1812, Ivan Ivanovich Vasilenko. Nikifor Ivanovich studied philology at Kiev University, taught at a gymnasium in the Chernigov region and then worked as a manager at wealthy country estates. In 1861, he married Proskov'ia Alekseevna Gogoleva, native of St. Petersburg, and had apart from Sergei three older daughters. Quoted in Vasilii Fedorov, *Chernovye nabroski, vypiski iz dnevnikov* [Drafts, Extracts from Diaries]. *Sergei Vasilenko*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579 (Fedorov, Vasilii Vasil'evich), op. 1, ed. khr. 22, pp. 55-56. Vasilii Fedorov (1891-1973) was a producer, theatre scholar and a friend of Sergei Vasilenko. Among other posts, Fedorov occupied the positions of the Director of Research at the Glinka Museum of Musical Culture in 1944 and the Director of the Museum of the Bolshoi Theatre in 1946-1957.

³⁸ Sergei Vasilenko, *Pis'ma S.I. Taneevu* [Letters to S.I. Taneev]. Housed in GDMC, fund 5 (Taneev, Sergei Ivanovich), op. 1, ed. khr. 230, p. 1.

for his future career in music. Safonov, the director of the Conservatoire in 1889-1906, invited the new graduate to help as his assistant conductor at the Conservatoire's orchestra and opera studio. This appointment led to a series of active professional concert engagements of Vasilenko as a conductor in Russia from 1902, some with the Private Opera Society known as the Opera Mamontov in 1903-1904, and abroad, including with the Berlin Philharmonic in 1908-1913. These were among the best orchestras of the time and, consequently, first-rate collaborations for any musician. A family friend Konstantin Stanislavskii, the creator of the internationally renowned 'Stanislavskii's system' of acting, commissioned Vasilenko to compose incidental music for a few stage productions of the *Moskovskoe Obshchestvo Iskusstva i Literatury* [the Moscow Society of Art and Literature], the forerunner of the *MKHAT* [the Moscow Art Theatre]. Thus, from 1902, Vasilenko was also actively engaged as a composer and gradually became a respected authority in orchestration.

Ippolitov-Ivanov, the director of the Moscow Conservatoire in 1906-1922, offered him a post teaching instrumentation and then a professorship of composition, a position he occupied for almost fifty years (1906-41 and 1943-56).³⁹ Sergei Rakhmaninov was another contender for this post in 1906, though he never fully devoted himself to teaching and, according to his friend Aleksandr Gol'denveizer,

³⁹ During the period of 17.10.1941 - 05.07.1943 during the Great Patriotic War, Vasilenko resided in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. He was evacuated with the family 'for creative work of his speciality' as stated in the directive of the *Komitet po Delam Iskusstv pri Sovete Narodnykh Komissarov Soiuzo SSR* [the Arts Committee of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR] dated 13 October 1941. Sergei Vasilenko, *Sluzhebnye dokumenty* [Service Documents]. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 981-993, p. 34.

did not like pedagogical work.⁴⁰ Perhaps, this was the reason why Rakhmaninov's candidacy did not get enough votes from the members of the *Khudozhestvennyi Sovet* [Arts Council] of the Conservatoire. Vasilenko, on the contrary, equally combined his teaching, conducting and composing activities and in 1932 was justly nominated as chair of the department of instrumentation, the position he held until his death (1932–41 and 1943–56).⁴¹

1.3 Vasilenko's philanthropic activities

At the time of the October Socialist Revolution, Vasilenko was a forty-five year old composer deeply rooted in the traditions of Russian imperial culture and values.⁴² His respectable mission of being a living composer, who connected the traditions of Russian music set up by Glinka, Tchaikovskii, Taneev and others with the young Soviet musical culture did not materialise immediately. What helped him to gain

⁴⁰ Aleksandr Gol'denveizer, *Vospominaniia* [Memoirs] (Moscow: Deko-VC, 2009), 327, 341-342. Rakhmaninov's failure did not pass without a trace for Vasilenko. In February 1917, Rakhmaninov was a chairman of the jury at a competition for the best vocal composition organised by Nazarii Raikii. The first prize was not awarded. Vasilenko's poem for mezzo-soprano with orchestra *Zhaloby muzy* [Complaints of a Muse] after the poem with the same title by Iakov Polonskii about the First World War did not get enough votes. Rakhmaninov abstained from voting and Nikolai Medtner made a rather curious remark that the part of the mezzo-soprano was written too low. Polonskii, on the contrary, highly regarded this composition. Further reference in: 1. Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia* [Memoirs], ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 356. 2. Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal'nyi variant* [Memoirs. Initial Version]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 412, pp. 44-47.

⁴¹ Vasilenko died in Moscow on 11 March 1956, leaving an extensive list of compositions, including six operas, eleven ballets, five symphonies, concertos for balalaika, trumpet, violin, cello, harp, clarinet, piano and French horn; chamber and instrumental music; songs, choruses, folksong arrangements and more. The list of compositions is given in Appendix 2.

⁴² A detailed discussion of Vasilenko's musical principles and his stylistic influences may be found in the fifth chapter.

influence and establish himself as a committed and faithful Soviet composer? Vasilenko's roots in the Russian aristocracy would hardly have endeared him to the new dispensation in Soviet Russia, though he kept very quiet about his pre-Revolutionary standard of life as a nobleman. According to Vasilenko's unpublished recollections of 1940s, his family was wealthy and owned not only a house in Moscow, but traded up a few country estates.⁴³ However, in his personal file as an employee and a conductor of the Bolshoi Theatre dated 14 March 1929, Vasilenko testified that he never owned any type of property and that his father was only a teacher in a gymnasium.⁴⁴ Such fabrications and an officially verified social allegiance were vital for one's physical existence at the time. Even in 1947, thirty years after the Socialist Revolution, Vasilenko's biographer, Georgii Polianovskii, described Vasilenko's family as a typical representative of a low class intelligentsia avoiding any words in connection with the upper class.⁴⁵ In an article commissioned by the Arts Committee of the Council of Ministers of the USSR dated 28 March 1953, Vasilenko allowed himself to reveal only that his parents were wealthy and his father taught mathematics.⁴⁶

⁴³ Quoted in Vasilii Fedorov, *Chernoye nabroski, vypiski iz dnevnikov. Sergei Vasilenko*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 22, pp. 55-56.

⁴⁴ Gosudarstvennyi Akademicheskii Bol'shoi Teatr [The State Academic Bolshoi Theatre], *Sergei Vasilenko. Lichnoe delo* [Sergei Vasilenko. Personal File]. Housed in RGALI, fund 648 (Gosudarstvennyi Ordena Lenina Akademicheskii Bol'shoi Teatr), op. 1, ed. khr. 469, pp. 18-19. This long standard form that consisted of 29 questions was stamped and authorised by the Secretariat of the Moscow Conservatoire.

⁴⁵ Georgii Polianovskii, *Sergei Vasilenko* (Moscow, Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1947), 7.

⁴⁶ Sergei Vasilenko, *Al'bom dokumentov* [Album with Documents]. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 788, p. 167.

Nevertheless, Vasilenko justly gained a reputation as a compassionate supporter of poor communities well before the Revolution and his philanthropy also helped him to fall on the right side of the authorities. Thus, in 1904, Vasilenko sold the land of the estate called *Tsarevka*⁴⁷ near the town of Elets that he inherited from his father to his peasants for an affordable price and provided them with a lengthy credit despite the petitions and delegations of other landowners. As a landowner, Vasilenko had to attend the meetings of the elective district council. In his view, the attitude of local aristocrats to peasants was similar to the exploitation of slaves, which Vasilenko could neither accept nor challenge.

In 1907-1917 he organised a series of the '*Istoricheskie Obshchedostupnye Kontserty*' [Historic Public Concerts, commonly called the Historic Concerts] in Moscow that popularised and introduced classical music in chronological sequence among the financially insecure and deprived audiences of students, teachers and workers. The Chief of the Department for Protecting the Public Security and Order⁴⁸ in Moscow was anxious about such a large number of workers attending these concerts as he saw a potential political danger in educating the lower classes. After the second concert on 6 December 1907, Vasilenko was requested to come to the Moscow police headquarters and had to agree to be accompanied by an undercover agent, who was to monitor that these concert activities lest they provoke a

⁴⁷ Administration of the Lipetsk region, "Dolgorukov," *Social Sphere*, <http://www.dolgorukovo.org/soczialnaya-sfera/kultura> (accessed September 26, 2012). Today, the land of this former estate is a part of a small village, which according to the government statistic of 2011 has only 19 residents. It belongs to the municipal district Dolgorukov of the Lipetsk region, in which one of the local music schools is named after Sergei Vasilenko.

⁴⁸ It was a secret police force in tsarist Russia commonly abbreviated as *Okhranka* that in 1880 replaced the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery.

revolutionary uprising.⁴⁹

The critics described Vasilenko's educational mission as the 'people's' university of the world history of music',⁵⁰ which certainly won popularity for its organiser among the general public. From 1909, Vasilenko undertook a few trips to Europe, where he lived for two to three months in search for unusual or representative repertoire for these concerts.⁵¹ Vasilenko's financial independence as a wealthy person, who hardly ever experienced any shortage of financial resources,⁵² allowed him to travel abroad extensively and continually supported his benevolent mission and concert projects, but only during the tsarist reign.

⁴⁹ Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* [Pages of Reminiscences] (Moscow, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1948), 202.

⁵⁰ Nikolai Kashkin, "Kontserty [Concerts]," *Russkie vedomosti* [Russian Gazette] 42, February 17, 1909. Concert life was booming in Moscow, but the tickets were very expensive reaching up to 50 roubles, which was unaffordable for many as it was equivalent to double the standard monthly income of a worker. For the first time such spectators had an opportunity to listen to a number of leading performers of the time, among them were Henri Casadesus, Arthur Nikisch, Konstantin Igumnov, Aleksandr Gol'denveizer and Wanda Landowska, who often waived their fees in order to keep the ticket price very low starting from only one rouble 40 kopeks for an annual series of ten concerts. The Russian Music Society (RMO) provided free of charge hire of the *Bolshoi Zal* [Big Hall] of the Moscow Conservatoire. Each concert had printed programmes, complimentary provided to the audience, and a pre-concert talk given by the leading music critic Iulii Engel's. Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo 1948), 26.

⁵¹ Further discussion of these series of concerts and their programmes may be found in the third chapter.

⁵² Tat'iana Kaptereva-Shambinago, *Doma i za granitsej* [At Home and Abroad] (Moscow: Novyi khronograf, 2009), 76. According to the memoirs of Vasilenko's step-granddaughter, Professor of the History of Art, Tat'iana Kaptereva-Shambinago (b. 15.08.1923), he was the owner of a number of residential houses in Moscow and this income provided him with generous funds for living.

Certainly, Vasilenko's unpretentious loyalty towards the disadvantaged and the representatives of the working class helped to re-instate his position as a reliable state composer and a loyal citizen of the new communist rule. However, his path to professional success and musical independence during the Soviet era was still a challenging prospect and, at times, a demoralising and daunting experience, which meant he could communicate openly neither with his colleagues nor the public. The assessment of Vasilenko's published memoirs and the unpublished documents offered below attest to this statement.

1.4 Vasilenko's memoirs

Vasilenko's official compliance with the Soviet regime secured recognition of his viola music neither in his lifetime nor posthumously. However, it permitted Vasilenko to share his literary and musicological writings with the public, but only during the final stages of his life. These publications are valuable for researches, though the politics caused adverse effects on their content and completion. A reader of the twenty-first century would expect that memoirs guarantee an authentic and adequate recollection of a personal and professional life of an individual. However, this was not the underlying principle with Vasilenko, who had to compromise his integrity in the interest of the publication. His first book of memoirs called *Stranitsy vospominanii* [Pages of Reminiscences]⁵³ was available in print only in 1948, when Vasilenko was in his late seventies, though a large proportion of its 1023 pages was

⁵³ Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1948).

ready by 1933.⁵⁴ The book focuses mainly on Vasilenko's formation as a musician and on his collaborations with Taneev, Safonov, Rimskii-Korsakov, Tchaikovskii, Sibelius, Saint-Saëns, Richard Strauss and other musicians, who occupied the leading roles in European music at the turn of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, the sequence of events does not go beyond the Socialist Revolution of 1917. Only Vasilenko's autobiography that is arranged as an introduction to the memoirs provides a little information about his life in Soviet Russia.⁵⁵ For instance, Vasilenko briefly described his dynamic concert activities in 1918-1920. He admitted that he could not recollect the names of all the organisations, apart from workers clubs, hospitals and the radio, for which he worked as a conductor and lecturer, though he insisted that he thoroughly enjoyed these commitments to a largely unsophisticated audience.

One should be sceptical about this rather doubtful loss of memory as Vasilenko did remember many minor details about his pre-Revolutionary activities

⁵⁴ Vasilenko donated his manuscript *Moi vospominaniia* [My Memoirs] to the State National Library in Moscow on 25 March 1933 on the following conditions that were accepted by the library: the manuscript became the property of the library; only Vasilenko authorised anyone's access to the manuscript during his lifetime; Vasilenko could make copies of the manuscript and add new chapters to the manuscript throughout his life, because the text was unfinished. Sergei Vasilenko, *Pis'mo v direktsiuu Publichnoi Biblioteki imeni Lenina* [A Letter to the Directorate of the Public Library Named after Lenin]. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 77, p. 22. Please note that Vasilenko's manuscript with his memoirs that is quoted in this and the following chapters is now housed in RGALI and GNMCMC. The manuscript is divided into articles that are split into several funds with different inventory numbers.

⁵⁵ According to Tat'iana Kaptereva-Shambinago, Vasilenko burnt some of his hand-written memoirs in the early 1950s that illustrated his activities during the Soviet period. He feared that their content could potentially lead to the political and social oppression of his family. Boris Tarasov, interview by the author, Moscow, July 19, 2012. Boris Tarasov is a musicologist and a friend of Kaptereva-Shambinago.

that he described in the main part of this book. Evidently, he simply chose to avoid identifying some of his work placements, including his brief membership of *Proletkult*, a movement that was censured because of its political controversy with the state over the nature of proletarian music and, as a result, was dissolved by the Party in 1932.⁵⁶ It is very likely that Vasilenko took no interest in any theoretical disputes about the future of proletarian music. Taking into account his liberal activities during the tsarist era it seems reasonable to assume that he simply carried on the role of sharing his expertise with the deprived audiences.⁵⁷ In the words of a musicologist Boris Schwarz ‘*Proletkult* attracted many good musicians who welcomed the opportunity of bringing music to the masses without much theorizing’.⁵⁸ Similar ideas of introducing classical music to the masses were shared by two other societies, ‘*Obshchestvo imeni I.S. Bakha*’ [Society named after Johann Sebastian Bach] and ‘*Obshchestvo imeni Betkhovena*’ [Society named after Beethoven], which were founded and soon liquidated by the decrees of the public and secret police, the NKVD [People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs].

⁵⁶ Georgii Polianovskii, *Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko i ego tvorchestvo* [Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko and his Creativity] (Moscow: Muzyka, 1964), 73. *Proletkult* is an abbreviation of ‘*Proletarskie kul’turno-prosvetitel’skie organizatsii*’ [Proletarian Cultural and Educational Organisations] officially formed in August 1917, though the movement took its inspiration in 1909 from a group called ‘*Vpered*’ [Forward]. The aim of the movement was to develop a truly proletarian culture. Further reading on this subject in: Neil Edmunds, *The Soviet Proletarian Music Movement* (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wien: Peter Lang, 2000).

⁵⁷ Further information about Vasilenko’s philanthropic accomplishments may be found in the subsection ‘Vasilenko’s philanthropic activities’.

⁵⁸ Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia. Enlarged Edition, 1917-1981* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 20.

Vasilenko was among the senior members of these societies.⁵⁹ Despite the altruistic involvement, he did not jeopardize his first literary publication by adding in such politically risky information.

Vasilenko did neither go into much detail about the social circumstances and the dramatic change in the life of the Moscow Conservatoire circles. However, regardless his enthusiastic tone of expression, one can read between the lines about the significant changes and appalling conditions that he and his colleagues experienced, especially when Vasilenko described their concert rewards as ‘treasures’.

[...] I have never seen such an exhilarating and thankful audience in front of me, even during the period of the ‘Historic Concerts’. As a reward for our work we were usually given bread, meat and sauerkraut. We received these treasures with a full understanding of the efficiency of our undertaking. [...]⁶⁰

Aleksandr Grechaninov, Vasilenko’s former teacher and colleague, who emigrated at first to France in 1925 and in 1939 to the USA, described the first years after the Revolution, which he also spent in Moscow, using a dissimilar but distinctive tone of expression and vocabulary: ‘The Bolsheviks won. A beggary life has started, full of hardship. One even cannot call this period of our ill-fated

⁵⁹ Ekaterina Vlasova, *1948 god v sovetskoi muzyke* [1948 in Soviet Music] (Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2010), 98-101. Both societies were formed in 1927-1928 and in 1930 were forced to merge with the All Russian Music Society ‘*Muzyka – massam*’ [Music for the Masses] due to the ostensible reason of similarities of their aims, which became a common legal practice for liquidating objectionable organisations.

⁶⁰ Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal’noe izdatel’stvo, 1948), 31.

existence a life.’⁶¹ Unlike Vasilenko, Grechaninov was not restricted by the censorship in describing his factual post-revolutionary experiences, because he published his memoirs in Paris in 1934 and its second edition in New York in 1951.

Only in the early 1950s, in a private conversation that took place at Vasilenko’s summer house outside Moscow, Vasilenko gave a rather different account of that time. In May 1959, Nikolai Zriakovskii, Vasilenko’s former student and then a colleague at the Conservatoire, recorded the depth of Vasilenko’s anguish when he spoke about the inept actions that were introduced by the new rule.

[...] During one of our confidential minutes, Sergei Nikiforovich talked in great distress about the clumsy break-up of the music tuition at the Moscow Conservatoire in the first years after the Revolution; about the exceeding arrogance and shameless interference of students into the work of teachers. It was obvious how hard it was for him to live through this and carry it all. [...]⁶²

On the contrary, Vasilenko emphasised in his book that from 1917 his compositional activities flourished, because the new regime and, in particular, the state decree of 1932, gave him wider opportunities to be closer to his fellow countrymen and explore Russian and Soviet subjects as well as folk music of other nationalities of the Soviet state. Vasilenko concluded that these subjects had been his aspirations ever since. He pointed out that he was one of the first tsarist

⁶¹ Aleksandr Grechaninov, *Moia zhizn’* [My Life] (New York: Rausen Bros., 1951), 114. Aleksandr Grechaninov, *My Life*, ed. and trans. Nicolas Slonimsky (New York: Coleman-Ross Co., 1952).

⁶² Nikolai Zriakovskii, *Moi vospominaniia o S.N. Vasilenko* [My Reminiscences About S.N. Vasilenko]. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 1083, p. 12.

composers in Moscow, who offered his services to the Music Department of *Narkompros*, an organisation that regulated the cultural life of the Bolsheviks.⁶³

Without doubt, the Soviet political atmosphere and censorship played a crucial role in Vasilenko's literary style, which did not allow him to share and disclose freely his thoughts and certain facts of the biography, in particular after 1917, and forced him to adopt an admiring stance towards socialist rule, which was a common practice. In an unpublished archival document of a private conversation between Vasilii Fedorov and Sergei Shambinago dated 3 August 1948, the best friend of Vasilenko from the time of his studies at the Moscow University, Shambinago, admitted that certain information, in particular about Taneev, was valuable and the book would undoubtedly arouse interest.⁶⁴ At the same time, he pointed out that this publication was a pack of blatant lies as in his opinion were all memoirs of the time. He boldly stressed that it was very likely Vasilenko was under

⁶³ *Narkompros* is an abbreviation of *Narodnyi Komissariat Prosveshcheniia* [People's Commissariat of Enlightenment].

⁶⁴ Vasilii Fedorov, *Chernovye nabroski, vypiski iz dnevnikov. Sergei Vasilenko*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 22, p. 52. Sergei Konstantinovich Shambinago (1871-1948) was Professor of Russian literature at the Moscow University and a lifelong friend of Vasilenko despite the fact that in 1910 Shambinago's wife Tat'iana Alekseevna Shevaldysheva (1879-1944) became Vasilenko's devoted partner for 34 years. Vasilenko officially divorced his first wife Anna Prokof'evna on 20 June 1927 and married Tat'iana Alekseevna on 24 October 1930 according to the stamps in his identity document N0630280 dated 24 November 1928 and his *trudovaia knizhka* [Worker's Book] N371a dated 29 May 1920. Sergei Vasilenko, *Lichnye dokumenty*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 972-980, p. 10. Sergei Vasilenko, *Sluzhebnye dokumenty*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 981-993, pp. 6-22. In 1945, Vasilenko married Elena Shambinago (1901-1983), the daughter of Tat'iana Alekseevna from her first marriage to Sergei Shambinago. This marriage of convenience fulfilled Vasilenko's wish to provide a legal protection along with the social and financial stability to the daughter of his beloved second wife, as Vasilenko did not have an heir. Further reference in: Tat'iana Kaptereva-Shambinago, *Doma i za granitsej* (Moscow: Novyi khronograf, 2009), 86.

the strong influence of his biographer, Georgii Polianovskii,⁶⁵ who probably advised him to evade and misuse some of the details of Vasilenko's biography.

Undoubtedly, the individual aggrandizement of a public man as the means to correspond closely with the paradigm of what a true Soviet composer should be must have been the leading objective for the editor. These common features of the time were encouraged in literary publications that had to be congruent with the Soviet ideology. Equally, it is obvious that this book contained only a small proportion of what Vasilenko could have included in this publication compared to his *'Vospominaniia'* [Memoirs] published in 1979 more than twenty years after his death.⁶⁶ Vasilenko started to work on this second book in the early 1950s, but did not complete the volume and its final version based on his diaries was edited by the musicologist Tamara Livanova. It provided more chronological details about his family, upbringing and professional activities as well as his many trips abroad for

⁶⁵ The name of a musicologist Georgii Aleksandrovich Polianovskii (1894-1983) appeared among twelve other composers and musicologists, who fabricated a dossier against Nikolai Roslavets called *'Pozorny dokumēt'* [Disgraceful Document]. It was published in 1930 by the *'Massovaia biblioteka VAPM - Vserossiiskoi Assotsiatsii Proletarskikh Muzykantov'* [The Mass Library of the VAPM – All Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians] in an anthology *'Dovesti do kontsa bor'bu s nepmanskoi muzykoi'* [Complete the Struggle against the NEPmen Music]. Further reference in: Marina Lobanova, *Nikolai Andreevich Roslavets I kul'tura ego vremeni* (Moscow: Petroglif, 2011), 136. The NEPmen were businessmen during the NEP, the New Economic Policy, introduced by Lenin in 1921 in order to encourage private trade that boosted the Soviet economy. The end of the New Economic Policy in 1928 marked the start of the re-nationalisation of the economy under Stalin and the political repression of the former businessmen. Further reference in: Alan Ball, "Private Trade and Traders during NEP," in *Russia in the Era of NEP. Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 89-105.

⁶⁶ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979).

recreation, concerts and research, though its subject was confined only to the period until 1917.

This publication dropped the severely shortened and partly misleading introductory biography from the first book that raised the queries above. However, a number of articles from the manuscript remained excluded, including those about the first Soviet *Narkom* [People's Commissar] of Enlightenment in charge of culture and education, Anatolii Lunacharskii, who became unpopular with the regime and was sacked from his high-ranking ministry post in 1929, a writer and a family friend Mikhail Bulgakov, whose plays were personally banned by Iosif Stalin and government censorship,⁶⁷ and about a doctor, Professor Grigorii Zakhar'in, which gave a detailed account of Vasilenko's aristocratic habits, and his social and cultural milieu.⁶⁸ Thus, any unbiased information on Vasilenko's life and activities, in particular during the Soviet period, has to be examined directly using his music scores and unpublished archival sources, because the majority of musicological books and articles about him during this period, even those published outside the USSR, did not avoid the strong influence of propaganda.⁶⁹ Besides, there have not

⁶⁷ According to archival documents published by the research fund 'Demokratiia', the plays of Bulgakov 'The Purple Island' and 'Moliere' ('The Cabal of Hypocrites') were prohibited on the Soviet stage by Stalin in 1929 and 1936 respectively, despite their public success. Further reference in: Leonid Maksimenkov, ed., *Bol'shaia tsenzura. Pisateli i zhurnalisty v strane Sovetov, 1917-1956* [The Great Censorship. Writers and Journalists in the Land of the Soviets, 1917-1956] (Moscow: Demokratiia, 2005), 209, 455.

⁶⁸ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal'nyi variant*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 412, pp. 16-22, 31-34. Professor of medicine at the Moscow University, Grigorii Antonovich Zakhar'in (1829-1898), was one of the leading Russian therapists of the time. Among his many students, was the future renowned writer Anton Chekhov.

⁶⁹ Further discussion of the portrayal of Vasilenko in the Soviet press may be found in the subsection 'The *Golovanovshchina*'. Further reading on Vasilenko in English: 1. Stanley Dale Krebs, *Soviet*

yet been any publications during the post-Soviet period with the one exception of those written by the author of this thesis that dedicated at least an article or a chapter to this composer.

1.5 *'The Golovanovshchina'*

One of the typical examples of disinformation and misinterpretation about Vasilenko due to the thorough politicization of Soviet society and its media was Vasilenko's association with the Golovanov case. In 1928, the name of Vasilenko publicly appeared in connection with the political repression that led to the dismissal of Nikolai Golovanov, the artistic director and conductor of the Bolshoi Theatre. This fabricated case became known as the '*Golovanovshchina*' [The Golovanov Case], in which Golovanov was accused of having bourgeois habits and a conservative approach to the new repertoire policy, thus preventing the promotion of young artists.⁷⁰ The initial allegation was caused by the inadequate libretto written by

Composers and the Development of Soviet Music (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1970), 82-85.
2. Rena Moisenko, *Realist Music. 25 Soviet Composers* (London: Meridian Books Ltd., 1949), 234-242. Soviet archives were inaccessible for foreign researchers, who had to use only available publications that during those times underwent severe censorship with any objectionable ideas being removed in order to comply with the state autocratic ideology. Even Stanley Krebs, the first American ever enrolled at the Moscow Conservatoire in 1959, who supplemented his book with some personal encounters with Vasilenko's contemporaries, was limited in his resources, because any exposed contacts between Soviet citizens and foreigners were forbidden and could potentially lead to imprisonment and labour camps.

⁷⁰ Further reference in: Bol'shoi Teatr [Bolshoi Theatre], "Golovanovshchinu vyrvem s kornem [We Will Root out the 'Golovanovshchina']," *Moskovskaia Pravda* [Moscow Pravda], May 5, 1928, Razdel iskusstvo [Arts Section].

Mikhail Gal'perin⁷¹ for Vasilenko's opera *Syn solntsa* [Son of the Sun] op. 62 that was being staged at the Bolshoi. The libretto illustrated the freedom fighters in China, a subject that highlighted the revolutionary concept. It correlated closely with the official Soviet policy of replacing the old tsarist repertoire with newly created operatic works, which aimed to illustrate the needs of the proletariat and reinforce the socialist course of the Party that possessed absolute validity.⁷² In a private conversation, Golovanov expressed his liking for the music but dissatisfaction with the poor quality of the libretto which needed alterations. This confidential exchange of views leaked out and was deliberately used by the administration, the *Mestkom* [Local Committee], the Komsomol and communist party bureaus of the Bolshoi as one of the grounds for a dossier against Golovanov, who purportedly made anti-Semitic remarks.⁷³ The harsh campaign in the press expanded so rapidly that it drew the attention of Stalin.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Mikhail Gal'perin (1882-1944) was a fine journalist, poet, translator and librettist, who was brought up in a Jewish family in Kiev, Ukraine. Gal'perin actively collaborated on the stage productions of the Bolshoi Theatre, the *Malyi* [Small] Theatre, the Moscow Theatre of Operetta, the Stanislavskii and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Academic Music Theatre and others.

⁷² Further reference on the new operatic Soviet policy in: 1. Meri E. Herrala, *The Struggle for Control of Soviet Music From 1932 to 1948: Socialist Realism vs. Western Formalism* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012), 71-105. 2. Ekaterina Vlasova, *1948 v sovetskoi muzyke* (Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2010), 39-80.

⁷³ These alleged remarks were referred to Gal'perin, the author of the libretto, who was a Jew.

⁷⁴ Iosif Stalin, "Otvét Bill'-Belotserkovskomu [The Answer to Bill'-Belotserkovskii]," in Iosif Stalin, *Sochineniia v 13 tomakh* [Collection of Works in 13 Volumes] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1949), vol. 11, 326-329. This article is dated 2 February 1929. Nevertheless, according to the memoirs of Dmitrii Rogal'-Levitskii, Stalin did not change his harsh judgement against Golovanov even in spring 1944 calling him a harmful anti-Semite. Further reference in: Vladimir Lakshin, "Gimn. O 281-m avtore gimna. Dmitrii Rogal'-Levitskii [Anthem. About the 281st Author of the Anthem]," *Nezavisimaia gazeta* [Independent Newspaper], February 12, 1991, Razdel arkhiv [Section: Archive], 5. For further details about this article see footnote 96.

The archive of Vasilenko has a draft of his letter dated 27 March 1928 to the *Mestkom* of the Bolshoi Theatre, in which Vasilenko tried to defend his unjustly accused former student and colleague Golovanov.⁷⁵ It is worth quoting Vasilenko's unpublished letter at length, because he explained the true circumstances that surrounded the plot:

1. I categorically deny a report that Nikolai Golovanov said the phrases that were ascribed to him during the public discussion of my opera '*Syn solntsa*' in my flat on 18 March 1928, because such a discussion did not take place.
2. During our personal talk Golovanov expressed his negative view so abruptly that made me very anxious, to the extent that I am in no condition to cope with it yet.
3. The reasons behind this anxiety I cannot conceal anymore. In my opinion, the administration in charge of the repertoire at the GABT⁷⁶ demonstrates a negative attitude to my major works. My ballets *Iosif Prekrasnyi* and *Lola* are removed from the repertoire.⁷⁷ Golovanov is my friend and former student, whose opinion is very precious to me; he stunned me with his statement that the libretto serves no purpose. This could have been a new cause to cease the production of my work and I naturally shared this opinion with my librettist, Mikhail Gal'perin, in a private conversation.

⁷⁵ Sergei Vasilenko, *Zaiavlenie* [Statement]. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 636, p. 1.

⁷⁶ GABT is an abbreviation of the *Gosudarstvennyi Akademicheskii Bol'shoi Teatr* [State Academic Bolshoi Theatre].

⁷⁷ Vasilenko's ballet *Iosif Prekrasnyi* [Josef the Handsome] op. 50 was staged in March 1925 and in 1929 and *Lola* op. 52 in June 1943 and in 1950. Further reference in: 1. Ekaterina Vlasova, *1948 v sovetskoj muzyke* (Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2010), 73, 77. 2. Georgii Ivanov, *Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko. Notograficheskii spravochnik* [S.N. Vasilenko. Music Guide] (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1973), 120-121. 3. Georgii Polianovskii, *Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko i ego tvorchestvo* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1964), 261.

4. I declare that one cannot make public conclusions from private conversations and initiate proceedings. This is totally unacceptable. [...] ⁷⁸

Needless to say, none of Vasilenko's points of explanation were taken into account. His line of defence was turned against him too in a series of articles in the Soviet press. Thus, in an article called '*Dirizher – antisemit. Trebuem vmeshatel'stva prokuratury*' [The Conductor is an Anti-Semite. We Demand the Involvement of the Prosecutor's Office] published by a newspaper *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, Vasilenko was described as an accuser, ⁷⁹ an unfair label that stayed with him for life. As a result of this choreographed campaign, Golovanov was sacked from his job, though he was re-employed again in 1930. ⁸⁰

Vasilenko's struggle to please the repertoire committee by writing an ideologically suitable opera and, thus, demonstrate his loyalty to the regime resulted in the production of his work in May 1929 and in 1934 at the Bolshoi Theatre. ⁸¹ However, he paid a high personal price for this seeming success. It ruined his close friendship with Golovanov, though Vasilenko was his backer, ⁸² and among his

⁷⁸ Sergei Vasilenko, *Zaiavlenie*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 636, p. 1.

⁷⁹ Glavlit, "Dirizher – antisemit. Trebuem vmeshatel'stva prokuratury," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, April 5, 1928, Razdel Iskusstvo [Arts section]. The article had no individual author but the resolution of the official censorship and state secret protection organ officially abbreviated as *Glavlit*, *Glavnoe upravlenie po delam literatury i izdatel'stv* [the Main Administration for Literary and Publishing Affairs under the People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR].

⁸⁰ Nikolai Golovanov (1891-1953) lost his post again in 1936, but was re-employed and then was fired for the last time in 1953.

⁸¹ Further reference in: 1. Ekaterina Vlasova, *1948 v sovetskoj muzyke* (Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2010), 73. 2. Georgii Ivanov, *Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko. Notograficheskii spravochnik* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1973), 120-121. 3. Georgii Polianovskii, *Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko i ego tvorchestvo* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1964), 263.

⁸² Tat'iana Kaptereva-Shambinago, *Doma i za granitsej* (Moscow: Novyi khronograf), 127.

colleagues Vasilenko was perceived as a doctrinaire composer, who was better to be avoided personally whenever possible.⁸³ Perhaps in hope that one day wisdom and integrity would prevail, Vasilenko kept all these negative articles along with his statement among his private documents. Moreover, the unpublished recollections of his friend and colleague Nikolai Zriakovskii contain Vasilenko's comment made in private in the early 1950s that the anti-Semite charges against Golovanov were pure allegations.⁸⁴ Today all these documents served their purpose and help one to uncover the unknown side of Vasilenko's assumed association with this story of the purges.

1.6 Orchestration of the National Anthem of the USSR

The commission to orchestrate the National Anthem of the USSR, written by Vasilenko's former student Aleksandr Aleksandrov in 1943, provided for Vasilenko's social security in the last decade of his life. This was a risky bold step for all people involved, because everything depended not only on the quality of the final product but on its aptness for Stalin. Thus, Viktor Knushevitskii (1906-1974), a former student of both Aleksandrov and Vasilenko, orchestrated the entries for the final contest round of anthems. Stalin liked Aleksandrov's music, but criticised its orchestration.⁸⁵ This was the moment when Vasilenko was called to step in, though

⁸³ Stanley Dale Krebs, *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), 85.

⁸⁴ Nikolai Zriakovskii, *Moi vospominaniia o S.N. Vasilenko*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 1083, p. 12.

⁸⁵ Reference in: 1. Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 139. 2. Dmitry Shostakovich, *Testimony*, ed. Solomon Volkov (London: Faber & Faber, 2005), 201-205. 3. Boris Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony: World and Music in Russian Culture* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2005), 214-218.

he never mentioned in any of his documents that he was replacing someone else.⁸⁶

This approach characterises Vasilenko as a wise decent man, who did not allow himself to stoop to meanness by smashing people's heads against each other. He boldly followed the same principle in his speech at the plenum of the USSR Union of Composers in 1948 that was held after the decree of Zhdanov against the composers guilty of formalism, of which more in the conclusion of this thesis.⁸⁷

Every day, from 1 January 1944 until the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the orchestral recording of the National Anthem started all the radio and TV broadcasts in the USSR. Vasilenko's name was publicly announced in connection with the Anthem only once. On 8 January 1944, a newspaper *Literatura i iskusstvo* [Literature and Art] published a series of articles on its front page about the first performance of the Anthem of the USSR, including a brief but detailed article by Vasilenko on the principles of his instrumentation of the Anthem.⁸⁸

Vasilenko kept the focus of his article primarily on the analysis of his instrumental approach that in his opinion brought in a special orchestral colouring. It is noteworthy that Vasilenko managed to put his points more succinctly than the other authors of the articles, including a conductor Aleksandr Melik-Pashaev, who did not avoid effusive praise describing the text and the music, which was a characteristic

⁸⁶ Vasilenko only briefly mentioned that Aleksandrov asked him to take on this work, because in the opinion of Aleksandrov, Vasilenko was the best. Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1948), 19.

⁸⁷ Sergei Vasilenko, *Moe vystuplenie na pervom plenume* [My Speech at the First Plenum]. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 1536, pp. 1-14.

⁸⁸ Sergei Vasilenko, "Printsipy instrumentovki [Principles of Instrumentation]," *Literatura i iskusstvo*, 8 January, 1944, Razdel: V Sovete Narodnykh Komissarov SSSR [Section: In the Council of the Peoples Commissars of the USSR].

feature of the time.⁸⁹

The RGALI has Vasilenko's unpublished recollections dated 7 August 1947 about Stalin and the private audition of the Anthem organised for him and the members of the government that took place at the Bolshoi Theatre on 30 December 1943 at 10pm, which was followed by a banquet that Vasilenko managed to leave only at 6am the following morning.⁹⁰ The manuscript has many corrections authorised by Vasilenko that polished his phrasing and content, which suggests that he intended this text for publication. The speech of Stalin addressed to Vasilenko in front of the members of the government, including Molotov, Beria, Kalinin, and Vasilenko's fellow colleagues, the conductors of the Bolshoi Theatre Golovanov, Mravinskii, Melik-Pashaev and the poets Mikhalkov and El'-Registan, is worth

⁸⁹ Aleksandr Melik-Pashaev, "Pervoe ispolnenie gimna [First Performance of the Anthem]," *Literatura i iskusstvo*, 8 January, 1944, Razdel: V Sovete Narodnykh Komissarov SSSR [Section: In the Council of the Peoples Commissars of the USSR].

⁹⁰ According to Vasilenko, the anthem was performed in three different arrangements that night: at first, in C major for a men's chorus with piano sang by the Red Army Choir and accompanied by Aleksandr Aleksandrov, followed by the arrangement by Nikolai Ivanov-Radkevich for a wind orchestra performed three times by the Red Army Band conducted by Semen Chernetskii and finally, in the arrangement by Sergei Vasilenko for a symphony orchestra in E flat major performed by the orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre conducted by Aleksandr Melik-Pashaev. After the performances, an officer disturbed the complete silence in the hall. He came on the stage and called up Vasilenko to Stalin's box: 'Comrade Vasilenko, please come here!' At the banquet, Vasilenko sat opposite Stalin, who was sitting next to the members of the Politburo Molotov, Beria and Kalinin as well as Aleksandr Shcherbakov (the First Secretary of the Moscow Regional Party Committee), Mikhail Khrapchenko (the First Chairman of the Committee of the Arts Council of Ministers of the USSR), Chernetskii and Melik-Pashaev. On Vasilenko's side of the table were Aleksandrov, Ivanov-Radkevich and the authors of the text of the Anthem Sergei Mikhalkov and Gabriel El'-Registan. Sergei Vasilenko, *I.V. Stalin. Vospominaniia. Glavy* [I.V. Stalin. Memoirs. Chapters]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2871 (Sobranie arkhivov deiatelei literatury) [Collection of Archives of Literary Figures], op. 1, ed. khr. 72, p. 1.

quoting at length. Stalin not only expressed his gratitude to Vasilenko for making his orchestration intelligible for the masses but, more importantly, explained the hostile attitude of the Bolsheviks to the cultural heritage and its representatives.

[...] I will not talk about Aleksandrov - he is known to everyone, and his teacher and the conductors, who are present here, know him even better. We will not talk about the music, as we are not specialists, but we do have right to talk about orchestration!⁹¹ Why? Because it sounds real and bright and expresses everything that the music has; every listener that does not have a special music background can justify this. Aleksandrov is ours; he has been working for us for a long time. Thus, I would like to say about those, who came to help us. At the beginning of the Revolution, there was a different attitude to the old masters, this attitude was incorrect...There was a saying: we do not need the heritage of the past; let us create everything new and unprecedented with our young people. This was wrong, as there were many other ugly occurrences, which were unavoidable at the beginning of the Revolution. How is this possible that science, literature, music and fine arts do not rely on the experiences if not of previous years but of centuries? Why would old masters not come with their experience and knowledge to teach young people how to build a new life? Thus, the comrade came to help us and what a brilliant result we have achieved! He is far from being young, but I can see that he is full of strength and energy...Let us wish him many more years of health and creativity, so that he would not only provide us with his compositions, but would teach his mastery to our young people! To your health, Sergei Nikiforovich! [...]⁹²

⁹¹ Stalin liked to refer to himself in the royal plural.

⁹² Quoted in Sergei Vasilenko, *I.V. Stalin. Vospominaniia. Glavy*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2871, op. 1, ed. khr. 72, p. 2.

This skilfully staged speech was full of compliments as well as repentances for the past acceptable only to naive and inexperienced people, a category to which none in the audience belonged. After the toast, Stalin continued in a fatherly way by drawing a line of succession, which thrilled Vasilenko to the core.

[...] Here we are seeing a rare and touching connection: in a row, there are sitting comrades Vasilenko, Aleksandrov and Ivanov-Radkevich, who made the military instrumentation, which we all liked. Aleksandrov was taught by Professor Vasilenko, Ivanov-Radkevich by Aleksandrov. This means: a father, son and grandson. [...] ⁹³

Vasilenko asked for the floor and followed this phony narrative by praising Stalin for his support of arts.

[...] His participation in the arts is revealed not only in the creation of the Anthem; he looks keenly and untiringly after Russian art in general. And if now it is indeed possible to work productively in all fields of the arts, we are totally obliged for this to Iosif Vissarionovich. [...] ⁹⁴

Vasilenko emphasised that he did not quote his speech in detail but today it still conveys the meaning of his political compliance with the supreme authority in art.

Vasilenko was truly proud of his orchestration. In his unpublished writing dated between 1949 and the early 1950s, he expressed the feeling of honour for

⁹³ Quoted in Sergei Vasilenko, *I.V. Stalin. Vospominaniia. Glavy*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2871, op. 1, ed. khr. 72, p. 2.

⁹⁴ Sergei Vasilenko, *I.V. Stalin. Vospominaniia. Glavy*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2871, op. 1, ed. khr. 72, p. 3.

being entrusted with this mission of orchestrating the national anthem.⁹⁵ His formal obedience most certainly helped him to stay alive and carry on his professional activities. One may say that Stalin was right to a degree in saying that the result of Vasilenko's collaboration was brilliant as it suited not only Soviet but also post-Soviet rule. As one of the paradoxes of our time, in 2000, the National Anthem of the USSR with new lyrics written by the same author, Mikhalkov, became the National Anthem of the Russian Federation that continues to live on in Russia today.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Sergei Vasilenko, *Avtobiograficheskie zapisi* [Autobiographic Writings]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 408, p. 23.

⁹⁶ According to the sources on Dmitrii Rogal'-Levitskii listed below, he re-orchestrated Aleksandrov's national anthem under Stalin's order and supervision in spring 1944. Further reference in: 1. Ol'ga Digonskaia, Interview by the author, Moscow, July 13, 2012. 2. Dmitrii Rogal'-Levitskii, "Stranitsy vospominanii. Gosudarstvennyi gimn [Pages of Reminiscences. State Anthem]," ed. Ol'ga Digonskaia, *Muzykal'naia akademiia* 3 (1998): 159-175. 3. Vladimir Lakshin, "Gimn. O 281-m avtore gimna. Dmitrii Rogal'-Levitskii," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, February 12, 1991, Razdel arkhiv, 5. One should not doubt that this re-orchestration did take place, though Vasilenko was left unaware of this. At the same time, one should question how much Rogal'-Levitskii altered or changed the orchestration. According to Rogal'-Levitskii's article listed above, he added harps and bells, enhanced the lower strings with *pizzicato* phrases, and intensified the texture and dynamics toward the end of the anthem. Nevertheless, Vasilenko did not notice any changes when he listened to the anthem in the presence of Rogal'-Levitskii. Vasilenko praised the orchestration as his own and Rogal'-Levitskii did not dare to comment that he re-orchestrated it. The scores of both orchestrations would have helped to answer this query. However, Vasilenko's archives do not have a copy of his orchestration and its location remains unknown at present. The supposition of the author of this thesis with regard to the limited scope of changes in the re-orchestration of the anthem is partly confirmed in the words of Stalin addressed to Rogal'-Levitskii, which were quoted in the article of Vladimir Lakshin listed above: 'You have taken the best of what it [the orchestration] had before and combined it with your own fine ideas, which made the outcome as it was required.' This article published in 1991 was based on the previously unpublished memoirs of Rogal'-Levitskii dated 11-20 April 1944 written in Moscow that were passed after his death in 1962 to Vladimir Lakshin, the son of a family friend. The memoirs describe the audition of the new orchestration of

1.7 Conclusion

In one of the unpublished writings,⁹⁷ Vasilenko admitted that despite all the tribulations and achievements of his life he was always alone, one to one with his music, perfecting his skills and exploring the unexplored. Vasilenko did not seek public acclaim, though he was awarded the honorary titles of People's Artist of Uzbek SSR in 1939 and of RSFSR in 1940, the prestigious Order of the Red Banner twice, in 1943 and 1947, and then in 1947 the Stalin Prize of the first degree,⁹⁸ which allowed him a number of social privileges.⁹⁹ However, he received his first honorary title Merited Worker of Arts in 1927 only after a petition addressed to the Council of People's Commissars and the *Narkom Lunacharskii* that was signed by 65 leading musicians and artists, including Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov, Nikolai Golovanov, Boris Sibor and Vadim Borisovskii.¹⁰⁰

On 5 November 1945, Vasilenko confessed in private to his close friend Fedorov the reasons behind his complete subservience to the state commissions and his dependence on the official liking for his music.

the National Anthem and the following banquet that took place in spring 1944 in the presence of Stalin and the other members of Politburo, which was conducted in a similar format to the one described by Vasilenko in his article. Rogal'-Levitskii did not specify the date of the audition, but the news, which Stalin received during the night banquet about the victories of the Red Army that reached the state frontier on a front of 85 kilometres at the river Prut and liberated the town of Kaments-Podolsk in Ukraine, point to 26 March 1944.

⁹⁷ Sergei Vasilenko, *Avtobiograficheskie zapisi*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 408, p. 6.

⁹⁸ Vasilenko was awarded this prize for his orchestral ballet suite *Mirandolina*, op. 122a, 1946.

⁹⁹ Vasilenko listed all his awards, prizes and medals in a handwritten manuscript dated 26 October 1953. Sergei Vasilenko, *Avtobiograficheskie svedeniia* [Autobiographic Data]. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 971.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Sergei Vasilenko, *Sluzhebnye dokumenty. Proshenie o nagrazhdenii S.N. Vasilenko zvaniem zaslužhennyi deiatel' iskusstv* [Service Documents. A Petition to Award S.N. Vasilenko a Title 'Merited Worker of Arts']. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 981-993, pp. 24-29.

[...] I write an awful lot. I take on everything, absolutely everything. You would ask why? I am wearing my last pair of shoes. [...] I work hard, but everything goes towards the food provision. All, all goes for the food. If this was only enough... [...]¹⁰¹

Today, this short quotation justifies Vasilenko's musical choices that depended on the everyday necessity to provide for the family and retain its social rank. Certainly, the execution of Stalin's compulsory musical components such as comprehensibility for the masses based on Russian heritage with folk and patriotic themes made Vasilenko an exemplary model for the young composers. But fate can play cruel tricks. Vasilenko's enforced conformity to the ideals of the Communist party, though he was not a member,¹⁰² and the fact that his career was allowed to proceed relatively unchecked, led in the post-Soviet world to the view that he had simply been a puppet of the state apparatus. Many fine examples of his music, in particular for the viola, have been neglected in consequence.

Vasilenko's family photo-albums in RGALI have official photos, showing him posing in a formal suit with his Soviet medals on his blazer – but there are also casual photos taken at home which show icons hanging in the *krasnyi ugol* ['red' or 'beautiful corner'] which are displayed only in very religious homes.¹⁰³ Vasilenko was a devoted musician deeply rooted in Russian culture with a broad spectrum of

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Vasilii Fedorov, *Chernovye nabroski, vypiski iz dnevnikov. Sergei Vasilenko*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 22, p. 50.

¹⁰² Vasilenko's '*Vypiska iz trudovogo spiska*' [The Extract from the List of Jobs] dated 13 February 1928 states that he does not hold a Party membership. Sergei Vasilenko, *Sluzhebnye dokumenty*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 981-993, p. 31.

¹⁰³ Sergei Vasilenko, *Al'bom s fotografiiami S.N. Vasilenko* [Album with Photographs of S.N. Vasilenko]. Housed in RGALI, fund 1937 (Sobranie fotografii deiatelei iskusstv) [Collection of Photographs of Artists], op. 5, ed. khr. 108-110.

knowledge, interests and talents, some of which Soviet life taught him to keep to himself. These days Vasilenko's music has fallen from view – in Russia itself, never mind further afield – and the little reputation he retains is as a conformist Soviet composer. Today, almost a century later, when all the aesthetic and political issues and disputes of the twentieth century have been resolved and settled with the passage of time, one should approach Vasilenko's works with a fresh and open-minded attitude.

Chapter Two

Published and unpublished works for viola by Sergei Vasilenko

This chapter provides the first ever complete list of Vasilenko's viola works compiled by the author of this thesis. Most of these compositions were written during the Soviet period, but hardly any were either published or premiered during the lifetime of Vasilenko. For these reasons, it is significant to recognize the possible causes that led the majority of viola compositions of a well-established and loyal Soviet composer to remain unknown to the public until today, over half a century after his death. This chapter is also a study of the factors that made Vasilenko become interested in the viola in particular and, as it was previously unknown, retain this interest until the last years of his life. His perception of the viola changed the boundaries of the technical and sonorous potential of the instrument as Vasilenko approached and challenged it in different genres.

Such a variety of compositional approaches that Vasilenko undertook in his viola works was unusual for the viola repertoire in general and also atypical for Vasilenko's contemporaries, of which more below. What made Vasilenko choose this tactic? It is likely that his broad spectrum of cultural, historical and musical interests were conducive to this distinctive implementation of Russian idioms combined with the specific lexicon of oriental and early music, to name but a few. For this reason, a part of this chapter is dedicated to Vasilenko's publications on music, including his book on instrumentation, articles and press reports, which help one to link and perceive the aesthetic and artistic underlay of his interests in music, some of which he conveyed in his viola compositions. Due to the political

circumstances that prevented Vasilenko from sharing his musical pursuits openly, the following discussion is largely supported by the archival materials.

2.1 Vasilenko's publications on music as a reflection of his compositional pursuits

The new socialist regime that replaced the tsarist reign in 1917 imposed new laws and values, which severely constrained Vasilenko from openly composing music on the subjects he was inspired by for years and from expanding and sharing his research interests in the Soviet press. This explains why Vasilenko's publications on music are of a different value for contemporary researches. Vasilenko occasionally contributed brief, but insignificant reports and reviews about his new compositions and those of his colleagues to the Soviet press, including the newspapers *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* [Soviet Art] and *Literaturnaia gazeta* [Literary Newspaper], and the magazine *Sovetskaia muzyka* [Soviet Music].¹⁰⁴ The titles of these articles illustrated their content, which reproduced a typical Soviet style aimed to praise and gratify the regime rather than give a detailed assessment of the true quality of compositions. Among these articles were '*Sozdamim muzyku, blizkuiu narodu*' [Let Us Create Music That is Close to the People], '*Sovetskie kompozitory o svoei rabote*' [Soviet Composers on Their Work] and '*Moi novye muzykal'nye proizvedeniia*' [My New Musical Works].¹⁰⁵ Vasilenko also prepared a few articles

¹⁰⁴ The list that includes some of these publications was compiled in: Georgii Ivanov, *Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko. Notograficheskii spravochnik* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1973), 157.

¹⁰⁵ 1. Sergei Vasilenko, "Sozdamim muzyku, blizkuiu narodu," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, March 28, 1948, Razdel iskusstvo [Arts Section]. 2. Sergei Vasilenko, "Sovetskie kompozitory o svoei rabote," *Pravda*,

about his contemporaries and friends, including the composer Ippolitov-Ivanov, the singers Vasilii Petrov, bass, and Antonina Nezhdanova, soprano, for the anthologies about these musicians, some of which were published in the lifetime of Vasilenko and the others posthumously.¹⁰⁶ These articles provided a general review of the role of these personalities in Soviet musical life, but their narrative style closely corresponded to reminiscences rather than to a typical musicological publication with a thorough evaluation.

Notably, a series of Vasilenko's articles published in a newspaper *Novosti radio* [News of the Radio] in 1925, when the censorship was not as severe as towards the end of the 1920s and beyond, Vasilenko approached the subject of his genuine interest unreservedly.¹⁰⁷ Among them were the articles that he used for his radio programmes and for his lectures on the history of music at Moscow University from 1920-1925: 'Pesni trubadurov' [Songs of Troubadours], 'Muzyka Kitaia' [Music of China], 'Narodnaia iaponskaia muzyka' [National Japanese Music] and

November 14, 1934, Razdel iskusstvo [Arts Section]. 3. Sergei Vasilenko, "Moi novye muzykal'nye proizvedeniia," *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, March 5, 1936, Razdel muzyka [Music Section].

¹⁰⁶ Further reference in: 1. Sergei Vasilenko, "Vospominaniia [Memoirs]," in Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov, *Pis'ma. Stat'i. Vospominaniia* [Letters. Articles. Memoirs], ed. Nikolai Sokolov (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1986), 270-276. 2. Sergei Vasilenko, "Na stsene i v zhizni [On the Stage and in Life]," in *Antonina Nezhdanova. Materialy i issledovaniia* [Materials and Research], ed. Vera Vasina-Grossman (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1967), 415-419. 3. Sergei Vasilenko, "Moi vospominaniia o Vasilii Rodionoviche Petrove [My Reminiscences about V. R. Petrov]," in *Vasilii Rodionovich Petrov. Sbornik statei i materialov* [Anthology of Articles and Documents], ed. Igor' Belza (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1953), 128-134.

¹⁰⁷ A further discussion of the political circumstances of the time is in the subsection 'Reasons for the neglect of Vasilenko's viola works during his lifetime'.

‘*Vagner i ego vremia*’ [Wagner and His Time].¹⁰⁸ One may classify their content as articles on music history and Asian folk traditions, which revealed Vasilenko’s expertise and erudition in these disciplines. These musical interests correlated closely with his compositional pursuits of this period, though he did not write any articles about them. These include his two early music arrangements for viola and piano listed in the subsection below as well as his *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, the *Legend* and the *Oriental Dance*, in which he broadly executed oriental idioms.¹⁰⁹

Vasilenko followed a similar educational approach in his major publication, which was not available in print until a few years before his death. This book in two volumes, aimed at semi-professional and professional academic readers, is an important source of the authentic information on Vasilenko’s interpretation and perception of orchestral instruments, including the viola, which will be used in this thesis. The first volume of this in-depth study on orchestral instrumentation called *Instrumentovka dlia simfonicheskogo orkestra* [Instrumentation of a Symphony Orchestra] was published only in 1952,¹¹⁰ largely because it was acknowledged as a valuable scholarly source by the professors of the Moscow Conservatoire. The archive of Vasilenko has a letter from the secretary of the Department of Instrumentation at the Conservatoire, Iurii Fortunatov, to the *Gosudarstvennoe*

¹⁰⁸ Sergei Vasilenko, *Novosti radio*, 1925, issues no. 5, 9, 20, 21. A detailed discussion of Vasilenko’s interest in oriental music, the early music and the modern artistic trends is in the third and the fifth chapters.

¹⁰⁹ A detailed study of Vasilenko’s viola works is in the third and fourth chapters and a brief review of his late pieces in the subsection ‘Late works of the early 1950s’ below and in Appendix 3.

¹¹⁰ Sergei Vasilenko, *Instrumentovka dlia simfonicheskogo orkestra* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal’noe izdatel’stvo, 1952), vol. 1. The manuscript is housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 920.

Muzykal'noe Izdatel'stvo [State Music Publishing House] dated 7 March 1951.¹¹¹ It states that the department thoroughly discussed the content of the book in the course of its meetings, approved it on 12 October 1950 and strongly recommended it for publication.

As Vasilenko explained in the foreword written in 1950, he intended his study in three volumes for students studying orchestration. Only the first two volumes were completed and published. The first consists of almost four hundred pages and over two hundred musical samples based on Russian and Soviet music and divided into two large sections: strings and woodwinds with French horns. Each section is subdivided further into smaller articles. Although, the content had purely academic subject-matter, Vasilenko still had to observe and balance his text against the constraints of Soviet indoctrination and the requirements of censorship. They required that any book on Russian-Soviet music encompassed a distinct illustration of the music for the masses and of the national republics of the USSR fused with communist ideas, thus balancing the study of the past with awareness of the present.¹¹² In the words of the Narkom of Enlightenment, Lunacharskii, the Marxist ideology proved to be an inspiration for composers and, thus, writers on music too

¹¹¹ Quoted in Sergei Vasilenko, *Sluzhebnye dokumenty*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 981-993, p. 35.

¹¹² For further information about the censorship requirements of the time see: 1. Neil Edmunds, "Lenin is always with us: Soviet Musical Propaganda and its Composers during the 1920s," in Neil Edmunds, ed., *Soviet Music and Society under Lenin and Stalin: The Baton and Sickle* (London, New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 105-122. 2. Simo Mikkonen, *Music and Power in the Soviet 1930s: a History of Composers' Bureaucracy* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 181-228. 3. Stanley Dale Krebs, *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), 34-60.

had to be social in content, depicting the virtues of the new society.¹¹³ As a consequence, Vasilenko included among the refined works of Glinka, Rimskii-Korsakov, Borodin, Shostakovich, Khachaturian, Prokofiev and other fine Russian-Soviet composers, examples of music written in a truly conformist Socialist Realism style.¹¹⁴

The first volume is the most authentic of the two, because the second volume was published posthumously in 1959 and was revised and edited by Fortunatov, who started to work on this publication together with Vasilenko. However, according to the foreword written by the composer Vissarion Shebalin, the initial author's plan of the second volume dated 1955 was considerably changed with some chapters being excluded from the final text and others re-written by Fortunatov.¹¹⁵ This volume undertakes a discussion of various combinations between instrumental groups in polyphony, harmony, accompaniment, melodies, phrasing in unison and dialogues.

¹¹³ Anatolii Lunacharskii, "O sotsiologicheskom metode v teorii i istorii muzyki [About the Social Method in Theory and History of Music]," in Anatolii Lunacharskii, *V mire muzyki. Stat'i i rechi* [In the World of Music. Articles and Speeches], ed. Igor' Sats and Grigorii Bernardt (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1971), 158-176.

¹¹⁴ Vasilenko added some minor compositions of the composers obedient to the Soviet regime, including the *Turkmen suite* by the Turkmen composer Veli Mukhatov (1916-2005) and the *Kolkhoznye pesni* [Songs of a Collective Farm] by Lev Knipper (1989-1974). Socialist Realism is a realistic style in literature, music and art that propagandizes and glorifies the achievements of socialism and of the working class. Further reference in: 1. Meri E. Herrala, *The Struggle for Control of Soviet Music from 1932 to 1948: Socialist Realism vs. Western Formalism* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012), 56-69. 2. Simo Mikkonen, *Music and Power in the Soviet 1930s: a History of Composers' Bureaucracy* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 243-283. 3. Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 2011), 105-135.

¹¹⁵ Sergei Vasilenko, *Instrumentovka dlia simfonicheskogo orkestra* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1959), vol. 2. The manuscript is housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 1079.

In the third, unprepared volume, Vasilenko planned to write about the methods of orchestration in accompanying solo instruments, which would have helped one in understanding of his compositional schemes and tactics in the solo instrumental repertoire.

Thus, one may conclude that due to the political circumstances, Vasilenko's writings on music, with the exception of a few occasional publications in periodicals of the early 1920s mentioned above and the scholarly book on orchestration, did suffer uncompromising restrictions in their content. Vasilenko's true musical interests, including his expertise in Oriental and early music, which he conveyed in his viola compositions, corresponded only to a fraction of his writings. As with Vasilenko's memoirs, this considerably limits the scope of trustworthy musicological resources for contemporary research on Vasilenko, turning his music scores and archival documents into the primary sources for the study of the composer and of his music. Thus, the gathering of information on Vasilenko's viola works offered below would have been simply impossible without his unpublished manuscripts.

2.2 A complete list of published and unpublished works for viola by Sergei Vasilenko

It would be reasonable to list all existing viola compositions of Vasilenko in chronological order; this would clarify the *raison d'être* of their emergence, assist the detailed analysis of their qualities and instrumental innovations and evaluate their significance. The list of compositions given below is the first up-to-date complete record of Vasilenko's works for viola with the details of their publication

and the location of the manuscripts. It was compiled by the author of this thesis using all available published and archival materials about the composer.¹¹⁶

Table 2.2 The list of viola compositions by Sergei Vasilenko with the details of their manuscripts and publications

Categories/ Periods	Year of creation	Title of a work	Publication
Early period/	1914	<i>Noktiurn</i> [Nocturne] for viola and piano (from the music for a theatre production after William Shakespeare <i>Son v letniuiu noch'</i> [A Midsummer Night's Dream], op. 28). ¹¹⁷	Unpublished, manuscript is lost.
Arrangements of early music	1918	<i>Chetyre p'esy na temy liutnevoi muzyki 16 i 17 vekov</i> [Four Pieces on Themes of Lute	Moscow, Vienna, New York: Gosudarstvennoe

¹¹⁶ The sonata, the lute pieces, the *Oriental Dance* and the four pieces of the 1950s that are compiled in this Table 2.2 were listed in the overall list of Vasilenko's compositions in: Georgii Ivanov, *Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko. Notograficheskii spravochnik* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1973), 30, 35, 100, 109.

¹¹⁷ This work is listed only in Georgii Polianovskii's book 'Sergei Vasilenko' published twice in Moscow by *Muzgiz* and *Muzyka* in 1947 and 1964 respectively. According to the list of Vasilenko's compositions in these publications, this piece was also transcribed for cello and piano, which was published by Iurgenson in Moscow in 1916. However, not a single copy of this publication has yet been found, though this piece along with the *Pavane* from the lute pieces was listed in a concert programme performed by Dmitrii Mogilevskii, cello, and the composer, piano, at the *Malyi Zal* [Small Hall] of the Moscow Conservatoire on 2 February 1924. Sergei Vasilenko, *Al'bom dokumentov*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 788, p. 70.

		<p>Music of the Sixteenth - Seventeenth Centuries]</p> <p>op. 35 for viola and piano</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Pavana</i> [Pavane] 2. <i>Madonna Tenerina</i> 3. <i>Serenada dame serdtsa</i> [Serenade for the Lady of my Heart] 4. <i>Rytsari</i> [Knights] 	<p>muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo RSFSR [the RSFSR State Publishing House], Universal Edition, 1930, 1932. The manuscripts are housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 54- 60.</p>
	Unknown	<p><i>Zodiakus I.A.S. Siuita iz proizvedenii neizvestnykh avtorov 18 veka</i> [Zodiakus I.A.S. Suite after Unknown Authors of the Eighteenth Century] for viola and piano</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Ouverture</i> 2. <i>Passacaille</i> 3. <i>Menuet</i> 4. <i>Plainte</i> 5. <i>Musette</i> 	<p>Unpublished manuscript, housed in the Russian State Library, Moscow, fund Bor. 4/74.</p>
Middle- period	1922	<p><i>Vostochnyi tanets</i> [Oriental Dance] op. 47 for clarinet in B-flat or viola</p>	<p>Unpublished for viola and piano, viola manuscript is</p>

		and piano	lost. For clarinet in B-flat and piano, Moscow: Gosmuzizdat, 1931. Moscow: Muzgiz, 1949, 1959. The clarinet manuscript is housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 242.
	1923	Sonata for viola and piano op. 46	Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo RSFSR 1925, 1931. Moscow: Muzgiz, 1955. Moscow: Muzyka, 1985. The manuscript is housed in RGALI, fund 653 (Muzgiz), op. 1, ed. khr. 239.
Late period	5 August,	<i>Spiashchaia reka</i>	Unpublished

	1951	[Sleeping River] for viola and piano	manuscript, housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 817.
	Unknown	<i>Kolybel'naia</i> [Lullaby] for viola and piano	Unpublished manuscript, housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 900.
	25 August, 1953	<i>Chetyre p'esy</i> [Four pieces] for viola and piano 1. <i>Prelidiia</i> [Prelude] 2. <i>Etiud</i> [Etude] 3. <i>Legenda</i> [Legend] 4. <i>Skertso/Tokkata</i> [Scherzo/ Toccata]	Unpublished manuscript, housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 500.

It is evident from the Table 2.2 above that Vasilenko's viola compositions fall into three categories and periods: early period/adaptations of early music, middle-period and late works. Thus, it would be logical to examine them according to the groupings formed above.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ The date of the *Zodiakus* and *Lullaby* remain unknown. However, they clearly correspond to the style of other works from particular phases. Thus, the *Zodiakus* is another adaptation of early music and the language of the *Lullaby* is comparable to the early 1950s pieces. Their detailed analyses are in the subsections on '*Zodiakus*' in the third chapter and in the 'Late works of the early 1950s' in this chapter and Appendix 3.

2.3 The stimulus for Vasilenko's interest in the viola

Vasilenko's seven compositions for viola and piano assume special importance.¹¹⁹ Russian viola repertoire was very modest at the beginning of the twentieth century and had only a few original works worthy of merit and these unfortunately did not win much recognition among either the public or performers.¹²⁰ The violists who performed these compositions, did not form the forefront of a viola movement that would change the reputation of the instrument. Their professional interests lay largely either in the field of chamber or violin music as they all were initially trained as violinists. The absence of an active viola soloist on concert stages and a rather sceptical perception of the technical and sound qualities of the viola among musicians and consequently the public resulted in its negligible rank among other instruments of the string family. The status of the viola as a valuable ensemble and orchestral rather than a solo instrument prevailed in Russian minds until the early

¹¹⁹ The absence of the text of the *Nocturne*, 1914, makes it impossible to analyse and evaluate this work at present. Therefore, it is reasonable to regard the lute pieces, 1918, as Vasilenko's first composition for viola and piano.

¹²⁰ Regrettably, there are only a few viola compositions worthy of notice from this period. Among them were the following works for viola and piano: sonatas op. 10 by Aleksandr Vinkler and op. 15 by Pavel Iuon, sonata op. 49 and the pieces op. 11 by Anton Rubinstein, *Elegy* op. 44 by Aleksandr Glazunov and *Eclogue* and *Romance* op. 12-13 by Fedor Akimenko. Such notable works as the sonata by Mikhail Glinka and the viola concerto attributed to Ivan Khandoshkin were not discovered until 1932 and the middle of the 1940s respectively. Further reference in: 1. Stanislav Poniatovskii, *Istoriia al'tovogo iskusstva* [The History of the Viola] (Moscow: Muzyka, 2007), 144-161. 2. Anne Mischakoff, *Khandoshkin and the Beginning of Russian String Music* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1983). 3. Franz Zeyringer, *Literatur für Viola* [Literature for the Viola] (Hartberg Österreich: Verlag Julius Schönwetter Jun., 1976). 4. Mikhail Grinberg, *Russkaia al'tovaia literatura* [Russian Literature for the Viola] (Moscow: Muzyka, 1967), 11, 79-86.

1920s, when the thriving concert activities of a young violist, Vadim Borisovskii (1900–72), drew attention to the viola.¹²¹

Vasilenko left no written explanation of the stimulus that brought his viola works into being. Certainly his sonata for viola and piano was composed in December 1923 and dedicated to Borisovskii, who premiered this work with the composer at the piano on 8 January 1924 in the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire. Nevertheless, Vasilenko's first composition for viola and piano was not his sonata, as one would have thought taking into account the rapid rise to fame of Borisovskii, but the *Four Pieces on Themes of Lute Music of the Sixteenth - Seventeenth Centuries*, op. 35. They were written in 1918, at a time when Borisovskii was only one of many violin students in Moscow. The date of this suite points to the fact that the initial interest of Vasilenko in the viola was influenced by causes other than the artistic talents of Borisovskii, which a few years later inspired Vasilenko and many other composers, including Nikolai Roslavets.¹²²

In view of Vasilenko's later reputation as a master of instrumentation, it seems reasonable to assume that his interest in the viola arose from his desire to experiment with different instrumental techniques, timbres and sound effects, which he broadly explored in these pieces, of which more below. One may also connect the

¹²¹ Borisovskii, like his colleagues, began his career as a chamber violist, but despite all odds, moved on to promote the viola as a solo instrument, giving recitals, researching and arranging works for this instrument. He was one of the founder-members of the Beethoven Quartet in 1922–1923, remaining in the group until 1964, when he was replaced by one of his prominent former students, Fedor Druzhinin (1932-2007).

¹²² Vadim Borisovskii was a dedicatee of sonatas for viola and piano by Vladimir Kriukov (op. 15, 1920-1921), Sergei Vasilenko (op. 46, 1923), Nikolai Roslavets (1926 and the 1930s), Aleksandr Mosolov (op. 21a) and Vasilii Shirinskii (1924); pieces for viola and piano by Vladimir Kriukov (op. 13), Aleksandr Mosolov (op. 2, 1922-1923) and by Aleksandr Krein (op. 2a) among others.

appearance of this nostalgic, gentle and innocent music with Vasilenko's attempt to sink into a reverie from the realities of everyday life in 1918, one of the most brutal post-revolutionary years of the Civil War. This was the year when he was imprisoned, of which more in the following subsection. Like the composer Grechaninov, who approached religious subjects in his music of this period in order to forget the inhumanity of the time,¹²³ Vasilenko composed this cycle of pieces that allowed him to escape to the troubadours' world of pure spirituality and idealistic ardour. Besides, the mellow timbre of the viola suited well the figurative poetic interpretation of their lament and lively songs and dances, which Vasilenko skilfully transferred to a twentieth-century idiom.

However, the Sonata was only acknowledged and performed from time to time in the viola class of Vadim Borisovskii,¹²⁴ who was the driving force of the majority of solo-violin activities in Moscow from 1923 until 1963, when a heart attack stopped his performing engagements. Borisovskii certainly knew of the existence of these lute pieces; he included them, along with the Sonata, in a catalogue of viola repertoire compiled in 1931 and published in 1937 in Germany,¹²⁵

¹²³ Aleksandr Grechaninov, *Moia zhizn'* (New York: Rausen Bros., 1951), 109.

¹²⁴ Evgeniia Stoklitskaia, interview by the author, Moscow, August 23, 2010. Stoklitskaia (b. 1937), the Head of the String Department at the Gnesin State Music College in Moscow and an author and editor of educational anthologies and publications for viola players, is a former student of Borisovskii and his close family friend.

¹²⁵ Wilhelm Altmann and Vadim Borisovskii, *Literaturverzeichnis für Bratsche und Viola d'amore* (Wolfenbüttel: Verlag für musikalische Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1937), 22, 57. Further discussion of this catalogue is in the subsection 'Reasons for the neglect of Vasilenko's viola works during his lifetime'.

but there is no evidence that he ever performed them in public and they have remained unperformed until recently.¹²⁶

2.4 Reasons for the neglect of Vasilenko's viola works during his lifetime

The main reason for such neglect was, as so often at the time, political. The rigorous campaign against '*poputchiki*' ['fellow travellers'], the slogan that was used to describe those who accepted the Revolution, but were not active participants, circulated in the Soviet press from 18 June 1925 after a resolution of the Party's Central Committee '*O politike partii v oblasti khudozhestvennoi literatury*' [On the Policy of the Party in the Field of Belles-lettres]. This policy was designed to target literature, but in practice was also interpreted as a guideline in the field of music.¹²⁷ The meticulous *chistki* ['cleansing', purges] among musicians, who were judged by their social origins and contributions to revolutionary values, were initiated by the Soviet authorities through the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM), which by then effectively controlled Soviet musical life.¹²⁸ The words of

¹²⁶ There is only a single concert flyer that states that the *Pavane* was performed on the cello. Further reference may be found in footnote 117.

¹²⁷ Further reference in: 1. Simo Mikkonen, *Music and Power in the Soviet 1930s: A History of Composers' Bureaucracy* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 1-40. 2. Aleksandr Voronsky, "On Proletarian Art and the Artistic Policy of Our Party," in Aleksandr Voronsky, *Art as the Cognition of Life. Selected Writings, 1918-1936*, ed. and trans. Frederick Choate (Michigan: Mehring Books Inc., 1998), 147-171, 443-448. 3. Katerina Clark, "The 'Quiet Revolution' in Soviet Intellectual Life," in Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites, eds., *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 210-230.

¹²⁸ RAPM, the *Rossiiskaia assotsiatsia proletarskikh muzykantov*, was founded in Moscow in 1923 and disbanded by the Party decree on 23 April 1932. More information on this decree is in footnote

the music-critic Vladimir Blium¹²⁹ in an article ‘*Protiv psevdo-proletarskikh techenii v muzyke*’ [Against Pseudo Proletarian Movements in Music] published in the newspaper *Vecherniaia Moskva* [Evening Moscow] dated 10 October 1930 became typical of the time.

[...] Where is the heap¹³⁰ of the qualified music *poputchiki* that make the Soviet musical culture of today – Vasilenko, Miaskovskii, Ippolitov-Ivanov, Shostakovich, Glier, Krein and others? Why are they not here? They are not here, because they are terrorised by the group of musicians that call themselves ‘proletarian musicians’.

[...] ¹³¹

Vasilenko did neither leave any official justificatory testimonials in

18 in the Introduction to the thesis. RAPM strove for the ideological monopoly in music and considered its members the only representatives of the true proletariat. Nikolai Roslavets did not escape the repression of the RAPM despite his peasant roots. Further reference in: 1. Marina Frolova-Walker and Jonathan Walker, *Music and Soviet Power, 1917-1932* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), 100-117. 2. Nikolai Roslavets, *Pis'ma* [Letters]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2659, op. 1, ed. khr. 94, pp. 1-20.

¹²⁹ Vladimir Ivanovich Blium (1877-1941) was a harsh music and theatre critic, the political editor of the music-theatre section of the *Glavrepertkom* that determined the state repertoire policy. *Glavrepertkom* is an abbreviation of *Glavnyi komitet po kontroliu za zrelishchami i repertuarom* [Chief Committee for the Inspection of Entertainments and Repertoire], in which Nikolai Roslavets led the music department. For further information about the Soviet state music agencies see: Amy Nelson, *Music for the Revolution. Musicians and Power in Early Soviet Russia* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2004), 125-154.

¹³⁰ The Soviet press was kept under strict control of the state and was thoroughly politicised as it was the most natural and powerful way to spread propaganda among readers. Blium’s article was written for the general public and, therefore, he preferred to use informal proletarian vocabulary such as the ‘*tolshcha*’ [the heap of people] instead of being in accord with conventional formal rhetoric, for example ‘a presence’.

¹³¹ Quoted in Sergei Vasilenko, *Al'bom dokumentov*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 788, p. 95.

attempting to defend his name nor his colleagues.¹³² Besides, the association of his name with the Golovanov case that occurred only two years earlier taught him that any such attempts would be useless if not damaging for all.¹³³ Vasilenko was tongue-tied - the fate of those who fell from official favour and suffered from orchestrated prejudicial ideological accusations, from which there was no escape for anyone.

Another reason for the neglect of Vasilenko's viola compositions might sound ludicrous today, but the political oppression was directed not only against individuals and their aesthetic ideas that did not conform to the Soviet ideology but also against musical instruments. Thus, in the early 1930, the RAPM decided that the viola was an instrument that overloaded the educational programmes. As a result of this directive Borisovskii, who held the only viola professorship at the Moscow Conservatoire,¹³⁴ was forced to resign from his post in 1931, and all his students were compelled to enrol on the violin course. Unofficially, his students continued their viola tuition at Borisovskii's home despite the fear of very likely trouble if this arrangement was revealed. Only a year later, Borisovskii was invited back to the Conservatoire due to the fact that the RAPM was dissolved by that time.¹³⁵

¹³² Vasilenko's memoirs of 1948 and 1979 contain his contradictory views on Roslavets' music language without going into any ideological polemics.

¹³³ A detailed discussion of this case is in the subsection '*The Golovanovshchina*' in the first chapter.

¹³⁴ Vadim Borisovskii occupied this post from September 1925, when he replaced his former Professor Vladimir Bakaleinikov (1885-1953), who emigrated to the USA. Further reference in: Vladimir Bakaleinikov, *Zapiski muzykanta* [Notes of a Musician] (New York: Vladimir Bakaleinikov, 1943).

¹³⁵ No copies of these directives have been found in archives yet, including those among Borisovskii's documents. However, this information was confirmed in the following reliable sources: 1. Aleksandra De-Lazari Dolli Borisovskaia, "Monolog [A Monologue]," in Vadim Borisovskii, *Zerkal*

Borisovskii was profoundly dedicated to the development of the viola and to the research and the enlargement of its repertoire.¹³⁶ However, his fine professional

volshebnyi krug [The Magical Circle of Mirrors] (Moscow: Reka vremeni, 2012), 18. 2. Vladimir Smirnov, *Russkii kharakter* [Russian Character], ed. Aleksandr Nikishin and Kira Smirnova (Moscow: Vagrius, 2004), 48-52. 3. Kira Smirnova et al., *Vodochnyi korol' Petr Arsen'evich Smirnov i ego potomki* [The King of Vodka Petr Smirnov and his Descendants] (Moscow: OAO izdatel'stvo Raduga, 1999), 158-164. 4. Viktor Iuzefovich, *Vadim Borisovskii – osnovatel' sovetskoi al'tovoi shkoly* [Vadim Borisovskii – the Founder of the Soviet Viola School] (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1977), 124. 5. Evgeniia Stoklitskaia, interview by the author, Moscow, August 23, 2010. Iuzefovich prepared his book in close collaboration with Borisovskii's widow, Aleksandra De-Lazari Dolli Borisovskaia (1904-2004), who provided him with documents from the family archive. Only a recently published volume of Borisovskii's poetry '*Zerkal volshebnyi krug*' contains an article by his widow, in which she affirmed that Borisovskii was sacked from the Conservatoire three times during the purges. In addition, this information is confirmed in the memoirs of Vladimir Petrovich Smirnov (1875-1934), the third of thirteen children of Petr Smirnov (1831-1898), the founder of one of the wealthiest Russian trade houses and vodka distilleries of the nineteenth century 'Petr Smirnov', known today as the 'Smirnoff' brand. Vladimir fled Russia after the Socialist Revolution of 1917 and settled in France, where he dictated his memoirs to his wife, Tat'iana Maksheeva, before his death in Nice. The memoirs were edited and published only in 2004 by his daughter Kira Smirnova, who also published her own book about her ancestors and the history of the family firm. These two books reveal that Borisovskii was an illegitimate son of Aleksandra Smirnova, the youngest daughter of Petr Smirnov. Reasonably, Borisovskii kept this fact undisclosed as both his father, Vasilii Nikolaevich Bostandzhoglo, who was a wealthy tobacco merchant from the Old Believers' family, a cousin of Konstantin Stanislavskii and a talented ornithologist, the founder of the collection of the Zoological Museum of the Moscow University, and his step-father, the merchant Martem'ian Nikanorovich Borisovskii were shot by the *Cheka* in 1919. His mother lost her property and income and was classified as '*lishenka*' [disenfranchised], which meant that she was deprived by the Soviet Constitution of 1918-1936 of all social rights, including employment, housing, rations, pension, and the right to vote due to her bourgeois roots and, therefore, was fully dependent on her son. This detailed information has not been published in any musicological sources before. Today, it justifies Borisovskii's inability to openly defend his professorship against the attack of the RAPM. Due to his family roots, he automatically fell into the same disenfranchised group of people, who were under repression even after 1936 when this category was officially eliminated.

¹³⁶ Borisovskii was an author of more than 200 arrangements and transcriptions for the viola. Some of them were published in limited editions in the USSR and the others still remain in manuscript.

accomplishments neither found recognition among the administration of the Conservatoire at that time nor protected him personally from political oppression, which consequently brought to a standstill his active collaborations with composers, including Vasilenko. Thus, seven years later Borisovskii ran into serious trouble because of the viola catalogue he had published with Dr Wilhelm Altmann, a German researcher from Berlin. The growth of the absolute authority of Iosif Stalin brought the time of despair that led to the purges. Gradually, Lenin's 'Old Guard', who played a key role in the Socialist Revolution of 1917, were either arrested or 'promoted' to prestigious but ineffectual positions. Thus, Anatolii Lunacharskii, the main political adviser of this research catalogue and also a great admirer of Vasilenko's ballets¹³⁷ was dismissed from his post as chief of the Central Research Committee in 1933 and sent away from the capital and its political conflicts and controversy. The liberal approach and a certain tolerance towards various cultural matters he had maintained during his term of office came to an end. On 4 January 1938, Borisovskii was attacked in a *Pravda* article, '*Podozritel'noe sodruzhestvo*' [Suspicious Partnership], by a music-critic Georgii Khubov,¹³⁸ who accused him of being a Nazi advocate – even though the catalogue of a solely musicological content had been put together by December 1932, well before the Nazis came to power.

This catalogue was a significant publication for violists as it listed for the

¹³⁷ In April 1926, Vasilenko became personally acquainted with Lunacharskii, who deeply admired his ballet *Iosif prekrasnyi* [Joseph the Handsome] op. 50, 1925, and offered the plot for Vasilenko's next ballet *Lola* op. 52, 1926. It was staged under the close patronage of Lunacharskii. Reasonably, Vasilenko included neither this information nor the fact that they became good acquaintances in his books of memoirs and his article about Lunacharskii remained unpublished. Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal'nyi variant*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 412, pp. 31-34.

¹³⁸ In 1932-39, Georgii Nikitich Khubov (1902-81) occupied the high-status position of the Deputy Editor of the leading magazine *Sovetskaia muzyka* [Soviet Music].

first time all known original and transcribed works for viola solo and for viola with other instruments, a valuable source of viola research data even today, in the twenty-first century. However, an article of a similar content that severely criticised Borisovskii and his publication was prepared by the state publishing house *Iskusstvo* [Art]. It is kept in RGALI in a form of a draft with no author's name: 'Borisovskii was always indifferent to Soviet reality. [...] His notorious individuality as an artist was only the outer shell of his political isolation from the Soviet public.'¹³⁹ An official claim against Borisovskii was accepted for legal action and the file delivered to the Kremlin for further investigation. It was passed on for the attention of Viacheslav Molotov, a leading Soviet politician and a protégé of Stalin. Molotov's secretariat summoned Borisovskii to the Kremlin for a meeting where, fortunately, the entire trumped-up charge was dismissed.¹⁴⁰ Borisovskii was lucky to survive.

It was a lucky escape also for Vasilenko. Certainly, Vasilenko's loyal public reputation appealed to the Soviet authorities,¹⁴¹ but the composer's professional status and musical fulfilment of the Party ideology were of critical importance.

¹³⁹ Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo 'Iskusstvo' [State Publishing House 'Iskusstvo'], *O politicheskoi bespechnosti rukovoditelei Moskovskoi Konservatorii i drugikh organizatsii iskusstv* [Regarding the Political Carelessness of the Administration of the Moscow Conservatoire and Other Arts Organisations]. Housed in RGALI, fund 672 (Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo 'Iskusstvo'), op. 1, ed. khr. 1010, pp. 1-2. According to the context of the article, one may assume that it was written at the end of the 1930s, the time when the purges reached a new peak. Perhaps this was the reason why the author wanted to remain anonymous.

¹⁴⁰ Kira Smirnova disclosed in her book that Borisovskii wrote a letter of explanation addressed directly to Stalin that prompted the secretariat of Molotov to call Borisovskii for a meeting, at which the case against him was dismissed. Further reference in: Kira Smirnova et al., *Vodochnyi korol' Petr Arsen'evich Smirnov i ego potomki* (Moscow: OAO izdatel'stvo Raduga, 1999), 161.

¹⁴¹ A detailed discussion of Vasilenko's philanthropic activities that won the loyalty of the general public is in the first chapter.

Thus, the subjects that interested him were considered suspect: ‘ancient’ music, with its natural absorption of spirituality and the troubadours’ idealised model of love. It was the same a decade or so later with the themes of his viola pieces of 1950s; their pastoral dreams and fantasies influenced by Symbolism and the Silver Age aesthetic. Such ideas contravened the limitations of Soviet ‘Socialist Realism’ and were not officially tolerated in atheist Soviet society.¹⁴² Besides, Vasilenko had not only been stung by the acerbic press, but was detained by the *VCheKa*¹⁴³ in the *Butyrskaiia* prison in Moscow, which after 1917 housed political prisoners many of whom were arrested and shot without trial. His archive has a certificate dated 7 November 1918 that confirms that ‘according to the order of the *Cheka* N1094 a citizen Vasilenko was released from custody’.¹⁴⁴ This incident that could have ended dreadfully has not been mentioned in any publications. Today, it gives one a clue why in the commentary to the 25 Anniversary Concert of Vasilenko’s professional activities in 1927 he, who before the revolution led a very active social and professional life, was unexpectedly described as ‘an extremely shy and unsociable composer’, whose music was rarely performed.¹⁴⁵ This was Vasilenko’s temporary defence of his inability to carve out a niche in Soviet society and its music industry.

¹⁴² For further information about Socialist Realism see footnote 114.

¹⁴³ *VCheKa* (usually called *Cheka*) is an abbreviation of the *Vserossiiskaia Chrezvychainaia Komissiiia* [All Russian Emergency Commission], the first Soviet security organisation, the predecessor of the KGB with unlimited powers. It was founded by Lenin’s decree in December 1917 in order to combat counterrevolution and sabotage.

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Sergei Vasilenko, *Al’bom dokumentov*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 788, p. 69.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Vasilii Fedorov, *Priglasitel’nye bilety, programmy spektaklei i kontsertov iz proizvedenii S.N. Vasilenko* [Invitation Tickets, Programmes of the Theatre Productions and Concerts Consisted of Works by S.N. Vasilenko]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 417, p. 1.

With the earlier viola works therefore under wraps, and Borisovskii unable to perform them, Vasilenko turned instead to topics that were politically approved by the Soviet state: stories of the Russian heroic past and present, folk traditions, and folk instruments including the balalaika. One may say that he essentially followed the advice given to him by Lunacharskii in the late 1920s: ‘I advise you to take plots from Russian fairy tales. The censorship should be less picky.’¹⁴⁶ Fortunately, Vasilenko was interested in themes that did chime with the regime. For instance, the Russian composers of the second half of the nineteenth century favoured by Stalin – Tchaikovskii and Rimskii-Korsakov in particular – were also his heroes. In different phases of his compositional career he was influenced by Russian folklore and history, and Middle Eastern and oriental subjects (Japanese, Indian and Chinese ones among them) – an outlook which coincided with the nationalist emphasis in Communist ideology, which concealed its true nature behind the affirmation of the national music of Russia and other nations of the Soviet republics.¹⁴⁷ This stylistic correspondence with the state doctrine clarifies why his score of the *Oriental Dance* for clarinet and piano was published, though the viola version got lost.¹⁴⁸ Most important of all, Vasilenko was a cautious man and, heeding his own and Borisovskii’s warnings, turned his attention away from objectionable subjects such as the viola. He was to write nothing more for the instrument for almost three decades.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal’nyi variant*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 412, p. 33.

¹⁴⁷ Among Vasilenko’s major works based on the national music of the Soviet republics were the first national Uzbek operas *Buran* [The Snow Storm] op. 98, 1938, and *Velikii kanal* [The Grand Canal] op. 99, 1939, composed together with his former student and a fellow composer Mukhtar Ashrafi.

¹⁴⁸ The details of this publication are listed in the Table 2.2 above.

2.5 Late works of the early 1950s

The evolution of Vasilenko's compositional and creative process is reflected in his late viola pieces of 1951-1953 that remain in manuscript. Their style bears a closer resemblance to Impressionism and Russian Symbolism with their challenging application of string technique and complex modern rhythms with metric modulations, extensive chromatic exercises and harmonic modulations.¹⁴⁹ The Party rejected these artistic trends as an expression of bourgeois society, as was discussed in the previous subsection. This ideological prohibition explains why these pieces were confined to archives until recently. The visual and narrative approach inspired by the pre-revolutionary Silver Age aesthetic, of which more in the last chapter, contributed to Vasilenko's musical interpretation and to the enhancement of his language.

These pieces stand as a marker of Vasilenko's stylistic and instrumental refinement. The technical demands, improvisatory character and the emphasis on nuance and melodic expressiveness remind one of the transformations in instrumental miniatures of Frederic Chopin, who in his turn took as his example Johann Sebastian Bach. Certainly, the impressionistic vision, the importance of colour, narrative and visual images were the influences of 'The Five', Debussy and the Silver Age movement incorporated in these works. Tonal contrasts, metric and rhythmic dispositions, a frequent usage of chromatic runs and an inventive approach to the form accord with the musical innovations of the Avant-garde. These newly discovered pieces are a fine enhancement of the viola concert repertoire.

¹⁴⁹ For a brief review of the language and sources of these pieces see Appendix 3 'A brief review of the language of the pieces of the early 1950s'.

2.6 Conclusion

In an unpublished transcript of a conversation between Vasilenko and his friend Fedorov dated 5 November 1945, Vasilenko expressed his deep anxiety about the quality and content of his works because of the Soviet demands of state assignments. At the same time, he defended his right to compose the only way he felt proficient and enjoyable regardless of any interference and accommodation to the opinion of others.

[...] I know how to orchestrate. I am ranked among the best of our contemporaries, though many young composers can orchestrate more or less. Everyone recognises that my colouring is unrivalled. But all of this is only a technique! How about the content? The content is needed. [...] No one should take advice during the process of artistic creation. I have my own understanding and I write accordingly. You feel differently and, therefore, express your feelings in your own way. Thus, I wrote an orchestral suite 'Ukraine'. [...] I had to compose it and I composed it. Let them say that 'it does not have a Ukrainian soul', let them say that I 'did not depict the river Dnieper'. But I do answer for every single note. I cannot change it just because someone feels this or that section differently. [...]¹⁵⁰

Perhaps Vasilenko's frustration with his official compositional activities, along with his political impartiality and the objectivity of an elderly man, who was tired of writing music he had to rather than wanted to write, were the reasons why Vasilenko approached the viola again a few years before his death and almost 30

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Vasilii Fedorov, *Chernovye nabroski, vypiski iz dnevnikov. Sergei Vasilenko*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 22, p. 50. The suite *Ukraine* was completed on 23 September 1946 and consisted of four movements: 1. *V stepiakh Ukrainy* [In the Steppes of the Ukraine] 2. *Leto. Dnepr* [Summer. Dnieper] 3. *Nochnye dorogi. Partizany* [Roads at Night. Partisans] 4. *Prazdnik* [Holiday]. Its manuscript is housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 869.

years after his first application to this instrument. His viola works of the early 1950s became Vasilenko's "swan-songs". They linked his musical interests of the pre-revolutionary era with the last years of his life that reflected his love for the idyllic, symbolic and picturesque world of images that he was forced to keep away from the music industry. In particular his piece *Sleeping River*, which is his own arrangement of his piano piece written in 1915, has something quite poignant and evocative of the past in its musical expression.

A musicologist, Dmitrii Rogal'-Levitskii pointed to the distinctiveness of his teacher's musical language. In whatever period Vasilenko was writing, his works reflect events in his personal life:

[...] In spite of the first impression of estrangement in his compositions from his inner world and of a certain impersonal character, they all exist with his thoughts and ideas. They are closely related to him and he himself lives on in them. [...]¹⁵¹

This statement might sound meaningless to anyone who tries to interpret it directly, but for a reader who has lived under Soviet restrictions and who fears for his physical existence – as Rogal'-Levitskii then did – his words hint at a hidden meaning. Vasilenko had to balance his language with the material from the lute manuscripts to make the outcome stylistically close to past times but also communicable to a twentieth-century audience.¹⁵² His stylisation is laconic and effective. Nevertheless, the austere simplicity and ominous harmonic language in the *Pavane* and especially of the *Madonna Tenerina* are reminiscent of the Russian Old

¹⁵¹ Dmitrii Rogal'-Levitskii, *Sergei Vasilenko i ego al'tovaia sonata* [Sergei Vasilenko and his Viola Sonata] (Moscow: Muzykal'nyi sektor muzizdata, 1927), 6–7.

¹⁵² A detailed discussion of the lute pieces may be found in the third chapter.

Believers' chant – unembellished monodic singing with minimal melodic expression – in which Vasilenko showed particular interest before the Revolution.¹⁵³ He could not reveal his continued fascination for symbolic and religious subjects during Soviet times (even if he briefly mentions it in his memoirs),¹⁵⁴ although their concealed influence continues to live on in his works. Fortunately, Vasilenko's little-known and newly discovered viola compositions are not restricted by any authoritarian decree to archives and libraries anymore. The following chapters provide a thorough analysis of these works and their stylistic peculiarities, which will assist their future performers, and researchers of Vasilenko's music.

¹⁵³ Further discussion of the Old Believers' chants in Vasilenko's language may be found in the subsection 'Old Believers' practices and chants and their role in Vasilenko's musical expression' in the fifth chapter.

¹⁵⁴ Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1948), 105–112.

Chapter Three

Early music arrangements for viola and piano by Sergei Vasilenko

3.1 Interest in historical instruments

Vasilenko was well established as a public figure and a composer who extensively employed Russian subjects in his music. What was the reason for his interest in the Baroque and Renaissance? Certainly, the initial causes of this undertaking were the activities of Vasilenko as a conductor and organiser of the series of the ‘Historic Concerts’ in 1907-1917, in which the programmes ranged from music of the fifteenth - seventeenth centuries to the music of Vasilenko’s contemporaries, including Skriabin and Richard Strauss.¹⁵⁵ This concert project was very successful and these performances of early music became the focus of public attention and of the press.¹⁵⁶

Wanda Landowska must have had a significant influence on Vasilenko’s growing appreciation for early music, though he did not specify this in his writings. Her active role in reviving the popularity of the harpsichord as a performer and

¹⁵⁵ The lists of concert programmes of the ‘Historic Concerts’ can be found only in archives: 1. *Programmy ‘Istoricheskikh kontsertov’ pod upravleniem Vasilenko, 1909-1910* [Programmes of the ‘Historic Concerts’ Conducted by Vasilenko]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2012 (Shebalin, Vissarion Iakovlevich), op. 5, ed. khr. 69, pp. 1-17. 2. Sergei Vasilenko, *Pis’ma Sergeiu Taneevu* [Letters to Sergei Taneev]. Housed in RGALI, fund 880 (Taneevy), op. 1, ed. khr. 147, pp. 3-7. 3. *Programmy simfonicheskikh kontsertov pod upravleniem Vasilenko, 1907-1915* [Programmes of the Symphonic Concerts Conducted by Vasilenko]. Housed in RGALI, fund 1720 (Zviagintseva, Vera Klavdievna), op. 1, ed. khr. 525, pp. 1-108. 4. *Programmy kontsertov s uchastiem Vasilenko, 1907-1937* [Programmes of the Concerts with Vasilenko’s Participation]. Housed in RGALI, fund 993 (Kolleksiia teatral’nykh programm) [Collection of Theatre Programmes], op. 1, ed. khr. 81, 82, 93.

¹⁵⁶ For further reference to the reaction of the public and the press see the first chapter and below in this chapter.

professor and her dedication to the scholarly research of early music were indisputable.¹⁵⁷ From 1907 until 1914, Landowska undertook annual concert tours to Russia, including her solo performances at the ‘Historic Concerts’ in Moscow, which were warmly received by the audience.¹⁵⁸ In addition, Landowska unreservedly assisted Vasilenko in arranging and finding suitable programmes of the early music period for his concert series, supplying him with appropriate references to the curators of European musical archives, giving valuable advice on Vasilenko’s arrangements of early music and providing him with the scores of works that she discovered and researched herself.¹⁵⁹ One may say that Vasilenko followed her steps in his exploration and study of the archival collections of early music.

The collection of early music at the Moscow Conservatoire Library, which Vasilenko used for his concerts, was very limited in scope and soon ran out. None of the individual compositions or programmes was performed twice in these series and, therefore, he was constantly in search of new interesting music. He researched in

¹⁵⁷ Wanda Landowska was the first Professor of harpsichord at the *Berlin Hochschule für Musik* [the Berlin Conservatoire] in 1912-1919 and, in 1925, she founded the *Ecole de Musique Ancienne* [the School of Early Music], a performing and teaching centre of early music, at first in Paris and then at her home. Landowska continued this performing, teaching and research work throughout her life, which resulted in numerous recordings, monographs and music editions. Further reference in: 1. Martin Elste, *Die Dame mit dem Cembalo: Wanda Landowska und die Alte Musik* [The Lady with the Cembalo: Wanda Landowska and Early Music] (Mainz: Schott Music, 2010). 2. Michael Latham, “Don Quixote and Wanda Landowska: Bells and Pleyels,” *Early Music* 1 vol. 34 (2006): 95-110. 3. Vladimir Shekalov, *Wanda Landowska i vozrozhdenie klavesina* [Wanda Landowska and the Revival of the Harpsichord] (St. Petersburg: Kanon, 1999). 4. Denise Restout, ed. and trans., *Landowska on Music* (New York: Stein & Day, 1969).

¹⁵⁸ Further reference in: Vladimir Shekalov, *Wanda Landowska i vozrozhdenie klavesina* (St. Petersburg: Kanon, 1999), 103-137.

¹⁵⁹ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal’nyi variant*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 411, p. 4.

archives in Vienna, Bologna, Berlin and Milan. The Berlin *Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung* [the Musical Instrument Museum]¹⁶⁰ and its rich collection of lutes generated Vasilenko's initial interest in these instruments during his visit in February-March 1910 and also in 1913, when he was accompanied by Wanda Landowska and her husband.¹⁶¹ He was allowed to copy the scores of a number of little-known and anonymous Renaissance and Baroque composers and on his return to Russia he wrote several pieces of his own based on the material he had discovered, among them, in 1912 and 1914, two suites: *Fifteenth – Sixteenth Centuries Lute Music of the Minnesingers*, op. 24, and *Sixteenth Century Lute Music*, op. 24a, for chamber orchestra and, in 1918, *Four Pieces on Themes of Lute Music of the Sixteenth - Seventeenth Centuries*, op. 35, for viola (or 'cello) and piano.

In thirty years, on 3 August 1948, Vasilenko's friend Sergei Shambinago claimed in a private conversation with Vasilii Fedorov that Vasilenko did not research any archives in person, but ordered and received all copies of early music from various publications by post.¹⁶² Today, since both opponents who could have

¹⁶⁰ Das Berliner Musikinstrumenten-Museum, *Musikinstrumenten-Museum*, <http://www.mim-berlin.de> (accessed February 26, 2012). This museum was founded in 1888 by Philipp Spitta and Joseph Joachim and is still open to the public. The author of this thesis visited this museum in person in August 2011. Not only today, but also at the time of Vasilenko's visits, its collection of historical instruments was one of the finest in Europe competing with the similar collections in Paris and Brussels, which initially inspired its founders.

¹⁶¹ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal'nyi variant*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 411, p. 4. Vasilenko did not include in his books of memoirs the fact that he stayed with the Landowska family in Berlin in 1913. Very likely, he feared being unjustly accused of being a Nazi supporter as was Borisovskii in 1938. Further details about the Borisovskii case are in chapter two, in the subsection 'Reasons for the neglect of Vasilenko's viola works during his lifetime'.

¹⁶² Vasilii Fedorov, *Chernovye nabroski, vypiski iz dnevnikov. Sergei Vasilenko*. Housed in RGALI, fund

answered this query are long ago deceased, the question as to whether this statement is a false accusation becomes secondary. In any case, Vasilenko did not conceal that certain music material he did indeed obtain by post, in particular the suite *Zodiakus*, of which more in the subsection ‘Sources of the suite *Zodiakus*’ below. Most important of all, these music sources were of inestimable value in both instrumental and scholarly terms, regardless of the means of their acquisition, because Vasilenko’s fine arrangements boosted public interest and raised awareness of this musical epoch.

The leading Moscow critics highly praised these works; besides, ‘early’ music was virtually unknown in Russian musical circles at the time. Among especially admired movements were two pieces based on the music material by anonymous fifteenth-century composers: the exquisitely melodious *Madonna Tenerina* dated 1400¹⁶³ as well as an energetic and rough *Allegro*, which Vasilenko entitled *Knights*.

2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 22, p. 52. These rather unfavourable and nit-picking comments referred to Vasilenko’s memoirs published in 1948. Shambinago affirmed that he travelled abroad together with Vasilenko and in Bologna, for instance, they stayed only one day mostly for recreation. Very likely, such contradictory remarks had various motives, including Shambinago’s eccentric character as an elderly man of 77, who died three months later, in November 1948, and who was likely to exaggerate particular facts about his old friend. Likewise, this disparity between the sources could have been a simple lack of accuracy in the plot of the first book of memoirs, which revealed only selected details of Vasilenko’s biography. According to Vasilenko’s diaries, which were partly transferred into his second book of memoirs published in 1979, he did travel abroad very often, but was not always accompanied by Shambinago. Further details about the memoirs are in the subsection ‘Vasilenko’s memoirs’ in the first chapter.

¹⁶³ Sergei Vasilenko, “Istoricheskie kontserty simfonicheskoi muzyki. Otryvok iz vospominanii [The Historic Concerts of Symphonic Music. Passages from Reminiscences],” *Sovetskaia muzyka* [Soviet Music] 2 (1947): 24-25.

The centre of the programme of the next of Vasilenko's Historic Concerts was the performance of lute music of the Minnesingers. [...] Vasilenko's contribution is immense. He dug out this precious objet d'art, arranged it and made it performable in our contemporary setting. Many musicians were amazed to learn about the existence of this completely unknown musical stratum [...]. 'Madonna Tenerina' is a truly exceptional work not only for its time but also for a later period. [...]¹⁶⁴

Vasilenko admitted that he was no musicologist,¹⁶⁵ and in any case there was hardly any information available to him about this period though he intensively researched all available Russian and overseas publications in an attempt to fill gaps in his knowledge. He referred to the originals of these often inconsistent melodic fragments as lute music only because no other instrument was mentioned in his sources. In his memoirs Vasilenko revealed how difficult these arrangements were to make:

[...] The original was often a long, tedious and inconclusive improvisation with interruptions and without any cadencies or clear rhythmical structure. These were the losses of the time or perhaps the mistakes of later copyists. Often, there were musical phrases and sections of amazing beauty, but they were like precious pearls hidden behind other ideas not only of a lesser value, but often uninteresting and unconnected with the previous context. My aim was to give special emphasis to the beauty of many episodes by giving them a well-defined modern structure, but without changing the general style and harmony of the originals. My work was confined to the following: to repeat musical phrases, sometimes even whole

¹⁶⁴ Leonid Sabaneev, "Kontserty [Concerts]," *Golos Moskvy* [The Voice of Moscow], October 23, 1912, Razdel kontserty [Section: Concerts].

¹⁶⁵ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 306.

sections, then add occasional cadances and, finally, orchestrate. [...] ¹⁶⁶

Suite op. 24a was in many ways a revised version of the suite op. 24. In this later edition, Vasilenko gave titles to unnamed pieces, including the last piece, *Knights*, and slightly changed the order of works and orchestration. ¹⁶⁷

3.2 The language of ‘*Four Pieces on Themes of Lute Music of the Sixteenth - Seventeenth Centuries*’, op. 35

Vasilenko’s continuous search for reconstruction of timbres and sound effects similar to those of the early period led him to consider using viola (or ‘cello) and piano for his cycle op. 35, 1918. The second, third and fourth movements – *Madonna Tenerina*, *Serenade for the Lady of my Heart* and *Knights* - Vasilenko borrowed from the orchestral suites op. 24/24a and the opening *Pavane* came from the photostats that had arrived from Paris in 1913. ¹⁶⁸ The authors of the music material used in the pieces op. 35 were anonymous apart from the *Fantasia* that Vasilenko renamed the *Serenade for the Lady of my Heart* ¹⁶⁹ autographed by

¹⁶⁶ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 306-307.

¹⁶⁷ Vasilenko’s titles not only vary between versions (see Appendix 2); they are inconsistent across the sources. Vasilenko also pays little regard to historical accuracy: the minnesingers flourished from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, and two of the movements of the *Sixteenth-Century Lute Music*, op. 24a, and the *Sixteenth – Seventeenth-Centuries Lute Music*, op. 35, have their origins in the fifteenth century.

¹⁶⁸ More information about this source may be found in the subsection ‘Sources of the suite *Zodiakus*’.

¹⁶⁹ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 307.

Valentin Bakfark, a famous lute player of the mid-sixteenth century about whose life little was then known.¹⁷⁰

The analysis of this cycle below exposes the attention to detail, mathematical and, at the same time, innovative and creative approach of Vasilenko to the form, structure and subject-matter of his compositions, which are important for any performer in order to comprehend and feel a composition as a whole. Vasilenko was a true student of his teacher of composition and counterpoint, Sergei Taneev, whom he consulted about the orchestral editions of these early music arrangements. Taneev was always credited for his exquisite knowledge and feeling for forms but criticized for being too academic, dreary and uninspiring.¹⁷¹ Vasilenko remembered that Taneev strongly required pure forms and a mathematical precision of bar symmetry from his students' compositional exercises, often in favour of an interesting and elegant theme or harmonisation.¹⁷² On the contrary, Vasilenko managed to combine the accuracy of structures influenced by his teacher, with his own inventiveness in forms, harmony, beautiful and inspirational melodic work.¹⁷³ It is important to

¹⁷⁰ More recent scholarship has not been able to add much more. Bakfark, called Bálint Bakfark in Hungarian (he was ethnically German), was born in Brassó (Kronstadt) in Transylvania (now Braşov in Romania) in 1507 and served at a number of European courts, eventually becoming one of the highest paid musicians of his day. He and his family died in Padua in 1576, in an outbreak of plague. Further reference in: Ivan F. Waldbauer, "Bálint Bakfark," in Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians in Twenty Volumes* (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1980), vol. 2, 46-47.

¹⁷¹ Grigorii Bernandt, *Sergei Ivanovich Taneev* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1983), 74-82.

¹⁷² Sergei Vasilenko, *Gody obshcheniia s S.I. Taneevym* [The Years of Collaboration with S.I. Taneev]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2465 (Institut Istorii Iskusstv) [The Institute of History of Arts], op. 1, ed. khr. 939, p. 17.

¹⁷³ The exact proportion of Vasilenko's input into the original material is unknown. One can only rely on Vasilenko's own surviving reminiscences. For further reference see footnote 166.

analyse the movements of the lute pieces op. 35 to find out how unpredictably Vasilenko combined traditional attributes of that period with his own ideas.

3.2.1 *Pavane*

The *Pavane* follows the traditional pattern: a slow court dance in 4/4 meter with a characteristic rhythmic pattern in both instrumental parts of minim-crochet-crochet.

This first piece has a sectional setting with eight bars consisting of two repeated four-bar motifs in almost every section, which bring a sense of balance and regularity to the structure. However, it is a through-composed structure with some elements of a simple ternary form, because of the return of altered sections in the third part. Vasilenko experimented with this final part, making two attempts to finish the piece, which produce unpredictability and lack of conformity to the equally proportioned setting of the first two parts. This is seen in Table 3.2.1 below.

Table 3.2.1 Sectional division with bar numbers and keys in the *Pavane*

<i>Pavane</i> in 4/4 (common time)						
Parts and Tempo indications	I <i>Andantino grazioso</i>		II <i>Marcare la melodia</i>		III <i>Tempo I</i>	
Sections	A + A ¹	B + B ¹	C + C ¹	D + D ¹	A ² + B + B ¹	A ³
Bar numbers	1 (introduction) /4+4/4+4	4+4/ 4+4	8/8	8 (4+4)/ 8 (4+4)	4+4/4+4/ 4+6	4+3/12

Keys ¹⁷⁴	D	D/ D	D-Bm/ D-Bm	G-C-G/ G-Am (2 nd time G-A)	D/D/D-F#- Em-D IV ⁶ -V to Bm	D-Em- D- Em/D
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The first recapitulation has sections A², B and a slightly extended and altered B¹ with modulations that are concluded by a Phrygian half cadence to B minor. The following second recapitulation brings back D major and re-establishes through modulations and secondary dominant chords¹⁷⁵ the significance of the once again altered theme A that is followed by the concluding phrase on the tonic pedal point. Both instrumental parts are equal partners in the continuing dialogue of themes throughout the piece, with which Vasilenko actively modulated to distantly related and unrelated tonalities, especially in the second and third movements, often creating unusual tonal colour and contrast. However, the tonal equilibrium is maintained due to the predominance of the main key D major that Vasilenko preserved throughout the piece with an exception of sections D/D¹, though their concluding A major works as the dominant to D major of the following section A².

The theme of section A is very simple in harmony. It has a melody in conjunct motion that follows only four steps E, F#, G and A on the tonic triad D major in the bass. Moreover, this simplicity continues further with an almost complete absence of embellishments or even trills in the whole piece with an

¹⁷⁴ A key with 'm' stands for minor and without 'm' for major in this table and the following tables below.

¹⁷⁵ A secondary dominant chord (dominant of the dominant) is a dominant chord that resolves to a degree other than the tonic. This temporary tonic or degree is the dominant of another key. One may call this harmonic technique a temporary modulation, in which the new key is not established.

exception of three bars in the piano at the beginning of section D¹. Similar melodic plainness and austerity of texture are executed in the second piece.

3.2.2 *Madonna Tenerina*

A slow *pavane* was traditionally followed by a galliard, an energetic dance in six. Instead, Vasilenko included the *Madonna Tenerina*, a tender song-type piece with an exceptionally beautiful melody as if it depicts a moment of religious prayer though this purely instrumental composition has no text for this imaginative sacred ceremony. The mood of this first melody explains the decision of Vasilenko to give this piece such a title, which points to its likely Italian origin.¹⁷⁶ The viola leads the themes accompanied by the piano that in its turn takes the lead only twice, in the second half of the first theme.

Table 3.2.2 Sectional division with bar numbers and keys in the *Madonna Tenerina*

<i>Madonna Tenerina</i> in 4/4 (common time)						
Tempo indications	<i>Andante misterioso</i>		<i>Piu agitato</i>	<i>Poco piu mosso. Dolcissimo</i>	<i>Tempo I</i>	
Sections	introduction	A	B	C	A	conclusion
Bar numbers	4	7+7	7+7+1	9+9+1	7+7+1	4

¹⁷⁶ Further discussion of the sources of Vasilenko's artistic inspiration and the plainness and austere minimalism of the first theme is in chapter five, in the subsection 'Old Believers' practices and chants and their role in Vasilenko's musical expression'.

Keys	Gm	Gm	Gm	F	Gm	Gm
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As it is seen from Table 3.2.2 above, Vasilenko slightly amended this supposedly non-repetitive structure. Section C preserved a major mode and, thus, added to the musical character the elegance and eagerness of hope. The recapitulation of section A and the conclusion, which is a replica of the introduction, bring back the solemn and ascetic mood of the beginning of the piece playing the role of a bridge between the sections. Thus, it is a through-composed composition with the elements of a simple ternary form.

A music critic, Sergei Bugoslavskii, writing in 1923 about another composition of Vasilenko based on early music sources, *Starinnye ital'ianskie pesni liubvi XVII veka* [Old Italian Love Songs of the Seventeenth Century] for voice and piano without an opus number, observed that Vasilenko's interpretation of 'a simple church-type harmony reminds one that [...] love was an eternal and beautiful religion'.¹⁷⁷ These words correlate with the tone and atmosphere depicted in the *Madonna Tenerina*.

3.2.3 *Serenade for the Lady of my Heart*

The third piece, *Serenade for the Lady of my Heart*, is a pure love song-type piece or ballade with an emotionally unrestrained lyric character indicated in the tempo *Con moto espressivo* that changes only in section D, marked *Piu mosso. Scherzando*.

This piece is another through-composed structure with self-contained sections, but

¹⁷⁷ Sergei Bugoslavskii, "Izdaniia. Sergei Vasilenko [Publications. Sergei Vasilenko]," *Teatr i muzyka* [Theatre and Music] 1-2(1923): 424.

without any re-appearance of the first theme at the end of the composition as it was in the *Madonna Tenerina*. Vasilenko again experimented with the form and included the altered section B after section C that provides a sense of certain connection between these independent sections. This is seen in Table 3.2.3 below.

Table 3.2.3 Sectional division and keys in the *Serenade for the Lady of my Heart*

<i>Serenade for the Lady of my Heart</i> in 4/4 (common time)							
Sections	A	B	C	B ¹	D	E	conclusion
Bar numbers	12+12	4+4	10+12	4+4	5+5	5+5	10
Keys	Dm-Am	Am	C-Am- C	Am	F/F- Dm	F	Dm-Gm- D

The general imbalance between the sections, continuous tonal contrast throughout the piece and especially the change of D minor¹⁷⁸ at the beginning to D major at the end of the piece are also new features, as the previous two pieces preserved their main keys and had evenly proportioned sections. The balance is maintained within the sections and brings symmetry to the piece as a whole. The piano part has mostly an accompanying role.¹⁷⁹ However, the first part of section C

¹⁷⁸ Vasilenko changed the key of the original musical material from F minor to D minor. Further reference in: Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 307.

¹⁷⁹ The first arpeggiated chords of the piano remind one of a *gusli* player from an opera *Sadko* by Rimskii-Korsakov. *Gusli* is an old Russian multi-string plucked instrument derived from the ancient lyre. It was used by wandering musicians and entertainers to accompany songs similar to those of the minnesingers in medieval Europe. *Gusli* is associated with the legendary Boian, a singer of tales from the ancient Slavic epic poem *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, which was adapted by Aleksandr Borodin as an opera.

presents a big piano solo, whilst in sections D and E both instruments simultaneously play the themes with an intensive harmonic display in the piano part with modulations and secondary dominants. This textural thickness is a new feature compared to the fineness and transparency of the first two movements. Furthermore, for the first time in this cycle, Vasilenko used a number of ornaments and trills, which embellished the atmosphere of a dramatic human love story with a happy ending. These narrative qualities of the music are not only represented in the title of the piece but are also observed in the instrumental interpretation steadily enriched by Vasilenko according to the development of this imaginative storyline.¹⁸⁰ This route is continued in the final piece of the cycle.

3.2.4 *Knights*

The fourth piece, *Knights*, is a forceful and energetic dance in 3/4. The tonal contrast here is achieved through unexpected modulations and secondary dominants, which one may say are distinctive harmonic rudiments of this cycle. As in the previous pieces, this music encompasses visual imaginative qualities. In his memoirs, Vasilenko described the theme of section D that comes without tempo changes, but is marked *dolce*, as ‘a church-type melody’.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Further details on narrative qualities in this cycle are in the conclusion below.

¹⁸¹ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 307.

Table 3.2.4 Sectional division with bar numbers and keys in the *Knights*

<i>Knights</i> in 3/4									
Parts and Tempos	I <i>Allegro energico</i>				II		III <i>Tempo I</i>		
					<i>dolce</i>	<i>Piu mosso</i>			
Section	A	B	C	A	D	E	A	B	Coda
Bar numbers	2/6+7	2+2+ 4+4	2+2+4	8	4+4+4+4+ 4+8	10	7	2+2 +4+ 4	2+2+2 +3+4
	Total 2 (introduction) +41				Total 38		Total 32		
Keys	A	D	F# m- E-C#m- F#m (2 nd time E)	A	A (V pedal point)-Bm- D-Em-Bm- A (V pedal point)-Bm	A (V pedal point)	A	D	A

As it is seen in Table 3.2.4 above, this piece is written in a through-composed form that has the components of a ternary form characteristic of a later classical structure, with the re-appearance of Part One, though slightly modified. It also has an internal sequence of self-contained themes and sections within each part, similar to those in the previous three pieces. Consequently, it concurrently blends the elements of cyclical and temporal developments, which was unconventional for this type of composition. However, the parts within the whole piece are reasonably balanced, although this composition does not have that pure symmetry of sections,

the best examples of which Vasilenko demonstrated in the first two pieces of this cycle. The recapitulation of sections A and B from Part One with a connecting episode at the end of the contemplative theme in Part Two link the contrasting musical material together.

One may conclude that Vasilenko enhanced the conventional rhetoric with unanticipated modulations to unrelated and distantly related keys that produced distinctive tonal and timbre contrasts in this suite. The composer combined traditional ternary forms with through-composed structures that engendered unconformity within equally proportioned internal structures. This changeability and impulsiveness placed special focus on emotive and visual facets of the music. Their impact on stylistic and performing issues will be discussed in separate subsections below as Vasilenko showed a similar approach in the suite *Zodiakus*.

3.3 Sources of the suite *Zodiakus*

The suite *Zodiakus* was initially arranged by Vasilenko for small orchestra, as with op. 24 and op. 24a, and premiered under his baton in Moscow on 18 December 1914. In his memoirs Vasilenko gave an interesting account of how he acquired the manuscript of this work, which he used as a source of the suite. In 1913, Henri Casadesus, the violist and founder of the famous quintet *Société des Instruments Anciens*, recommended that Vasilenko write to the *Schola Cantorum* in Paris,¹⁸² asking for some interesting manuscripts of early music. The reply, in July 1913, was polite but rather terse: Vasilenko was sent photostats of four manuscripts of

¹⁸² Schola Cantorum, *Schola Cantorum*, <http://www.Schola-Cantorum.com> (accessed February 20, 2012). The school was founded in 1894 and was unusual at the time in its emphasis on early and instrumental music as the Paris Conservatoire courses were dominated by the operatic repertoire.

anonymous early composers with a note requesting copies of his orchestrations. The tone of the second letter from Paris was rather different:

Dear Sir,

We received your score and understand that we are dealing with a true Master of the orchestra. We are sending you a copy of a very rare manuscript, only recently discovered. [...] ¹⁸³

This new manuscript contained a series of short but exquisitely elegant pieces by a number of anonymous eighteenth-century French composers, hidden behind a peculiar pseudonym, *Zodiakus I.A.S.* ¹⁸⁴ Vasilenko chose seven of these pieces for his orchestral suite op. 27 and this composition, too, received high praise from Paris. ¹⁸⁵

The undated arrangement for viola and piano without an opus number – previously unknown – includes four pieces from the orchestral suite and also a new one, *Musette*, from the same original Parisian source. ¹⁸⁶ This viola work is not mentioned in any published or archival sources. One may suppose that it was composed after 1931 as Borisovskii did not include this suite into his viola catalogue published in Germany. At the same time, it is unlikely that Vasilenko worked on this arrangement later than the early 1930s, when his compositional activities were

¹⁸³ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 330.

¹⁸⁴ The meaning of the initials remains unknown.

¹⁸⁵ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 330.

¹⁸⁶ The viola version drops the word 'French' which features in the title of the orchestral version, and which Vasilenko also used to describe the material in his memoirs.

preoccupied with the subject-matter of the Soviet past and present, Turkmen themes, Chinese and Indian exoticism.¹⁸⁷

3.4 The language and form in the *Zodiakus*

This viola suite consists of five contrasting movements of dance and song-type pieces: *Ouverture*, *Passacaille*, *Menuet*, *Plainte* and *Musette*.¹⁸⁸ Technically the *Zodiakus* is much more demanding and instrumentally inconvenient than the lute pieces, and occasionally it borders on being unplayable on the viola. This cycle presented Vasilenko as a master of stylization. He generally followed the style and idioms of the eighteenth-century French suite, but at the same time, operated freely with some elements of the twentieth-century language, including excessive usage of double-stops, experiments with polyrhythm and occasional unusual modulations offering an unconventional tonal display of movements unrelated by key (F major, F major, A major, A minor, G major). The viola part is often active in the higher part of its register, which was far from typical for the Baroque period – but for a good reason: the author of this thesis was fortunate to find this unused manuscript of Vasilenko in the collection of music from the library of the violist Vadim Borisovskii,¹⁸⁹ and it is reasonable to conclude that this arrangement was intended

¹⁸⁷ According to Vasilenko's archive, the last public performance of his orchestral suite *Zodiakus* and the lute suite with Vasilenko as a conductor took place in Moscow on 2 December 1928, which points out that he approached these works at the turn of the 1930s. Sergei Vasilenko, *Al'bom dokumentov*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 788, p. 82.

¹⁸⁸ All titles of the movements in the manuscript are given in French.

¹⁸⁹ Due to the political circumstances discussed in detail in the subsection 'Reasons for the neglect of Vasilenko's viola works during his lifetime' in the second chapter, Borisovskii had to be very selective and careful in his choice of repertoire. The *Zodiakus* of Vasilenko did not fulfil the stylistic

for him. For these reasons it would be logical to focus in particular on structural and instrumental challenges and innovations that this suite offers to its performers and compare them with the lute pieces.

3.4.1 *Ouverture*

The opening *Ouverture* (Overture) follows the traditional French form originating in the sixteenth - seventeenth centuries in the ballets *de cour* [a court ballet]. This movement is divided by a double bar-line into two parts - slow and fast - that supplement each other. The first part is marked *Sostenuto e maestoso*, in which Vasilenko pursued a conventional approach with dotted rhythms throughout the section that he concluded with a regular half-cadence. The contrasting section *Allegro* is written in a contrapuntal style, typical of this form. It is repeated twice; the first time it ends on a half-cadence to F major and the final time on the tonic. Both sections written in 4/4 (common time) are fairly balanced with 25 bars in total in the first and 29 bars in the second. Vasilenko maintained a transparent tonal display of F major with occasional modulations to the dominant key C major and D minor.

This traditionalism is challenged in instrumental parts and, in particular, in the viola part with some uncharacteristic technical elements for this period. The composer extensively used double stops with numerous suspensions and passing notes in both sections, with which he enriched the melody led by the viola. The thick texture of chords and almost continuous passages of double-stops embellished with occasional trills in the first part correspond to its grand royal character, whereas the requirements of the Party ideology, which might have been the reason for Borisovskii's neglect of this suite.

brisk tempo and the usage of the high register in the second part highlight its lively and vibrant character. The *Ouverture* is technically very difficult not only because of extensive usage of the high register and double-stops. Most of the time, the part is instrumentally inconvenient and, consequently, demands extra precision and refinement of execution.¹⁹⁰ These instrumental intricacies, unnecessary and avoidable at times, may partly explain the inattention to this work by Borisovskii.¹⁹¹ This certain inaccuracy in the text also indicates that this manuscript did not have any basic corrections by a composer, which he would have instantly put in if this composition had been rehearsed and prepared for a performance.

3.4.2 *Passacaille*

In French court ballets, an overture was usually followed by a series of dances that played the role of an interlude before a ballet.¹⁹² The *Passacaille* (Passacaglia), a set of four variations on a melodic bass pattern in triple time 3/4 of a serious character, follows the opening *Ouverture* in this suite. Vasilenko followed a traditional framework of short sequences of chords that outline perfect full and interrupted cadence formulas. The tonal plan has a distinguishing feature of modulating to closely and distantly related keys, often using secondary dominants as it was in the lute cycle, with the return to the home key F major in almost each variation, which is seen in Table 3.4.2 below.

¹⁹⁰ Further discussion of instrumental issues is in the subsection 'Performing issues'.

¹⁹¹ Further information on this subject may be found in the subsection 'Reasons for neglect of Vasilenko's viola works during his lifetime' in the second chapter.

¹⁹² Further reference in: 1. Edmund Fairfax, *The Styles of Eighteenth Century Ballet* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003), 81-189. 2. Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 91-92.

Table 3.4.2 Sectional division with bar numbers, dynamics and keys in the
Passacaille

<i>Passacaille</i>				
Sections	Tempo indications	Dynamics	Keys	Bar numbers
Theme	<i>Moderato</i>	<i>piano/pianissimo</i>	F major	1 introduction, 7+7=15
Variation 1	<i>Moderato</i>	<i>pianissimo,</i> <i>espressivo</i>	Gm-Dm/ F-Dm-F	4+4/+6=14
Variation 2	<i>A tempo</i>	<i>piano</i>	C/F-Dm	8/+8+4=20
Variation 3	<i>Accelerando e</i> <i>crescendo</i>	<i>forte</i>	Am/Dm	8/+4+4=16
Variation 4	<i>Accelerando e</i> <i>crescendo</i>	<i>fortissimo, piano</i> <i>dolce</i>	Dm-F/Dm	7/+5=12
Theme (<i>da</i> <i>capo</i>)	<i>Moderato</i>	<i>piano/pianissimo</i>	F major	7+7=14

The variations have irregular bar numbers, and the sections, apart from Variations Two and Three, are enclosed by double bar-lines. In Variation Three Vasilenko exercised sequences of ascending double-stops, chord and scalar passages that correspond to the more irregular flow of music. He started the *Passacaille* with simple variations of a short *ostinato* motif, moving on to increasingly complex ones, which impart a sense of continuous development and progression within the form, but concluded the piece with a *da capo* to the opening section. This recapitulation

and return of the home key bring a sense of balance to the temporal development of variations and, consequently, engenders elements of a cyclical development. Similar unconventional principles are encountered in the lute pieces.

This fusion of developments entails closer sound balance, creativity in dynamic context and closer collaboration between the two performers. Vasilenko used the principle of canon, in which the piano takes the lead and starts the first motif, and the viola, the follower, imitates the leader with exact repetition of rhythms and intervals. The significant number of dynamic indications of crescendo and diminuendo throughout this movement, mainly in *piano* and *pianissimo*, necessitate a thorough control of phrasing. Vasilenko kept this equal interaction of instruments steady. Gradually this imitation develops into more complex contrapuntal language when two instruments not only move independently, as in Variation Four, but oppose each other as in Variation Three. The dynamics abruptly transform here with *accelerando in tempi* enriched with crescendo that reach *forte* and *fortissimo*. This instrumental insubordination is deepened by polyrhythm with syncopations in the piano part, accents, thicker texture in the viola part with chord and unresolved interval progressions based on minor seconds and sevenths, perfect fourths and fifths as well as octaves that ascend further and further up the register reaching D₆.¹⁹³ The outcome is instrumentally more convenient than in the first piece, though the interval sequences in the highest register in Variation Three require technical proficiency and aural precision.

¹⁹³ The pitch notation of the Acoustical Society of America is used in this thesis, in which C₄ refers to the middle C.

3.4.3 *Menuet*

The third piece is a *Menuet* (Minuet). Traditionally it consisted of two sections of eight bars each. This minuet is slightly extended. It is written in a rounded binary or minuet form ABA, in which part A is in A major and part B is a contrasting trio in C# minor that is followed by exact repetition of the first part. All three parts have a perfect symmetry of four sections with eight bars in each section in 3/4. The tonal plan does not expose any unconventional approaches as it retains the dominance of the home key A major with occasional modulations to relative major and minor keys A major-F# minor and C# minor-E major. The viola leads the theme in part A, which Vasilenko embellished with trills and grace notes and combined *arco* episodes with responses played *pizzicato*. However, this instrumental disposition changes in trio, where the pianist takes the lead and the violist accompanies with harmonics and *pizzicato* phrases in the highest register. Only in the last eight bars of this part the viola joins the piano on equal terms and gradually takes a full control of the melodic line ornamented with *appoggiaturas*, trills and *acciaccaturas*. This instrumental enhancement with combinations of *pizzicato*, harmonics and *arco* episodes added extra timbre effects and colours to this otherwise perfect replica of a traditional minuet.

3.4.4 *Plainte*

The fourth piece, *Plainte* (Plaint), is a very intimate movement with a beautiful simple melody with the character of a lament. It is written in 3/4 in a through-composed form with fairly balanced sections, which are seen in Table 3.4.4 below. Its tender sad melody gradually breaks into short motifs and becomes more expressive, gaining dramatic qualities. Section E, which is an extensively modified

version of section A, brings back the solemn grief and lamentation of the opening section.

Table 3.4.4 Sectional division with bar numbers, dynamics and keys in the *Plainte*

<i>Plainte</i>				
Sections	Tempo indications	Dynamics	Keys	Bar numbers in total
Introduction	<i>Lento</i> <i>affettuoso</i>	<i>pianissimo</i>	Am	4
A	<i>A tempo</i>	<i>piano</i>	Am-G/Dm	8 (2+2+4)+ 8 (2+2+4)=16
B	<i>A tempo</i>	<i>piano, molto</i> <i>espressivo</i>	Am/Dm- Am	8(2+2+4)+ 8 (2+2+4)=16
C	<i>Piu mosso</i>	<i>mp, drammatico</i>	Am-Dm- C-Dm	12
D	<i>Piu mosso</i>	<i>forte, crescendo</i>	Am-C- Dm-C/Am	12+4=16
E (A ¹)	<i>Tempo I</i>	<i>pianissimo</i>	Am-G/ Dm-C	8+6=14
Postlude/conclusion	<i>Allargando</i> <i>assai</i>	<i>piano</i>	Am	8

The division between sections A, B, C and E is marked by double bar-lines with half and full cadences, predominance of the home key A minor and the return

of the opening mourning character at the very end of the piece adds elements of balance and completion to these sections. At the same time, frequent harmonic modulations and secondary dominants, a through-composed structure of the piece and its gradual alteration of sections in continuous progression, in which the music becomes more emotional and vivid, in particular in sections C and D, emphasise its temporal development. Thus, this fusion of developments, similar to the one in the *Passacaille*, modified certain repetitiveness of opening sections and then reinforced and stimulated their dynamic enhancement in the middle. This synthesis of musical development necessitates initial control of dynamic resources marked in the score from *ppp* [three *pianos*] to *sforzando*, but, at the same time, requires a range of contrasts. The text of the manuscript contains detailed descriptions of temper and tone such as *calando*, *affettuoso*, *espressivo*, *drammatico*, *affrettando* and *dolente*. They facilitate the emotive enhancement dictated by the uniformity of the melodic outline and guide both performers in their musical self-expression. The beauty of this movement is in its melodious expression produced as the result of a considerate approach of Vasilenko to the form of the composition, its registers, qualities of sonority and sound effects.

3.4.5 *Musette*

The final piece, *Musette*, is a tranquil dance or pastoral air that imitates the sound of a *musette*, a small French instrument from the bagpipe family. It is written in 6/4 and its form consists of ABCA sections. Thus, it is a through-composed form with some elements of a simple ternary form, similar to the second lute piece *Madonna Tenerina*. This structural peculiarity is seen in Table 3.4.5 below.

Table 3.4.5 Sectional division with bar numbers and keys in the *Musette*

<i>Musette</i>			
Sections	Tempo indications	Keys	Bar numbers
A	<i>Teneramente, con moto</i>	G major	1+5/5
B	<i>Teneramente, con moto</i>	D major-G major	11/11
C	<i>Poco piu lento</i>	G minor	16 (8+8)
A	<i>Tempo I</i>	G major	5/5

All sections are separated by double bar-lines and differ in length. Only sections A and B are repeated, as shown in the Table above. This external imbalance is compensated by internal equilibrium of sections and predominance of the home key G major with a single modulation to the dominant key D major and the contrasting parallel key G minor. This piece is a fine replica of traditional bagpipe music with repetitive short motifs that have consistent rhythmic patterns minim-crotchet and extensive usage of ornamentation with grace notes throughout. Again, as in the previous *Plainte*, this piece combines temporal development due to the continuous alteration of sections and also some elements of rotation or cyclical development, because of the return and repeat of section A at the very end, clear and unambiguous division of sections, supremacy of the home key and regularity of the rhythmic layout. However, this movement has a minimum of dynamic markings typical of a Baroque composition compared to the previous piece, in which Vasilenko put special emphasis on the emotional aspect of the music.

Thus, the fusion of temporal and cyclical developments introduced in the lute pieces places special focus on the expressive and picturesque qualities of the music in the suite *Zodiakus* that brings new stylistic features uncharacteristic of the eighteenth-century French suite, of which more below. The special emphasis on emotive expression expanded the melodic development and, therefore, slightly unbalanced the internal proportions of the *Passacaille* and the *Plainte*, whereas in the *Musette* and especially in the *Menuet* Vasilenko followed their traditional steadiness and predictability of musical enhancement, consequently preserving their sectional uniformity.¹⁹⁴ Vasilenko's rigorous attention to detail and his resourceful approach to the structures within these suites resulted in a special combination of tuneful melodies with clear imitations and distinctive rhythmical configurations, which offered an unreserved scope for instrumental enhancement and perfection. The harmonic display in the piano part does not overburden the texture maintaining the balance between the instruments, though the clarity in the viola part suffers occasionally due to the unbalanced technical peculiarities, which will be reviewed in the subsection 'Performing issues' below.

3.5 Performing issues

The *Ouverture*, *Menuet*, partially *Musette* in the *Zodiakus* and the *Pavane* from the lute pieces retained the traditional structure. This traditionalism consequently impacts on the interpretation. The regularity of structural units places special emphasis on the timbre and sound contrast in order to avoid repetitiveness.

However, a performer should take note that these suites combine the traditional

¹⁹⁴ For further reference see Tables 3.4.2, 3.4.4 and 3.4.5 with the bar numbers in these movements.

rhetoric and unconventional idioms and, therefore, entail taking the initiative in articulating and implementing his/her performing goals. Thus, the lute pieces and the *Passacaille* and *Plainte* from the *Zodiakus* have a special focus on melodic development with the unrestricted range of musical expression enriched by advanced instrumental techniques that were inventive for viola compositions of this period. As Vasilenko rightly underlined in his book on instrumentation, the diversity of sound colour, dynamic and expressiveness of tone largely depend on the considerate instrumental execution.¹⁹⁵ The string techniques within these suites that are discussed below offered a broad range of technical approaches, timbres and sound effects to performers.

3.5.1 Fingering and double-stops as the means of melodic clarity

Neither the *Zodiakus* nor the lute pieces have any printed fingering and bow indications, apart from only three rather incidental bow markings in the *Pavane*. Consequently, a performer has a complete freedom of imagination and improvisation in his/her usage of various instrumental techniques whilst being guided only by the author's musical phrasing, detailed analysis of the text and form. Vasilenko broadly used the advanced instrumental string techniques and idioms characteristic of the twentieth century, including extensive usage of the upper register, long leaps and progressions of double-stops. These various technical novelties and complexities in the text led to a few impracticalities and entail convenient fingering and shifts.¹⁹⁶ In the *Ouverture*, one might consider omitting

¹⁹⁵ Sergei Vasilenko, *Instrumentovka dlia simfonicheskogo orkestra* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1952), vol. 1, 7.

¹⁹⁶ One should not doubt that Vasilenko knew the instrument well, but he evidently experimented

some notes in chords and double stops not only in order to extract the melody from this dense texture bringing forward its expressive and melodious qualities, but merely to make the viola part playable. Thus, in bar eight, Vasilenko wrote an octave on G₄ in the third position with a trill above the top note, which is simply impossible to perform. For this reason one has to focus on the melody and leave out the low G, which is doubled in the piano part anyway. Thus, both the harmony and melody will remain fully intact.¹⁹⁷

The last piece of the lute cycle, *Knights*, presents similar challenges. Its continuous “waves” of scalar and chromatic passages covering all registers and combined with rigorous chord technique entail full technical control and precision. The combinations of legato, light or “flying” and heavy staccato produce an effect of the elegant but incessant and vigorous steps of medieval riders. The closing repetitive semi-quaver passages of double-stops in the viola part in the coda, which Vasilenko did not transfer to the ‘cello part,¹⁹⁸ are rather impractical not only

with the technical capacity of the viola in order to find new sound and timbre effects. His collaboration with Borisovskii on the *Viola Sonata, op. 46*, in 1923-1924, of which more in the fourth chapter, was a contributing factor to the search for new instrumental approaches, as Borisovskii also liked to explore the possibilities of technical challenges and uneasy stretches that may bring a new sound colouring and expressiveness of tone. The fact that Borisovskii left the manuscript of the *Zodiakus* unused, justifies some necessary amendments to the score today, because they are essential for its performance. For further reference to Borisovskii’s technical facility see: 1. Evgeniia Stoklitskaia, *Al'tovaia pedagogika Vadima Borisovskogo* [The Viola Pedagogy of Vadim Borisovskii] (Moscow: Muzyka, 2007), 48-54. 2. Fedor Druzhinin, *Vospominaniia* [Memoirs] (Moscow: Greko-latinskii kabinet Shichalina, 2001), 72.

¹⁹⁷ For further reference see the edited score of the suite *Zodiakus* enclosed.

¹⁹⁸ The arrangements of the viola and ‘cello editions occasionally differ apart from the *Pavane*. Compared to the ‘cello edition, these alterations in the viola part are more complex and advanced. Some phrases in the viola part were transferred from the middle to the upper register and enriched with added chromatic passages and double-stops. Thus, the ‘cello part in the coda of the piece

because of their instrumental inconvenience. They unnecessarily overburden the texture of both instrumental parts that are already intensified by continuous semi-quaver rhythmic patterns, broad use of registers and chords in the piano part. This section gains better articulation and expression, when one slightly modifies and lightens the texture of these double-stops.

Example 3.5.1 Vasilenko, *Knights*, fragment, *Piu mosso*, bars 101-107
 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo and
 Wien, New York: Universal Edition, 1932), 2. Reproduced by
 permission of Universal Edition.

Più mosso

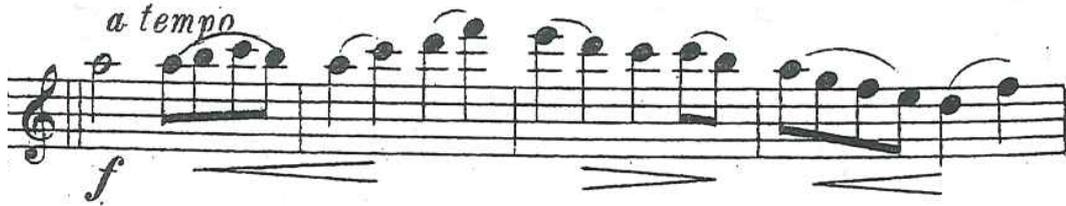
3.5.2 Timbre contrasts and the upper register

The form of Vasilenko's pieces, which are well calculated in their structures, dictates the range of instrumental tactics and creativity in performing proficiency because of their sequential development. Such uniformity of structural units necessitates not only flawlessness and precision of execution but also a varied display of timbres in order to avoid monotony. Thus, the simplicity of musical

Knights repeats the bass line of the piano with a leap A-E for nine consecutive bars, whereas the viola version offers ascending passages of double-stops.

language in the *Pavane* and *Madonna Tenerina* brings to light the question of dynamic and timbre contrasts not only through standard methods of dynamic range and change of positions. Such ordinary string techniques as vibrato and non-vibrato along with the usage of open and closed strings when executed within the repetitive succession of themes and motifs, especially in the *Pavane*, become of greater value as they create a varied sound palette of soft, airy, warm or intense and austere sounds. However, the *Pavane* is written in the middle register with occasional brief transitions to the upper register that play only the role of a timbre contrast. Whilst in the *Madonna Tenerina*, this changeover of registers develops and elaborates the melody, which becomes more dramatic. This is the only movement in both cycles that is written for the viola with a mute that naturally adds a mellow muffled character to the sound. The first four bars of the second half of section C in the *Madonna Tenerina* present its very emotionally expressive theme in the high register (above C₆), in which the viola naturally has a penetrating sound effect. It is an extremely high and unusual register for viola compositions of this period, which demonstrates Vasilenko's unconventional approach in the search for a new timbre quality. Moreover, the music score states here *forte* dynamic and a player may consequently follow a standard approach of using expressive vibrato and intensity of sound. However, the outcome would be very messy if not hysterical or vulgar. This theme entails rather the opposite method of an airy, light and quick bow motion closer to the finger-board with a very sensitive vibrato movement, which is more typical for delicate rather than exposed episodes.

Example 3.5.2 Vasilenko, *Madonna Tenerina*, fragment, *Poco piu mosso/a tempo*, bars 43-46 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo and Wien, New York: Universal Edition, 1932), 2. Reproduced by permission of Universal Edition.



A similar approach is encountered in the third lute piece, *Serenade for the Lady of my Heart*, in which Vasilenko extensively used the upper register. The character of the opening theme and the theme in section D require a soft sound but with a good projection and defined bow and vibrato control. It is interesting to compare these conclusions based on the understanding of forms as well as on practical requirements with a comparable view of Vasilenko about the delicacy of using viola timbre qualities in the high register, a technique that is more characteristic of the violin. ‘The viola in the violin tessitura sounds more intense and expressive than on the violin. It underlines the intimacy and gentleness of the momentum.’¹⁹⁹ At the same time, the violist might consider reviewing and playing an octave lower bars 34-35 and bars 49-52 with double-stops in the second part of the *Ouverture*. The acute sonorous effect of the high register amplified by the fast tempo is in conflict with the melodic flow that develops smoothly. The change of

¹⁹⁹ Sergei Vasilenko, *Instrumentovka dlia simfonicheskogo orkestra* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1952), vol. 1, 128.

registers would bring more focus on vocal clarity and expressiveness of the melody.²⁰⁰

3.5.3 Execution of harmonics and pizzicato techniques

The sound specifics and different intensity of the echo effects of natural and artificial harmonics as well as broken and *arpeggiated* pizzicato chords - all bring a special distinction for a particular phrase within a viola part. Thus, *Serenade for the Lady of my Heart*, the third piece from the lute cycle, has a number of episodes played pizzicato throughout the text. The longest two are in section D, *Scherzando*, and the conclusion, *Meno mosso*. The title of the first one entails light, playful, but elegant touch of single pizzicatos and unbroken chords, whereas the final section concludes the initial theme of a love drama with its plea and affirmation of feelings. This requires a combination of accuracy and precision in unbroken chords and in ascending scalar passages. On the contrary, the descending passages of pizzicato motifs followed by arpeggiated chords necessitate softness and delicacy.

Example 3.5.3a Vasilenko, *Serenade for the Lady of my Heart*, fragment, *Piu mosso. Scherzando*, bars 63-67 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo and Wien, New York: Universal Edition, 1932), 2. Reproduced by permission of Universal Edition.

²⁰⁰ For further reference see the score of the suite *Zodiakus* enclosed.



Example 3.5.3b Vasilenko, *Serenade for the Lady of my Heart*, fragment, *Meno mosso*, bars 84-88 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo and Wien, New York: Universal Edition, 1932), 2. Reproduced by permission of Universal Edition.



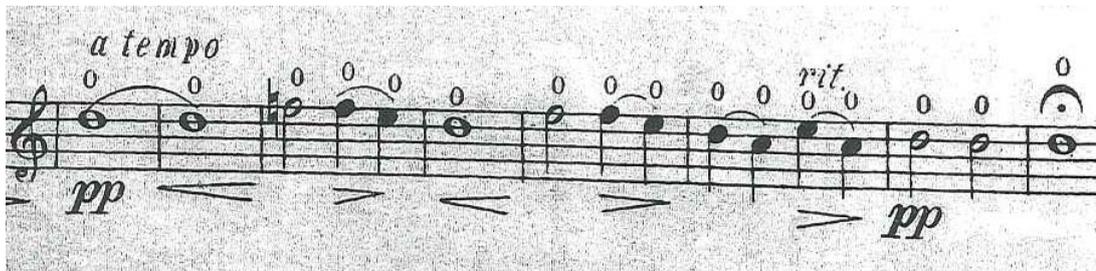
The interaction of pizzicato and *arco* episodes serve as a special playful and light sound contrast in the trio of the *Menuet*, which require certain instrumental proficiency. Its execution becomes a rather intricate task, because of the quick changeover from *arco* to pizzicato and back in *Moderato tempi*. One should minimise the bow movement and stay in the lower half of the bow in order to reduce the physical impact of this technique.²⁰¹

The combination of artificial and natural harmonics become the means of musical expression of contemplation and sorrow in the final bars of the *Madonna*

²⁰¹ For further reference see bars 2-3, 9-10, 20-21, and 25-26 of the edited score of the suite *Zodiakus* enclosed.

Tenerina, when the main theme gets divided into short motifs. A mute adds an extra delicacy and tenderness to this technique that requires no force. Despite the slow tempo, whole notes, minims and slurred crochets necessitate a quick bow motion in this episode, but with a light touch in order to achieve the maximum expressiveness of *diminuendo* and *crescendo* in *pianissimo* dynamic.

Example 3.5.3c Vasilenko, *Madonna Tenerina*, fragment, bars 60-67
(Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo and
Wien, New York: Universal Edition, 1932), 2. Reproduced by
permission of Universal Edition.



Harmonics turn into a useful technique that gives a variety of instrumental and musical approaches in the *Passacaille* and *Plainte*. The intricacies in their texts limit performing possibilities and leave the only achievable solution of replacing certain notes for harmonics that otherwise become impractical. Thus, the first note in the *Passacaille* is a minim C₆ tied for three bars, which then comes back after the interval sequence written in the low register, two octaves down. This long leap is unusual for the Baroque period, which was generally characterized by a conjunct motion. It also causes problems for the violist. There is no rest or pause to find and secure this top C in *pianissimo* dynamic, which becomes a rather unrealistic objective. Although it is not marked in the manuscript, a violist might like to

consider playing a harmonic instead as it creates a special timbre effect that also goes along with the gentleness of the melodic line.²⁰²

Similarly, in the *Plainte*, the first four bars of section E with dotted minims (bars 65-68) are written in the very high register. It is impossible to secure these notes, because of a very large leap and absence of rests between this section and the preceding double stops in the previous section that restrict the fingering option to the only one. One might consider playing natural and artificial harmonics here, which would be consistent with the dynamics marked *pianissimo*.²⁰³ It is very likely that Vasilenko himself would have chosen this technique if he had been advised against these unnecessary technical impediments produced as a result of these leaps. His comments about the quality of harmonics on the viola attest to this supposition. 'Harmonics in a melody add delicacy, poetic expressiveness and distinctive colour.'²⁰⁴ These were exact characteristics that Vasilenko depicted in these movements.

3.6 Conclusion

Vasilenko was a renowned master of instrumentation and his stylistic experiment with different musical genres and forms based on early music material were a novelty. He also paid special attention to the well-calculated structures of these suites that guided him in his search for new approaches in instrumental application, which were innovative for the early music period. Vasilenko enhanced these suites

²⁰² For further reference see bars 9-12 of the edited score of the suite *Zodiakus* enclosed.

²⁰³ For further reference see the edited score of the suite *Zodiakus* enclosed.

²⁰⁴ Sergei Vasilenko, *Instrumentovka dlia simfonicheskogo orkestra* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1952), vol. 1, 211.

with unconventional, highly demanding string techniques that expanded the timbre and expressiveness of tone production and the diversity of sound. The peculiarities of the through-composed and ternary forms and consequent fusion of cyclical and temporal developments became the means of artistic articulation and musical expression in these works.

The narrative qualities of these works are evident not only in the titles. Each movement imparts its own imaginative ‘story’ due to the specifics of its melodic phrasing and its development, ornamentation, harmonic execution, dynamics and tempo indications that consequently guide a performer in his/her choice of a timbre palette and technical application with the intensity or restraint of available resources. An inventive and considerate approach to these objectives by performers would bring new artistic qualities to the music and play a significant role in its interpretation. Undoubtedly, this instrumental approach characteristic of the Russian national composers of the second half of the nineteenth century and of Russian Symbolism²⁰⁵ was atypical of any surviving Baroque compositions. Moreover, Vasilenko showed a true individuality in the *Madonna Tenerina* as it demonstrated not only a fine stylization but his knowledge of early Russian liturgical music, of which more in the fifth chapter.

These questions of performing issues described above become especially important when one performs these pieces with a harpsichord²⁰⁶ that does not demonstrate much variety of sound control and, thus, gives the viola a full command

²⁰⁵ Further discussion of the influences of Russian composers and Symbolism is in the fifth chapter.

²⁰⁶ The author of this thesis on the viola and Nicholas Walker on the harpsichord gave the premiere of the suite *Zodiakus* and the lute pieces at Handel House, London, in 2010. For further reference see Appendixes 1 and 2.

of the dynamics display. There is no evidence that Vasilenko experimented or performed these pieces with a harpsichord, an instrument that was unpopular in his lifetime. However, in the third lute piece the solo section of the piano is marked *quasi clavecin* under the piano score, which suggests that Vasilenko was searching for a timbre and sound quality similar to those of a harpsichord. Vasilenko's aspiration to produce interesting, unusual and distinctive timbre blends most certainly would have guided him towards this grouping of instruments if he were to have had this opportunity during the Soviet period.²⁰⁷

The following words of Vasilenko, which he voiced at the end of his life, in the early 1950s, stand as a genuine source of creative inspiration for the performers of his music: 'One has to call young people not to be afraid of experimentation as it enriches and broadens prospects immensely.'²⁰⁸ Today, one may say that this quotation is also a tribute to Vasilenko's mastery and individuality that he showed in

²⁰⁷ The authentic instruments of the Baroque and pre-Baroque were unpopular in Soviet times as the instruments of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, which were declared extraneous to the proletarian culture. *Sovetskii Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar'* [Soviet Encyclopaedic Dictionary], ed. Boris Vvedenskii (Moscow: Bolshaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia, 1953), vol. 1, 146. Unfortunately, contemporary musicologists have not yet dedicated even one article or a chapter to this subject. Thus, an American musicologist Richard Taruskin briefly pointed out that Stravinskii's interest in Bach and pre-Bach composers was regarded as counterrevolutionary art in Soviet Russia. Richard Taruskin, *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-utopian Essays* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2009), 390. The revival of interest in authentic performances in Russia started to take place only towards the end of the twentieth century with the performances of an ensemble of early music '*Madrigal*' founded by Andrei Volkonskii (1933-2008) in Moscow in 1965. More on this subject in: 1. Andrei Volkonskii, *Partitura zhizni* [The Score of Life], ed. Elena Dubinets (Moscow: Ripol klassik, 2010). 2. Iurii Kholopov, "Andrei Volkonsky the Initiator: a Profile of His Life and Work," in *Underground Music from the Former USSR*, ed. Valeria Tsenova (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 1-20.

²⁰⁸ Quoted in Nikolai Zriakovskii, *Moi vospominaniia o S.N. Vasilenko*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 1083, p. 13.

these arrangements, which undoubtedly enriched the concert viola repertoire with two fine suites in the style of early music.

Chapter Four

Sergei Vasilenko. *Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 46*

The single-movement *Viola Sonata* was written for Vadim Borisovskii in 1923. This work makes considerable technical demands on both players, encompassing the unrestrained emotional expression and power of Romanticism, the intimate lyricism of vocal and song-type themes, the clarity of contrapuntal imitation with the emphasis on rhythm comparable to neoclassical features, and the exotic chromatic harmonies of Oriental music combined with the dissonant harmonies that reflected the modern tendencies of the time, of which more below. Such a fusion of contrasting styles is perhaps the only example found in viola compositions of this period in Russia.²⁰⁹ It is reasonable to investigate this unconventional form prior to any detailed analysis of its instrumental and stylistic issues. This will help orient us within the sections, to understand their tonal plans and establish their harmonic and architectural peculiarities, which are important for the interpretation of this composition. The external layout of these sections is strongly reminiscent of a traditional four-movement symphony and a sonata with an opening sonata-allegro, then a slow movement adagio, followed by a minuet or scherzo and concluding with a sonata-allegro, as shown in Table 4 below.

²⁰⁹ One might argue that Ernst Bloch's *Suite* (1919) and Rebecca Clarke's *Sonata* (1919) for viola and piano also exhibit similar contrasting stylistic characteristics. However, Vasilenko never mentioned the names of these composers in his writings and probably did not know of the existence of these compositions. This is not surprising, because even today, in the twenty-first century, these viola works are not well known in Russia.

Table 4 Sectional division with bar numbers and keys in the *Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 46*

Parts/sections ²¹⁰	I	II	III	IV
Composer's sectional indications	<i>Allegro moderato</i>	<i>Andante amorevole</i>	<i>Fughetta. Molto energico</i>	<i>Tempo del commincio (Allegro moderato)</i>
Total bar numbers	224	95	59	139
Keys	D minor	E major	E minor	D minor/D major

The form looks relatively standard at first glance, because the change of tempo indications, keys and the modes guide one towards the understanding of its sectional division. The first element that attracts attention is the imbalance of length between the sections. This is caused by a very complicated and unusual internal structure within each section. The opening allegro (*Allegro moderato*) contains only the exposition and development, concluding with a dramatic cadenza. Instead of an immediate recapitulation, a second section, *Andante amorevole*, presents two independent, very intimate and exceptionally melodious themes followed by a short, vigorous episode, marked *Molto agitato*. This episode connects this section with a *Fughetta*, a third section that has an exposition and counter-exposition but no development. A contrastingly contemplative passage, *Sostenuto*, leads to a fourth section, *Tempo del commincio*, which now acts as the recapitulation of the first, thus providing balance. It even presents a modified and shortened version of the

²¹⁰ It is a single-movement sonata. Thus, it would be logical to call its parts sections.

Fughetta, which then leads towards the vibrant and spectacular coda. It would be logical to analyse each section of the sonata closely, taking into account the size of the composition and the originality of its internal structures that are articulated by the keys, harmony, rhythm, meter, tempos and texture.

4.1 Language (harmony)

Vasilenko managed to combine traditionalism, polarity and idiosyncrasy of harmonic and melodic idioms in this sonata. The tonal plan of sections is D minor-E major-E minor-D minor/D major.²¹¹ It displays a certain route of a modal contrast between parallel minor-major. At first glance, only the pitch tone alone continues to link these keys and sections together. Thus, E major is not related to D minor at all, but E minor, the parallel modal form to E major, is related to D major. E minor is introduced as a key centre not only in the third section with its distinctive theme of the *Fughetta*, but also in the development of the first section based on the material of the first subject group themes, in which the home key D minor does not appear at all.²¹² Thus, Vasilenko prepared in advance the appearance of this unrelated key E major and indiscernibly established distant tonal links between the contrasting thematic materials of the sections that tie them together.

4.1.1 The first section

The exposition **in the first section** follows a traditional key relation of the first subject group in the home key D minor and the relative F major in the second subject and the closing theme. However, there are features that demonstrate an

²¹¹ See Table 4 above.

²¹² D minor comes back only in the recapitulation section. See further analysis below.

unconventional approach. Traditionally, the first subject retains the home key, though it may have brief modulations to remote keys, and introduces the relative major followed by thematic and rhythmic contrast only in the second subject. Instead, the first subject modulates to F major already in bar 10, the main key of the second subject.²¹³ A new sequential episode with modulating major ninth and thirteenth chords with some omitted notes works as a transition to the home key D minor and the re-appearance of the main subject. This novelty is seen in Table 4.1.1a below.²¹⁴

Table 4.1.1a Sectional division with bar numbers, metre and keys in the First section/Exposition of the *Sonata, op. 46*

First section/Exposition (119 bars)					
Tempo indication	Time signature	Subject groups	Key	Bar numbers	Bars in total
<i>Allegro moderato</i>	12/8;	1 st subject group, main theme	D minor	1-9	1 introduction +36
	C (4/4) viola bb. 26-28		F major	10-27	
<i>Piu mosso</i>	12/8	Sequential episode (starts on the base tone A)		28-31	
<i>A tempo</i>	12/8; C (4/4) viola bb. 32-	1 st subject group, main	D minor	32-37	

²¹³ The recapitulation does not retain this tonal alteration and stays in D minor, though the second subject and the last theme modulate to D major, but the coda has the first subject in *alla breve* in F major.

²¹⁴ This and the following Tables 4.1.1a-4.1.4 also contain details about meter and structures, which will be discussed in separate subsections below.

	34	theme			
<i>Piu mosso</i>	12/8; C (4/4) piano b. 54 & viola b. 55	1 st subject group, 2 nd theme	D minor (viola-solo episode)	38-65	28
<i>Meno mosso. Amoroso</i>	C (4/4)	2 nd subject	F major-E flat major	66-77 (A) (5+2+5=12)	35
			F major-D flat major/ B flat major-G flat major/ V pedal to F major	78-89 (B) (4+4+4=12)	
			F major	90-100 (A ¹) (5+5+1=11)	
<i>Allegro impetuoso</i>	12/8; C (4/4) piano bb. 101-102	Closing theme	F major	101-107	19
<i>Calando</i>	12/8		V pedal	108-109	

<i>Tranquillo</i>	C (4/4); 12/8	Transition	F major	110-119	
<i>assai</i>	viola b. 110 & piano left hand bb. 110-115				

The second subject is a contrasting theme of a song-type lyric character. The rhythmic and melodic materials of its parts are closely related. Part B is concluded with a half-cadence in the original key, but the return of part A is not fully repeated; these are typical features of a rounded binary form ABA¹. The key display is noteworthy with modulations to related and remote keys, including on a perfect fourth, F-B flat and D flat-G flat, though the key F major is maintained throughout all three parts.

The development in the first section also shows an innovative rhetoric. The composer introduced a completely new theme *Energico* and the sequential episode, similar to the *Piu mosso* in the exposition, became a part of this new theme in E minor. This key is a new tonal centre, with which Vasilenko started the opening bars of the development based on the main subject. The home key D minor does not appear in the development at all apart from the dominant pedal in the piano anticipating the viola cadenza at the very end and thus breaks all classical conventions of the sonata-allegro form. Consequently, one may say that Vasilenko moved further away from the traditional syntax of tonal centres that imply the domination of a home key within a single section or movement. His tonal plan in the sonata is only a thin framework that connected him with the classical principles of

the sonata form, but with which he confidently experimented and distanced himself from conventions. This development has melodic segmentation, rapid harmonic, chromatic and sequential modulations with the use of seventh and ninth chords. This is seen in Table 4.1.1b below.

Table 4.1.1b Sectional division with bar numbers, metre and keys in the First section/Development of the *Sonata, op. 46*

First section/Development (105 bars)					
Tempo indications	Time signature	Subjects	Keys	Bar numbers	Bars in total
<i>Tempo I</i> <i>(Allegro moderato)</i>	12/8; C (4/4) viola bb. 129, 141, 143& piano left hand b. 131	Based on the main subject	E minor	120-131	12 (4+4+4) +
			F# minor	132-143	12 (4+4+4) +
			Motif sequence on G-B flat base tones	144-147	4 =24 +4
<i>Piu mosso.</i> <i>Piangendo</i>	12/8	Elements of the main subject	G minor	148-153	6 +

<i>Allegro assai</i>	C (4/4); 12/8 piano bb. 158-166	Transition to <i>Energico</i>	V pedal to G minor, G minor	154-171	18=24
<i>Energico</i>	C (4/4); 12/8 viola bb. 172-181	New theme	E minor (sequential episode on a perfect fourth down to <i>Piu mosso</i> in bb. 28- 31)	172-195 (192- 195)	12+12= 24
A tempo	12/8	Elements of the main subject	Motif sequence V pedal to D min	196-199	4+
Cadenza in tempo	C (4/4)	On the themes of the first subject group	V pedal to A min, extensive chromatic modulations	200-224	24+1

Vasilenko concluded this section with a big powerful viola cadenza based on the themes of the first subject group of the exposition and thus placed special emphasis on this thematic material instead of the new theme. The cadenza smoothly converts the dramatic mood of this first section to the subsequent sensitive lyricism of the second section that comes instead of the recapitulation.

4.1.2 The second section

The second section exhibits some rudiments of oriental rhetoric,²¹⁵ including intensive enharmonic changes and modulations, sequences and progressions of augmented and diminished intervals, triads, seventh and half-diminished seventh chords without resolutions. The themes are primarily led by the viola that is accompanied by the piano. They produce harmonic restlessness and devalue the sense of any tonal centre, giving the impression of atonality, especially in the first theme of a lament-type character and the conclusion of the second theme that is based on the first motif of the first theme. The question of a tonal centre becomes rather irrelevant here, because these series of unresolved chords incessantly modulate and oppose each other and thus undermine a single tonic triad as central. They virtually abolish any propensity for key centres and play a role of contrasting harmonic colouring. Rogal'-Levitskii, was of the opinion that the tonal centre of the first theme is F# minor.²¹⁶ However, it gains the elements of this key only towards bars 3-4 due to the specifics of its sequential chromatic layout of the melody, whereas the harmonic outline of the first two bars with their inverted major dominant ninth chord (third inversion) most certainly directs one towards E major. The second theme is of a vocal character in a contrasting minor-major mode with a verse-chorus format or a simple binary form alternating between two parts ABA¹B¹, in which both parts are shortened and slightly modified for the second time. The usage of the low register in the verse deepened by its solemn and poignant character and dignity of expression creates an atmosphere of dirge-like worship or a funeral

²¹⁵ A detailed discussion of Vasilenko's interest in oriental subjects is in the subsection 'Orientalism' in the fifth chapter.

²¹⁶ Dmitrii Rogal'-Levitskii, *Sergei Vasilenko i ego al'tovaia sonata* (Moscow: Muzykal'nyi sektor, 1927), 16.

hymn. Its tonal display is notable, modulating on a perfect fourth up as in the second subject of the exposition, which is marked in italics in Table 4.1.2 below. These features are elevated in the chorus with the change of its melodic flow to a major mode and the repositioning of both instrumental parts to a higher register.

Table 4.1.2 Sectional division with bar numbers, metre and keys in the Second section of the *Sonata, op. 46*

Second section in 3/4				
Tempo indications	Subjects	Keys	Bar numbers	Bars in total
<i>Andante amorevole</i>	1 st theme /A	E major (piano)	225-242	4+4+10+
		C# major (viola)	243-257	4+4+7=33
<i>Dolente</i>	2 nd theme/B	<i>C# minor-F# minor</i> (viola)	258-269 (A)	6+6+
		E-F# major/G-A major	270-287 (B)	8+8+2=30
<i>A tempo</i>	2 nd theme/B ¹	A-D minor (viola)	288-297 (A ¹)	5+5+
		Sequential modulations	298- 307(B ¹)	10+
<i>Molto agitato</i>	Conclusion on the motif of the 1 st theme/A ¹	Chromatic modulations/atonality	308-319	12=32

Vasilenko concluded the second section of this sonata with a dramatic and anxious episode marked *Molto agitato* based on the opening motif of the first theme that he altered in rhythm, tempo, character and harmony. Its rapid sequential

progressions of diminished seventh and ninth chords with parallel tritons in the base without resolutions generate and bring back a sense of atonality after the comparatively tonal second theme. These chords, similar to the first theme, play the role of a contrasting harmonic palette, which the composer invented according to his inner hearing, desire and intuition. The tonal unity is imperceptibly replaced by harmonic unity. The chords distract from the absence of tonal centres, diminish their function and play the role of harmonic melodies and thus synthesize and unite melody and harmony. This episode, *Molto agitato*, links both themes together, concludes the section and, at the same time, works as a transition to the following third section *Fughetta*.

4.1.3 The third section

The third section, *Fughetta*, with its contrapuntal language and chromatic modulations is not a shortened fugue, but a fugato. Once again, Vasilenko demonstrates an unconventional approach to form and language. The exposition and counter-exposition of the *Fughetta* are ideally balanced with three bars each for the theme, answer and episode. This traditional opening of a fugue has also a typical tonal outlook with the home key E minor followed by its dominant key B minor. A short sequential episode after the counter-exposition gives an impression of the beginning of a development. Instead, it leads to the *Piu mosso*, a simplified version of the *Piu mosso* from the first section, which is seen in Table 4.1.3 below.

Table 4.1.3 Sectional division with bar numbers, metre and keys in the Third section of the *Sonata, op. 46*

Third section, <i>Fughetta</i> , in Common Time (4/4)					
Tempo indications	Subjects/episodes	Keys	Bar numbers	Bars in total	
<i>Fughetta.</i> <i>Molto energico</i>	Introduction (A)	Half-diminished	320-322	3	
	Exposition, theme	7th E minor	323-325	3+	
	Answer	(piano), B minor	326-328	3+	
	Episode	(viola)	329-331	3=3+9	
	Counter-exposition (A ¹), theme	E minor (viola)	332-334	3	
	Answer	B minor	335-337	3+	
	Episode	(piano)	338-440	3=9	
	Sequential episode with the elements of a development (B)	B-D minors	341-344	4(2+2) +	
	<i>Piu mosso</i>	Simplified sequences similar to bb. 28-31	from F major	345-349	5=9
	<i>Allargando</i>	Episode of a new content (C)	Chromatic sequences to A min b. 358	350-358	9

<i>Sostenuto</i>	solo-violin episode (D)	C# pedal (piano)	359-368	10
	short cadenza (E)	V pedal to D minor	369-378	10

This modified *Piu mosso* is followed by a chromatic episode with new thematic material that brings a solo-violin episode, which merges into a short cadenza. These series of sequential episodes introduce a combination of new elements combined with thematic associations from the first section and thus conclude this third section and concurrently set up the transition to the fourth section.

4.1.4 The fourth section

The fourth, final, section starts with one bar of introduction followed by the main subject in the home key D minor similar to the exposition. However, the main theme stays in this key unlike the first section, where it modulated to F major. All themes of the exposition are considerably shortened, including the second subject, which is now written in D major, the modified home key that changed its mode. This key D major is preserved further in the closing theme and connecting episodes. This is seen in Table 4.1.4.

Table 4.1.4 Sectional division with bar numbers, metre and keys in the Fourth section of the *Sonata, op. 46*

Fourth section						
Tempo indications	Time signature	Subject groups/ episodes	Keys	Bar numbers	Bars in total	
<i>Tempo del commincio</i> (<i>Allegro moderato</i>)	12/8	introduction	D	379	1	41
		1st subject, main theme	minor	380-401	22	
<i>Piu mosso.</i> <i>Agitato</i>	12/8; C (4/4) piano bb. 411-419 & viola bb. 413-419	1st subject, 2nd theme (viola-solo episode)	D minor	402-419	18	
<i>Meno mosso.</i> <i>Amoroso</i>	C (4/4)	2 nd subject	D major	420-430	5+5+1=11	
<i>Allegro impetuoso</i>	12/8	Closing theme	D major	431-439	9	
<i>Tranquillo assai</i>	12/8; C (4/4) piano right hand bb. 440-442 & viola bb. 441-442	Transition/ Connecting episodes	D major	440-442	3	
<i>Piu mosso</i>				443-445	3	

<i>Allegro strepitoso</i>	C (4/4)	<i>Fughetta</i> of the third section		(446-476)	(31)	
		Exposition (theme, answer, episode)	B flat- F minor	446-451	3+3+6	(2+4)=12
		Connection		458-460	3 (2+1)	
		Counter-exposition (theme, answer, episode)	C-G minor	461-472	3+3+6	(2+1+3)=12
		Connection		473-476	3+1	
<i>Energico Piu mosso</i>	C (2/2)	Coda (Main theme)	F major	477-484	8	41
		(as <i>Piangendo</i> b. 148)		485-492	8	
<i>Furioso</i>	6/8	Conclusion	D major	493-517	25	

Instead of an immediate coda comes the altered *Fughetta* of the third section in B flat minor in the piano part, which then modulates to its dominant key F minor in the viola part. However, this tonal disposition changes in the counter-exposition to C-G minor, though the traditional dominant relation of keys as in the third section is maintained. The virtuosic and spectacular coda based on the main subject is written in the relative F major of the home key D minor and then in parallel D major. This coda presents ecstatic and forceful sequential passages in triplets in the viola that gradually reach the highest register. The dynamism of this vigorous climax resolves with a full cadence. Vasilenko included an episode *Piu mosso* that is

related to the *Piangendo* in the development and thus created additional links that tied together the material of the previous sections.

One may conclude that Vasilenko developed an idiosyncratic rhetoric, in which conventional harmonic rudiments merged with unanticipated modulations to unrelated and distantly related keys, with recurrent shifts on a perfect fourth, frequent usage of parallel chords and tritons without resolutions, chromatic and non-functional harmonic passages that lacked a tonal centre and thus equated the roles of harmony and melody. In 1905, the Russian composer Anatolii Liadov made the friendly but just remark that Vasilenko's harmonies were unpredictable, independent and impulsive.²¹⁷ This approach produces vivid sound contrasts in the sonata, which are consequently reflected in the timbre palette. Vasilenko developed this principle from the late 1890s, when he studied composition with Konius.

[...] My ideal was a bright and clear horizontal melodic line, but with a compulsory complex and sensitive inner system. Georgii Eduardovich Konius said to me: 'You have taken a very dangerous route. I looked at your works. They are still very euphonious, but all your chords are organised in a peculiar way as they alternate with each other unpredictably.' [...]²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Quoted in Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1948), 49.

²¹⁸ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 136.

The Russian composer Artur Lur'e,²¹⁹ whose music closely correlated with the new radical trends of the time, described similar harmonic tendencies in his article '*O garmonii v sovremennoi muzyke*' [On Harmony in Contemporary Music] written in 1937.

[...] A "new" chord is a fetish for musicians; an incessant creation of "new" chords predominates in compositions today. [...] Old harmony is a consonance and dissonance. The new harmony is a dissonance, consonance and timbre. The new harmony is based on timbres, so to say, on the correlation of sound capacity, whereas before the harmony relied on the role of the main tone or chord that connected them. Besides, the true evolution of harmony, its real enhancement, comes from the enrichment of counterpoint and the development of polyphony.
[...]²²⁰

Vasilenko did neither suffer from obsession nor blindly copy the trends of the time, but these ideas of contrapuntal enrichment and significance of timbres as

²¹⁹ Commonly spelled as Arthur-Vincent Lourié (1892-1966), the co-writer of the Futurist Manifesto '*My i Zapad*' [We and the West] in February 1914, was also influenced by Cubism and Picasso. In 1918-21, the head of the music department of *Narkompros* under Lunacharskii; in 1922, went to Berlin on an official visit and never returned to the USSR, at first settling in Paris and then, in 1941, in the USA. Further reference to Lur'e may be found in: 1. Igor Vorob'ev, Anastasiia Sinaiskaia, *Kompozitory Russkogo Avangarda* [Composers of the Russian Avant-garde] (St. Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2007), 49-77. 2. Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music. From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2006), 233. 3. Mikhail Kralin, *Artur i Anna: roman bez gerioia, no vse-taki o liubvi* [Arthur and Anna: a Novel Without a Hero, but about Love] (Moscow: Vodolei, 2000).

²²⁰ Quoted in Igor Vishnevetskii, ed., *Evraziiskoe ukhlonenie v muzyke 20-30kh godov* [Eurasian Bias in the Music of the 1920-30s] (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2005), 282. Further reference on compositional inventions of the time in: 1. Jim Samson, *Music in Transition: a Study of Tonal Expansion and Atonality, 1900-1920* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1995). 2. Rudolph Reti, *Tonality, Atonality, Pantonality. A Study of Some Trends in Twentieth Century Music* (London: Rockliff, 1958).

the result of harmonic and melodic execution were consonant with his inspiration that had special origins, of which more below.²²¹

One may also observe the individuality of the composer in his implementation of the conventional devices. Vasilenko methodically exercised harmonic and melodic sequences throughout the sonata and justified the importance of this method for musical enhancement in his memoirs. 'If there are sequences and opportunities for elevation, one has to lead them to the very end, to the ultimate point and to their highest intensity.'²²² This approach transformed the main subject. Its modification from a simple ascetic melody in D minor in the opening bars of the first section into a vibrant and vigorous theme in F major in the coda is reminiscent of the thematic transformations of Liszt and of Skriabin's sonatas starting from the *Third Piano Sonata*. The *arpeggiated* ascending and descending runs of inverted triads and seventh chords in semiquavers in the viola part opposed by triplets in the piano part in the first eight bars of the coda bear distinct associations with Russian Orthodox bell-ringing that places special emphasis on polyrhythmic and poly-harmonic sequences with interaction between registers.²²³ The power and vividness of the musical texture, harmony and timbres are comparable with the strength and

²²¹ See the subsections 'Song and counterpoint: the influence of Glinka and Taneev' and 'The Influence of the French Impressionists on Vasilenko's language' in the fifth chapter.

²²² Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 247.

²²³ It is likely that Vasilenko derived the idea of imitating bell-ringing from Taneev, who often used this principle in his choral works and also in his chamber music, in particular, *Piano Quintet* op. 30. For further reference see: Galima Aminova, *Otechestvennye istoki tvorchestva S.I. Taneeva* [National Origins of Taneev's Creativity] (Krasnoiarsk: Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 2006), 152-153. However, Vasilenko used this method only in the first eight bars of the coda, whereas in Taneev's works it was one of the main principles of thematic enhancement within large structural sections. For further discussion of Taneev's influence see the fifth chapter.

richness of the orchestral quality of tone.

Example 4.1.4 Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, op. 46, fragment,
Fourth section/Coda, bars 477-479 (Moscow:
Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo muzykal'nyi sector, 1925), 32.
Reproduced by permission of the Library of the Union of
Composers of the Russian Federation, Moscow.

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is for Viola, the middle for Piano (Treble Clef), and the bottom for Piano (Bass Clef). The tempo is marked 'Energico.' and the dynamics include 'f' (forte). The score features complex polyrhythmic patterns, including triplets and sextuplets, and syncopation.

4.2 Language (meter and rhythm)

The composer freely operated with polyrhythm and poly-meter throughout. In the exposition, the experimentation with the meter in the themes of the first subject group created rhythmical tensions and tautness. Vasilenko not only opposed the viola and piano with the polyrhythm of duplets, triplets, quintuplets, sextuplets, septuplets and syncopation that appear frequently starting from bar nine, but also by alternating between compound and simple times of 12/8 and the Common Time (4/4). He also exercised the poly-meter within the piano part in the *Tranquillo assai* combining both meters together. In the development of the first section, this meter manoeuvring along with rhythmic alterations is considerably extended, which adds

restlessness and irregularity to the melodic and harmonic flow.

The second and third sections preserve their meters of 3/4 and 4/4 respectively. The slow pace of the second section starts with certain rhythmic steadiness, which is uncharacteristic of oriental melodies that usually exhibit rhythmic unpredictability. At the same time, the second theme demonstrates frequently exploited polyrhythm with syncopation opposed by triplets. They produce a certain apprehension and thus intensify the sorrowful mood of the theme. On the contrary, the relentless usage of syncopation, dotted rhythms and tied notes in the *Fughetta* gave the impression of an incessant contrapuntal stream stimulated by a fast energetic tempo. This complex approach to the meter and rhythm as in the first and third sections continues in the fourth section. Moreover, Vasilenko commenced the coda with a modified Common Time in 2/2 instead of the usual 4/4, which he then changed to 6/8. These time-signatures accelerate the pace of the finale with the passages of irregular groups that the composer kept switching backwards and forwards from sextuplets to septuplets in quavers in the piano part.

One may say that this complexity and disruption of conventional meter and rhythmic patterns became a characteristic element in Vasilenko's language as he showed a similar method in his other compositions, including his first major work the *Skazanie o velikom grade Kitezhe i tikhom ozere Svetoiare* [Tale of the Great City of Kitezh and the Quiet Lake Svetoyar], written some twenty years before the sonata. Rimskii-Korsakov gave special emphasis to the constant alternation of the time-signatures between 2/4, 3/4 and 6/8, when he listened to this cantata in October 1902.²²⁴ It is likely that asymmetrical phrase structures formed by the polysyllabic

²²⁴ Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1948), 54.

words of the Russian language that illustrated natural recitative speech along with the repetitive patterns characteristic of Russian vocal music were conducive to this approach in the cantata.²²⁵ In the sonata, it brought tension, agitation and thematic confrontation and enhancement to the melodic flow, which also depended on the tempos and tonal outlook. They bring to the foreground different musical features and qualities. Thus the slow tempo and regular meter in the second section intensify the sonorous effect of chromatic modulations and tonal restlessness that initially added a certain sensitivity and daintiness to the music. As a result, the time expands, but the polyrhythm and the gradual repositioning from the low to the high registers in both instrumental parts impart acute anxiety and reinforce the texture. In contrast, the fast tempo and relatively traditional tonal plan in the third section laid special emphasis on the dense contrapuntal language and syncopated rhythmic stream. Both instrumental parts oppose each other and the time becomes compressed. This effect of the expansion and reduction of the time was also caused by the complexity of inner structures and the diverse nature of textures, such as counterpoint and song-type themes of Russian origin that entailed melodic enhancement, of which more below.

²²⁵ Thus the *Introduction and Aria Gusliara* [gusli player] in B minor in the cantata exhibit continuous melodic and note repetition, which Vasilenko opposed with rhythmic and meter flexibility (see music example 5.2e in the fifth chapter). Sergei Vasilenko, *Vstuplenie i ariia gusliara. Skazanie o velikom grade Kitezhe i tikhom ozere Svetoiare*. Text by Nikolai Manykin-Nevstruev (Moscow, Leipzig: P. Iurgenson, 1902), 3-13. Further discussion of Vasilenko's interest in vocal music is in the subsection 'Song and counterpoint: the influence of Glinka and Taneev' in the fifth chapter.

4.3 Structure (textures and forms)

The process of the alteration of traditional instrumental forms in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century was introduced and developed in the late piano sonatas of Aleksandr Skriabin and later by Nikolai Medtner and Anatolii Aleksandrov. All Skriabin's sonatas starting from the sixth to the ninth span a single-movement structure.²²⁶ This practice was very influential, especially among the young generation of composers, including Roslavets, who employed a single-movement form in his radical endeavour to break all possible ties with tradition.²²⁷ Vasilenko in contrast, never belonged to the extreme and revolutionary groups of the musical scene. He implemented his innovations while maintaining his ties to tradition and compromised between the conservatives and left-wing modernist movements of the time. Vasilenko followed this unconventional, ultra-modern approach of having a single-movement sonata performed with no interruption that consequently shortens

²²⁶ For further reference on Skriabin and structures in Russian music of the time see: 1. Richard Taruskin, "Scriabin and the Superhuman. A Millennial Essay," in *Defending Russia Musically* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 308-359. 2. Boris de Schloezer, *Scriabin: Artist and Mystic*, trans. Nicolas Slonimsky (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). 3. Hugh Macdonald, *Skryabin* (London, New York, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978). 4. Tamara Levaia, *Skriabin i khudozhestvennye iskaniiia XX veka* [Skriabin and Artistic Searches in the Twentieth Century] (St. Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2007). 5. Leonid Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Skriabine* [Reminiscences About Skriabin] (Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2000). 6. Boleslav Iavorskii, "Zametki o tvorcheskom myshlenii russkikh kompozitorov ot Glinki do Skriabina [Notes on the Artistic Thinking of Russian Composers from Glinka to Skriabin]," in *Izbrannye trudy* [Selected Works]. (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1987), vol. 2, 41-232. 7. Sergei Pavchinskii, *Sonatnaia forma proizvedenii Skriabina* [Sonata Form in the Works of Skriabin] (Moscow: Muzyka, 1979). 8. Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music. From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2006), 207-216.

²²⁷ The first sonata for viola and piano by Roslavets has a single-movement form. Further reference to this work may be found in the section 'Relation between the written component and the recital programme' and in the introduction of the thesis.

and condenses the time compared to the layout of a standard four-movement sonata. Despite this radicalism, his works, though varied in compositional techniques and styles, were largely based on an exquisite melodic development of themes, the legacy of the Russian composers of the nineteenth century and folk traditions. The Russian-British musicologist Marina Frolova-Walker justly pointed out that this vocal element with the concept of *pesennost'* and its synonym *raspevnost'* [songfulness]²²⁸ is an essential feature of Russian music.

[...] The heart of Russian music is folk *pesennost'* (not song in the narrow sense of genre or type of musical form) and the rhythm of human breathing, which dominate everywhere in Russian music, both vocal and instrumental, over the bars and patterns of the periodic formal architecture. Should we say that this quality *raspevnost'* is a tradition or, better, the nature of a man who has lived in the steppes and fields, on the edge of the great rivers and severe forests of our Motherland? It is still hard to say what the genesis of this quality is, but it is perhaps the most viable strand of Russian culture... [...]²²⁹

Vasilenko not only used song-type themes in internal sections of the sonata but enhanced and shaped them into simple forms. The second subject of the exposition has a simple binary form (ABA¹). The second section has the elements of a ternary form, because of the return of the elements of the first theme (ABB¹A¹),²³⁰

²²⁸ This term was introduced by Boris Asaf'ev in his essay '*O russkoi pesennosti*' [On Russian Songfulness], which was published in his essay series '*Muzyka moei Rodiny*' [Music of my Motherland] in the third issue of the magazine *Sovetskaia muzyka* [Soviet Music] in 1948.

²²⁹ Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism. From Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007), 263.

²³⁰ Rogal'-Levitskii was of the opinion that this section is a three part verse-chorus form. Dmitrii Rogal'-Levitskii, *Sergei Vasilenko i ego al'tovaia sonata* (Moscow: Muzykal'nyi sektor, 1927), 16.

but its second theme is a strophic verse-chorus form (ABA¹B¹).²³¹ The expansion of the second subject to a simple binary form may occur in a sonata form, though it is more likely in symphonic works,²³² whereas the usage of a verse-chorus form in a viola sonata reveals the true originality of Vasilenko's creativity. As a result of this melodic enhancement, the time expands not only within these internal structures as mentioned in the previous subsection, but stretches out the form of the sonata as a whole, prolongs its length and makes the whole composition last up to 17-18 minutes. This approach was uncharacteristic of Scriabin, whose late piano sonatas exhibit the time economy of contrasting thematic material and its development; the crystallisation of harmonic units and melodies. Thus it takes a maximum of 8 to 12 minutes to perform, almost twice as short as the viola sonata.

Vasilenko enhanced this work further with the elements of motivic development, when an episode and its breakdown of extended phrases that are too short in size to give them independence re-emerge throughout the composition. Thus the intervallic sequential passage *Piu mosso* of the exposition (bb. 28-31) that interrupts the main theme re-appears in the development (bb. 192-195), third section (bb. 345-349) and the fourth section (bb. 455-457, 470-476) with rhythmic and harmonic alterations, but still building up a recognizable thematic/textural link throughout these sections.

²³¹ See Tables 4.1.1a and 4.1.2 above.

²³² Further reference in: 1. Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988). 2. Igor' Sposobin, *Muzykal'naiia forma* [Musical Form] (Moscow: Muzyka, 1984), 202-203. The book by Sposobin is an important source as it had seven republications and was initially recommended by Professors of the Moscow Conservatoire, including the leading composers Miaskovskii and Shebalin in 1945, in the lifetime of Vasilenko.

Example 4.3a

Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, op. 46, fragment, First section, bars 28-31 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 4. Reproduced by permission of the Library of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation, Moscow.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a fragment from Vasilenko's *Sonata for Viola and Piano*. The first system consists of a single staff for the Viola (treble clef) and a grand staff for the Piano (treble and bass clefs). The tempo marking 'Più mosso.' is written above the first staff. The dynamic marking 'ff' is placed below the first staff. The second system follows the same layout, with the piano part starting at measure 30. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks.

Example 4.3b

Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, op. 46, fragment, First section/Development, bars 192-195 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 15. Reproduced by permission of the Library of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation, Moscow.



Example 4.3c Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, op. 46, fragment, Third section, bars 345-349 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 22-23. Reproduced by permission of the Library of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation, Moscow.





Example 4.3d Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, op. 46, fragment, Fourth section, bars 455-457 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 30-31. Reproduced by permission of the Library of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation, Moscow.



Example 4.3e Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, op. 46, fragment, Fourth section, bars 470-476 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 31. Reproduced by permission of the Library of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation, Moscow.

He pursued a similar method with the melodic passage of a transitional character *Tranquillo assai* in the first section (bb. 110-119), where it connects the exposition and development, and in the final section, where it is considerably shortened (bb. 440-442) and leads instead of a coda towards the *Fughetta*. This approach enhanced thematic development, created new structures and thus gave special contrasting features to the texture and rhetoric.

Example 4.3f Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 46*, fragment, First section/Exposition, bars 110-119 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 10. Reproduced by permission of the Library of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation, Moscow.

Tranquillo assai.

p Tranquillo assai. *pp*

p *rall.*

a tempo *pp* *pp* *rall.*

Detailed description: This image shows three systems of handwritten musical notation for piano. The first system is marked 'Tranquillo assai.' and includes dynamic markings 'p' and 'pp'. It features a treble and bass clef with various notes, rests, and slurs. Handwritten annotations include fingerings like '2 2', '1 5', '2 3 4 5 2 3', and '4 2 1 2 1'. The second system continues the piece with 'p' and 'pp' dynamics and includes a 'rall.' marking. Handwritten annotations include '2 1 2 4 5' and '5 3 2 4 2'. The third system is marked 'a tempo' and includes 'pp' and 'rall.' dynamics. It shows a change in tempo and includes a double bar line with a repeat sign. Handwritten annotations include '8' and '12 8'.

Example 4.3g Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, op. 46, fragment, Fourth section, bars 440-442 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 30. Reproduced by permission of the Library of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation, Moscow.

Tranquillo assai.

Tranquillo assai. *p*

Detailed description: This image shows a single system of handwritten musical notation for piano. It is marked 'Tranquillo assai.' and includes a dynamic marking 'p'. The notation is in treble and bass clefs with various notes, rests, and slurs. Handwritten annotations include fingerings like '5', '2 2 3 4', '2 2 3 4', and '5 2 1 3 2'. The system ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Vasilenko placed special emphasis on the internal balance of structural dimensions within the sonata. The manuscript of the sonata contains a large number of numeral markings of Vasilenko in blue and red pencils that correspond to the piano and viola parts respectively. They indicate that he calculated the number of bars in sections and regarded the equilibrium of structures as being of great importance for the clarity and expressiveness of a musical composition.²³³ All three parts of the second subject in the exposition have almost perfect internal and external meter balance or a symmetrical design (12/12/11), which brings the sense of tranquillity after the agitation of the first subject group. The third part has

²³³ These sectional divisions do not form any integer sequences as they trample back and forth, but demonstrate larger sections in the viola part in comparison with the piano. Thus the viola part forms the following model: 44-55-48-42-39-97-54-48-49-41; whereas the piano part has 12-11-13-13-16-16-16-12-14-16 and so on. The complete chart is included in Appendix 4. The emphasis on structuring and inner clarity of forms was characteristic of the time. Vasilenko's teacher Georgii Konius developed a method of form analysis called *metrotektonizm* [Metrotechtonic Study] that was based on the abstract principle of proportions similar to architecture, in which the crystal symmetry of bars in a work was the factor of beauty of the work as a whole. Thus the proportion of bar grouping, so called the law of balance of temporal values, is the principal of formation of any form. According to Konius' method, the equality of grouping creates a 'harmony' of temporal structures, for example, 2 3 4 - 2 3 4, 2 3 4 - 4 3 2, 2 3 4 - 3 4 2. An uneven grouping can compensate an even grouping and thus form a quadrangle figure, for example, 5+3=8=2⁴ or 5+2+5=12=2⁶. The metre of a pulse is consequently 2⁴ and 2⁶ that tightens the sections of a work together, in which the sum of structural proportions may not correspond to particular sections of a work, such as a theme or episode. Konius' method was of some interest for Vasilenko as he briefly mentioned this in his unpublished article on Taneev. However, Vasilenko's division included in appendix 4 does not correspond to the method of Konius, the example of which is demonstrated in Appendix 4a. For further reference to Konius and his method see: 1. Sergei Vasilenko, *Gody obshcheniia s S.I. Taneevym*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2465, op. 1, ed. khr. 939, p. 19. 2. Georgii Konius, *Materialy, vospominaniia, pis'ma*, 1862-1933 [Materials, Memoirs, Letters], ed. Natalia Konius and Lidia Kozhevnikova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1988). 3. Georgii Konius, *Metricheskoe issledovanie muzykal'noi formy* [Metric Research of a Musical Form] (Moscow, Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1933), 1-36.

rallentando molto for the last two bars, which consequently extended its length and brought it to equilibrium with the previous two parts. The development has a complete internal balance with 24 bars in each sector and four bars of motivic development in the first and last sectors based on the first subject. Vasilenko only added one extra bar with a pause to the cadenza (24+4/24/24/4+24+1). The third section maintained almost perfect balance between the sectors keeping the same length of nine bars with three bars of the introduction and ten bars in the closing sector (3+9/9/9/9/10/10). The fourth section retained the length of the theme-answer from the *Fughetta* with a slightly extended episode (12+3/12+3+1). Vasilenko only added connections between the exposition and counter-exposition with one extra bar before the coda. The sizes of the opening sector and the coda have 41 bars each and form the arch of the finale.

Vasilenko united the diversity and dissimilarity of structures and textures within this work. The first and last sectors in the finale are both based on the first subject group themes and thus their supremacy is endorsed by the relations between the thematic materials in the opening and final sections of the sonata. These relations emphasise that this internal four-section layout has traditional rudiments of a sonata-allegro with an exposition and development in the first section and the finale that accomplishes the function of a recapitulation and re-establishes the material of the exposition. This thematic superiority clarifies the reason for the imbalance of length between the sections of the sonata, with the first and last sections being considerably larger than the middle.²³⁴ The first and fourth sections present, elaborate, modify and reinstate the thematic and harmonic material and thus perform the most significant dynamic function and space in the structure. The second and third sections with their

²³⁴ See Table 4 above.

contrapuntal and distinctive oriental idioms play the role of a thematic and linguistic contrast that deepens the musical drama and argument set up within the exposition and development of the first section. There is also a clear tendency towards bar reduction towards the fourth section, which is twice as long as the third, but twice as short as the first. The role of the fourth section here is to amalgamate, compress, bring tension to the climax and re-establish the supremacy of the main subject. Therefore, this sonata combines the elements of cyclical development, because of the modified return of the opening section, and temporal development due to the continuous dynamism and transformation throughout the sonata. Vasilenko showed a similar outline in his early music transcriptions, though undoubtedly on a lesser scale. This evaluation partly concurs with the opinion of Krebs, who pointed out the intensity of the musical drama and melodic enrichment in Vasilenko's writing: 'Nor did the organic form and motivic development enter his style. He substituted drama for form and melody for motive.'²³⁵ Indeed, one can hardly say that this sonata has an organic form as it combines traditional and unconventional elements. However, Krebs made a misjudgement when he alleged that Vasilenko ignored structural aspects and motivic development.

4.4 Performing issues

The structural, key, melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, meter, textural and stylistic peculiarities and origins in this work affect the instrumental and interpretative goals for performers. Both instrumental parts display an awe-inspiring orchestral power and, at the same time, sensitivity and depth of feeling demonstrated through the

²³⁵ Stanley Dale Krebs, *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), 83.

range of instrumental registers, dynamics and intensity of technical features, which are very demanding for both players. The composer did not give a violist any time to re-charge during all these diverse moods and textures, because all four sections are performed *attacca* in this sonata. Moreover, he offered the soloist one major cadenza and three short solo episodes, which added a *concertante* element to the work. The fact that this sonata was arranged for violin and piano²³⁶ speaks for its exceptionally advanced technical and instrumental qualities equal to those of the violin solo. Usually, violin works are transcribed for the viola not only as a means to enlarge its limited repertoire but also in order to boost its technical potential, which is traditionally regarded as inferior to that of the violin.

4.4.1 Fingering

The viola part has long episodes with sequential passages of double-stops throughout the sonata, including *Piu mosso*, *Energico* and the *Cadenza* in the first section, *Fughetta* and *Allegro strepitoso* in the third and fourth sections respectively. These intervallic combinations of perfect fourths and fifths, minor and major sevenths, minor seconds, tritons and octaves in the middle and high registers (upper positions of A and D strings) create rather uneasy stretches in the left hand.²³⁷ Irrefutably, these progressions are intervallic components of diminished sevenths and various inversions of ninth and seventh broken chords with omitted notes, with which Vasilenko furnished and elaborated the motivic development.²³⁸ The dynamic

²³⁶ Sergei Vasilenko, *Sonata dlia al'ta i fortepiano, op. 46. Perelozhenie dlia skripki i fortepiano Mikhaila Reitikha* [Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 46. Arrangement for Violin and Piano by Mikhail Reitikh] (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1955).

²³⁷ For further reference see bb. 28-31 in the subsection 'Structure (textures and forms)'.

²³⁸ See more information on the motivic development in the subsection 'Structure (textures and

probably suggested by Borisovskii, who according to Druzhinin liked uneasy and uncomfortable shifts on the fourth finger.²⁴² A violist might revise the fingering printed in the solo part in bb. 28-29 (third-fourth/second-third finger pattern in bar 28 and second-fourth/first-second finger pattern in bar 29) and change it for second-fourth/first-second and second-third/first-second finger patterns respectively, which perhaps would create unusual stretches. At the same time, this fingering would add strength and articulation to the passages that are essential in this powerful episode marked staccato.²⁴³

4.4.2 Bowing as the means of articulation

The question of articulation is of high importance for the clarity of this thick texture that has many accents and staccato symbols in dramatic episodes. Especially in the *Fughetta*, the rapid waves of scalic passages with dotted rhythm and ascending chromatic sequences in triplets require extra precision, efficiency and lightness of bow strokes.

Example 4.4.2a Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 46*, fragment, Third section, bars 326-331 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 21. Reproduced by permission of the Library of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation, Moscow.

²⁴² Fedor Druzhinin, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Greko-latinskii kabinet Shichalina, 2001), 72.

²⁴³ For further reference to the musical example see the subsection 'Structure (textures and forms)'.

However, they ought to be performed in the lower half, naturally the heaviest part of the bow, because of the *fortissimo* dynamic, which is impossible to sustain for this long period in the lighter, upper half of the bow. The bow stroke that emerges as the result of all these contradictory objectives is a combined short *détaché* and *staccato* (or heavy *marcato*) with occasional elements of *spiccato*. At the same time, the approach to this orchestral density of texture in the cadenza, in which Vasilenko added chords and ascending virtuoso scalic passages to the progressions of double-stops, is very different.

Example 4.4.2b Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, op. 46, fragment, First section/Cadenza, bars 200-205 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 16. Reproduced by permission of the Library of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation, Moscow.

16 Cadenza in tempo.

It necessitates a good production of tone, resilient, elastic and smooth connection of the bow strokes, depth and vividness of timbre, emphasis on the melodic elegance and liberty of phrasing covering all registers that elaborate the vocal and virtuosic display of the viola solo.

4.4.3 Upper positions and the search for a special timbre quality

Another notable peculiarity in the text of the sonata is occasional indications of positions and strings on which a performer is advised to play melodic phrases. Most of the time, these indications are written either next to expressive melodic themes and phrases or in the episodes in which these melodies gain a dramatic character due to intensive harmonic and rhythmical work.²⁴⁴ These indications require the use of high positions on low strings instead of the standard low positions on the middle strings that have an open exposed sound.

²⁴⁴ In the first section, these indications are printed in the themes of the first subject group in bb. 2, 6, 14-15, 24, 124, 126, 128 and in the cadenza; in the middle sections in bb. 253, 288, 290 and 368. There are none in the recapitulation as the composer expected the performer to duplicate the fingering and positions of the first subject from the first section.

Example 4.4.3a Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, op. 46, fragment, First section/Exposition, bars 124-128 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 11. Reproduced by permission of the Library of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation, Moscow.

This unusual repositioning implies that the composer was looking for a distinctive colour and timbre effect of a rich, deep and expressive tone production. It is interesting to compare this feature with Vasilenko's perception of viola qualities described in his book about instrumentation. He emphasized that the viola does not possess exceptional qualities in the middle register due to a certain nasal effect in its timbre. In his opinion, the high register exhibits broad expressive possibilities,²⁴⁵ the qualities that Vasilenko unreservedly demonstrated and enhanced in the sonata.

²⁴⁵ Sergei Vasilenko, *Instrumentovka dlia simfonicheskogo orkestra* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1952), vol. 1, 60.

Especially in *Piangendo*, all solo episodes and the coda have either long leaps within the range of two to three octaves or ascending arpeggiated passages, similar to the components characteristic of violin virtuoso compositions.

Example 4.4.3b Vasilenko, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, op. 46, fragment,
Fourth section/Coda, bars 499-503 (Moscow:
Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 33.
Reproduced by permission of the Library of the Union of
Composers of the Russian Federation, Moscow.

The image displays a musical score for a fragment of the fourth section/coda of Vasilenko's Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 46. The score is written for viola and piano. The top system shows the viola line with long leaps and ascending arpeggiated passages, and the piano accompaniment with sustained chords and arpeggiated figures. The bottom system shows the continuation of the piece, ending with a double bar line and repeat signs.

Here they frequently reach the top notes of the viola's playing range. This feature became distinctive of viola music towards the second half of the twentieth century, but was hardly ever employed in the music in the early 1920s. Moreover, Vasilenko's further comments give an explanation of his particular choice of a solo instrument, which lend special significance to the analysis of this sonata and provide

justification of his use of the viola instead of the traditional choice of the violin or cello.²⁴⁶

[...] Violas are superb as solo instruments. For example, in melodies of oriental character they reveal a certain acuteness and, at the same time, charm and expressiveness of tone, which are characteristic features of folk instruments of the East. Its timbre reminds one of the *cor anglais*. However, if a melodic line has a fast tempo and contains difficult technical elements then one should indeed give his preference to the viola. [...]²⁴⁷

Even the harsh critics of Vasilenko emphasised the beauty and self-expression of his melodic lines in the sonata. Thus Nikolai Miaskovskii writing in an article '*Na kontsertakh sovremennoi russkoi muzyki*' [At Concerts of Contemporary Russian Music] in the magazine *Muzykal'naia kul'tura* [Music Culture] in 1924, made a positive remark after his unjustified criticism of the 'prehistoric' language of the sonata that the clarity and candour of themes were the best features in this composition. Furthermore, he specifically pointed to the beauty of the viola in the second section that has melodies of oriental character, which unpredictably correlated with the judgment of Vasilenko with regard to the usage of the viola

²⁴⁶ Rogal'-Levitskii left deeply appreciative and inspiring words about Vasilenko, which perhaps do not convey specific details, but emphasize the elegance and diversity of instrumental and melodic approach in the sonata and the originality of Vasilenko's instrumental choice. 'The viola sonata was born in this colourful exquisite oriental aroma, in this fantastic chaos of boundless perception of the mysterious exotic and in this amazing play of various instrumental timbres. It is difficult to say precisely what thoughts guided the author and explain his existence among this bright layer of the Orient [...]. His passion towards everything exquisite, beautiful and extraordinary directed his instrumental choice towards the viola rather than the violin or cello.' Dmitrii Rogal'-Levitskii, *Sergei Vasilenko i ego al'tovaia sonata* (Moscow: Muzykal'nyi sektor, 1927), 9.

²⁴⁷ Sergei Vasilenko, *Instrumentovka dlia simfonicheskogo orkestra* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1952), vol. 1, 60.

above. 'The sincerity of music reaches its culmination of expressiveness in lyrical moments, in particular in the slow second section.'²⁴⁸ Thus, the opinions of these two antagonists differed with regard to the definition and stylistic content of true contemporary music, but complemented each other on the exceptionally melodious nature and eloquence of instrumental tone in the sonata. Vasilenko, in his turn, did not restrict his melodies to the upper register of the viola that in his opinion was especially remarkable, but used freely all four octaves of the viola's capacity. His most lyrical theme of the second subject and the second theme in the second section are written in the low and middle registers of the viola. They require sensitive control over the vibrato in order to maintain the intimacy and introversion of the music throughout. Moreover, Vasilenko used a mute in the second section, which imparted a special mysterious, velvety and mellow sonority to the timbre.

4.5 Conclusion

The depth of knowledge of instrumental colours, their combinations, technical and sonorous possibilities as well as the professionalism in their application allowed Vasilenko to employ, operate and mix contradictory idioms with dynamism and expression. He modified his language according to the requirements of the new musical epoch and enriched his viola sonata with the instrumental advantages and inventions of the twentieth century. Writing in October 1919, his contemporary Boris Asaf'ev commented that Vasilenko 'does not look behind and he cannot look

²⁴⁸ Nikolai Miaskovskii, *Sobranie materialov v dvukh tomakh* [Collection of Materials in Two Volumes] (Moscow: Muzyka, 1964), vol. 1, 231.

ahead. Therefore, he will not discover any new paths but he is always modern.’²⁴⁹

Asaf’ev was right to a degree due to Vasilenko’s close bond with the traditions of earlier Russian composers and folk music and his inspiration drawn from the Silver-Age aesthetics, but his musical language was also moderately influenced by Debussy and Skriabin, of which more in the fifth chapter. The modernism that Asaf’ev described can be distinguished in the modernist approach to the one-movement sonata form, the experiments with polyrhythm and poly-metre, the moderate modifications in the harmonic language with freely used seventh and ninth chords and unusual chromatic modulations – not extending to a continuous atonality, but bringing a degree of nonconformity and novelty to the tonal plan.

The range and complexity of styles and string techniques in Vasilenko’s works for viola and piano allow one to describe them as unique examples of Russian compositions for the viola with a diversity of harmonic and rhythmic language, an exquisite palette of sound colour and a considered approach to the form, articulations and dynamics. Rena Moisenko described Vasilenko’s writing as ‘exotic, aesthetic and excessively refined’,²⁵⁰ which also applies to his viola works. The composer often explored beyond the traditional limits of the technical and sonic potential of the instrument, placing it on a par with the violin. Thus, he challenged the whole conception of the tradition that regarded the viola as inferior to the violin and other instruments of the string family. This innovative style launched new standards in viola performance and expanded its repertoire. Vasilenko’s most important achievement in this sonata was the enhancement of the viola with a quasi-

²⁴⁹ Boris Asaf’ev, *O muzyke XX veka* [On the Music of the Twentieth Century] (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1982), 111.

²⁵⁰ Rena Moisenko, *Realist Music. 25 Soviet Composers* (London: Meridian Books Ltd., 1949), 236.

orchestral range of colours, and an equal intensity of musical and technical material that was rare in chamber music.

Chapter Five

Stylistic issues in Vasilenko's viola compositions

5.1 Formation of musical principles

Vasilenko's compositional language is refined, inimitable and euphonious with a particular emphasis on a timbre, register and sonority. What was the inspirational milieu of Vasilenko's creativity? His inner circle of friends consisted of leading musicians, writers and artists of the time that influenced the formation of his aesthetic principles and interests. Among the collection of Vasilenko's documents in the archive of his friend Fedorov, is an undated file designed and neatly decorated in Vasilenko's hand with his personal writings, inscriptions and photos entitled '*Moi uchitel'ia i druz'ia*' [My Teachers and Friends].²⁵¹ The content of this file was not transferred in this format into Vasilenko's two books of memoirs, published in Moscow in 1948 and 1979, which are discussed in the first chapter. It is a valuable document as it brings to light the names of the most important personalities in the view of Vasilenko that played a crucial role in his professional growth. Vasilenko extracted these names from a long list of his acquaintances and commented on each person that he included in this unpublished file with deep respect and admiration. All these individuals were not only major personalities in their professional fields and very active public figures, but above all, they are remembered in history as the true proponents of the Russian national heritage. Among them were musicians Anatolii Liadov, Vasilii Safonov, Aleksandr Glazunov, Mili Balakirev, Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov and Fedor Shaliapin, the critic Vladimir Stasov, the entrepreneur

²⁵¹ Sergei Vasilenko, *Moi uchitel'ia i druz'ia*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 413, pp. 1-20. This file is likely to be of the mid 1940s, when Vasilenko worked on the first publication of his memoirs.

Savva Mamontov, the historian Vasilii Kliuchevskii and artists Viktor Vasnetsov, Mikhail Nesterov and Mikhail Vrubel’.

Vladimir Stasov, the literary mentor of the ‘*Moguchaia kuchka*’ [‘The Mighty Handful’, commonly called ‘The Five’], the composers’ group that was distinctive for its endeavour to create a genuinely Russian music, gave the following advice to Vasilenko in 1903, after a concert in which he listened to Vasilenko’s *Epicheskaia poema* [Epic Poem] op. 4: ‘You are a true Russian composer! Do keep this direction and do not turn towards the West. A Russian must always be Russian and only Russian!’²⁵² Perhaps, today these authoritarian words of one of the firm believers in Russianness over European influence in literature, fine arts and music could be interpreted as radically nationalistic and narrow minded. At the same time, they imply faithfulness towards one’s own origin and customs that preserves the distinctiveness of a national idiom and one’s own individual traits. Vasilenko did indeed follow this path and gained recognition as a composer with special emphasis on Russian national traditions and history, including the Old Believers’ chant,²⁵³ folk and oriental music, and symbolic and mystic themes influenced by the Silver Age aesthetic. However, he was equally inspired by the ideas of Glinka and Taneev as well as the musical trends of the West, including French Impressionism, of which below. Vasilenko showed true individuality in his refined implementation of these often incompatible subjects in his viola compositions. Thus, his fine stylization in

²⁵² Quoted in Sergei Vasilenko, *Moi uchitelia i druž’ia*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 413, p. 9.

²⁵³ Reforms to the practices of the Orthodox Church in the mid-seventeenth century led to a schism, with the *starovery* [Old Believers] adhering to the earlier rites, including the preservation of the *znamenny raspev*. Further details of Vasilenko’s interest in this subject are included in the subsection on the Old Believers below.

the *Madonna Tenerina*, a sample of early music from Italy, has some features comparable to Russian liturgical chants.²⁵⁴

5.2 Old Believers' practices and chants and their role in Vasilenko's musical expression

Chant as an element of musical vocabulary and as a symbolic depiction of faith played an important role in Vasilenko's artistic expression. He undertook diligent practical and scholarly research on the Old Believers' chant, *znamennyi raspev*, the prohibited movement of the Russian Orthodox Church that from the end of the seventeenth century led a clandestine existence in spite of severe persecution.²⁵⁵ On the recommendation of the Director of the Moscow Conservatoire Vasilii Safonov, who belonged to the Old Believers,²⁵⁶ and of Professor Stepan Smolenskii, who was the leading specialist on Russian liturgical music, Vasilenko was permitted to attend Old Believers' liturgies in Moscow, which were held in strict confidence and forbidden to outsiders. In an unpublished article of the late 1920s, Vasilenko explained the reasons for his thorough interest in their customs and practices.

²⁵⁴ For further discussion see the subsection 'Old Believers' practices and chants and their role in Vasilenko's musical expression'.

²⁵⁵ Only in 1905, did the last Russian tsar, Nicholas II, impose a law of religious tolerance towards the Old Believers.

²⁵⁶ For further reference see: 1. Aleksandr Gol'denveizer, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Deka-VS, 2009), 221. 2. Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1948), 29. Safonov belonged to the liberal wing of this movement called the *Edinovertsy* [Coreligionists], which was the only legal denomination of the Old Believers in Imperial Russia. However, the fact that Safonov belonged to this denomination has not been publicised. This movement was an attempt to unify the traditional Russian Orthodox Church and the Old Believers, who submitted to the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in return for their right to use old books and rites.

[...] In 1899-1901, I was very much interested in the Old Believers' singing, visited their services and eagerly studied the *kriuki* notation. Owing to the recommendation of my unforgettable teacher of the History of Church Singing Stepan Vasil'evich Smolenskii, I went to see the secret church services at the *Rogozhskii* and *Preobrazhenskii* cemeteries,²⁵⁷ became acquainted with the singers of their choirs and collected a great number of authentic ancient tunes based on the *kriuki*. At this time, I was hardly interested in the confessional forms of the religion, but in the most vivid manifestation of religious ecstasy. [...] ²⁵⁸

This practical experience made a profound musical impact on the young composer, though the essence of their faith did not appeal to him. Vasilenko learnt not only the technical components of the *znamennyi raspev*, but also the vitality of its musical expression, which using minimum resources depicted deep religious devotion and prayer.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷The *Rogozhskii* and *Preobrazhenskii* cemeteries were the burial and spiritual centres of the Old Believers in Moscow. Nevertheless, the Old Believers were legally banned from providing full church services, including the Holy Liturgy. Despite the prohibition, the Liturgies were performed behind closed doors and Vasilenko was trusted to attend them only due to his connections. The author of this thesis visited the Rogozhskii centre in July 2013. Today, it is the largest Old Believers' administrative and spiritual centre in Moscow, though the cemetery is a municipal non-denominational burial site and one of three churches, the Church of St Nicholas, belongs to the main Russian Orthodox Church.

²⁵⁸ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vokal'nye proizvedeniia* [Vocal Works]. Housed in GDMC, fund 36 (Kolleksiia avtografov i redkikh dokumentov) [Collection of Autographs and Rare Documents], op. 1, ed. khr. 7, pp. 1-2.

²⁵⁹ A fine anthology of the *znamennyi* chants from the collection of the State Public Scientific Technological Library of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences is available now in an electronic format owing to an internet project 'The Fund of *Znamennyi* Chants' that was founded in 2003. It also offers contemporary recordings and pre-revolutionary textbooks on the *znamennyi* chants with instructions on their technical components and methods of reading. Further reference

Vasilenko's first major composition, a cantata *The Legend of the Great City of Kitezh and the Quiet Lake Svetoyar* op. 5 written in 1902, was composed using the authentic tunes of the Old Believers and schismatic legends from the Volga region. It was dedicated to Safonov, who conducted its premiere at the concert of the Russian Music Society on 16 February, 1902, in Moscow.²⁶⁰ Vasilenko received a Gold Medal for this composition and his work anticipated Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov's opera on the same subject in 1904. Rimskii-Korsakov highly praised Vasilenko's cantata after a private audition of this work organised at his request by Safonov in October 1902 with Vasilenko and Aleksandr Gol'denveizer performing on two pianos.²⁶¹ 'I did like your work very much. The instrumentation is simply brilliant. You used glissando of trombones, which I have never utilized before.'²⁶² The introduction of the cantata starts in B minor with an opening theme entrusted to trombones. Vasilenko did not specify the titles of the authentic tunes and the sections in which he integrated them in his score.²⁶³ However, the author of this

in: *Fond znamennykh pesnopenii* [Fund of Znamennyi Chants], <http://znamenu.ru> (accessed September 11, 2012).

²⁶⁰ Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov, *Pis'ma. Stat'i. Vospominaniia* [Letters. Articles. Memoirs], ed. Nikolai Sokolov (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1986), 306. Following the advice of Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov, Vasilenko re-arranged this cantata as an opera in two acts and staged it at the Moscow Mamontov Private Opera on 23 March 1903. It was conducted by Ippolitov-Ivanov with the stage design and decorations made by Apollinariii Vasnetsov and Kazimir Malevich. However, the opera libretto was not effective for a stage production and so the production ceased the following season.

²⁶¹ The manuscript of the cantata arranged by Vasilenko for two pianos is housed in RGALI, fund 952, op. 1, ed. khr. 68.

²⁶² Quoted in Sergei Vasilenko, *Moi uchitel'ia i druz'ia*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 413, p. 2.

²⁶³ The clergy of the churches that Vasilenko visited did not allow him to copy the tunes of the chants that were performed at the ceremonies, because they did not want these tunes to be performed by the pagans as they called all those who did not belong to the Russian Orthodox Old-

thesis was fortunate to discover that this opening theme is an authentic tune of the *znamennyi* chant called *Bog Gospod'* [God is the Lord], which was performed daily at the early morning church-service of the Old Believers communities.²⁶⁴ Vasilenko only transposed it a minor third down and slightly altered its rhythm.

Example 5.2a Vasilenko, *Skazanie o velikom grade Kitezhe i tikhom ozere Svetoiare, op. 5*, fragment, *Maestoso*, bars 1-4: Sergei Vasilenko, *Vstuplenie i ariia gusliara. Skazanie o velikom grade Kitezhe i tikhom ozere Svetoiare, op. 5* [The Introduction and Aria of a Gusli Player. The Legend of the Great City of Kitezhe and the Quiet Lake Svetoyar] (Moscow, Leipzig: Jurgenson, 1902), 3. Reproduced by permission of the British Library, London.

The image shows a musical score for a piano accompaniment. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo/mood is marked 'Maestoso.' and the instrument is 'Trombe.'. The dynamics are marked 'ff'. The score shows four measures of music. The first measure has a treble clef staff with a melody starting on G4 and a bass clef staff with a bass line starting on D3. The second measure continues the melody and bass line. The third measure continues the melody and bass line. The fourth measure concludes the fragment with a final chord in the treble staff and a bass line.

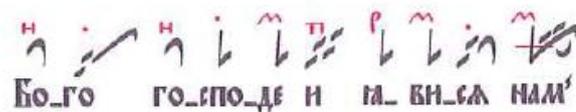
Example 5.2b *Bog Gospod'*. The original Old Believers *znamennyi* tune no. 7: Fond *znamennykh pesnopenii* [Fund of *Znamennyi* Chants]. <http://znamen.ru>

Rite Church. Therefore, Vasilenko had to rely on his musical memory and write the tunes down at home, which he then used as the musical material for his own melodies. Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 103-105.

²⁶⁴ This tune is listed as no. 7 in the section '*Na utreni. Bog Gospod'* [In the Morning. God is the Lord] among the collection of the *znamennyi* chants in: <http://znamen.ru> (accessed March 10, 2013).

Глас 7

♩ 5161:



♩ q106:



н ≡ Сит.:



This theme is followed by an aria of a *gusli* player, who sings the tale of Kitezh, which the Old Believers associated with the holy city, where the true believers could openly lead their religious life.²⁶⁵ The music exhibits continuous melodic and note repetition that was characteristic of the *znamennyi* chants, which Vasilenko opposed with rhythmic and meter flexibility. This is the only part of the cantata that was published for the first and last time in 1902 by Iurgenson.²⁶⁶ Unfortunately, this cantata was never recorded and remains in manuscript. It is likely that this obvious musical association with the recognizable chants of the prohibited Old Believers' movement on the public concert stage became the focal

²⁶⁵ For further reference see: 1. Natal'ia Ponyrko, ed., "Legenda o grade Kitezhe [The Legend of the City of Kitezhe]," in *Biblioteka literatury drevnei Rusi. XIII vek* [The Library of the Literature of Ancient Russia. Thirteenth Century], vol. 5, ed. Dmitrii Likhachev, Lev Dmitriev, Anatolii Alekseev, and Natal'ia Ponyrko (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1997), 168-183. 2. Vasilii Leonidovich Komarovich, *Kitezhskaia legenda. Opyt izucheniia mestnykh legend* [The Legend of Kitezhe. The Learning Experience of Local Legends] (Moscow, Leningrad: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1936), 157-173.

²⁶⁶ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vstuplenie i ariia gusliara. Skazanie o velikom grade Kitezhe i tikhom ozere Svetoiare*. Text by Nikolai Manykin-Nevstruev (Moscow, Leipzig: P. Iurgenson, 1902), 1-13.

point for tsarist censorship and was the consequent reason for the withdrawal of this work from the concert repertoire.²⁶⁷

Znamennyi raspev, melismatic liturgical singing in unison, used to be the only singing tradition in the Russian Orthodox Church up until the reforms of Patriarch Nikon in the mid-seventeenth century.²⁶⁸ These church reforms introduced a polyphonic way of singing influenced by the West, in particular Poland, Germany and Italy,²⁶⁹ and brought in the modern five-line staff notation in place of the

²⁶⁷ Vasilenko's cantata was intended for concert performance and could not possibly compete in size and grandeur of stage effect with the opera of Rimskii-Korsakov on the same subject. Despite the religious background of the legend of Kitez and of St. Fevroniia of Murom that Rimskii-Korsakov adapted for his opera, his fine work is secular in its musical expression, whereas in Vasilenko's cantata, the implementation of the authentic Russian chants placed a stronger focus on its religious context.

²⁶⁸ Further musicological sources concerning the Old Believers' practices and Russian melismatic singing are still very limited in English. Among them: 1. Nicholas Brill, *History of Russian Church Music, 988-1917* (Bloomington: Nicholas Brill, Illinois State University, 1982), 13-44. 2. Alfred J. Swan, *Russian Music and its Sources in Chant and Folk-song* (London: John Baker Ltd., 1973), 29-44. 3. Dmitrii Conomos, *The Late Byzantine and Slavonic Communion Cycle: Liturgy and Music* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985), 82-170.

²⁶⁹ Iurii Kholopov (1932-2003), a prominent Russian musicologist and music theorist, was of the opinion that these church reforms were largely influenced by the development within the Orthodox Church and the treatise '*Musikiiskaia grammatika*' [Musical Grammar] dated 1679-1681 and written by the first Russian music theorist Nikolai Diletskii. Further reference in: Iurii Kholopov, "Russkaia filosofii muzyki i trudy Alekseia Loseva [Russian Musical Philosophy and the Works of Aleksei Losev]," in *Voprosy klassicheskoi filologii. Vypusk XI* [Questions of Classical Philology. Edition XI], ed. Aza Takho-Godi (Moscow: MGU, 1996), 240-248. However, Diletskii gained his ideas directly from the West as he studied at the Jesuit Academy of Vilna (Vilnius, the present capital of Lithuania), one of the oldest universities in Eastern Europe founded in 1579 by the Society of Jesus, a religious order of the Roman Catholic Church. The curriculum at the Academy was taught in Latin. In addition, contemporary researchers question Diletskii's nationality, who possibly had Polish, Jewish and Ukrainian roots. Further reference may be found in: Irina Gerasimova, "K voprosu o proiskhozhdenii kompozitora Nikolaia Diletskogo [Towards the Question of the Origins of the Composer Nikolai

symbols called *kriuki* that developed from Byzantine *neumatic* notation. Vasilenko recalled the difficulties of reading this notation:

[...] The ancient symbols called *kriuki* did not represent any individual sounds.

These symbols had curious titles such as ‘*golubchik borzyi*’ [‘my swift dove’], ‘*dva v chelnu*’ [‘two in a canoe’], ‘*nemka kudriavaia*’ [‘a curly German lady’] etc., and represented a whole complexity of notes. One had to learn this endless number of symbols like characters in Chinese grammar and also have knowledge of their combinations. [...] ²⁷⁰

Writing in the late 1940s, Vasilenko expressed deep sorrow that the collection of the *kriuki* books that was brought together by Smolenskii at the *Sinodal’naia* [Synodal] School in Moscow, which specialised in church singing, was irretrievably lost when the school was liquidated by the Bolsheviks in 1918.

[...] Certainly, I do not share the belief of the enthusiast Smolenskii that the *kriuki* books are the only treasure of Russian ancient music and that these tunes can be used for writing dozens of symphonies and operas. However, I thoroughly regret that this unique heritage, if it has not yet been lost, is still not deciphered. [...] ²⁷¹

Diletskii],” in *Drevnerusskoe pesnopenie. Puti vo vremeni. Vypusk 4. Materialy nauchnoi konferentsii ‘Brazhnikovskie chteniia 2008-2009’* [Old Russian Chant. The Paths of Time. Edition 4. The Handbook of the Musicological Conference ‘Brazhnikov Readings 2008-2009’], eds. Al’bina Kruchinina and Natal’ia Ramzanova (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia Konservatoriia imeni Rimskogo-Korsakova, 2010), 163-173.

²⁷⁰ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal’nyi variant*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op.1, ed. khr. 410, p. 39. The signs have names and spiritual symbols. Thus, ‘*golubchik borzyi*’ represents two ascending sounds and a symbol of the Holy Ghost. Further reference in: E. A. Grigor’ev, *Posobie po izucheniiu tserkovnogo znamennogo peniia* [Handbook of Znamennyi Chant Church Singing Studies] (Riga: Rizhskaia grebenshchikovskaia staroobriadcheskaia obshchina, 1992), 32-49.

²⁷¹ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal’nyi variant*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 410, p. 41. For further information on the Smolenskii collection of manuscripts see: Nicholas

Znamennyi raspev was composed using different compositional *modi operandi* to Western musical systems. At the same time, it had characteristics comparable to the plainsong notated in *neumes* that was used for the body of chants and motets in the Roman Catholic Church. Likewise, the *znamennyi raspev* was of monophonic origin with a melody in conjunct motion that followed a pitch system of whole and half-steps, though the scale was over an octave.

Vasilenko's practical expertise in the *znamennyi raspev* certainly influenced his aural perception of early liturgical music in general. Vasilenko emphasised that he was captivated by the Old Believers' practices largely due to the effect of their genuine tunes that provoked and strengthened the religious zeal of the worshippers without any additional embellishments to beautify the ceremony. The exceptional manifestation of religious belief and prayer combined with the musical asceticism typical of the *znamennyi raspev* is also demonstrated in the second piece *Madonna*

Brill, *History of Russian Church Music, 988-1917* (Bloomington: Nicholas Brill, Illinois State University, 1982), 141-142. Fortunately, research on the *kriuki* notation and the early liturgical chants continued during Soviet rule. Maksim Viktorovich Brazhnikov (1902-1973) was a musicologist and the pre-eminent scholar on Russian early liturgical music in the USSR, who deciphered numerous manuscripts. In 1940, Brazhnikov was sacked from his research post at the Hermitage in Leningrad, but managed to convince Stalin by writing of the importance of this heritage for the country. Stalin gave permission for him to carry out this research, though the majority of Brazhnikov's works have not been published and are kept in the archives of the St. Petersburg Conservatoire and the GNMCMC, funds 23, 286, 340. Further reference may be found in: 1. *Istoriia v litsakh* [History Through Faces], "Maksim Viktorovich Brazhnikov," Russian National Library, <http://www.nlr.ru/ar/staff/braj.htm> (accessed September 11, 2012). 2. Alexander Ivashkin, "Shostakovich, Old Believers and New Minimalists," in *Contemplating Shostakovich: Life, Music and Film*, ed. Alexander Ivashkin and Andrew Kirkman (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 19-45. 3. Elena Meshcherina, *Muzykal'naia kul'tura srednevekovoi Rusi* [Musical Culture of Medieval Russia] (Moscow: Kanon, 2008), 49-55. 4. Mariia Lebedinskaia, *Den' za dnem. Vospominaniia o Maksime Viktoroviche Brazhnikove* [Day after Day. Memoirs About M.V. Brazhnikov] (St. Petersburg: Petro-RIF, 1994).

Tenerina from the *Four Pieces on Themes of Lute Music of the Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries*, op. 35, for viola and piano written in 1918. The *Madonna Tenerina* is based on an instrumental sample of early music from Italy that Vasilenko discovered in archives.²⁷² The outcome of Vasilenko’s stylization in the lute pieces is very appealing and thoughtful, and communicates with a contemporary audience without requiring knowledge of all the details of the Baroque style and mentality. Moreover, the austere minimalism without any embellishments of the first theme of the *Madonna Tenerina* in conjunct motion that gives the impression of “tramping” backwards and forwards between the pitches E, F#, G and A does not develop any further and reminds one of the ascetic simplicity, plainness and steadiness of the monodic chants. In addition, the narrative qualities of this musical prayer addressed to the Virgin Mary are distinct from the very first bars.

Example 5.2c Vasilenko, *Madonna Tenerina*, fragment, *Andante misterioso*, bars 1-11 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal’noe izdatel’stvo and Wien, New York: Universal Edition, 1932), 2. Reproduced by permission of Universal Edition.

Andante misterioso ♩ = 66
Con sordino
p dolcissimo
3 1
poco riten.

²⁷² Further discussion of the lute pieces may be found in chapter three.

Indeed, the visual associations of the service were of no less importance for the composer's perception of the music as Vasilenko's memoirs demonstrate their close relationship:

[...] On the hazy frosty morning at 5 o'clock [...] I entered the dark church. Ancient ten *pood* deacon's candles²⁷³ flickered with smoky flames. All members of the congregation were in dark clothing and the women in white embroidered headscarves as depicted in the painting of Apollinariii Vasnetsov 'Taking the Veil'.²⁷⁴ The monophonic singing in unison of a big choir was magnificent. [...]²⁷⁵

These emblematic rituals irretrievably disappeared from the ordinary liturgical services and became a matter of research for scholars. Besides, Vasilenko strongly linked the Old Believers' music with the ancient icons. In his opinion, they both depicted the spiritual atmosphere of the irrational mystic world that was in harmony with Vasilenko's musical aspirations, of which more below. In the late 1940s, he recalled this in his memoirs: 'Perhaps, this was my imagination, but, at the time, I was deeply encouraged by this idea and eagerly studied the ancient religious

²⁷³ *Pood* is a unit of mass equal to approximately 16.38 kilograms, which was abolished in the USSR. The deacon's candle is a large candle that is held by clergymen in their hands during worship.

²⁷⁴ Vasilenko almost certainly confused Apollinariii Vasnetsov (1856-1933), who specialised in scenes of medieval Russia, with Mikhail Nesterov (1862-1942), who was indeed the author of the '*Velikii postrig*' [Taking the Veil], 1898 (housed in the State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg). Nesterov called this painting a symbolic requiem for his lost love for a young singer, who refused to become his wife. This picture depicts an Old Believers' hermitage in the woods with a procession of women in dark clothing with deacon's candles in their hands. Among the prioress and nuns is a young woman, in a white embroidered headscarf, who is taking the veil. Further reference in: 1. Irina Nikonova, *Mikhail Vasil'evich Nesterov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1984), 64-65. 2. Ekaterina Gromova, *Mikhail Nesterov* (Moscow: Olma, 2011), 26-27.

²⁷⁵ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal'nyi variant*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 410, p. 40.

paintings.’²⁷⁶ It is not without reason that Vasilenko compared the Old Believers’ services to the paintings of his friend Nesterov, who was a leading representative of religious Symbolism in Russian art.

[...] A devout Orthodox Christian, Nesterov, dedicated his pre-revolutionary paintings to the depiction of souls alienated from the world. These paintings had a huge influence on my musical creativity. They captured my imagination but not because of their holiness and religious feeling. A certain ineffable light and the otherworldly ambience were in accord with my artistic intellect. [...]²⁷⁷

These symbolic visual and narrative associations correlating with the most effective impact of sacred music were Vasilenko’s primary aspirations, which he fulfilled not only in his cantata and in the *Madonna Tenerina*. Vasilenko’s interest in the Old Believers’ rhetoric combined with the poetry of the Russian symbolists of the Silver Age was demonstrated in the third romance *Raskol’nich’e* [Schismatic] after the poem of Konstantin Bal’mont *Ty sveti, sveti* [You Shine, Shine] from the vocal cycle *Zaklinaniia* [Incantations] op. 16, 1909, for soprano and piano, which was published in 1911.²⁷⁸ Vasilenko’s two poems *Vir’* and *Vdova* [Widow] for bass and orchestra op. 6, 1903, also follow the same route. They were composed after the

²⁷⁶ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal’nyi variant*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 412, p. 11.

²⁷⁷ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal’nyi variant*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 412, p. 39. Vasilenko was a friend of many Russian painters, including Mikhail Vrubel’ and Viktor Borisov-Musatov, important representatives of Russian Symbolism. Vasilenko’s thorough interest in correlations of colour, visual images and music occupy a significant place in his works. Further discussion of these subjects and the influences of Symbolism is included in the separate subsection below.

²⁷⁸ Sergei Vasilenko, *Incantations Pour Chant et Piano, op. 16* (Moscow: Iurgenson, 1911). This work was premiered by Vera Petrova-Zvantseva and Sergei Vasilenko in Moscow in 1911.

poetry with the same titles by Ivan Bunin and Iakov Polonskii respectively, and dedicated by Vasilenko to Fedor Shaliapin. The first poem is in G minor. It depicts an Old Believers' hermitage hidden in a dark wood and protected by a wild bird called *vir'*. The bell ringing for evening prayer and the smoky flames of candles enrich the mysteriousness of the ascetic harsh habitat of the worshipers. Its sombre ritual melody written in the low register, gradually gains almost continuous note repetition, similar to Vasilenko's writing in the cantata *Kitezh*.

Example 5.2d Vasilenko, *Vir'*, fragment, *Moderato*, bars 7-15: Sergei Vasilenko, *Dve poemy dlia basa s orkestrom*, op. 6. *Perelozhenie dlia basa s fortepiano. Vir'*, slova Ivana Bunina. *Vdova*, slova Iakova Polonskogo [Two Poems for Bass with Orchestra, op. 6. Arrangement for Bass and Piano. 'Vir', Text by Ivan Bunin. 'Widow', Text by Iakov Polonskii] (Moscow, Leipzig: Jurgenson, 1905), 3. Reproduced by permission of the British Library, London.

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Vir' by Vasilenko. It consists of two staves: a bass line and a piano accompaniment. The bass line is written in G minor (one flat) and 4/4 time. The piano accompaniment is also in G minor and 4/4 time, starting with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic. The lyrics are in Russian and German. The Russian lyrics are: 'Гдѣ ель-никъ су-мрач-ный сто-ить въ лѣ-су зуб-ча-тымъ,'. The German lyrics are: 'Wo fin-strer Tan-nen-wald sich hebt im Forst als zac-kig'. The score shows the first seven bars of the piece.

тем-нымъ стро-емъ,
dunk-le Rei-he,

Example 5.2e Vasilenko, *Skazanie Vasilenko, Skazanie o velikom grade Kitezhe i tikhom ozere Svetoiare, op. 5*, fragment, *Maestoso*, bars 25-34: Sergei Vasilenko, *Vstuplenie i ariia gusliara. Skazanie o velikom grade Kitezhe i tikhom ozere Svetoiare, op. 5* (Moscow, Leipzig: Jurgenson, 1902), 3. Reproduced by permission of the British Library, London.

Г.
Н.
-я ромъ зо-вет-ся то о-зе-ро че-резъ то, что въ вѣ-
-jar wird be-nannt je-ner stil-le See, weil in Ur-rä-ter-

Trombe

Г.
Н.
-ка старо-дав-ні-е на томъ о-зе-рѣ со-лн-цу вос-хоже-му, бо-гу
-ten in Freud'und Weh sich das Volk hier am Wald-see ver-sammelt hat, um Ja-

f Quartetto

Example 5.2f

Vasilenko, *Vir'*, fragment, *Piu lento*, bars 29-32: Sergei

Vasilenko, *Dve poemy dlia basa s orkestrom*, op. 6.

Perelozhenie dlia basa s fortepiano. Vir', slova Ivana Bunina.

Vdova, slova Iakova Polonskogo (Moscow, Leipzig:

Jurgenson, 1905), 4. Reproduced by permission of the British

Library, London.

Più lento

Е - я у - боръ весь сѣ - ро - ас - пид - на - го цвѣ - та, го -
 Sein Kleid um - fließt ein Glanz von schiefer - grauer Tö - nung, sein

Più lento

p

colla parte

- лов - ка въ хо - хол - кѣ,
 Köpfchen ist be - schopft;

p

It then develops from *lento* to *allegro strepitoso*, its register expands with long leaps and both parts oppose each other with poly-metre. Unfortunately, none of these fine compositions were ever recorded, though they were published once in 1905.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁹ Sergei Vasilenko, *Poemy dlia basa s orkestrom. Perelozhenie dlia basa s fortepiano*, op. 6 [Poems for Bass and Orchestra, op. 6. Arrangement for Bass and Piano] (Moscow: P. Iurgenson, 1905), 1-26. The first poem was premiered by Vasilii Petrov (bass) and Sergei Vasilenko (conductor) in Kislovodsk in 1906; the second poem was premiered in Berlin in 1909. For further reference see: Sergei Vasilenko, "Moi vospominaniia o Vasilii Rodionoviche Petrove," in *Vasilii Rodionovich Petrov. Sbornik statei i materialov*, ed. Igor' Belza (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1953), 128-134.

The religious theme with a symbolic narrative interpretation continues in Vasilenko's romance no. 1, op. 13, 1908, *Devushka pela v tserkovnom khore* [The Girl Sang in a Church Choir] after a poem of Aleksandr Blok with the same title.²⁸⁰ At first glance, one may interpret this romance as a refined lyrical composition about a girl whose beautiful singing in a church brings hope and belief in a better life to her listeners. The image of ships leaving the bay represented imaginative dreams floating away, which was a typical element of the symbolic poetry of the Silver Age.²⁸¹ However, this text has a special historical and religious context hidden in the background. The poem was written in August 1905, and in May 1905 two-thirds of the Russian fleet was destroyed in the battle of Tsushima between Japan and Russia, which was a devastating loss for Russia. Thus, this romance is not only a nostalgic picturesque narrative but a symbolic musical prayer for all who gave their lives for their homeland. The last two lines of the work point to the Royal Doors and a child who is crying about those who will never come back. Traditionally, an icon with the Mother of God Hodegetria with the Child Jesus in her hands is placed on an iconostasis in an Orthodox Church on the left from the Royal Doors²⁸² thus opening a pathway to prayer and directing one to the only source of redemption for sins.

²⁸⁰ Sergei Vasilenko, *Romansy* [Romances] no. 1-3, op. 13 (Moscow, Leipzig: Iurgenson, 1909). The romance no. 1 was also published in English and French: Sergei Vasilenko, *The Singing Maiden. La jeune fille chantait* (London, Brighton: J&W. Chester, 1917). A recording of this romance performed in Russian by Ivan Kozlovskii (tenor) and Petr Nikitin (piano) has survived. Housed in London: BL, shelf number 1LP 0134518 S1 BD4 Melodiia. The text of this romance is enclosed in Appendix 5.

²⁸¹ Roman Iakobson, "Stikhotvornye proritsaniia Aleksandra Bloka [Poetic Divination of Aleksandr Blok]," in Roman Iakobson, *Raboty po poetike* [Works on Poetics], ed. Mikhail Gasparov (Moscow: Progress, 1987), 254-266.

²⁸² *Hodegetria* translates from Greek as 'She who shows the way'. This type of icons depicts the Virgin Mary holding the Child Jesus and pointing at Him as the only means of salvation for mankind.

The theme of this romance correlates with Vasilenko's sketches of a symphonic poem for chorus and orchestra *Obraz Bozhiei Materi Odigitrii* [The Image of the Mother of God Hodegetria] as well as the *Angel skorbi* [Angel of Sorrow] for an unaccompanied chorus, which he destroyed.²⁸³ One may call Vasilenko's approach religious Symbolism in music, which was a challenging aspiration as it ran contrary to both strict traditions of Russian and Western sacred music. However, this explains Vasilenko's brief comment in his memoirs, in which he listed his orchestral lute suite op. 24, 1912, which was used as the basis for his lute cycle for viola and piano, among the works that were influenced by Symbolism and Impressionism, including the symphonic poems *Sad smerti* [The Garden of Death] op. 12 and *Polet ved'm* [Flight of the Witches] op. 15. They were written at the time when his little son Aleksei died in 1908.²⁸⁴ It is likely that Vasilenko's approach to religious subjects in music was not only a tribute to Vasilenko's 'artistic intellect' as he pointed out in his memoirs, but also a symbolic echo of his personal loss. Regardless of the true motives of Vasilenko's implementation, his unique practical encounters, exploration and re-discoveries of the authentic means of Russian religious musical expression enhanced the quality and merits of his sacred compositions and brought them closer to their original attributes.

These icons are traditionally displayed at the altar on the left of the Royal Doors of the iconostasis in an Eastern Orthodox Church. For further reference see: Roderick Grierson, ed. *Gates of Mystery. The Art of Holy Russia* (Fort Worth, Texas: InterCultura and the Russian State Museum, 1994), 11-59, 121.

²⁸³ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vokal'nye proizvedeniia*. Housed in GDMC, fund 36, op. 1, ed. khr. 7, p. 2.

²⁸⁴ Further reference in: 1. Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1948), 123. 2. Georgii Polianovskii, *Sergei Vasilenko* (Moscow-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1947), 67.

Notably, Sergei Taneev, who broadly used Russian liturgical themes in his works, showed a pessimistic attitude to the *kriuki* material that Vasilenko used in his cantata,²⁸⁵ and Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov expressed disbelief in their authenticity, pointing out that after two hundred years of persecution these chants would acquire some elements of folklore. Rimskii-Korsakov was right to a degree as traditionally there are no hymn books in an Orthodox Church and the congregation learns the tunes by ear. Besides, by the end of the seventeenth century, there was a split within the Old Believers into two principal movements: *popovtsy* [with priests] and a more conservative group called *bezpopovtsy* [without priests],²⁸⁶ which consequently led to the adaptation of their singing practices according to the needs of each respective community, which did not always have enough singers.²⁸⁷ Traditionally, only male singers were allowed to sing in a church. However, due to the shortage, untrained female and male singers would step in, who learnt the tunes aurally during the services rather than by studying the *kriuki* books and thus naturally added local folk

²⁸⁵ Vasilenko remembered a caprice based on the themes of Vasilenko's cantata that his friend Iurii Sakhnovskii played on the piano in the styles of Bach, Handel and Mozart illustrating Taneev's admiration for these composers and his unenthusiastic attitude to the *kriuki*. Sakhnovskii concluded his improvisation with the following comment addressed to Taneev: 'Sergei Ivanovich being very happy that he teased Vasilenko departs in a bad cab to Klin.' Taneev listened and laughed himself to tears. Sergei Vasilenko, *Gody obshcheniia s S.I. Taneevym*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2465, op. 1, ed. khr. 939, pp. 20-21. Further discussion of Taneev's influence may be found in the subsection 'Song and counterpoint: the influence of Glinka and Taneev'.

²⁸⁶ Both movements believe in the importance of priesthood. However, the *bezpopovtsy* rejected those priests who ever practiced the New Rites as they considered them traitors and a threat to spiritual salvation. The *bezpopovtsy* believed that all true priests who practiced the Old Rites died during the reforms of Nikon.

²⁸⁷ For further information concerning the Old Believers' practices see: Old Believers, "Rarus's Gallery: Muzykal'naia kul'tura staroobriadtsev [The Musical Culture of the Old Believers]," <http://www.raruss.ru/rus-christian-painting/1764-music-old-believe.html> (accessed March 8, 2013).

elements to their practices.²⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the singers of the *znamennyi* chant were expected to perform naturally in the style comparable to folk singing that did not require classical vocal training. Moreover, Vasilenko's authentic collection of tunes came from the two main centres of the Old Believers in Moscow that did have fine singers, who carefully preserved the singing practices of the Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church. This fact makes Rimskii-Korsakov's scepticism with regard to authenticity of the musical material inapplicable to Vasilenko's case.

With regard to Taneev's view, unlike Vasilenko, he could not separate the external musical customs from the specifics of the philosophy and the eremitic way of life of this wing of the Russian Orthodox religion, which were extraneous to his beliefs, whereas for Vasilenko, the musical and visual impacts were the prime objectives. This symbolic approach allowed him to combine and elaborate their special musical elements with early musical material of Western origin and with the poetry of the Russian symbolists of the Silver Age.

²⁸⁸ It is likely that there was a cross-over influence of church and folk singing practices in some Old Believers' communities. Thus, the folk tunes preserved by the Nekrasov Cossacks that belong to the *popovtsy* movement evidently have been influenced by church singing. There are few general characteristics of their melodies that point to this supposition: they are in conjunct motion with note repetitions but almost no leaps; some tunes do not span more than a perfect fifth in register; they are monodic and are written in a low register, though they are performed by a mixed choir. The author of this thesis was privileged to listen to the authentic recording of the Nekrasov Cossacks made in 1984 during the ethnographic expedition to their settlement in the Levokumskii district of the Stavropol' region organised by the Moscow Conservatoire and led by Vera Medvedeva, a musicologist and a member of the Composer's Union. Some of these songs were not included in the LP 'The Nekrasov Cossacks at the Moscow Conservatoire' that was recorded in 1982 and produced by the *Melodiia* C20 20435 009 in the USSR in 1984. Further reference on the Nekrasov Cossacks and the samples of their songs is available thanks to the researchers Fedor and Tamara Tumilevich: Fedor and Tamara Tumilevich, "Kazaki-nekrasovtsy: nasledie kazachestva [The Nekrasov Cossacks: the Legacy of the Cossacks]," <http://www.tumilevich.ru/index.php> (accessed March 8, 2013).

5.3 Orientalism

One of the specific features of Russian Nationalist composers of the nineteenth - early twentieth century, in particular of Glinka, Rimskii-Korsakov, Balakirev, Borodin and Rakhmaninov, was their natural absorption and implementation of Oriental subjects. Vasilenko too followed this route as the second section of the viola sonata brought a particular focus on two independent vocal-type themes that reminded one of mournful and yearning exoticism typical of the Russian-Oriental melodic world. Lur'e emphasised this in his article '*Linii evoliutsii russkoi muzyki*' [Lines of the Evolution of Russian Music] written in 1944: 'The Russian East is certainly not picturesque, but one of the main and organically inseparable elements of Russian musical language.'²⁸⁹ The Oriental origin was not associated with a single place or location on any map, but was a collective imagination of an exotic culture with different elements drawn from the folk traditions of the Caucasus, Chuvash, Bashkir, Arabian and other nationalities of the south and east. Balakirev, the leader of the composers' group 'The Five', argued for the use of eastern subjects and harmonies as the means to oppose the German and Western-orientated style in Russian music. It developed into an exotic counter-culture.²⁹⁰ The presence of

²⁸⁹ Quoted in Igor Vishnevetskii, ed., *Evraziiskoe ukhlonenie v muzyke 20-30kh godov* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2005), 304.

²⁹⁰ Further reference may be found in: 1. Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance. A Cultural History of Russia* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 358-429. 2. Richard Taruskin, *On Russian Music* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2009), 188-189. 3. Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music. From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2006), 80-83. Oriental subjects through stylization became the hidden measure of the demonstration of forbidden political themes prohibited by the repressive Russian government and as the means to oppose the melancholic character of Russian folksongs with the freedom of Oriental passionate and sensuous fantasies communicated through symbolic nature. Balakirev's *Islamei* and

oriental elements with obsessive rhythms, note repetitions, accelerated tempi, irregular phrasing, augmented and diminished intervals and extended melismas became the distinguishing features of Russian music. The composers of 'The Five' often used authentic folk melodies, but did not confine themselves exclusively to this practice. Balakirev travelled to the Caucasus in 1862 and collected authentic songs of this region.²⁹¹ He observed that these melody-songs were all based on the pentatonic or five-tone scale typical of the music of Asia. This finding broadened further east the imaginary geography of Russian Oriental sources reaching China, Japan and India.

The manuscript of Vasilenko's autobiography dated 1922 provides previously unknown details of his thoroughgoing interest in Oriental ethnography.

[...] From 1911, I began my exploration of Oriental music. The start of the First World War in 1914 called off my plans of travelling to Japan, China and the islands of the Pacific Ocean to research their native music and instruments. [...]²⁹²

The first work that illustrated Vasilenko's interest in oriental exoticism was the *Maioriiskie pesni* [Maori Songs] after Konstantin Bal'mont op. 23, 1913.²⁹³

Tamara, Borodin's *Prince Igor* and *In the Steppes of Central Asia*, Rimskii-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* and *Antar* illustrated the vastness of the Russian Empire with its multinational European and Asian cultures, history and traditions with symbolic interpretations of the morality of a Western man and the irrationality of an Eastern woman.

²⁹¹ Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance. A Cultural History of Russia* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2003), 390-391.

²⁹² Sergei Vasilenko, *Avtobiografiia* [Autobiography]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2037 (Kochetovy), op. 1, ed. khr. 128, p. 1. Vasilenko's interest in exotic music resulted in composing the orchestral *Exotic Suite* op. 29 (1915-16), *Indian Suite* op. 42a (1927), *Chinese Suites* op. 60 (1928) and op. 70 (1931), *Japanese Suite* for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and xylophone op. 66 (1930), and *Chinese Sketch* for woodwind op. 78 (1933).

Vasilenko found a scientific hypothesis made by the Russian anthropologist, ethnographer and Professor of the Moscow University Dmitrii Anuchin that the Maori, the native Polynesian people of New Zealand, originated from the Caucasus.²⁹⁴ Therefore, Vasilenko added some oriental elements to his *Maori Songs*, including extensive chromatic progressions and poly-meter (6/8 and 3/4), but none of the augmented seconds traditionally associated with this style.

[...] I regard the 'Maori Songs' as a success, with which [...] my compositional activities pursued the enjoyment of the East and research into exotic music. [...] I relentlessly continued this work throughout my whole life. [...]²⁹⁵

In 1922, Vasilenko wrote a graceful and, at the same time, virtuoso *Vostochnyi tanets* [Oriental Dance] for clarinet in B-flat or viola with piano op. 47. Its joyful and lively character and harmonic execution that despite all modulations always reinstate a clear tonal centre are in contrast to the mood of the second section of the sonata. The viola manuscript of this piece has been irretrievably lost and was never published. The clarinet manuscript survived and has been preserved in the GNMCMC (fund 52, ed. khr. 242), though the first two pages of the manuscript have gone astray.²⁹⁶ The author of this thesis arranged this piece for viola and piano.

²⁹³ The manuscript of this work is housed in RGALI, fund 952 (Muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo Iurgensona), op. 1, ed. khr. 105.

²⁹⁴ Contemporary scholars believe that Polynesian people originate from the area of South China. Further reference may be found in: Peter Bellwood, James J. Fox, and Darrell Tryon, eds., *The Austronesians: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Canberra: The Australian National University Press, 2006), 23-24, 37-38.

²⁹⁵ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 315.

²⁹⁶ Fortunately, this work was published at least three times in 1931 by the Gosmuzizdat and 1949 and 1959 by the Muzgiz. Therefore, the missing text could be reconstructed. The fact that it was

This viola edition makes adjustments to the articulation and phrasing of the clarinet version to render this charismatic work more suitable for a stringed instrument.²⁹⁷

Unable to travel abroad, Vasilenko meticulously studied the elements characteristic of the Orient, but always trusted his own judgment:

[...] “Digging” through the books and articles I tried to uncover the methods of exotic music and the mysteries of its harmonisation. After two months I got fed up with the study of the theory of the Eastern modes, pitches, instruments and other various systems. [...] Setting the theories aside, which in my opinion were completely unnecessary for compositional activities, I persisted in collecting musical material and harmonised it as I felt psychologically fitting. [...]²⁹⁸

Among his works with an oriental influence is the ballet-pantomime *Noiia* [Noya] op. 42, 1923, completed a few months before the viola sonata.²⁹⁹ Rogal'-Levitskii substantiated the fact that Vasilenko's exoticism was different from the banal formulas and replications of original tunes and made a connection between these works.

[...] It would be reasonable to perceive the sonata as independent from other works of this period. However, knowing this ballet and having listened to the sonata, it

also intended for viola is confirmed in: 1. Georgii Polianovskii, *Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko i ego tvorchestvo* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1964), 259. 2. Georgii Ivanov, *Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko. Notograficheskii spravochnik* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1973), 35.

²⁹⁷ The score of this viola edition is attached to this thesis.

²⁹⁸ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 315-316.

²⁹⁹ This ballet was based on the melodies of Indian, Japanese, Vietnamese and Chinese folklore. Vasilenko re-approached the musical material of the *Noya* in the *Legend*, in one of his viola pieces of the early 1950s. For further information about the ballet *Noya* and the *Legend* see Appendix 3.

strikes one how similar they are in their essence. [...] A thorough study of the sonata allows one to associate this work with Vasilenko's oriental compositions. [...]³⁰⁰

It is virtually impossible to verify the resemblance between the sonata and ballet as *Noya* was neither staged nor published. However, taking into account the discussion above, one may say that the pursuit of exotic strands was indeed characteristic of Vasilenko's works of this period. In an unpublished article of the late 1920s, Vasilenko stressed the point that he changed his rhetoric in his compositions of 1913-1926: 'The second half of 1913 until 1926 was the period of a major turning from my previous style of writing. Love and exoticism became sources of inspiration for me.'³⁰¹

Vasilenko showed traditionalism in employing oriental elements in the sonata, but offered a different thematic interpretation. He supplemented the first theme in the second section with a term *amorevole*, a symbolic description of sensual fantasies and exoticism, which became a typical subject-matter associated with the Orient, and also with a phrase *quasi campana* that translates from Spanish as 'similar to a bell or chime'. Historically, most certainly this theme of a sacred intimate feeling would have been the most distant from any associative links with oriental expression. In his memoirs, Vasilenko compared his visualization of folk music from the Caucasus with fantastic frescos of ancient times.³⁰² It showed the

³⁰⁰ Dmitrii Rogal'-Levitskii, *Sergei Vasilenko i ego al'tovaia sonata* (Moscow: Muzykal'nyi sektor, 1927), 9.

³⁰¹ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vokal'nye proizvedeniia*. Housed in GDMC, fund 36, op. 1, ed. khr. 7, p. 3. Most certainly, Vasilenko's admiration for Tat'iana Shevaldysheva, his future wife, was a contributing factor.

³⁰² Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1948), 125.

individuality of the composer, who fearlessly blended two traditionally incompatible topics together.

5.4 Song and counterpoint: the influence of Glinka and Taneev

Vasilenko was a melodist, who placed special emphasis on the melodic outline and linear development of themes in the sonata and his other viola works. Aleksandr Grechaninov boosted Vasilenko's initial interest in vocal music during their lessons in the early 1890s. 'Grechaninov was a passionate follower of 'The Five'. [...] He adored Russian songs. From him, I gained an interest in and an ambition to learn Russian folklore.'³⁰³ In an unpublished article of the late 1920s, Vasilenko verified the importance of this genre in his style and divided his vocal compositions into three periods: 1896-1904, 1906-1913 and 1913-1926 that corresponded to his inspirations; firstly, from Tchaikovskii and Rimskii-Korsakov, then Russian Symbolism with strong emphasis on folk customs³⁰⁴ and, finally, exotic themes.

[...] I regard highly the process of composing romances, similar to orchestration. I consider a romance as an intact dramatic scene, but in a compact structure that, therefore, requires much more intensive work and temperament. In an opera, one may take a few pages to describe a scene, whereas here one has to outline the same with only a distinct stroke and often within a single musical phrase. Since my first vocal writing, I have always strived to achieve two elements: to reproduce the most

³⁰³ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal'nyi variant*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 409, p. 16.

³⁰⁴ Vasilenko composed many romances after the poetry of Russian Symbolist poets, including Konstantin Bal'mont, Valerii Briusov, Aleksandr Blok and Sergei Gorodetskii. For further reference to Vasilenko's list of works see Appendix 2.

comprehensive and psychologically adequate accompaniment [...] and to preserve a pure musical form. [...]³⁰⁵

Vasilenko followed this route of preserving musical structures and decorating his melodies with divergent harmonic and stylistic modes in the sonata giving them the elements of a romance and Eastern exoticism. This method he described in his unpublished archival writing dated 1949, more than a quarter of a century after the completion of this sonata.

[...] For many years of my life I have collected Russian songs and I came up with particular methods of arranging them. It is not enough to come across a fine Russian melody that has opportunities for extensive alteration. One needs to adorn it with an appropriate harmonic costume and find a matching style according to the origins of the song, whether the North, the Central Regions or the South. [...]³⁰⁶

Vasilenko's interest in melodic development encouraged him to combine different genres in the sonata: song elements in the first two sections and typical features of a fugato with an exposition and a counter-exposition in the third and the fourth sections, thus modernising the sonata form. The unusual synthesis of counterpoint and song elements combined in a single work was initially introduced by Mikhail Glinka, who was the first composer who implemented Russian subjects on a large scale.³⁰⁷ The emphasis on the national musical identity over the European

³⁰⁵ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vokal'nye proizvedeniia*. Housed in GDMC, fund 36, op. 1, ed. khr. 7, p. 1.

³⁰⁶ Sergei Vasilenko, *Avtobiograficheskie zapisi* [Autobiographical Notes]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 408, p. 2.

³⁰⁷ Glinka highly regarded his studies of composition and counterpoint with Siegfried Dehn in Berlin in 1833-34 that boosted Glinka's ideas about writing national music. 'He organised my knowledge and, in four small notebooks, he wrote especially for me the *'Science of Harmony or General Bass'*, the *'Science of Melody or Counterpoint'* and *'Instrumentation'*. I wanted to publish them, but Dehn

influence was growing in Russia towards the second half of the nineteenth century.³⁰⁸ Sergei Taneev was a strong advocate of Glinka's idea of combining counterpoint originating from Western Europe with a Russian folk-song of Slavonic, East European origin. This synthesis became Taneev's utopian goal in search of a distinctive Russian instrumental form as he considered the mission of any Russian composer to refine a unique Russian style. Taneev clarified his proposal '*Chto delat' russkim kompozitoram?*' [What Needs to be Done by Russian Composers?] in his notebook in February 1879 that explains Vasilenko's approach in his sonata.

[...] We do not have a national music. [...] The task of every Russian composer consists in furthering the creation of a national music. [...] We have to apply to Russian song the same thought process which has been applied to the song of Western peoples. We will then have a national music. Begin with elementary contrapuntal forms, pass to more complex ones, elaborate the form of the Russian fugue, and from there it is only a step to complex instrumental types. The Europeans took centuries to get there, we need far less. We know the way, the goal, we can profit by their experience.³⁰⁹

did not agree. There is no doubt that I am obliged to Dehn more than to any other maestro. [...] He organised not only my knowledge but my ideas about the art of music in general. His lectures were the starting point of my work - consciously rather than blindly as before. [...] The idea of writing national music, though not yet operative, became clearer.' Mikhail Glinka, *Zapiski* [Notes] (Moscow: Gareeva, 2004), 101-102. Glinka's first major national works were his operas *Zhizn' za tsaria* [A Life for the Tsar] and *Ruslan i Liudmila* [Ruslan and Lyudmila].

³⁰⁸ For further reference to the emergence of Russian national consciousness see: 1. Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism. From Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007), 74-226. 2. Richard Stites, *Serfdom, Society, and the Arts in Imperial Russia* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005), 84-398.

³⁰⁹ The manuscript of this article is housed in GDMC and is reprinted fully in Aminova's book. Quoted in Galima Aminova, *Otechestvennye istoki tvorchestva Sergeia Ivanovicha Taneeva*

Taneev, who taught Vasilenko and Skriabin composition at the Moscow Conservatoire, was a renowned expert on musical forms and his colleagues ironically called him an academic and alchemist for his broad knowledge, erudition and diligent approach to the purity and precision of musical forms, styles and language. Taneev was a master of counterpoint and in his treatise *Podvizhnoi kontrapunkt strogogo pis'ma* [Convertible Counterpoint in the Strict Style] written in 1889-1906 he explained the laws of counterpoint from the aspects of genuine logic and mathematics.³¹⁰ He regarded classical concepts of a composition as a pure rationale of technique that was extraneous to anything spontaneous. Vasilenko remembered that Taneev advised him to complete his study of law at Moscow University, when Vasilenko wanted to give it up in favour of music. Taneev pointed out that perhaps Vasilenko would rarely use 'the dreary dogmas of Ancient Rome, but these logical exercises were excellent for the intellect and mind. As a result, all the other subjects, including counterpoint and musical forms, would be easy to grasp.'³¹¹

The method of intensive development of themes that tightly unify and amalgamate different thematic material in a work was traditional for Russian composers, including Tchaikovskii, Rimskii-Korsakov and Taneev. As one of the best students of this highly competent and hypercritical theorist, Vasilenko was

(Krasnoiarisk: Gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2006), 217-218. All major monographs on Taneev are in Russian. Among them: 1. Leonid Sabaneev, *Vospominaniia o Taneeve* [Reminiscences about Taneev] (Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2003). 2. Grigorii Bernandt, *Sergei Ivanovich Taneev* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1983). 3. Boleslav Iavorskii, "Vospominaniia o Taneeve [Memoirs about Taneev]," in *Izbrannoe. Pis'ma. Vospominaniia* [Selected Works. Letters. Memoirs] (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2008), 157-281.

³¹⁰ Sergei Taneev, *Podvizhnoi kontrapunkt strogogo pis'ma* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1959). Sergei Taneev, *Convertible Counterpoint in the Strict Style* (Boston: Bruce Humphries, 1962).

³¹¹ Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1948), 82.

greatly influenced by Taneev's methods and ideas. This influence is evident in this sonata in the use of combined fugal and song elements.³¹² Vasilenko pointed out in his memoirs that Taneev scrupulously and fastidiously worked on his development sections, and his plans of these sections often had interesting methodologies, including the absence of the tonic but the presence of a new 'central' key and new episodic themes.³¹³ Thus, the absence of a home key D minor and the appearance of

³¹² Paul Hindemith used a comparable approach in his works, including viola sonatas. He was the only composer, who placed special emphasis on the viola as a solo instrument equally in both his compositional and performing activities at the beginning of the twentieth century. Hindemith occasionally combined his contrapuntal language with the elements of folksongs, certainly of German origin. Among them are the second movement of his *Sonata for Viola and Piano op. 11* and the concerto for viola and orchestra *Der Schwanendreher*, 1935. However, the obvious polarity of the national idioms of the composers' folkloric elements rooted in German and Russian cultures point to the uniqueness of their compositional influences that developed concurrently but independently. In addition, Hindemith wrote the majority of his sonatas for viola and piano and solo viola opp. 11, 25 and 31 between 1919-1923 with only two late sonatas of 1937 and 1939. Vadim Borisovskii was the first performer of Hindemith's sonatas in the Soviet Union after his concert tour to Germany in 1927. Thus, the premier of Hindemith's sonatas in the Soviet Union occurred some four years later after the completion and premier of the viola sonata by Sergei Vasilenko in 1923. Further reference on the performance of Hindemith's viola works in the USSR may be found in: Stanislav Poniatovskii, *Istoriia al'tovogo iskusstva* (Moscow: Muzyka, 2007), 222. Hindemith's sonata op. 11 still blends reminiscences of Romanticism, but the other sonatas gradually expound a leaner complex neoclassic style through highly dissonant language. The significance of rhythm in Vasilenko's sonata, the expansion of tonal harmony and a certain abrupt emotional restraint and clarity in the contrapuntal themes of the *Fughetta* after the liberty of expression in the first section and the intimacy in the second section are comparable with neoclassical features and the style of Hindemith. However, one can encounter only external features of Neoclassicism in this work, in which Vasilenko employed individual elements of the contrapuntal style by showing an eclectic approach in his highly individual compositional outcome.

³¹³ Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1948), 85. Taneev's plans for Bach's fugues may be seen in: Sergei Taneev, *Iz nauchno-pedagogicheskogo naslediiia* [From the Scientific and Educational Legacy], ed. Fedor Arzamanov and Luidmila Korabel'nikova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1967), 155-163.

a completely new theme *Energico* in E minor, the key that became predominant in the development section of Vasilenko's sonata, were the inimitable features of an instrumental sonata of the early twentieth century inspired by Taneev's ideas.

5.5 The Influence of the French Impressionists on Vasilenko's language

Vasilenko admitted that he experienced a period of fascination with French Impressionism, which marked a number of his works.³¹⁴ He denied the value of a thorough replication of compositional systems and traditions for the practical work of a composer by giving special merit to the combination of subconscious, picturesque and intellectual impulses.

[...] I ordered a number of scores of Debussy and Ravel from abroad, which I thoroughly studied. They suggested an idea of creating a new orchestral palette. I did not depart from the score of 'Pelléas et Mélisande' day and night. I was bored with the previous colouring. I found disgusting the orchestral canvases with predictable, obvious and firm clichés. I was also fed up with the scores of Glazunov: everything was provided and secured, everything sounded well, but without romanticism, flight of thought and audacity. At first, I started to strive for a higher and broader individualisation of particular instruments, then mixtures, in other words, combinations of instruments of different instrumental families. This field has endless combinations, distant from any clichés. [...] New sounds were created. The old major principle of filling in the middle register in order to gain a good and firm

³¹⁴ Among them are symphonic poems *Sad smerti* [The Garden of Death] op. 12, 1907-08, and *Polet ved'm* [The Flight of the Witches] op. 15, 1908-09, and a symphonic suite *V solnechnykh luchakh* [In the Rays of the Sun] op. 17, 1911.

sound palette was thrown away. I got rid of this principle ones and for all. [...]³¹⁵

Certainly, this freedom of expression and operation with the variety of compositional resources came after a thorough scholastic study. This knowledge gave Vasilenko independence of thought and practical consciousness, which consequently boosted his sensory stimuli and encouraged innovative approaches. Debussy expressed analogous ideas insisting that a theory does not have value, but the inner hearing, impulse and the feeling of contentment are the most important. 'There is no such thing as theory. If something pleases the ear then that's all that matters.'³¹⁶

The viola sonata of Vasilenko instantiates similar qualities. It becomes apparent that though it does not have any plot or a corresponding title apart from a plain phrase '*Sonata for Viola and Piano*', it does provoke impetuous images and sparks emotions. The broad usage of vocal elements with a strong focus on a linear development, harmonic unpredictability, contrasting textural material and a wide range of specific words and phrases indicating changes of dynamics, articulation and musical moods are conducive to the formation of this denotation. The score has an exclusive selection of Italian terms as *amoroso*, *impetuoso*, *energico*, *piangendo*, *affrettando*, *amorevole*, *disperato*, *furioso* in addition to the standard ones of *calando*, *dolce*, *dolento*, *agitato*, *marcato* and others. As a result, this music gains narrative qualities and conjures up immaterial sensations despite its opposing stylistic origins and associations. The elimination of positivism in favour of intuition, subconscious and psychological perceptions, a highly unorthodox narrative

³¹⁵ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 204-205.

³¹⁶ Quoted in Marguerite Long, *At the Piano with Debussy* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1972), 18.

style and distinctive rhythmic and harmonic experimentations united the languages of Vasilenko and the French Impressionists, but their inspirations came from different cultural grounds.

5.6 Symbolism

Like Debussy, Vasilenko was greatly influenced by the individualism of the Symbolist movement, which flourished in their native countries, France and Russia, at the turn of the twentieth century, though Symbolism took a special course of development in Russia. It transformed into the Silver Age aesthetic, a term referring to the unification of a number of artistic movements, including Symbolism and Futurism, in the first two decades of the twentieth century.³¹⁷ Dissatisfaction with the realistic portrayal of life embraced by poets and writers in the nineteenth century stimulated a wave of creativity and rebellion against traditional values unprecedented in the cultural history of Russia. This period was comprised of cross-fertilised literature, music, the visual arts, theatre and philosophy with a strong emphasis on Russian spiritual distinctiveness that influenced a whole generation of artists, writers and musicians, including Vasilenko. In the manuscript of an article dated 18 March 1947, Anatolii Aleksandrov gave a fair evaluation of the stylistic influences that made an impact on his teacher.

[...] The orchestral style of the French Impressionists was consonant with the individuality of Vasilenko with its colourful sound palette and harmonic

³¹⁷ Further reference in: 1. John E. Bowlit, *Moscow and St. Petersburg in Russia's Silver Age: 1900-1920* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008). 2. Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music. From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2006), 196-235.

exquisiteness. However, one should not exaggerate: the French school only partly influenced the Russian composer; he took its values and as it were translated into Russian language. [...] ³¹⁸

Vasilenko's intellectual ability merged with his natural aptitude for the intuitive and imaginative based on Russian mysticism that derived not only from the literature and arts of the epoch, but also from the irrational perception of the Russian soul drawn from national customs, fairy tales and folk art that traditionally linked human life and the Russian landscape and deified the act of creation. In an unpublished article Vasilenko emphasised this special link whilst describing his fascination with Russian Symbolist poets Briusov, Gorodetskii and Blok, which resulted in a series of romances op. 11-21 that Vasilenko composed during 1904-1913.

[...] In these texts I felt the possibility of depicting clearly the ideal correspondence between the soul of nature and the psychology of a human being. I constantly feel that the water-sprites, forest spirits, marsh priests and moon maidens ³¹⁹ are the embodiment of the inner forces of nature, which ought to reflect human relationships. Perhaps, this is a representation of romanticism, but only through these images I came closer to the depiction of human passions. [...] ³²⁰

This search for the soul became the distinctive feature of Russian culture, which had special resonance in the picturesque and narrative rhetoric typical of

³¹⁸ Anatolii Aleksandrov, *K 75-letiiu Sergeia Nikiforovicha Vasilenko* [On the 75 Anniversary of Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 320, p. 1.

³¹⁹ These spirits and gods of nature were traditional subjects of Russian tales and folk customs often derived from the pagan times before Christianity, which were naturally absorbed into Russian culture.

³²⁰ Sergei Vasilenko, *Vokal'nye proizvedeniia*. Housed in GDMC, fund 36, op. 1, ed. khr. 7, pp. 2-3.

Russian composers of the time.³²¹ Vasilenko managed to embody the fluctuations and unsteadiness of his epoch showing individualism, nonconformity and creativity in his harmonic and sound palette and in the importance of narrative and visual associations. These features were very valuable for the composer as he further refined them in his viola pieces of the early 1950s, of which more in the second chapter.

5.7 The impact of colour in Vasilenko's musical perception

The variety of thematic material with the range of harmonic and melodic idioms creates not only a certain imaginative display of unpredictable sensations but also the mingling of multi-coloured lights and shades in the sonata. Vasilenko specified that a colour palette and consequently visual images were very important for his artistic perception of a work. Visual art depicted through music and, vice versa, paintings that engendered feelings, emotions and musical images were the only compositions and examples of fine art that Vasilenko fully appreciated and cherished. Moreover, he emphasized his association of colours with musical tones/pitches and modes. This allows one to conclude that the distinctiveness of a musical colour palette provided certain guidance in his choice of tonal plans, interruptions and modulations.

[...] I was never taught how to draw. I could never reproduce even a simple drawing. However, I have always showed great interest in the world of colours, light and shadows alongside my fascination by music. The connection between

³²¹ Further reference in: 1. Cherry Gilchrist, *The Soul of Russia. Magical Traditions in an Enchanted Landscape* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2008), 15-50. 2. Tatiana Levaia, *Russkaia muzyka nachala XX veka v khudozhestvennom kontekste epokhi* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1991), 15-72.

music and painting became more and more obvious to me year by year. For me, some keys corresponded to certain colours: F major to bright yellow, E flat major to blue, B minor to pale green and so on. The general background of a music composition, so called orchestral pedalling, matched the background of a picture, whether light, bright or gloomy. The melodic lines sometimes illustrated certain colourful stripes or patches. In my view, music and painting do amalgamate. I perceive painting through music. [...]³²²

This integration of non-musical elements, such as the impressions perceived by the eye, into a musical work and attempts at synthesis with the visual arts were common at the turn of the twentieth century for European and Russian composers, including Debussy and Rimskii-Korsakov.³²³ Skriabin developed a whole system of colours based on the circle of fifths, in which he did not differentiate minor and major modes unlike Vasilenko, who distinguished modes according to a certain colour scheme. Skriabin integrated his system into composing his music³²⁴ and went further in developing his unrealized work *Misterium* with a synthesis of dance, music and light that was planned to be performed for a week in the Himalayas.

³²² Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1948), 170-171.

³²³ Further reference in: 1. Paul Roberts, *Claude Debussy* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2010), 129-148. 2. Leon Botstein, "Beyond the Illusions of Realism: Painting and Debussy's Break with Tradition," in *Debussy and His World*, ed. Jane F. Fulcher (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 141-179. 3. Irina Vanechkina, Bulat Galeev, "Tsvetnoi slukh v tvorchestve Nikolaia Andreevicha Rimskogo-Korsakova [Colour Hearing in the Creative Works of N.A. Rimskii-Korsakov]," *Synaesthesia: Research Institute 'Prometheus' (Russia, Kazan)*, <http://synesthesia.prometheus.kai.ru/index.html> (accessed May 17, 2012). 4. Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov, *Perepiska s Vasiliem V. Iastrebtsevym i Vladimirom I. Bel'skim* [Correspondence with Vasilii V. Iastrebtsev and Vladimir I. Bel'skii], ed. Liudmila Barsova (St. Petersburg: Mezhdunarodnaia assotsiatsiia 'Russkaia Kul'tura', 2004), 260, 272.

³²⁴ The best example is the symphonic work *Prometheus* [The Poem of Fire], op. 60, 1910, written for piano, orchestra, optional choir and *clavier à lumières* [a colour organ], invented by Preston Millar.

Vasilenko respected Skriabin and knew him very well and, though he could comprehend his associations of music and colour, he was quite sceptical about Skriabin's fantasy-projects and philosophical conceptions.³²⁵

At the same time, Vasilenko valued the idea that an artist should envisage and strive towards the unknown and harmonious in order to bring true creativity to the fore. Nevertheless, it would be impractical to assume that Vasilenko was constantly concerned with every reiteration of colour when a new tonal or harmonic centre recurred. He did not leave examples of a whole spectrum of colours and corresponding keys, which allows one to suppose that his interest in colour was just an extra tool in his intuitive artistic attempt to evoke experience of one sense by an appeal to another. 'Many times I connected colour and sound in my artistic imagination and, therefore, I can comprehend the association of light and sound.'³²⁶

Iurii Fortunatov was of the opinion that colour, timbre and sonority took on increasing importance in Vasilenko's language.

[...] The timbre guided the composer's thoughts giving him clues to the best choices of images and even the melodic structures of voices. [...] The development of an idea forms the chain of feelings: timbre, register and theme. During the process of work, a theme gains its shape only after the composer has heard certain timbres in his inner ear. [...]³²⁷

Vasilenko's visual perception was very important for him and correlated with his

³²⁵ Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1948), 118-122.

³²⁶ Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1948), 121.

³²⁷ Iurii Fortunatov, 'Sergei Vasilenko', in Teodor Miuller (ed.), *Vydaishchiesia deiateli teoretiko-kompozitorskogo fakul'teta Moskovskoi Konservatorii* [Prominent Musicologists of the Music Theory-Composition Faculty of the Moscow Conservatoire] (Moscow: Muzyka, 1966), 14-15.

aural and emotional sensitivity.

5.8 Conclusion. Performance issues

It is the reading and comprehension of a musical score that dictates a particular instrumental application and binds together the musical ideas of a composer with one's own interpretation. Attention to this is essential for making one's performance a truly unique experience for an audience. A performer should always strive to achieve individuality in his/her performance but also needs to ensure that his/her interpretation reflects the distinctive spirit of a composer's writing and epoch and brings out the full potential of a musical work.

One may conclude that the distinguishing feature of Vasilenko's writing for the viola was his proficiency and inventiveness of stylistic approaches in his compositional language. His knowledge and intellectual discernment of the epoch and style of a musical genre fused with intuitive and subconscious impulses, with a strong focus on narrative and visual associations deeply rooted in Russian culture and traditions. It is likely that the unconventional and liberal thought of the Silver Age were contributing factors to his writing of solo compositions for such an unusual solo instrument as the viola. In addition, its deep velvety timbre became a suitable bearer of symbolic ideas preoccupied with the figurative world of mysticism and the images or voices of death, which perhaps originate in Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*.³²⁸ The understanding of this distinctive symbolic and imaginative

³²⁸ These symbolic images were developed in many viola works written by Russian composers, including the sonatas for viola and piano by Sergei Vasilenko, Nikolai Roslavets, Grigorii Frid and Dmitrii Shostakovich as well as Alfred Shnitke's [Alfred Schnittke's] Viola Concerto. For a detailed discussion of Vasilenko's sonata for viola and piano see the fourth chapter.

compositional approach is essential for the interpretation of Vasilenko's musical creativity by contemporary performers.

The predominance of major orchestral and vocal works in Vasilenko's compositional writing of the pre-revolutionary period was conducive to the variety and changeability of musical articulation, and the instrumental density and technical intensity in his compositions for viola and piano that he started to compose after 1917.³²⁹ These compositions illustrate the composer's colourful approach to the timbre, phrasing, temperament and emotive aspects that depended on the genre of a work. For this reason, a player should execute the instrumental challenges offered by the composer bringing the musicality and inventiveness of his musical expression to the foreground, in which one's technical capacity serves the stylistic and temperamental needs of a particular composition.

Vasilenko's unusual synthesis of counterpoint and song elements, discussed above, engenders different objectives for a violist. The lyricism and elegance of Vasilenko's vocal and song-type themes effectively replicate a human voice with its conversational tone of expression, which naturally requires a warm intimate colouring of sound embellished with an expressive vibrato. The linear activity of Vasilenko's contrapuntal themes brings to the fore the clarity of articulation and the interrelation of secular and sacred aspects in his early music arrangements, in which a delicate balance of instruments that are treated as equal partners in a musical dialogue is of no less importance.

The findings of peak points in a particular composition of Vasilenko would shape the musical and dynamic charisma and the feel of the structure as a whole.

³²⁹ The list of compositions is given in Appendix 2.

This is important in Vasilenko's music as he followed an inventive approach to musical structure, in which the clarity in the display of such architectural elements as motif, musical phrase and theme depended not only on the composer's knowledge of musical forms but also on his inner hearing of a particular register and timbre that shaped his musical images and melodic structures. At the same time, Vasilenko's individual approach to musical forms within his compositions demonstrated inner logic and organisation that most certainly derived from Taneev.³³⁰ This orderliness helps a performer to orientate themselves within the larger structural units of a composition. Vasilenko's rhythmic irregularity and impulsiveness were largely influenced by oriental melodies and asymmetrical phrase structures formed by the polysyllabic words of the Russian language characteristic of vocal music discussed in subsections above. A perceptive attention of a performer to the changes of rhythm and metre within structural units would expose the individuality of Vasilenko's phrasing and the peculiarities of his agogics that determine the use of bow and the eloquence of the left hand technique. Listening acutely to the sound resonance and the quality of tone that reflect the intonation in focus and its expressiveness is especially important due to the unpredictability of Vasilenko's harmonic language that was inspired by the French Impressionists, the modern trends of the time and the colourful approach to the timbre quality and sound colour.

The words of the famous Russian pianist and pedagogue Genrikh Neigauz should assist one in comprehension and interpretation of Vasilenko's music:

[...] At first one has to search for an image and then for physical/technical sensations. [...] In order to become a fine artist, one has to imagine something that

³³⁰ The influence of Taneev on Vasilenko has been discussed further in the third and fifth chapters.

does not exist. [...] Everything is important in a fine musical work. Think about small nuances. They are very important. Do not do anything against the author and remember the words of Lev Tolstoi that in art 'just a little' is important. [...] Do not think about yourself when you perform but about the music and the composer.
[...]³³¹

Vasilenko kept his ties with tradition and the musical knowledge and skills that he was taught at the Moscow Conservatoire but strove for musical individuality, new ideas and greater efficiency. He proficiently implemented many diverse stylistic attributes in his music, enhanced his compositions with virtuosic instrumental techniques, broadened the sonorous qualities of the instrument comparable to orchestral colouring and thus, explored the previously unexplored potential of the viola in a solo repertoire. The understanding and skilful execution of these aspects by performers would enrich one's performance and preserve Vasilenko's musical legacy for future generations.

5.9 Vasilenko's legacy

Detailed analysis of Vasilenko's viola compositions has revealed that his compositional style was exquisitely crafted, sophisticated and very distinctive. Vasilenko admitted that he inherited his musical roots primarily from the traditions of the Russian national composers of the second half of the nineteenth and the turn of the twentieth centuries, especially from Taneev, Tchaikovskii and Rimskii-

³³¹ Elena Rikhter, "V 29 klasse [In the Classroom 29]," in *Genrikh Neigauz. Vospominaniia. Pis'ma. Materialy* [Heinrich Neuhaus. Memoirs. Letters. Materials], ed. Elena Rikhter (Moscow: Imidzh, 1992), 368, 370, 375-376.

Korsakov³³² who recognised and appreciated the vividness of his compositional talents. The words of the famous Russian historian, Vasilii Kliuchevskii, addressed to the young composer in the early 1900s reveal the close bond between Sergei Vasilenko and the Russian legacy:

[...] You do understand Russian music in depth. Do not turn towards the West or East. Develop Russian music as it is an inexhaustible treasure-trove; besides, this field will never disappoint your expectations. Our great Russian composers have drawn only a fraction from this treasure-house. [...] ³³³

While the Russian origins were the inspirational source of Vasilenko's musical resourcefulness and being, his intellect and erudition won him recognition among his contemporaries. Some critics called him 'a profound analyst'³³⁴ for his comprehension of Russian music along with the works of Wagner, French Impressionists and other composers. Vasilenko was well acquainted with the innovations of Igor Stravinskii³³⁵ and Vladimir Rebikov and was not afraid of

³³² Further reference in: 1. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, *My Musical Life*, ed. Carl Van Vechten and trans. Judah H. Joffe (London: Eulenburg Books, 1974), 379. 2. Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia. Pervonachal'nyi variant*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 410, pp. 53-76, 77-79.

³³³ Quoted in Sergei Vasilenko, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1948), 162.

³³⁴ Evgenii Braudo, "Sorokapiatiletie tvorcheskoi deiatel'nosti zaslužennogo deiatelia iskusstv S.N. Vasilenko [The 45 Anniversary of the Creative Activities of the Merited Arts Worker S.N. Vasilenko]." In *Stat'i o Vasilenko, Gliere, Gnesine, Ippolitove-Ivanove, Prokof'ev, Spendiarove* [Articles About Vasilenko, Glier, Gnesin, Ippolitov-Ivanov, Prokofiev and Spendiarov]. Housed in RGALI, fund 2024 (Braudo, Evgenii Maksimovich), op. 1, ed. khr. 37, p. 18.

³³⁵ The premiere of Vasilenko's *Flight of the Witches* op. 15 overshadowed the performance of the *Fireworks* op. 4 by Stravinskii that took place in St Petersburg on 9 January 1910. However, Vasilenko left encouraging comments about the young composer describing him as 'a very nice and highly cultural fellow and an enthusiast of orchestration', and 'a seeker of new paths and unexpected sonorities'. Further reference in: 1. Sergei Vasilenko, *Vospominaniia*, ed. Tamara Livanova (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 251. 2. Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian*

mentioning their names and showing respect for their originality even in 1948, the year of the Zhdanov decree, when those artists who failed to comply with the Party cultural policy could jeopardize their careers and lives.³³⁶ Often his inquisitiveness and zest of mind led him to pursue and adapt different stylistic elements from Baroque and Neoclassicism to a Romantic idiom. He unpretentiously grasped the Silver Age aesthetic with its mysticism, symbolic approach and visual images. Yet he did so without any favouritism or fanaticism and distanced himself from any rigorous duplication of either fashionable aesthetics or radicalism. Due to this fact, some left-wing supporters of the Russian Avant-garde movement were rather ironic about Vasilenko's compositional talents.³³⁷

Traditions: a Biography of the Works Through Mavra (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), vol. 1, 416-418.

³³⁶ Sergei Vasilenko, *Moe vystuplenie na pervom plenume*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 1536, p. 9. This plenum of the Composers' Union of the USSR took place in April 1948. Vasilenko did not name any names of his colleagues that were attacked as formalists in the Zhdanov decree, but instead focused his speech on the importance of keeping the links with the Russian tradition of which more below. He opposed this idea with Arnold Schoenberg by quoting his article from a German music magazine *Moderne Musik* [Modern Music] dated 1912, in which Schoenberg proclaimed the discontinuity with the traditional rules of harmony and polyphony and with the concept that music should express feelings. Naturally, this manifesto of Schoenberg contradicted completely with Vasilenko's artistic standpoint.

³³⁷ Nikolai Miaskovskii was extremely committed to the Avant-garde movement and its revolutionary innovations. Therefore, he was excessively acerbic about the significance of Vasilenko among other Russian composers of his generation. In November 1912, the music magazine '*Muzyka*' [Music] published an article about the leading composers of the time written by Miaskovskii, in which Vasilenko was incidentally listed among Scriabin, Rakhmaninov and Medtner. In a letter dated 12 November 1912 to Vladimir Derzhanovskii, the editor of the magazine, Miaskovskii anxiously demanded an official statement from the magazine to testify that it was a misprint. 'It would be not only good but essential to exclude the name of Vasilenko. Otherwise, one must also add the names of Gliere, Grechaninov and as many other composers as one may wish to include.' Nikolai

Indeed, the analysis of Vasilenko's viola compositions reveals that he was often interested in the beauty of the external characteristics of different musical styles rather than in the principles of their aesthetics and depths of their philosophies. Vasilenko demonstrated the best examples of this approach in the sonata with its extraordinary synthesis of strict contrapuntal elements of Neoclassicism with colourful oriental idioms and unreserved emotions of Romanticism, as well as in his stylisation of the Baroque style in the *Zodiakus* suite and the lute pieces enriched with the instrumental advantages and inventions of the twentieth century. In an unpublished speech at the first plenum of the Composer's Union in 1948, Vasilenko voiced the principles of composing that he regarded essential for himself and for a comprehensive tuition of the young generation.

[...] The aims of the supervisors of our young composers are primarily the following:

1. To develop a brilliant technique of composing through an extensive and in-depth study of works of the great masters, both Russian and of the West.
2. To strive towards the development of students' own musical identity without any imitation of others.
3. To emphasise to the young people the necessity of a thorough analysis of a musical idea and a theme in terms of the musical sensitivity and significance of these themes.
4. The Russian subject and the Russian style have to be in the foreground. The young people at the Conservatoire are completely separated from Russian music. When I was a student at the Moscow Conservatoire, we had a fantastic enthusiast of Russian music, a teacher of the history of church music,

Miaskovskii, *Sobranie materialov v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1964), vol. 2, 973. Gliere taught Miaskovskii, but this did not protect him from his former student's sarcasm.

Smolenskii. The point is not in studying church singing, perhaps we do not need it, but by studying the ancient *kriuki* notation Smolenskii made us study in depth and thus instilled our love for Russian song. [...] There was a rule at the pre-Revolutionary Moscow Conservatoire: in the first year of the ‘free composition’ course one had to compose an overture on Russian themes given by a Professor. Perhaps a Russian subject was not necessarily of any practical use to a student in his/her future, but, nevertheless, he/she absorbed Russian song in practice. Only in this way a composer will have access to the heart of the Russian people!

5. At the time of the completion of Conservatoire studies, former students should not lose the connection with their teachers. I continued a warm friendship with Taneev and Ippolitov-Ivanov until their death and they invariably directed me in my undertakings.³³⁸

Today, one may interpret these words of the seventy-six year old composer as his overlooked legacy, in which he emphasised the importance of the succession of generations. He stressed that only a profound musical knowledge of past and present achievements would inspire one’s own creativity and, thus, bring compositional wisdom.

Anatolii Aleksandrov justly ranked Vasilenko among his contemporaries:

[...] Vasilenko is a model of a composer, who steadily and tirelessly pursued his beliefs. The dominant rulers of the Moscow musical circles replaced one another, whilst Sergei Nikiforovich kept following and enhancing his own line. [...] ³³⁹

³³⁸ Sergei Vasilenko, *Moe vystuplenie na pervom plenumе*. Housed in GNMCMC, fund 52, ed. khr. 1536, pp. 9-11.

³³⁹ Anatolii Aleksandrov, *K 75-letiu S.N. Vasilenko*. Housed in RGALI, fund 2579, op. 1, ed. khr. 320, p. 1. The underlined word ‘his’ in this quotation stands as in the manuscript.

Indeed, political systems and their leaders come and go, but the cultural and historical legacy of Russia, to which Vasilenko was faithful throughout his life, remains the most valuable possession of its people, because it maintains their intellectual national identity of today and, thus, forms a precious part of world heritage for its future generations. The recent access to unpublished documents and collections in Russian libraries and archives help one to uncover the unknown of the Soviet past and bring back to light and share the best achievements of its representatives. The findings about Sergei Vasilenko and his music are an important step in this process that enriches one's knowledge of this epoch and its distinctive musical legacy.

Certainly, the scope of this thesis is limited to the research and discussion of only a limited proportion of Vasilenko's musical heritage focusing primarily on his compositions written for the viola. His works for other instruments still require further research. However, the most important accomplishment of the research work that has been undertaken by the author of this thesis is not only the academic findings about Vasilenko as a musician and public figure but the discovery of his unknown and forgotten viola compositions, which undoubtedly enriched the concert viola repertoire. The recent performances, publications, research presentations and the recording of these works by the author of this thesis has initiated the consequent revival of interest from general audiences and professionals in Vasilenko both as a man and a composer, who managed to preserve and enhance his pre-revolutionary musical roots despite the ideological and stylistic constraints of the Soviet epoch.