

ALEXANDER TCHEREPNIN

Born in St. Petersburg in 1899, Alexander Tcherepnin became a true musical citizen of the world. With the center of his career shifting from Tbilisi and the Caucasus to Paris and central Europe, from Shanghai and Tokyo to Brussels and back to Paris, and ultimately from Chicago and New York to London and Zurich, he left an indelible influence, transcending barriers of nationality and generation.

Tcherepnin's gifts were hereditary. His father Nicholas Tcherepnin had composed impressionistic ballets that won the Diaghilev troupe its first Western successes. When the nineteen-year-old Alexander belatedly began formal conservatory studies of musical theory, he had already written some two hundred piano pieces, many with modernistic traits inspired by his father's star pupil Sergei Prokofiev. Young Tcherepnin brought these to Tbilisi, where the family relocated during the revolutionary turmoil of 1918, often performing them in recital (several dozen of these early efforts became best-sellers when published in Paris after he settled there in 1921).

In Georgia, Alexander began composing on synthetic scales derived from the "major-minor triad" (C-Eb-E-G). Nikolai had explored the eight-step "octotonic" scale, which regularly alternates half-steps and whole-steps; Alexander went his father one better: by 1922 he was developing a vocabulary of ear-catching sounds from his own symmetrical nine-step scale (C-Db-Eb-E-F-G-Ab-A-B-C—the interval pattern is half-whole-half; half-whole-half; half-whole-half). Further experiments during final studies at the Paris Conservatoire yielded an approach called "Interpoint," meant to convey complex rhythmic information with maximum clarity, and to keep the various musical registers separate in the ear.

As winner of a 1925 Schott Prize for his *Concerto da Camera*, Op. 33, Tcherepnin impressed new audiences in Germany and Austria as a kind of Russian Hindemith. Increased intellectual density marked such scores as *Message*, Op. 39 (1926), but Tcherepnin later made a conscious effort to leaven his style by employing elements of Eurasian folk music. Between 1934 and 1937, he systematized methods of using Oriental pentatonic scales during two lengthy stays in the Far East. There he met the young Chinese pianist Lee Hsien Ming, whom he later married.

Trapped in wartime Paris and cut off from his international publishers, Tcherepnin wrote *Gebrauchsmusik* ballets. With the Liberation, he returned to concert works such as the *Symphony No. 2* and the *Piano Concerto No. 4*. In 1949, he became Professor at DePaul University in Chicago, a post he retained until retirement age, taking American citizenship in 1958. Tcherepnin remained an active recitalist, performing such new works as the *Twelve Preludes*, Op. 85. His composing career further blossomed, perhaps reaching its peak in a trio of orchestral masterpieces from the late fifties: the electrifying *Divertimento*, Op. 90, a trenchant symphony in all but name, the Apollonic, elegiac *Symphony No. 4*, Op. 91 and the grandiose, quasi-serial *Symphonic Prayer*, Op. 93.

After nine years spent exclusively in North America, Tcherepnin resumed European concertizing in 1958. This renewed activity would prompt his *Second Piano Sonata* and the fifth of his six piano concertos. In 1967, he became the second Russian émigré composer (after Stravinsky) officially invited to revisit his homeland. While his output declined following a subsequent heart attack, Tcherepnin continued to satisfy editors' requests for educational music, and appeared regularly as both pianist and conductor until his death in Paris in 1977.

ALEXANDER TCHEREPNIN'S STUDENTS

As an educator, Tcherepnin's scope was nothing less than astonishing. In China during the 1930s, he taught that nation's first generation of concert composers, and was granted near-ministerial powers in setting up a national system of musical education. In Japan he similarly took emerging young composers under his wing. He also founded a publishing firm to issue music by Chinese and Japanese composers. While Professor of Music at DePaul University in Chicago (1949–64), he nurtured several American students who went on to enjoy notable composing careers.

This program celebrates Tcherepnin as both creator and educator. It includes major scores from two crucial periods in his career, the 1920s and 1950s, along with the music of five composers whom he taught during his American years: Robert Muczynski, John Downey, Phillip Ramey, Gloria Coates and his son, Ivan Tcherepnin. The works of his students, remarkable for their diversity, testify to Alexander Tcherepnin's great gift for guiding young composers along the pathway to personal expression and originality.

—Benjamin Folkman

ROBERT MUCZYNSKI

Alexander Tcherepnin was instrumental in helping me find my own voice, musically. But his impact on me personally was absolutely incalculable. He was the first to recognize whatever degree of musical talent I possessed. In addition, he was completely supportive, optimistic and inspiring as a teacher and friend. Without his guiding vision I doubt I'd be a composer. He had the remarkable ability to make one believe in oneself and to be dedicated to noble purposes. As a composer, I owe him everything.

JOHN DOWNEY

My first encounter with Alexander Tcherepnin was a most memorable one, insofar as this tall, gaunt man from Russia with the soft eyes and velvety voice impressed me immediately with his magnetic presence and sympathetic personality.

I remember vividly the excitement with which I observed Tcherepnin gradually unfold to me his concept of Interpoint as I was working on unravelling my own fugal perceptions. This lively contrapuntal rhythmic style peppered the finale of my Second Piano Sonata [1950], as I seized the implications of his novel idea.

PHILLIP RAMEY

Ideally, every young composer should work with a distinguished older composer whose music he admires. In that regard, I could not have been more fortunate. I always excitedly anticipated composition lessons with Alexander Tcherepnin, because of his friendly intensity, high standards and penetrating insight. My private sessions with him were serious but never intimidating; he could be devastatingly critical, but always in an affirmative way. He often seemed more coach than professor, pointing out flaws and suggesting remedies, ending a lesson with an encouraging pat on the shoulder, saying, "Now go fix this. I know you can do it. I have confidence in you." His effect on me was electrifying. I doubt I would have persevered and become a composer without his encouragement.

My most treasured memento of "Sasha" Tcherepnin is an inscription he wrote on my score of his Piano Concerto No. 6: "To the one who is brother to my sons." The high point of my youth was unquestionably the close friendship I enjoyed with this good and great man.

IVAN TCHEREPNIN

My father was a composer who bridged the "Old School" of Russian music with modern concerns. His solutions were always original and true. His technical and formal innovations were used in the service of musical expression, never for their own sake. He was by example an amazingly consciencious, idea-laden and completely accomplished composer. A more truly spiritual man than my father I have not met. But neither have I met a more fundamentally human one, replete with a great sense of humor and real humility.

What was his example to others? Be true, be curious, do not limit yourself to traditional methods, do not accept already-tried solutions; invent but always feel, never bore others for the sake of your own conceits. Serve the People!

GLORIA COATES

When I was quite young, I was already using tone-clusters without having heard of them—nor had my high school theory teacher, who advised me not to use these sounds, because they couldn't be found in theory books. In 1952, Alexander Tcherepnin gave a lecture in Milwaukee entitled "How a Composer Works." Impressed by his knowledge, enthusiasm and charming humor, I thought this was finally an opportunity to ask a "real composer" if and how those "forbidden" chords I had been hearing and using could be notated. Tcherepnin requested to see my music, after which he invited me to study with him, gratis. This I did privately, and subsequently, during the summer of 1962, at the Salzburg Mozarteum. He became my mentor, encouraging me throughout my life to continue using and believing in my intuition and to "not let anyone change a note"; to work very hard and never give up. I will always be grateful to Alexander Tcherepnin for his faith in me and in my music.

ALEXANDER TCHEREPNIN AND HIS STUDENTS

STEPHEN GOSLING, Pianist

ALEXANDER TCHEREPNIN

Message, Op. 39 (1926)

ROBERT MUCZYNSKI

First Piano Sonata, Op. 9 (1955–57)

I. Moderato

II. Allegro giocoso

JOHN DOWNEY

Pyramids (1961)

PHILLIP RAMEY

Color Etudes (1994)

I. Purple

II. Green

III. Maroon

IV. Orange

V. Red

VI. Gold

VII. Blue

VIII. Silver

IX. Black

INTERMISSION

IVAN TCHEREPNIN

Four Pieces from Before

For Christmas (1959)

Riding the Clouds (1962)

Waltz (1960)

Vernal Equinox (1962)

Beginnings Nos. 1 and 2 (1964)

Waltz Perpetuelle (“The 45 RPM”) (1977)

GLORIA COATES

Tones in Overtones (Sonata No. 1) (1971–72)

I. Prime

II. Triads and Clusters

III. Scales open and closed

IV. Tetrachord

ALEXANDER TCHEREPNIN

Twelve Preludes, Op. 85 (1952–53)

- I. Adagio
 - II. Animato
 - III. Lento
 - IV. Allegro
 - V. Allegretto
 - VI. Lento, recitando
 - VII. Animato
 - VIII. Mesto
 - IX. Allegro
 - X. Lento marziale
 - XI. Agitato
 - XII. Lento
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STEPHEN GOSLING

Pianist Stephen Gosling's playing has been hailed as "electric . . . luminous and poised" (*The New York Times*), projected with "utter clarity and conviction" (*Washington Post*) through "extraordinary virtuosity" (*Houston Chronicle*).



A native of Sheffield, England, Mr. Gosling moved to New York in 1989 to study with Oxana Yablonskaya at the Juilliard School, where he earned his Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees. At Juilliard he was awarded the Mennin Prize for Outstanding Excellence and Leadership in Music and the Sony Elevated Standards Fellowship. He was also featured as concerto soloist an unprecedented four times, in works by Stravinsky, Schnittke, Schoenfield and Corigliano (the latter with Leonard Slatkin and the Juilliard Orchestra in Avery Fisher Hall).

Energetically committed to the music of our time, Mr. Gosling is a member of the New York New Music Ensemble, Ensemble Sospeso, and Columbia University's Sinfonietta Moderna (whose inaugural concert will be on February 13th 2005 at Merkin Hall). He appears frequently as guest artist with such groups as Orpheus, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Continuum, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, Speculum Musicae, Ensemble 21, DaCapo Chamber Players, Continuum, SEM Ensemble, the League of Composers/ISCM Chamber Players, and Da Camera of Houston. He has also played in Off-Broadway productions and collaborated with several dance companies, most recently in works of Xenakis and Ligeti with Shen Wei Dance Arts at the Lincoln Center Festival.

Mr. Gosling is a prolific recording artist as well, with releases on the New World, Bridge, CRI, Mode, Innova, Albany, Centaur, Trust, and Rattle labels.