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**Mark Belodubrovsky,
a Versatile Contemporary
Composer, Violinist
and Educator**

Mark Belodubrovsky is one of the most accomplished contemporary composers living presently in Moscow who has written a substantial amount of solo, chamber and vocal musical compositions of high quality, which are performed in Russia and in a number of other countries. His musical output is especially noted for its versatility of different styles of music: some of his compositions are traditional and romantic in their style and tonal in their harmony, with a strong influence of Russian folk music which the composer actively employs in a number of his compositions, while other works follow innovative avant-garde trends and incorporate serialism, including serial rhythm, sonoristics, aleatory technique and a number of other techniques. Some of his compositions are very accessible to a broad audience, containing memorable melodic and rhythmic traits, while others are written in a highly complex language, based on musical experimentation, comprehensible for the most part to a sophisticated audience well-versed in avant-garde trends in music. Some of his works are based on extroversive theatrical gestures and even contain comic elements, while others bear an inner philosophical discourse. Nonetheless, both of these contrasting features combine together to express a highly original style of the composer's music which cannot be mistaken for that of anybody else. Belodubrovsky is known and highly regarded as a composer, a violinist, an enthusiastic cultural activist who discovered

**Марк Белодубровский,
многогранный современный
композитор, скрипач
и просветитель**

Марк Белодубровский — один из самых интересных современных композиторов, живущих в настоящее время в Москве и написавших большое количество сольных, камерных и вокальных произведений высокого художественного достоинства, исполнявшихся в России и за рубежом. Особенность его музыки заключается в контрастности стилей: некоторые его сочинения традиционные и романтические, обладают тональной гармонией, с заметным влиянием русской народной музыки, которую композитор активно использует в целом ряде своих произведений, в то время как другие его сочинения следуют новаторским авангардным течениям и используют серийную технику, включая серийный ритм, сонористику, алеаторику и другие техники. Многие его сочинения доступны для широкой публики и содержат запоминающиеся мелодические и ритмические черты, в то время как другие написаны весьма сложным языком, базирующимся на музыкальном экспериментаторстве, понятном лишь искушённой публике, знакомой с авангардными музыкальными течениями. В основе некоторых его сочинений — экстравертивные театральные жесты, есть и юмористические элементы, в то время как другие несут внутренний философский дискурс. Тем не менее эти контрастные свойства органично сочетаются, создавая яркий и самобытный стиль композитора,

and popularized rare compositions of the early 20th century Russian modernist trend, the long-time director of the Nikolai Roslavetz and Nahum Gabo Festival for the Arts in Bryansk, and simply as a very open musician with a broad-minded approach towards various musical styles and directions. All of this has undoubtedly created an impact on his multifarious musical style which combines opposite stylistic directions.

The article describes the life and the musical activities of Mark Belodubrovsky, then proceeds to describe and analyze his musical compositions. It is shown that notwithstanding the fact that his compositions pertain to different styles, they are all united by one individual stylistic trait which defines the composer's artistic individuality.

Keywords:

Mark Belodubrovsky, Bryansk, Nikolai Roslavetz, Nahum Gabo, music festival, musical compositions.

который невозможно спутать с чьим-либо другим. Белодубровского знают и уважают как композитора, скрипача и активного деятеля культуры, открывавшего и пропагандирующего редкие произведения русского авангарда начала XX века, бессменного директора Фестиваля искусств имени Николая Рославца и Наума Габо в Брянске и просто как открытого музыканта с широким взглядом на различные музыкальные стили и направления. Вся его деятельность, безусловно, оказала воздействие на его многогранный музыкальный стиль, сочетающий противоположные стилистические направления.

Данная статья описывает жизнь и музыкальную деятельность Марка Белодубровского, а затем анализирует его произведения. Автор делает вывод, что несмотря на стилевые различия сочинений композитора, все они объединены единой стилистической сутью, определяющей его творческую индивидуальность.

Ключевые слова:

Марк Белодубровский, Брянск, Николай Рославец, Наум Габо, музыкальный фестиваль, музыкальные произведения.

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works are based on extroversive theatrical gestures and even contain comic elements, while others bear an inner philosophical discourse. Nonetheless, both of these contrasting features combine together to express a highly original style of the composer's music which cannot be mistaken for that of anybody else. Belodubrovsky is known and highly regarded as a composer, a violinist, an enthusiastic cultural activist who discovered and popularized rare compositions of the early 20th century Russian modernist trend, the long-time director of the Nikolai Roslavetz and Nahum Gabo Festival for the Arts in Bryansk, and simply as a very open musician with a broad-minded approach towards various musical styles and directions. All of this has undoubtedly created an impact on his multifarious musical style which combines opposite stylistic directions.

Mark Belodubrovsky was born in Bryansk, a regional center in Russia close to the borders of Ukraine and Belarus, on June 23, 1941 (a day after Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union). He began violin studies with his mother Alexandra Belodubrovsky, then entered the Specialized Music School in Leningrad, where he majored in violin as a student of Veniamin Scher and later studied composition with Sergei Volfenzon, from where he graduated in 1960. Then he went on to study at the Leningrad Conservatory, continuing his violin studies with Veniamin Scher, his composition teacher being Orest Yevlakhov, graduating from there in 1965. After that Belodubrovsky returned to Bryansk where he became a soloist at the Bryansk Philharmonic Society, a member of the Bryansk String Quartet (with Alexander Simonov as second violinist, Igor Dubinin as violist and Nikolai Kovalchyuk as cellist) and the Bryansk Piano Trio (with Ludmila Severina as pianist and Yuri Kravchenko as cellist). He also began to teach violin, chamber ensemble and music theory at the Bryansk Music College. In 1972 he founded the "Apodion" Club (the title of which presented a humorous parody of a Soviet-

style abbreviation of the words "Apollo" and "Dionysus," the two opposing aspects of Nietzsche's artistic dichotomy) which was aimed at presenting and promoting rare specimens of music, literature and art. This club was forcefully closed down in 1985 by the Soviet authorities, who accused Belodubrovsky of promoting "bourgeois culture, religious art and Zionism." However, the musician did not despair and continued his musical activities, having founded the "Nikolai Roslavetz Festival for the Arts" during the following year, 1986.

At that time Belodubrovsky discovered for himself the works of Nikolai Roslavetz (1880–1944), an early 20th century Russian modernist composer who wrote music based on single chord-formations, resembling late Scriabin's harmonic style and preceding Schoenberg's serialism. Roslavetz's music was discovered by George Perle in 1959 in the USA and musicologist Detlew Gojowy in the 1960s in Germany, the latter popularized the composer's music in his comprehensive book "Neues Sowjetisches Avant-garde in die 1920-es Jahre," published by Laaber Press in Germany. In the Soviet Union Roslavetz's music began to be popularized in the 1980s by musicologist Marina Lobanova, music theorist Yuri Kholopov, composer Edison Denisov and others. A number of Roslavetz's compositions were published in Moscow during the years 1989–1992. Since then, most of Roslavetz' musical compositions have been published in Germany in Schott Edition. Marina Lobanova has written a comprehensive monograph on Roslavetz's music, and a number of pianists and other performers have recorded the composer's works on CD's with famous labels.

Belodubrovsky began actively performing and popularizing Roslavetz's music while he still directed the "Apodion" Club, then after it was closed he founded the Nikolai Roslavetz Festival for the Arts (renamed as the Nikolai Roslavetz and Nahum Gabo Festival for the Arts in 1993, having added to the title the name of the famous architect Nahum Gabo). This festival was aimed at popularizing the

music of Nikolai Roslavetz, as well as other early 20th century Russian modernists Alexander Mosolov, Arthur Lourie, Sergei Protopopoff, Vladimir Shcherbachev, Vladimir Deshevov and others, and also presenting music by contemporary composers from Russia and other countries. During the years 1988–1990 Belodubrovsky performed a number of concerts with his wife, pianist Ludmila Severina, and with other musicians in Moscow, Leningrad and other cities and wrote a number of articles about Roslavetz which were published in the Soviet music journals “Sovetskaya muzyka” and “Muzykal’naya zhizn’,” the first articles about the composer to be published in the Soviet Union since 1929, when he was essentially prohibited from being performed. In the 1990s Belodubrovsky started to participate actively in various music festivals in Russia and Western Europe, including the festival “Aid to St. Petersburg” in Finland, the “Moscow Autumn” and “Alternativa” contemporary music festivals in Moscow, “Sergei Oskolkov and his Friends,” “From the Avant-garde to the Present Day” and “A Week of Music of Gabriel Fauré” festivals in St. Petersburg, and went on tours with concerts in Germany and Switzerland. His music has been performed a number of times at the Composers’ Concordance concerts in New York since 2004. The “Nikolai Roslavetz and Naum Gabo Festival for the Arts” continued to be held in Bryansk, and a number of important musical compositions by Nikolai Roslavetz have been premiered at the festival, most notably, the Second Chamber Symphony, performed by the Studio for New Music chamber ensemble in March 2002. Since 2008 Belodubrovsky has lived in Moscow, where his music has been performed at the “Moscow Autumn” contemporary music festival, at the Jurgenson Salon and at the “Musical Bridges” contemporary music series at the Moscow Conservatory. The performers of his music include the Moscow Ensemble for Contemporary Music, the “20th Century” Ensemble, pianists Mikhail

Dubov and Ivan Sokolov, violinists Maria Khodina, Maria Margorina and New York-based violinist Dan Auerbach.

As has been stated before, Belodubrovsky has written compositions in various musical styles, ranging from the traditional to the avant-garde style. The composer’s earlier works are for the most part fairly romantic in their style. During the 1960s and 1970s Belodubrovsky composed a number of song cycles set to lyrical poems by the famous 18th, 19th and early 20th century classic Russian poets Gavrila Derzhavin, Alexander Pushkin, Feodor Tutchev and Ilya Selvinsky, as well as Hungarian poet Sandor Petefy. In each of these song cycles the composer attempted to create by musical means the portrait of the respective poet on whose poems the corresponding cycle was composed. The single song “**Romance**” to the poem of early 20th century poet Velemir Khlebnikov (1885–1922) and the **Two Romances set to Poems by Ilya Selvinsky** are the earliest songs, and virtually the first compositions by Belodubrovsky, having been written in the early 1960s, while he was a student at the Leningrad Conservatory. At that time, he received the published editions of the poems by these masters, which were very rare in those times in the Soviet Union. The Romance set to the text of Khlebnikov is a traditional romantic song, albeit composed on the text of a modernist poet. The Two Romances on the texts of Ilya Selvinsky contain stylizations of street songs and cabaret songs, organically combined with an academic romantic style. One of the reasons why the composer had the wish to compose this small cycle was his desire to express by musical means the popular tavern-like spirit expressed in the poems. Herein lies a parallel with the bringing in of quotations of popular songs present in Alban Berg’s operas “Wozzeck” and “Lulu,” each of which contains stylizations of cabaret songs, as well as the allusions to cabaret music existent, on the one hand, in Schoenberg’s early tonal “Cabaret Songs” and, on the other hand, in his expressionistic “Pierrot Lunaire” in

their juxtaposition of the vernacular and the elitist musical styles. Belodubrovsky's aim in composing these songs was to alleviate these "vulgar" musical traits and to elevate them to a "high" classical style.

The **Songs set to texts of African Poets** for baritone and piano was composed in 1964, when Belodubrovsky was studying at the Leningrad Conservatory. The composer chose four poems from a collection of African poetry translated onto Russian and recreated in his music the African exotic color and the intensive feelings present in the poems. The first song is called "The Voice of the Ancestors," the music to which is solemn and dark in its mood. The poet calls upon people to listen to the voices of their ancestors. The second poem is called "The Lonely Woman," the music of which is lyrical and sad in its mood, expressing the poem which describes a sad and lonely woman walking on the street, and claiming his resemblance to her in his forlorn state. The third song is called "Answer," and it features a fast tempo and an intensely tragic mood with dynamic vocal declamations, expressing the poem's supplicating questioning about the meaning of life. The fourth song is called "Waves," and it is the only joyful song in the cycle, endowed with a fast tempo, virtuosic piano textures, and a major mode with pentatonic predominance, expressing the poem's pantheistic hymn to the joy of life. The colorful allusions to the exoticism of the African continent is depicted by means of fanciful melodic turns with suggestions of folk music from unspecified faraway countries, harmonic chords with parallel fifths and octaves, an abundance of modal harmonies, and pentatonicism in the final song. At times, sharpened rhythms brings in allusions to a Westerner's perception of African music, thereby continuing the tradition of exoticism in music, as expressed by Rimsky-Korsakov, Ravel and many others.

The **Concerto for Violin and Orchestra** was composed in 1965 as a diploma work for graduating from the Leningrad Conservatory. Only the first movement of the work was fully

orchestrated, while at the graduation exam performance the entire composition was played in its violin and piano arrangement. The second movement has been frequently performed by Belodubrovsky and his wife Ludmila Severina in its version for violin and piano. It is a lyrical work in an Andante tempo with minor-leaning modal harmonies and parallelisms in the harmonic outline. It is in ternary form with a tranquil beginning and ending and a more intensive middle section with a more virtuosic violin part, ending with a dynamic cadenza for solo violin, after which the tranquil mood of the first section recurs in the recapitulation. The second movement of the concerto was performed at the Moscow Conservatory in 2019 by Maria Khodina on the violin and Sayaka Takahashi on the piano, for which occasion it was renamed by the composer as "**Poem for Violin and Piano.**"

The **Song Cycle on the Texts of Sandor Petefy** originally consisted of three songs, initially composed in 1966, all of which were rather short in duration. They had a very simple, traditional, romantic style, bearing allusions to a popular, folksy musical manner. In 2006, forty years later, Belodubrovsky decided to expand the conception of the cycle and wrote three other songs, longer in their durations, considerably more complex in their musical language, in their harmonies and textures, more expansive in their musical development. This was stipulated by the composer's fondness for the poet's works, as well as for his desire to maintain his principle demonstrated in his previous song cycles to reflect the entire fullness of the poet's personality. For this reason, he started to choose other texts by the poet, thereby raising the total number of songs of the cycle to six. Notwithstanding the apparent difference of breadth between the earlier and the later composed songs, all of them contain a sense of unity with each other and help create an integral song cycle. Obviously, the three later songs bring in greater breadth to the whole cycle, endowing it with almost symphonic qualities.

The “**Bryansk Songs**” for soprano, violin, viola, cello and piano were composed in 1970. They consist of three original Russian folksongs from the Bryansk region, to which the composer added accompaniments. These pieces were composed as the result of Belodubrovsky’s study of Russian folk music. When the composer studied at the Leningrad Conservatory, the students were sent on “folk music expeditions” to Russian villages so that they could collect folk songs as they were sung by the village dwellers, and he was very impressed by the singing of the women folk singers. He added instrumental accompaniments to the songs he collected during his trips to the villages, thereby turning them into original pieces. The accompaniment expressed the essence of the folk songs, at the same time, endowing them with the character of classical music and with his personal compositional stylistic manner. The composer wrote these pieces at a time of a state of compositional stagnation he experienced, when he felt no stimulus to compose music, and he did not know what to do next. He decided to overcome this crisis by creating arrangements of these folk melodies. The accompaniments also bear the trace of influence from the style of Carl Orff, whose music the composer was fascinated with at the time. Orff took original elementary German songs in their actual sounds and incorporated them verbatim in his own musical compositions. In addition, he developed his own conception of how the folk songs were to be elaborated and incorporated in classical compositions. The German composer had six notebooks with elaborations and arrangements of folk songs, as well as instructions of how to teach children by their means. These elaborations began with simple melodies, on the basis of which Orff instructed how the children would be taught to improvise in class and thereby to develop their musical and auditory skills. Belodubrovsky remembers how pleased he was when after a performance of his “Bryansk Songs” a fellow composer came up to him and told him that it was clear that

the music was simple and comprehensible and, at the same time, there were certain elements present which were more complex than originally perceived. After having finished this work, the composer felt freed of his compositional stupor, and this composition served as a stimulus for him to continue developing further in terms of his compositional activities.

The Fifteen Pieces based on Folksong Themes for string quartet were composed in 1972, and they are essentially arrangements of folk songs of the peoples of each of the 15 republics of the Soviet Union. The composer was immensely interested in folk songs of various nations and peoples, and he decided to compose pieces for string quartet in which he would elaborate and create accompaniments for them as harmonic and textural filling. At first, he arranged the folk songs of only several nationalities, and then he decided to incorporate those from all the 15 Soviet republics. In addition to other considerations, he was particularly interested in the fact that extremely different nationalities with cultures that are totally dissimilar to each other frequently have music with very similar features. This prompted him to speculate that the further back through the centuries we go in history, the more similarity and even unity between different peoples may be found in terms of their culture and music. In addition, the creation of this instrumental cycle included a practical element — Belodubrovsky wrote this work in order to support the Bryansk String Quartet, in which he was the first violinist. The cycle was performed rather frequently in Bryansk in the 1970s and was even broadcast on the radio. In Moscow it was performed by the “20th Century” ensemble at the Jurgenson Salon in 2010.

The theatrical music to Maurice Maeterlinck’s play “**L’Oiseau bleu**” [“**The Blue Bird**”] for recitation, soprano, violin, cello and piano was composed in 1977. The composer was fascinated with the theatrical plays of Maeterlinck and decided to compose this work for the Bryansk Piano Trio affiliated

with the Bryansk Philharmonic Society. This was a theatrical play to be performed not in a theater, but in a concert hall by one person reciting the text, while the singer provided a few vocal numbers, while all the instrumental parts were performed by the piano trio. The music consists of separate numbers, each one delineating a character or an episode of the play. The composition includes a lot of sophisticated avant-garde effects characteristic of contemporary European music, intermingled by some highly melodic numbers, most notably, those including the soprano, containing very accessible melodic tunes in the vein of Soviet children's music of the second half of the 20th century. The composition lasts 45 minutes, and, notwithstanding its wide assortment of refined avant-garde textures, it is altogether very audience-friendly and greatly accessible to lay listeners unfamiliar with sophisticated avant-garde music, especially to children, who appreciated it during its numerous performances in different schools and libraries in Bryansk in the 1970s and 1980s.

The cantata **"You are in my Heart, Fatherland"** for recitation, mixed chorus and chamber orchestra was composed in 1979, and contains three movements. The subject matter of the text is the history of Russia from its early days to modern times. The first movement is called "Song of the Russian Land," wherein the music brings in allusions to early Russian Znamenny chant church singing. The middle movement is more dramatic and includes aleatory writing and declamations, while the third movement describes Russia during the Soviet period and contains melodic writing in the vein of children's songs of that time period.

The cantata **"Bryansk"** for female chorus and piano was composed in 1982 in commemoration of a significant historical date connected with the city of Bryansk, set to texts by Sergei Markov and Alexander Levinsky, supplemented with slight literary revisions by younger-generation Bryansk-based poet Galina Kartashova. Since in the original conception of the Cantata its

texts described the historical events of Bryansk during and after World War II, it was necessary to introduce realities of the city's life during more recent years, and this was superbly carried out by Levinsky and Kartashova.

The song **"The Bryansk Madonna"** was composed in 1982 to a poem written by Belodubrovsky himself based on several poems by Italian poets. In the center of Bryansk, close to the Bryansk Music College, there is a small park named after the famous Russian poet Alexei Konstantinovich Tolstoy, wherein there is a large number of wooden statues, one of which presents a copy of the statue of the Madonna, or Virgin Mary, originally created by a classic Italian sculptor. This particular statue inspired the composer to write this song. Since he had in his personal library a volume of Italian poetry translated into Russian, and since he perceived the importance of the fact that the statue of the Madonna was based on an original Italian statue, he decided to base his original poem on four Italian poems. He chose poems by four Italian poets, uniting their aspects into one poem, so that the object of the poem was only the Virgin Mary. The music of the song is very soft and lyrical, combining a tonally centered harmony with very intricate deviations into chromaticism, especially in the piano part, while the vocal part sings a very gentle tonal melodic line.

The **"Ten Frescos for Four Electronic Bayans"** were composed in 1985 for a special group of musicians playing on a unique set of "electronic bayans" (essentially electrically amplified accordions). The composition was written in commemoration of the thousandth anniversary of the city of Bryansk (the first time Bryansk was mentioned in historical chronicles was in the year 985 AD), and it expresses the historical realities of the city, and it organically combines Russian melodicism with contemporary sonoristic textures. It also includes a few vocal lines, which may be sung either by the performers, while they play on their instruments, or by singers who are added to the ensemble

during the performance. The texts for the vocal parts are written by different poets, the most significant of whom is Vyacheslav Kupriyanov. His *vers libre* poems have been set to music in this composition. Belodubrovsky found Kupriyanov's poems in a literary journal and was very impressed of the way he depicted the history of Russia from its earliest days to modern times. The composition consists of three movements, the second of which has an abundance of sonoristic textures played by the bayans, while the first and the third emphasize the melodic element. The composition includes a stylistic allusion to the traditional folk song "Desnyanka" the text of which Belodubrovsky replaced with his own original text.

In the late 1980s Belodubrovsky began composing his first works in his avant-garde style. The composer was more grateful than most of his contemporaries for the changes brought about by the end of end of the Soviet regime, since the atmosphere in a smaller city like Bryansk were especially oppressive to artists than that of the big cities like Moscow and Leningrad, and the changes the country underwent in the late 1980s and early 1990s presented Belodubrovsky with greater opportunities for his composing and performing activities than he ever had before. Belodubrovsky's works for solo violin are extremely important among his output. Since the composer is a violinist, the works written in his genre are written to demonstrate both his virtuosic technique of performance and the expressivity of his musical style and his personal character. The most well-known of his solo violin works is his **Prelude and Toccata**. This work, composed in 1988, consists of an expressive first movement in a moderate tempo with free rhythm endowed with a poignant emotional intensity, while the second is fast in its tempo, dynamic in its energy and mood, quite virtuosic and its technique and is written almost entirely in the regular motoric rhythm of regular sixteenth notes performed at a speedy pace. The composition combines a perceptible tonal centrality with intensive chromatic

harmonies, spelling out a peculiar use of serial technique. This was the composer's first work incorporating serialism, and he found it especially intriguing to compose a work which possessed serial writing in combination with tonal centrality.

The composer's second work for solo violin was the **Prelude and Chorale**, which was written by him in April 1989. It is also a two-movement cycle. The first movement, which is the Prelude, is extremely dramatic, emotionally poignant, entirely atonal in its harmonies, consisting of short separate rhythmically fast phrases played loudly and dynamically, alternating with slower and softer sounds, the latter including harmonics. The second movement, the Chorale, is predominantly diatonic, combining the C major mode and the Mixolydian mode, containing irregularly rhythmmed repeated double stops, all of which is meant to resemble church chants from Georgia. In the Chorale the composer attempted to reflect elements of Georgian folk and church music by means of nonstandard modal harmonic progressions. Some chromatic harmonies return towards the end of the work. The dichotomy of the two movements of the piece extremely contrasting in their harmonic and textural languages creates a moving dramaturgical effect.

"**Burn, O Invisible Flame**" is a work for female chorus in three movements set to a poem by contemporary Russian poet Olga Sedakova, depicting feelings of sadness, loneliness and, at the same time, religious fervor expressed in the poem. Olga Sedakova came to Bryansk in 1985 to take part in Belodubrovsky's "Apodion" Club, and the composer had the chance to acquaint himself with her poems, which he liked immensely, and wished to set one of them to music. The initial version of the composition was written in 1991, but the composer made a revised version in 2015. The work is tonal in its harmony with a predominance of the minor mode, very sad, plaintive, and at the same time elevate, featuring multifold repetitions of short melodic fragments

overlying harmonic textures. The harmonic textures involve a large number of divisions for the female soprano and alto voices, giving way to full harmonic textures and complex chords, with an abundance of seventh chords, ninth chords and triads with added neighboring notes. The third movement features the separate choral voices singing repetitive motives at various speeds, thereby creating an aleatory texture. In the composer's later version of the work the harmonies and the textures, especially those of the third movement, are made even fuller and more complex. There are slight allusions of folk music and Russian Orthodox Christian church music, albeit not as direct as in the cycle "The Blue Candle."

The **Dramatic Fantasy** for two pianos was composed in 1991 and is written by means of the serial technique, which the composer organically combines with sonoristic textural effects for two pianos. The work is fast in its tempo, very dynamic in its mood and contains a lot of rhythmic repetitions alternating between the two pianos, succeeding each other at times, which creates an interesting antiphonal acoustic effects.

Of special interest are his two Sonatas for Violin and Piano. The **First Sonata for Violin and Piano** was composed in 1991–1992. It is a complex modernist work written by means of the serial technique. The entire composition is based on one single twelve-note series, which is such that if it were stated in several voices at once, it would create the impression of an overall improvisation consisting of a freely atonal displacement of pitches. However, the entire musical material of the work is structured in such a way that lengthy fragments of the music are organized serially. This series not only develops the horizontal melodic dimension of the music, but also affects the rhythm in the broadest sense of the word, making it possible to organize the overall form of the composition. Since the twelve-tone series organizes all the parameters of the music, this also generates the composition's large-scale

form. The intervallic relationship between the tones of the series can be numerically established and then transferred to the value of the respective duration. To a certain degree this corresponds with the serial technique of American composer Charles Wuorinen known as the time-point system.

At the same time, the Sonata contains avant-garde sonoristic textural effects which are not connected with the serial technique, such as playing inside the strings of a grand piano, as well as a tragic emotional mood. The work expresses the composer's intensive sad feelings connected with the adverse material and political conditions of living in Bryansk in the 1980s. The First Sonata initially was given the title of "Ksnyarb," which is "Bryansk" spelled backwards, but the composer later discarded the title, in order to avoid excessively concrete biographical connotations. It was composed under the influence of the composer's friendship and musical interaction with St. Petersburg-based pianist and composer Sergei Oskolkov, together with whom Belodubrovsky performed in a piano-and-violin duo. The two musicians performed this work at the Nikolai Roslavetz and Nahum Gabo Festival for the Arts in 1993, and then played it in different concerts and festivals in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Recently it was performed at the "Moscow Autumn" contemporary music festival in Moscow by violinist Vladislav Pesin and pianist Mikhail Dubov.

The choral cycle "**Luminous Dreams**" for children's chorus a cappella set to poems by Russian contemporary poet Victoria Andreyeva was composed in 1997. The cycle contains four short pieces for two-part chorus (three-part in the third movement), with repetitive entirely tonal harmonies and simple melodic and contrapuntal writing, both extremely accessible, so that children could sing it without difficulty, and at the same time, very sophisticated and expressive, effectively grasping the moods of the four poems, which also seem deceptively to be simple on first reading, but are in fact very profound and philosophical in their

inner content. The titles of the four pieces are, respectively, “Luminous Days,” “An Opened Window,” “Thunderstorm” and “Ah, in that Garden.” Belodubrovsky was very fond of these poems and wished to convey their lyrical moods by musical means. The third movement is the fastest in its tempo and most dynamic in its mood and the most complex in its textures. It has a three-part texture, two of the voices of which repeat a fast melodic motive at random, creating an aleatory texture, while the third voice comes it a few seconds later with a more expanded melody. The fourth piece returns to the simple two-part texture and the lyrical mood of the first two pieces.

The **“Four Poems by Joseph Eichendorf”** for solo violin were composed in 1998 under the influence of the great German poet’s verses. Each of the four pieces of this cycle is preceded by Eichendorf’s poems, which may be recited by the violinist in German, or in Russian. The music includes a lot of sound painting, not only expressive, but also depictive elements, such as trumpet fanfares, the rustling of the wind and bird calls. It combines elements of tonal melodicism with a variety of sound color, including pizzicato, harmonics and such extended techniques as playing on the other side of the bridge.

The **Four Transformations** for solo violin, composed in 1999, contain fragments of real music by other composers — namely, Mendelssohn, Webern, Grieg and Dufay, transformed by Belodubrovsky, each time in a different way. The composer was influenced by the technique of “transformation” developed by Russian artist Mikhail Chemiakine, who emigrated to Paris in the 1970s, who had the tendency of creating altered or distorted copies of well-known sculptures or paintings by other visual artists, recognizable, albeit, greatly varied in Chemiakine’s rendition. Likewise, Belodubrovsky tried to alter well-known musical works by other composers, thereby creating original works of his own with recognizable features of the original compositions. The first movement is a

transformation of Mendelssohn’s Wedding March, which is altered by speeding up the tempos, adding dissonant harmonies and presenting the initial melody with a comical touch. The transformation of Webern’s fourth piece from his Five Pieces for String Quartet opus 5 is extremely difficult in its technique, albeit, containing a comical character by having the violinist combine all four rhythmically and texturally diverse parts together in one part with an added whistling part. Notwithstanding the comical quality, Belodubrovsky’s transformation of Webern’s piece retains to a certain degree its expressive and mystical character. The transformation of Guillaume Dufay’s motet is also extremely difficult in its technique, since it combines all the four voices of the choral work in one violin part as quadruple-stops, the awkwardness of playing all four voices on one bow dispelling much of the solemn, elevated character of Dufay’s work and bringing in an unwieldy, comical character, retaining only a bit of the original austere character of the original piece. Grieg’s “Death of Åse” is transformed by having the violinist play the chorale texture of the original music faster than the elder composer wrote it and with added double-stops, thereby bringing in a humorous element.

Two Bryansk Songs for solo violin were composed in 1999 and are based on genuine folk songs from the Bryansk region, which the composer transformed to such an extreme manner, that it is no longer to recognize the original songs. The first piece is moderately slow in tempo and elaborates folk Russian melodicism in the high register of the violin, at times making use of harmonics, as well as dramatic double-stops in combination with trills on the violin. The second piece is fast in its tempo and dynamic in its mood. It elaborates a melody which sounds as a Russian folk song, presenting it in various registers, with various manners of playing the violin, combining the initial diatonic melody with dissonant, chromatic double-stops. The violinist is supposed to recite in a funny voice the text of a Russian

folk song from the Bryansk region about a dove flying and a girl asking her mother permission to go out to the village and to hear folk musicians playing the Russian folk instrument, the gusli. The middle of the piece contains very dynamic, virtuosic music in regular sixteenth-note durations performed in contrasting registers, including high register. Then the music returns to the initial folk-song material of the piece. The performance of this composition has been performed by Belodubrovsky himself in an especially impressive and dynamic manner.

The **Second Sonata for Violin and Piano** was composed in the year 2000 with the aim of performing together with Sergei Oskolkov at the piano a set of “Second Sonatas for Violin and Piano,” including those by Oskolkov, Alfred Schnittke and 20th century French composer Jacques Charpentier. Unlike the First Sonata for Violin and Piano, this composition is not written entirely in the serial technique, but employs some of aspects of serialism in the context of diatonic melodic musical material. The composition contains tonal centricity combined with lengthy excursions into the realm of chromatic harmony. Although this Sonata was written much later than the First Sonata, it also expresses, albeit retrospectively, the composer’s intense emotional response to the hardships of his life in Bryansk in the 1980s connected with the oppressive political situation, when the governmental authorities were giving him a hard time because of his musical-educational activities of promoting rare specimens of music, literature and art, including those prohibited by the Soviet regime. The most prominent use of the serial technique is expressed by the inclusion of the famous Soviet popular song from the time of World War II “*Shumel surovo bryansky les*” [“The Bryansk Forest was Stirring Sternly”] composed by Sigismund Katz to a poem by Anatoly Sofronov. The composer presented the pitches of this widely famous Soviet song in retrograde form, as if it were a serial line. Simultaneously he gave instructions for the musicians to pronounce the words

of the song’s title backwards, and then in the dramaturgical culmination of the composition the names of the two creators of the song Katz and Sofronov are also to be chanted by the two performers backwards as “Tsak” and “Vonorfos,” in a seeming act of mystical exorcism. Thereby, the composer was expressing his attitude of protest against the political persecution he had to endure from the Soviet authorities during those years, most notably when his “Apodion” Club was forcefully closed down in 1985. The Second Sonata for Violin and Piano was performed by Belodubrovsky and Oskolkov at the Nikolai Roslavetz and Nahum Gabo Festival for the Arts in Bryansk, at the “Moscow Autumn” contemporary music festival and the Sergei Berinsky Musical Club in Moscow and the “Sergei Oskolkov and his Friends” festival for the arts in St. Petersburg.

“**Journey from Moscow to St. Petersburg**” (or “**Composition in which I Expressed my Feelings during my Journey from Moscow to St. Petersburg**”) for piano, harmonica, whistle, quail-pipe and automobile horn, all played by one performer, the pianist, was composed in 2002. It is a lightweight, comical and theatrical composition, containing predominantly repetitions of alterations between tonic and subdominant harmonies played on the piano and the harmonica, to which are added additional comically sounding textures of the whistle, the quail-pipe and the automobile horn. The title of the work invokes a book of memoirs by late 18th century poet and writer Alexander Radishchev “The Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow” which combines sentimental poetic musings with elements of social criticism. The composition, written during one of Belodubrovsky’s trip to St. Petersburg to take part in the festival for the arts “Sergei Oskolkov and his Friends” lacks both traits inherent in Radishchev’s book, but is entirely comical, expressing a primitivist and Dadaist musical aesthetics, akin to the artistic movement of the 1920s, and meant to depict the sound of a train. It has been performed in various venues

in Moscow, at Belodubrovsky's festival in Bryansk and at the aforementioned festival in St. Petersburg.

The choral cycle **"Blue Candle"** for mixed chorus set to poems by Russian mid-20th century visionary poet Daniil Andreyev (1906–1959) was composed between 1998 and 2003 and consists of three movements. The composer chose three poems by Andreyev from his collection "The Blue Candle," all of them containing religious visionary qualities and moods. All three of the pieces are moderate in their tempi, the second being slightly faster than the first and third. They combine a simple melodic quality with the choral textures and elevated moods of Russian Orthodox Christian church music, albeit the composer's intention was not to create a canonical church composition, but to recreate the profound, mystical qualities of the poems by means of the music. The second movement contains more discernible melodic writing, while the first and third pieces emphasize the choral textures to a greater degree.

The **Sonata for Violin and Organ**, subtitled **"Epitaph, Improvisation and Chorale"** was composed in 2004 and was performed at the "Moscow Autumn" festival in Moscow. It consists of three extremely contrasting movements the characteristic features of which are essentially described by the work's subtitle, and is written almost entirely in a traditional musical style containing elements of neoclassicism and a diatonic harmony. The first movement is slow and solemn, the second is faster and more rhythmically active, and the third movement is slow and has an austere, religious mood. In the first movement of the Sonata, the "Epitaph," there is a self-quotation of a musical theme from the composer's "Suite for Four Electronic Bayans" from the 1980s, whereas the last movement of the composition, the "Chorale" contains a quotation from a specimen of Znamenny chant, the early Russian (pre 17th century) monophonic church singing.

In 2005 Belodubrovsky composed a short opera **"Nikolai" ["Nicholas"]** for soprano,

tenor, violin, cello and piano to a libretto of his own creation based on poetic and prose texts by early 20th century poets Velemir Khlebnikov, Daniil Kharms and Alexander Vvedensky and by contemporary Russian writer Victor Pelevin. The libretto contains lightweight humorous elements, as well as serious, philosophical contemplation of life and its meaning. It deals with the last Russian tsar Nicholas II (who reigned between in 1894 and 1917). He is shown as superficial in his character and weak and indecisive in his motivations. Through the influence of his wife Empress Alexandra, his character is changed, and he acquires strength of motivation and volition. Belodubrovsky considers this work as the most important in his musical output. The music, tonal in its harmonies and romantic in its style, with elements of neoclassicism characteristic of late 20th century composers from St. Petersburg, begins and ends in a slow and austere mood with sparse textures, switching to a faster tempo and a more lightweight, jovial mood, prior to returning to the initial mood later. The end of the opera contains a text setting of Alexander Vvedensky's famous "Elegy" and offers extremely sad and pensive music, depicting the mood of the text in its philosophical questioning about the meaning of life.

"Dream" for violin and piano, composed in 2005, is a short lyrical composition, entirely tonal in harmony and traditionally romantic in its instrumental texture and overall language, composed in a rather standard ternary form with a slightly more dynamic middle section. It was composed in memory of composer German Okunev, a faculty member of the Leningrad Conservatory, who was killed in a car accident, when he was taken away in an ambulance after having fallen ill with the flu.

"Extraction of Iodine from Algae" for solo violin was composed under the impression of a philosophical treatise by priest and philosopher Father Pavel Florensky (1882–1937). The music expresses and depicts the aforementioned title by

means of physical effects, such as rustlings, created by sparse sonoristic avant-garde textures, including quarter-tone intervals and glissandi carried out by double-stops in the high register of the violin. It also contains depictions of bell peals created by double-stops and triple-stops in the lower register of the violin, indicating the fact that Florensky was a priest. A very important element in the piece is the pitch F, indicating the name of Florensky, with which the piece begins and which frequently recurs throughout the entire work.

“**Az i ya**” for solo flute was written in 2007. The title of the piece presents a word play, including the Old Slavonic word “Az” (meaning “I,” as in first person singular), the “i” meaning “and” in Russian” and the “ya” meaning the first person singular “I” in contemporary Russian. At the same time, the assemblage of word also connotes the Russian word for “Asia.” Thereby the composer presents a correlation between ancient, historical with contemporary culture. The music combines in an organic way simple diatonic melodic passages, repeated by means of variations, with more complex chromatic passages containing livelier virtuosic textures, albeit containing lots of repetitions. Subsequently the composer created a newer version of the piece, to which he added more chromatic harmonies, virtuosic passages, and even a small number of extended techniques for flute. The piece conveys a succession of different emotional moods, ranging from pensive and philosophical to fast and lively.

“**The Beasts of St. Anthony**” for clarinet, violin, cello and piano is a three-movement composition written in an avant-garde style. It was inspired by a book of poetry titled “The Beasts of St. Anthony” written by Leningrad-based poet Dmitri Bobyshev, who was patronized by Anna Akhmatova, and who later emigrated to the USA, and by the picture illustrations of these poems by artist Mikhail Chemiakine. In Bobyshev’s poetry book each poem is illustrated by Chemiakine, and the music was inspired both by the

poems and the pictures. The composition contains serial technique applied not only to pitch, but also to rhythm. The rhythmic series is built in such a way that it bears rhythmic development, thereby, the pitch series is transferred to the rhythmic series, and that in turn is transferred to the gradual development of the overall form. In addition to the serial aspect, the composition includes very harsh sonoristic textures and elements of aleatory technique.

“**Debryansk**” for piano, composed in 2010, consists of three movements bearing the titles of “Morning,” “Day” and “Evening.” The title of the work denotes the early historical name of “Bryansk” (stemming from the Russian word “debry,” which means “forest thickets”). The composer wished to express the history of Bryansk, so the work is endowed with an assortment of avant-garde textures meant to convey historical color and exoticism — first of all, piano textures depicting bell peals, describing the churches of Bryansk and their lengthy history, as well as extended techniques, such as playing inside the strings of the piano and pizzicato sounds inside the strings. The work was performed by pianist Ivan Sokolov in Moscow and at the “Nikolai Roslavetz and Nahum Gabo Festival for the Arts” in Bryansk.

This examination of Mark Belodubrovsky’s musical compositions demonstrate him as a versatile, talented and distinguished composer, able to create music in various styles and techniques, from traditional to avant-garde, in different instrumental and vocal media. Notwithstanding their extreme diversity, his musical style is not in the least eclectic or lacking in inner focus, but the extreme diversity of the composer’s styles merely presents a broad panorama of various aspects of a single unified style, endowed with profound philosophical thought, emotional expression, colorful depiction and brilliant theatrical qualities. All of this portrays a powerful and highly integrated creative talent whose musical language speaks powerfully to those

who are fortunate to hear it, and whose recognition by the public definitely deserves to be expedited and given its proper dues. In addition to his merits as a violinist, concert organizer and popularizer of music by undeservedly forgotten composers, he deserves to be better known and appreciated as a distinguished original composer.



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