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A MANIFESTATION OF APOLLONIAN ECUMENISM IN SELECTED PIANO WORKS OF ALEXANDER TCHEREPNIN (1899-1977)

by

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A MANIFESTATION OF APOLLONIAN ECUMENISM
IN SELECTED PIANO WORKS OF ALEXANDER TCHEREPNIN (1899-1977)

Svetlana Yashirin, D.M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2006

Advisor: Paul Barnes

The period of 1890-1920, surrounding the Russian October Revolution of 1917, was marked by an unprecedented outburst in all human activities and a tremendous struggle of intellectual forces represented by various personalities and groups. Creativity among poets, artists and musicians soared because of a strong belief in art as a transforming force.

Composer Alexander Tcherepnin was born in 1899 in St. Petersburg, Russia. Tcherepnin's early exposure to the traditions of the New Russian Music School through his father Nikolai Tcherepnin (1873-1945) and to modern art of the *Mir Iskusstva* (The World of Art) led to the formation of a unique music style and aesthetic principles. In his style, Alexander Tcherepnin synthesized the New Russian Music School's universalism and *Mir Iskusstva's* Apollonian aestheticism. This document examines selected piano works of Alexander Tcherepnin in light of this unique cultural setting and diverse influences.

Russian composers of this period were continuing traditions of Romanticism or exploring modernism, often displaying rabid nationalism or avant-garde (aggressive confrontation). Tcherepnin was the sole representative of Apollonian ecumenism in music, which stands for elegance and peace. He poignantly and faithfully manifested principles and ideals of his aesthetic convictions through his entire life, in the face of adverse circumstances.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Unfortunately, most people whom I want to thank for helping me to reach this milestone in my life will never know about my indebtedness to them. Natalia Basyrova and Irina Sobolevskaya, my first and unforgettable teachers, taught me to love music and to work hard. My college teachers in Ternolpol School of Music taught me to perceive music as a part of societal and cultural life. My Nebraska students at Peru State College, at Concordia University and at Southeast Community College pushed me to search for answers beyond those which I have acquired throughout my years of training.

I want to express my gratitude to my teachers at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, such as Audan Ravnan and Shirley Irek, who gave me a chance to study music at the college level in America by accepting me into the program and believing in me. I am very grateful to my Supervisory Committee members - Glenn Nierman, Tyler White, Martin Gaskell and Ann Chang-Barnes - for their belief in high standards, their competence, their love for music and their ongoing support, all of which were invaluable to me. Especially I want to express my gratitude to Peter Lefferts and Paul Barnes for their encouragement, sensitivity, non-intrusiveness, open-mindedness and patience, which helped me throughout my graduate studies in general and in my final research in particular. Also, my thank you page would not be complete without mentioning the great help provided by the UNL libraries, especially Love Library and Westbrook Music Library.

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Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Keats *Ode on a Grecian Urn*

Chapter I
INTRODUCTION: APOLLONIAN ECUMENISM

An unprecedented surge in creative activity at the end of the nineteenth century in Russia was caused by a younger generation of artists influenced by new aesthetic theories. These new aesthetic practices were confronting older, more conservative, and often reactionary traditions. In Europe, contradictions erupted between groups of different aesthetic convictions, such as between the Academy and the newer trends of Impressionism and Symbolism. In Russia, because of its geopolitical position, the conflict was not limited to confrontation between newer and older aesthetic traditions: it also included the severely aggravated question of national identity.

The socio-political situation, born out of antagonisms of the industrial revolution, was seen by German philosophers Nietzsche and Schopenhauer as grave, but Russian thinkers saw their homeland's situation as catastrophic. Salvation was seen in the art and aesthetic of *humanism*, which was regarded as independent from any ideology. And all humanistic searches were leading to the same starting point of Apollonian aestheticism, born in Ancient Greece out of Apollo's set of aesthetic characteristics: beauty, clarity, balance, simplicity and wisdom.

Alexander Tcherepnin (1899-1977) as no other Russian composer, was uniquely surrounded by Russian leading artistic figures who were involved in aesthetic deliberations of that time. These people were educated in traditional Russian humanist values, creating "art in the name of people."[1] The Apollonian aesthetic sought by Russian

[1] Bruce W. Lincoln, Between Heaven and Hell: The Story of a Thousand years of Artistic Life in Russia (Viking, New-York, 1998): 223.

and European artists aimed toward *human being's happiness* and not toward *human being's oppression*. In addition to adopting a new aesthetic, Russian humanists also sought to embrace all different peoples populating the country, which was ecumenism. The synthesis of *ecumenical humanism* and *Apollonian aestheticism* could have been an ideal answer for Russian artists seeking peaceful solutions to the unresolved and growing contradictions the country was facing after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1861.[2] Tcherepnin, because of his family circumstances, was brought up on the synthesis of Russian humanist spiritual treasures and aesthetic principles of the newer generation of the *Mir Iskusstva*.[3] His family's emigration from Russia in 1918 allowed Tcherepnin to preserve and develop further his aesthetic convictions, turning them into Apollonian ecumenism.

An analysis and comparison of the aesthetical principles of Tcherepnin with the aesthetic manifestations of Russian, European and American philosophers and artists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries such as Schiller, Nietzsche, Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Diaghilev and Rochberg yields striking resemblances.The high standards set by Russian humanists Pushkin, Lermontov, Glinka, and the composers of the Mighty Five served as inspiration and a model for younger generations. Chapter II illustrates Tcherepnin's integration of these various Russian humanist characteristics. Features of Apollonian aestheticism, the product of Nietzsche's philosophy as absorbed and transformed by

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[2] Lincoln p. 222. Emancipation Proclamation of 1861 made millions of serfs free and left the question of integration into society of newly freed masses unresolved.

[3] *Mir Iskusstva* (The World of Art)-Russian artists and writers of the *fin-de siecle* found their voice in this group. Members of the group were convinced that art must encompass every artwork from the past and present that raises humanity above tendentiousness or any mundane and utilitarian concerns. The group had its beginnings in St. Petersburg among a group of former schoolmates who met several times a week. At first dominated by the painter Alexander Benois and the literary critic and thinker Dmitrii Filosofof, the group soon added the young artists Lev Bakst and Nikolai Rerikh, and Sergey Diaghilev.

Russian aesthetes of *Mir Iskusstva*, are compared with characteristics of Tcherepnin's compositions in Chapter III.

The examples in chapters II and III are taken from three of Tcherepnin's piano works, written during different stylistic periods and under different circumstances: *Sonatine Romantique* Op. 4 (1918), *Five Etudes de Concert* Op. 52 (1934-36) and *Chant et Refrain* Op. 66 (1940). These pieces are representative of the composer's different stylistic periods and demonstrate different technical and musical elements.

The final chapter discusses Tcherepnin's relevance in the modern artistic world by comparing aesthetic values of Tcherepnin with aesthetic values that are summoned forth by American composer George Rochberg in "The Aesthetics of Survival."[4] This chapter analyzes similarities in aesthetic views of the twentieth century, represented by Rochberg, and the nineteenth century, represented by German and Russian aestheticians. These similarities of aesthetic principles, which never had a chance to survive, exemplify the actuality of the aesthetic question today.

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[4]George Rochberg, The Aesthetics of Survival: a Composer's View of Twentieth-Century Music (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1984).

Chapter II
TCHEREPNIN AND ECUMENISM

In many documents, such as autobiographies and interviews, Tcherepnin asserts that he learned composition not by going to school but instinctively. Without full realization of the source of his ideas, Tcherepnin knew for sure that they were flying "in the air."[5] The air of Tcherepnin's home in St. Petersburg was highly artistic and musical, indeed:

> I was the only child and, as a result, I was admitted to all musical gatherings and rehearsals at home; (where the guests included Rimsky-Korsakov, Liadov, Cui, Glazunov, Stravinsky, Prokofieff, Diaghilev, Benois, Fokine, Pavlova and Chaliapin) and at the concert halls when my father, his friends, or his students were conducting, as well as being allowed to go to concerts, operas and ballets. Also at home there were discussions of the Russian Ballet during the time of its conception and formative years—discussions which included my father, Diaghilev, Benois, Fokine, Bakst, Nouvelle, Nurok, and *tutti quanti*. Via Benois family (my mother's), I was also permitted to associate with contemporary painters and sculptors, to attend their exhibitions, and to meet with writers and poets like Gorodetsky, Kamensky, and Gumilev. [6]

Each of these names stands for a certain era in art and is associated with his or her set of goals, ideals and philosophic values. Tcherepnin met the Mighty Five's surviving members Rimsky-Korsakov and Cui, illustrious composers of the St Petersburg conservatory Glazunov and Liadov, and representatives of fledgling modernist music Stravinsky and Prokofiev. Prominent poets of the Silver Age[7] Gorodetsky, Kamensky and Gumilev, to whose poetry both Nikolai and Alexander Tcherepnin set music, were often present in his home, too. Two cornerstone figures of *Mir Iskusstva*, "a raging lion"[8]

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[5] Alexander Tcherepnin, "Autobiography," Tempo No. 130 (1979): 16.

[6] Ibid. 12.

[7] Francis Maes, A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar (University of California Press, 2002) 197, 202.

[8] Lincoln, Between Heaven and Hell: 269.

Sergey Diaghilev (1872-1929), and theatrical designer and producer Alexander Benois (1870-1960), ardently discussed the aesthetic ideas of the *Ballet Russes*, which brought irreversible change to the artistic world with "The Rite of Spring" in 1913.

These people sought to use art to fulfill their mission of finding an answer to Russia's tormenting question: *East or West*.[9] For several centuries Russians struggled with this question, and at the end of the nineteenth century the issue became extremely aggravated. Peace and prosperity of the nation seemed within reach if contradictions and confrontations could be eliminated. Russia's location between two opposite cultures caused Russians to interact with parts of the world stretched to the East and to the West without wholeheartedly committing to either one. While Western reformers dealt primarily with one culture, Russians had to deal with many cultures because of the country's geopolitical situation. In the past Russians embraced the religion, art and literacy of Byzantium, assimilated Mongolian ways of dealing with money and postal service, and accepted philosophical ideas of the French Enlightenment and German philosophical pessimism. Non-commitment to any single pattern of development was seen as the reason for lagging behind more developed Western countries. Those who were campaigning for Russia's assimilation with the West saw progress in the development of science and dehumanization. Those who saw the East as the only righteous choice saw Russia's salvation in religion and spirituality. However, there were those who saw the synthesis between the West and the East as the only plausible solution, and their ideas were conveyed by poets and philosophers.

Russian humanists, those who created art in the name of the people, saw their mission in improving the life of the Russian *narod* (people). To do this they sought to

[9] Lincoln, 55.

educate plain folk through aesthetic experience, by exposing them to all the wealth of the world's art. Humanists believed that national problems were caused by people's ignorance, and once people became aesthetically refined they would be able to improve their own lives. *Mir Iskusstva* saw in aesthetics the power that would be able to stop confrontations and reconcile contradictions between the extremes of Westerners, putting their faith solely in scientific progress, and Slavophils, putting their trust exclusively in religion. Educating the masses and reconciling cultural differences made the Russian humanist tradition two-sided: the first saw low social class as the source of genuine spiritual strength, while the second perceived people of nations located to the West or to the East as brothers.

The first and foremost Russian humanist was Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), who in his poetry spoke of the humanism for which all Russians were yearning. According to Dostoevsky:

> There had never been a poet with a universal sympathy like Pushkin's…For what is the power of the spirit of Russian nationality if not its aspiration after the final goal of universality and omni-humanity?...To become a true Russian, to become a Russian fully, means only to become the brother of all men, to become, if you will, a universal man.[10]

To be a genuine Russian meant to become a brother to all men, a universal man. Pushkin, who himself became a symbol of humanism, served as an inspiration to the Russian people for many generations to come. Thus the word 'humanism,' as a universal synthesis, can be interchanged with 'universalism,' by which the first Russian humanist composer was characterized.

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[10]Feodor Dostoevsky The Dream of Queer Fellow and the Pushkin Speech, trans. by Kosteliansky, S. and J. Middleton Murry (London: Unwin Books 1916, 1960) 56-57.

In Russian music in the early nineteenth century, the tradition of universalism started with Michael Glinka (1804-1857). Glinka was the first universal Russian composer, using a "full range of operatic styles and conventions practiced at his day"[11] such as Italian, French and German. Richard Taruskin writes about Glinka: "German music was all *dukh*, brains without beauty; Italian music was all *chuvstvennost'*, beauty without brains. Glinka resolved-yes, consciously, that his music, Russian music, would uniquely have both brains and beauty."[12]

Glinka's tradition of conscious synthesis of practiced conventions was continued later in the century by composers of the Mighty Five. The maverick of Russian art criticism, Vladimir Stasov (1824-1906), formulated the characteristics of traditional Russian humanism in music. The main characteristics of the New Russian Music School were outlined and published by Stasov in 1882 in his essay "Our Music," which was a part from a larger art survey, "Twenty-Five Years of Russian Art." These characteristics were: a) skeptical absorption of the traditions of the past, b) fondness for Russian folk song, c) oriental theme and d) inclination toward program music. Although Tcherepnin was born when the New Russian Music School period was over, its characteristics continued to be relevant. In his works Tcherepnin widened and deepened the scope of Russian humanist traditions that he inherited from the New Russian Music School.

For example, the first characteristic, the "skeptical and selective universal absorption of existing traditions," describes Russian composers as being selective and not having blind faith towards musical creations of the past. According to Stasov, this

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[11] Taruskin 66.

[12] Ibid. 67.

attitude toward the alleged "wisdom of the past," so honored by academia, saved the New Russian Music School from creating pedantic or routine works. Selective absorption of existing Western traditions became one of Tcherepnin's traits, too. For example, Tcherepnin remained a tonal composer all his life, clearly understanding that this steadfastness negatively affected his career, reputation and, of course, income. The gravity of such a position is better understood through an analogy made by composer Jacob Druckman: "not being a serialist on the East Coast of the United States in the sixties was like not being a Catholic in Rome in the thirteenth century."[13] Tcherepnin, being selective in his absorption of traditions, did not let mainstream fads divert him from his life-long humanist convictions.

The second characteristic of the New Russian Music School composers was their careful and responsible treatment of folk song and culture in general. According to New Russian Music School spokesperson Stasov, folk song is "unaffected musicality of the people," representing an indispensable part of every "creative and musical spirit."[14] For Tcherepnin, folk song was as important as the "anatomy of the human body for a painter…Operating with themes from folklore composers work with eternal material…"[15] Tcherepnin reverently remembered his childhood years, when he and his father "used to listen to singing of simple villagers."[16] Tcherepnin believed that this simple singing mirrored the soul of the plain folk. His appreciation and genuine interest in folk music

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[13] Richard Crawford, An Introduction to America's Music (W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 200) 502.

[14] Stasov, Our Music: 527.

[15] Enrique Arias, "Alexander Tcherepnin's Thoughts on Music," Perspectives of New Music xxi (1982-3) 142.

[16] Ibid. 141.

later became his topic of research and the source of infinite inspiration. In his use of folk elements, Tcherepnin went further than his predecessors by embracing not only national folklore, but international, too: "I would say that the folklore of all countries…has the same eternal value."[17] Tcherepnin was heir to the New Russian Music School by being inspired by folklore; at the same time, he represented the new Silver Age generation by applying his interest in folklore not to a single country or narrow region, but many countries.

The third characteristic of the New Russian Music School is the oriental theme. Stasov argued that the oriental theme for Russians represented a completely different attraction than for Europeans. For Europeans the interest in orientalism was more of a curiosity. For example, Mozart's "Alla Turca" (KV 331) is brilliant and witty, but there is no emotional affinity. Russians, on the other hand, by hearing Eastern melody, felt the inexplicable bittersweet nostalgia that stood for the unattainable and remote realm of spiritual freedom and liberty.

The poet, who at the beginning of the nineteenth century began the tradition of seeing the Orient as a place of free-spirited people was Michael Lermontov (1815-1841). Russians were influenced by Lermontov's idealization of the Caucasus people, their character and their will for freedom. Lermontov's poetry served as the source of spiritual strength and bravery to politically oppressed Russians:

> …the mind of Lermontoff was disquited by the same great problems of Good and Evil struggling in the human heart, as in the universe at large…Like Shelley among the poets, and like Schopenhauer among the philosophers, he felt the

[17] Ibid. 141.

> coming of that burning need of a revision of the current moral principles, so characteristic of our own times.[18]

Russian and Western differences in the interpretation of Oriental themes turned out to be a great disappointment to Diaghilev. When *Ballets Russes* brought to Paris their best works, and best works for Russians meant works that incorporated the Oriental themes, Parisians could not understand their poignancy. Westerners could not grasp the idea of the spiritual indebtedness to the East experienced by every true Russian. Instead they saw in these productions only "exotica-cum-erotica."[19]

In the words of Tcherepnin, Russian ties with the East carry many hundreds of years of love-hate relationship:

> Around 1,000 years ago, Russia was geographically situated in feudalistic states not always friendly to each other. The Mongolian invasion put all of these states under the domination of the Mongols, so that Russia became part of the great Mongolian Empire, which extended from Visla to the Pacific Ocean. After many centuries, the Russians succeeded in defeating the Mongols; they did not drive the Mongols away, but dominated them, inheriting the great Mongolian Empire. There is a French proverb which reads, 'Scratch a Russian and you will find a Tartar.' Indeed the Mongols and the Russians merged, so that the actual Russian race is in many ways the result of this assimilation. Russia is as much a European country as she is an Asiatic one—a true Eurasian Empire, both geographically and ethnically.[20]

Tcherepnin not only inherited from New Russian Music School an attitude toward the East as the source of genuine spiritual freedom, but he was also able to broaden this tradition. He was first immersed into Eastern culture during his stay in Tbilisi in 1918, after the family left St. Petersburg in the hope to escape the turmoil of the Revolution.

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[18] Prince Kropotkin, Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishert, 1970) 53.

[19] Taruskin, Defining Russia, 182.

[20] Tcherepnin Autobiography 17.

Later he made two trips to the Far East and spent 1934-36 in China, where he tirelessly helped young Chinese composers in establishing their own national music school and their own music publishing house. Close contacts with Eastern music culture and traditions, especially Eastern folk music, made an indelible mark on his compositions. In China musicians are still reverently preserving memories about his input in their music.

The fourth characteristic of the New Russian Music School was an inclination toward **"**program music**."** Stasov writes that practically all Russian symphonic music is programmatic: "One cannot help noticing that inclination toward program music is much stronger with Russians than almost anywhere else in Europe."[21] Tcherepnin absorbed his programmatic inclination from the New Russian Music School as well. Not only a successful theatre composer who wrote three operas, thirteen ballets and a lot of songs, Tcherepnin utilized his love for poetry even in simple instrumental pieces. Often sonatas, etudes and character pieces bear evocative titles with poetic lines at the beginning, middle or the end of the piece, sometimes even with a story. For example, in *Sonatine Romantique* Tcherepnin musically described real events that happened before his own eyes in the spring of 1918:

> I was lying in my bed during Holy Week, with high fever, ill with scurvy from not enough to eat. My home was just opposite from St. Nicholas Cathedral, where I used to go with my Father for the Easter services. This year I was unable to go, but I heard the bell ringing and saw the processions from my window, so I was somehow attending. At the Saturday service, some marines from Kronstadt came with guns and started to fire, so from my window I heard gunshots along with the hymns…It was a custom in Russia that on Easter anyone who wished was allowed to go and ring the church bells to his heart's delight. I had done this many times in my youth, but this time I could ring these bells only on the piano.[22]

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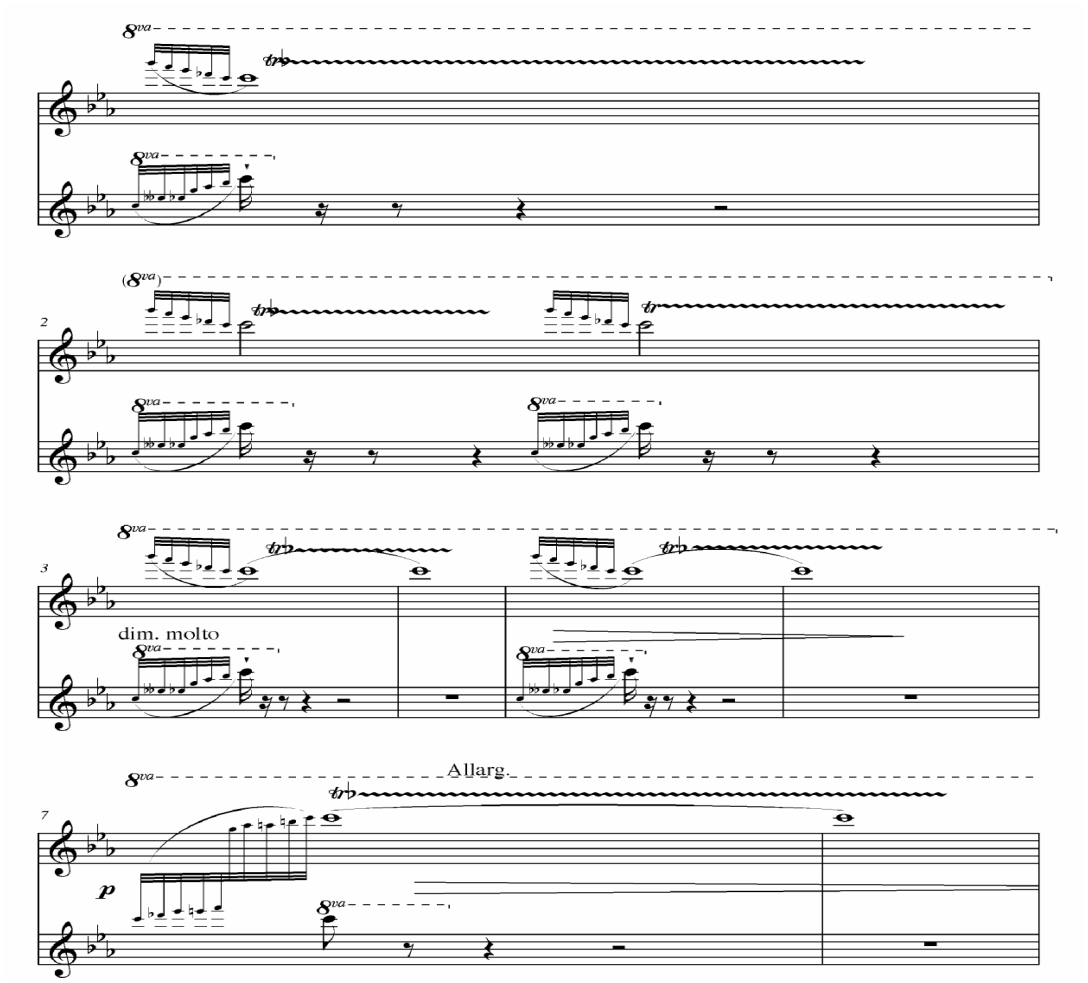
[21] Vladimir Stasov, "Our Music" trans. R. Taruskin, in book Music in the Western World,selected and annotated by Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin (New York: Schirmer Books, 1984) 393.

[22]Enrique Arias, Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989) 55.

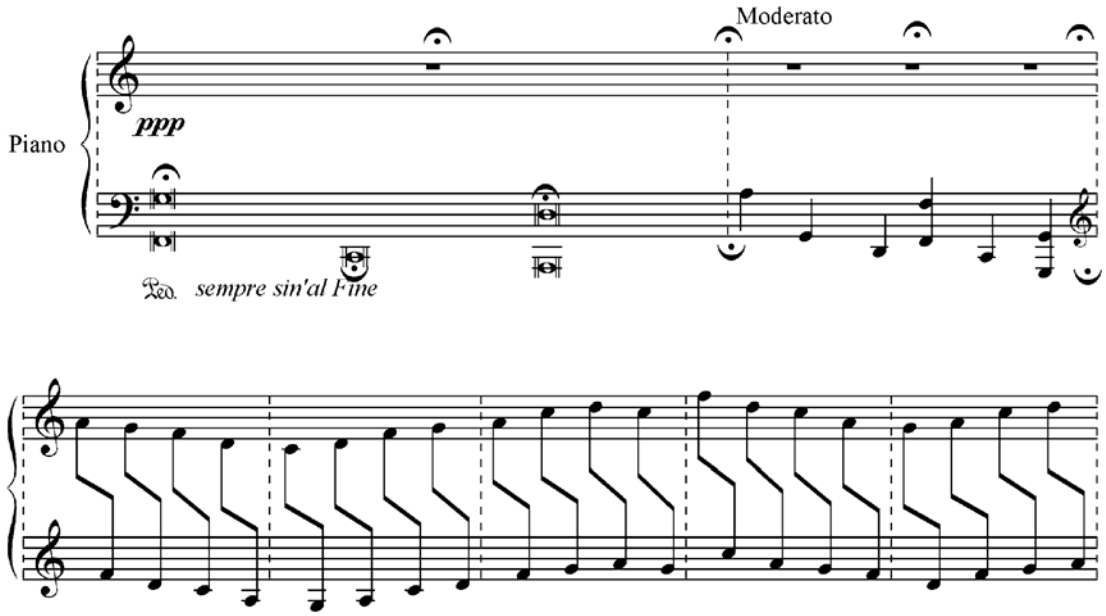
The following music example is from the Fourth movement of *Sonatine Romantique* depicting surreal sounds of gunshots (mm. 64-71):



Ex. 1. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Sonatine Romantique*, Op. 4, fourth movement, mm. 64-71.

This sonata was written in four days during Easter's Holy Week of 1918 and is an interesting musical commentary on violent events by a person who did not take political sides, because as a humanist he sought a universal synthesis between contradictions.

The instrumental musical setting of folktales and stories was not unusual for Tcherepnin. For example, in the *Five Etudes de Concert* he used a folk story of the traveling Mandarin. This piano cycle consists of five multi-character piano pieces contrasting in character, texture and tempo. The second movement, entitled *Lute,* was inspired by a traditional Chinese instrument, the *kou chin (guzheng).* It depicts the following story about two friends: "A traveling mandarin…meets a woodcutter, with whom he discusses art, poetry, and music. They become friends and decide to meet the same time the next year. The mandarin returns to meet an old man who tells him his son, the woodcutter, has died. In his sorrow the mandarin breaks his lute and throws it into the river."[23] Music of this piece begins with long notes elongated with fermatas, preparing for a serious and tragic story, followed by idiomatic sound of Chinese lute playing, with repeated notes alternated between two hands:



Ex. 2. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Five Etudes de Concert*, Op. 52, second movement *Lute,* opening.

[23] Arias, Bio-Bibliography, 77.

Clear ringing tone and free narrative style is represented in fermatas, in dotted measure lines and one pedal from beginning to the end, perfectly reflecting the mood and character of the story.

For Tcherepnin the assimilation of various aspects of the old masters' humanism was occurring simultaneously with learning from young composers, such as Stravinsky and Prokofiev. Sergey Prokofiev (1891-1953) was a regular visitor in Tcherepnin's home because Nikolai Tcherepnin was Prokofiev's private composition teacher. Nikolai Tcherepnin was the only professor in the St. Petersburg Conservatory who supported Prokofiev's modernist style of composition. In Tcherepnin's diary many entries are dedicated to Prokofiev. Tcherepnin was a "zealous devotee"[24]of Prokofiev and a warm, life-long personal relationship between Prokofiev's and Tcherepnin's families continued after emmigration, too. Prokofiev's clarity, vitality and economy of expression became part of Tcherepnin's musical style. Victor Michailovich Belaiev (1888-1968),[25] "an expert of all contemporary Russian music,"[26] in his article about Tcherepnin, described Prokofiev's influence on the younger composer as "the most wholesome lifelong influence"[27] of the ideal that embodies "all positive qualities" of a truly Russian composer.

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[24] Ludmila Korabelnikova, Alexander Tcherepnin: Dolgoe Stranstvie (Moscow: Yazyki Russkoy Kul'tury, 1999) 24.

[25] V.M. Belaiev-musicologist, specialized in music of Eastern regions of USSR; taught Tcherepnin in St. Petersburg and wrote the article about the composer in 1925.

[26] Korabelnikova 107.

[27] Vladimir M.Belaiev, "Sovremennaya Mysika i Alexander Tcherepnin," Sovremennaya Mysika, 1925, #11 translated by the present author.

Tcherepnin was also strongly influenced by Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), to whose music Tcherepnin was exposed through his father Nikolai Tcherepnin, who conducted *Ballet Russes*. About Stravinsky, Tcherepnin had a special opinion, which he did not read in any books, and with which even Stravinsky did not agree: "I see him as a folklore musician-the typical heir of Rimsky-Korsakov—and find unity and consecutive order in all his works beginning from the earliest till the latest, which are serial."[28] Even the modernism of Prokofiev and Stravinsky is a manifestation of humanism, if viewed as a return to a starting point, where artistic musical thought is dominant over the musical extravagance.

Enthusiastic acceptance of Prokofiev and Stravinsky's modernism prompted Tcherepnin to experiment and create his own modernist techniques. Tcherepnin's modernism is apparent in two personal techniques: a nine-step scale and interpoint. Tcherepnin recalls that at a very early age he had "the tendency and the urge to combine major and minor chords. Only a major minor tetrachord gave the sensation of finality and stability."[29] A nine-step scale comes out of the combination of minor and major tetrachords invented by the composer. Tcherepnin, in his autobiography, writes that since early childhood he had realized that "happiness and unhappiness, joy and sorrow co-exist and cannot be separated from each other."[30] This realization brought him to the idea of combining major and minor triads, which was very appealing: "I heard it constantly sounding in me and, somehow, even in the early instinctive period of my composing, I

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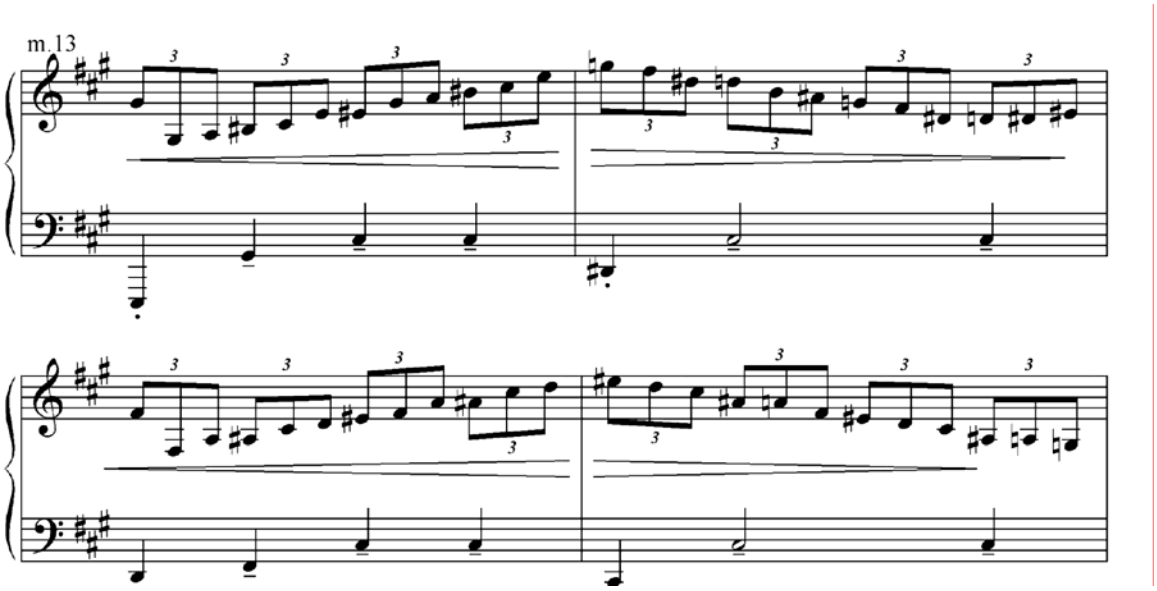
[28] Alexander Tcherepnin, in letter to Shneerson, April 7 1962. qtd. in Korabelnikova p. 26, translated by the present author.

[29] Tcherepnin, Autobiography, 14.

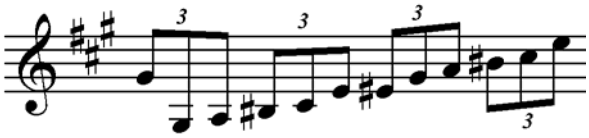
[30] Tcherepnin, Autobiography, 14.

used it as final, consonant chord."[31] The major/minor triad combination led to superimposing major and minor tetrachords, which eventually became a nine-step "synthetic scale."[32] The effect produced could be described as serene and ethereal. For example, in *Sonatine Romantique* Tcherepnin used nine-step scale for the first time:



Ex. 3. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Sonatine Romantique* Op. 4, first movement, mm. 13-16.

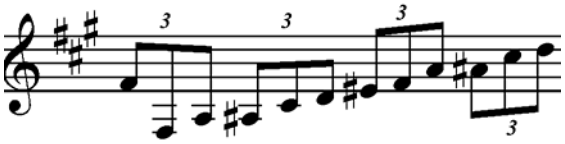
The scale is derived by superimposing the two hexachords with starting notes one whole step apart that appear in the RH in mm.13 and 15:



Ex. 4. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Sonatine Romantique* Op. 4, first movement, m.13

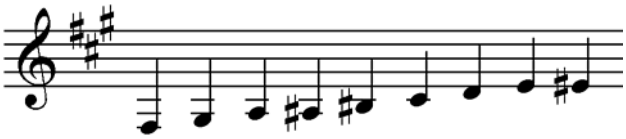
[31] Ibid. 14.

[32] Ibid. 14.



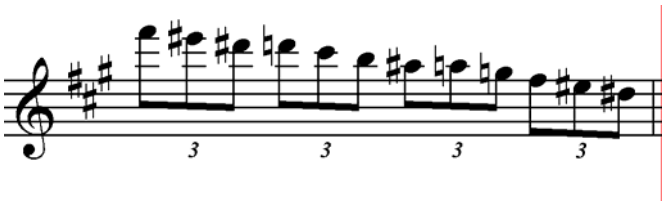
Ex. 5. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Sonatine Romantique* Op. 4, first movement, m.15

Combining the first hexachord G#, A, B#, C#, E, E# with the second hexachord F#, A, A#, C#, D, E# produces the nine-step scale structured: W, H, H, W, H, H, W, H steps:



Ex. 6. Nine-Step Scale.

Tcherepnin uses the scale in its entirety, too: in m. 96, one whole step alternates with two half-steps:



Ex. 7. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Sonatine Romantique* Op. 4, first movement, m.96.

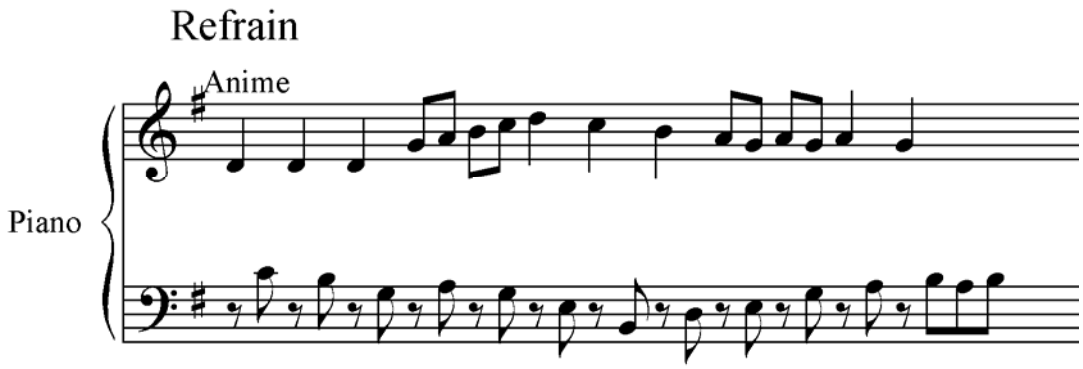
From his early youth, Tcherepnin rejected "impressionism and the vagueness associated with it," because in his mind, "progress would be achieved via clear part-writing: therefore by polyphony."[33] Interpoint is another important basic element of Tcherepnin's musical language, described by the composer himself as "instinctively acquired part-writing technique."[34] This contrapuntal procedure's main goal is to create a

[33]Ibid. 14.

[34]Ibid. 14.

feel of instability by "combining several linear elements in such a way as to stress their independence rather than their mutual dependence."[35] As explained by Tcherepnin, interpoint has three different types: vertical, horizontal and metrical.

Vertical interpoint represents a combination of linear elements that "alternate their respective attack points, avoiding coincidental attacks…"[36] Alternating of attack points is traditional and comparable to cross-rhythms and even a fourteenth century hocket:[37]



Ex. 8. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Chant et Refrain* Op. 66, *Refrain*, opening.

Horizontal interpoint texture consists of "staggered linear entrances" that could be "thought of as a kind of 'shifted barline interpoint,'"[38] because of a condensed time span and a dense texture. The following example is from *Chant et Refrain* m. 18:

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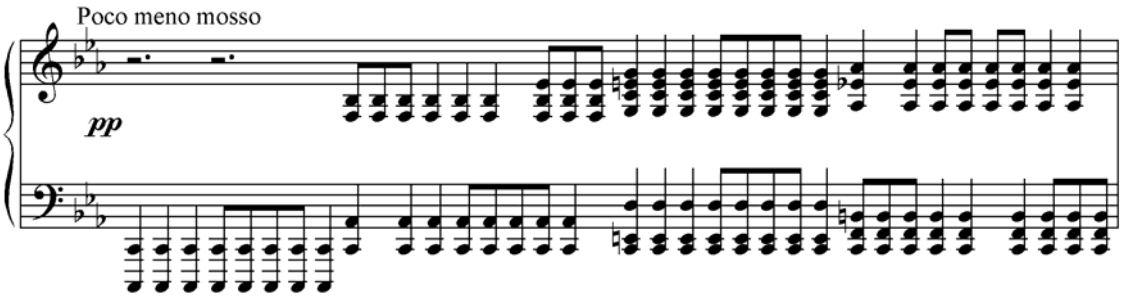
[35] Guy Wuellner, The Complete Piano Music of Alexander Tcherepnin, diss., (U of Iowa, 1974) 66-67.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

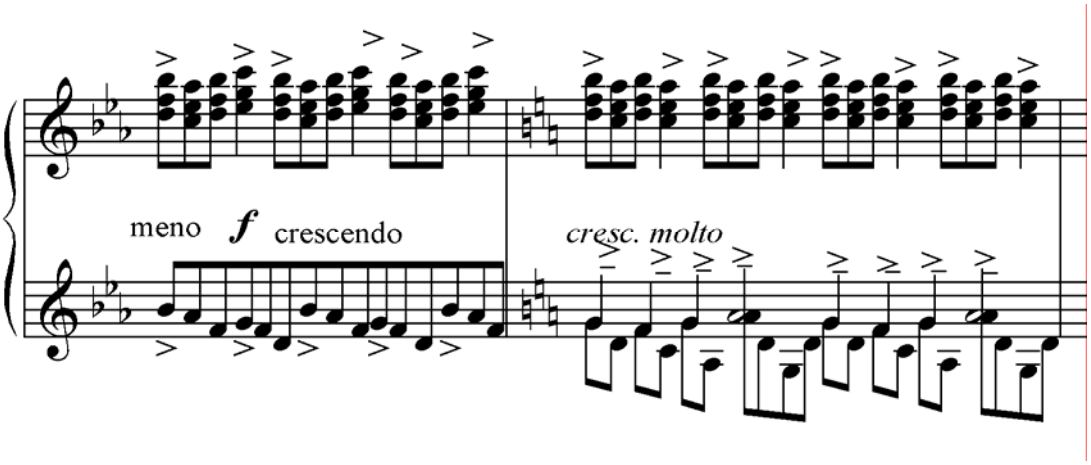
[38] Wuellner, 70.



Ex. 9. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Chant et Refrain* Op. 66, *Refrain* m. 18

Each hand has its own entrances, creating the feel of shifted bar line.

Metrical interpoint is a "simultaneous use of strikingly contrasted rhythms in different parts of the musical fabric"[39] with conflicting meter and accents. An example of metrical interpoint can be found in *Chant et Refrain* (mm. 15-16):



Ex. 10. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Chant et Refrain* Op. 66, *Refrain* mm. 15-16.

Chant et Refrain (1940), written in Paris, is traditional in form: it is a prelude and fugue on models from the Baroque period. The prelude is improvisatory, with elaborate ornamentation and a lyrical, flowing melody. While the fugue is polyphonic, it is intrapuntal instead of contrapuntal. The *Refrain* (fugue) contrasts with the *Chant* (prelude) in character and sound, with an energetic driving rhythm and percussive dry

[39] Ibid.

articulation. Interpoint sections create moments of instability, tension and excitement, but these are always in moderation. They are usually used to highlight the contrasting improvisatory section. Interpoint comes out of counterpoint as a variation and continuation of an old Western musical tradition.

Tcherepnin's father played the most important role in the formation of his son's style. Nikolai Tcherepnin was raised on the traditions of New Russian Music School but later sought new ways of expression, and denounced New Russian Music School artistic principles. He never was able to succeed because: "His denouncement was of a more negative then positive character, because by not being able to completely abandon old traditions, he in some way artistically discredited his own creativity of the later period."[40] But Tcherepnin did not live through the rebellion against old traditions like his father did. Tcherepnin also did not live through the evolution from the old style to new, like Stravinsky, who began his musical activity in the bosom of New Russian Music School and then went away from their traditions the same way as N. N. Tcherepnin. Refining and complicating his technique, Stravinsky did not stop there and went ahead to develop a new style. Tcherepnin was born during the time when the traditional and modern co-existed; and in the place where Eastern and Western cultures collided. His synthesis turned out to be a natural way of expression that is truly universal and ecumenical.

[40] Belaiev, 136, trans. by the present author.

Nothing in extreme.
Delphic saying.

Chapter III
TCHEREPNIN AND APOLLONIAN AESTHETICISM

Tcherepnin's humanist convictions were refined through the Apollonian aestheticism championed by *Mir Iskusstva.* This aestheticism was based on a set of characteristics and principles associated with the cult of Apollo: beauty, balance and wisdom. *Mir Iskusstva's* aesthetic of beauty was not hedonistic. Members of this group "hoped to extract a new vision that would preserve the unique character of Russia's arts and artists against the depersonalized way of life that the modern age had brought into being."[41] Thus beauty in all parts of life would be the highest moral principle of human society, where people would use reason in order to maintain balance in life and not to bring destruction upon themselves.

When Diaghilev proclaimed that "we are a generation above all thirsting for beauty,"[42] he did not mean *art-pour-art*, but he meant *art unfettered*. Unfettered art is art without social or political tendentiousness: it exists without ideological ties to any political or social party. *Mir Iskusstva* members' artistically refined nature opposed ideological wars, justified on the grounds of ethics, which were unceasingly waged in all Russian circles, including artistic. The accepted stereotype of the most immoral type of behavior in Russian society was not joining the war and it was boldly defied by *Mir*

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[41] Lincoln, 269.

[42] Sergey Diaghilev, "Complicated Questions." Mir Iskusstva,(November, 1898) 60.

Iskusstva aesthetes. Influenced by Nietzsche, Diaghilev and his group *Mir Iskusstva* viewed aesthetics as morally above ethics. According to Nietzsche, an aesthete does not have ties with ideologies, and the future, if it will come, will be "beyond good and evil."[43]

But not all aesthetics are Apollonian. Members of *Mir Iskusstva*, because of their broad art education, were convinced that true and genuine beauty could be found only in Ancient Greece of the fifth century B.C. This assumption led them to erroneous belief that their aesthetic convictions were commonly accepted and shared. Almost all members of *Mir Iskusstva* graduated from St. Petersburg Art Academy, where Greek art was viewed as the apex of human culture. *Mir Iskusstva* aesthetes failed to specify an exact kind of aesthetic they meant, which was the Apollonian aesthetic, and were branded as pleasure seekers.

The tradition of tailoring an aesthetic to the need of different ideologies began with the famous political maxim of Plato: "Let me make the songs of a nation and I care not who makes its laws."[44] Since then, politicians, especially in dictatorships, think they have permission to "make songs" that would be more powerful then laws, brainwashing and manipulating people. In every chapter of *Mir Iskusstva's* famous manifesto published in 1898, the main purpose is to show the absurdity of merging art with any ideology of the day. Art based on Apollonian aesthetic instills terror in ideologically governed societies, because no belligerence, chauvinism, greed or lust for power could be justified

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[43] Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Edited by Rolf-Peter Horstman and Judith Norman, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[44] Plato "Republic" qtd. in Grout, Donald Jay and Claude V. Paliska. A History of Western Music. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988): 8.

by beauty. Beauty in art and life is concerned with the happiness and wellbeing of the common man, which is antagonistic and subversive to any ideologically governed society.

Nietzsche expressed his views on art and aesthetics as vehicles for societal reform[45] in his book *The Birth of Tragedy out of Spirit of Music* (1872), where he said that "life's existence could only be justified as an aesthetic phenomenon."[46] In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Nietzsche talked about the new philosophy and aesthetic of the future and how it must not cultivate cruelty:

> Consider the Roman in the arena, Christ in the rapture of the cross, the Spaniard at the sight of the stake or the bullfight, the present day Japanese flocking to tragedies, the Parisian suburban laborer who is homesick for bloody revolutions, the Wagnerienne who unfastens her will and lets Tristan und Isolde "wash her over"—what they all enjoy and crave with a mysterious thirst to pour down their throats is "cruelty," the spicy drink of the great Circe.[47]

Nietzsche, who in his youth admired Wagner, later was repulsed by the Dionysian[48] nature of his former friend's music. The Apollonian aesthetic principle "nothing in extreme" could not be applied to Wagner's art, which is based on ideology and represents an "extreme" which is neither humanistic nor concerned with the wellbeing of the common man.

Tcherepnin, who considered the vocation of the composer equal to the mission of a priest, was "serving" people, not downplaying but guiding them "as the priest guides

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[45]Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, 120.

[46]Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings ed. by R. Geuss, (Cambridge, U. K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 8.

[47]Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, 120-121.

[48] In "Birth of Tragedy" Nietzsche considered Dionysus to be god of music, and Wagner as a perfect composer representing Dionysian in music, such as unrestrained passion.

his congregation."[49] All human beings are naturally drawn to beauty, so serving people is the same as serving Apollo, being guided by Apollonian principles. These aesthetic convictions were assimilated by Tcherepnin from Benois and *Mir Iskusstva.*

In his memoirs Benois, who had a great literary gift in addition to his outstanding artistic capabilities, often reflected upon *Mir Iskusstva*'s works and anachronistic aesthetic ideals, in an era of ubiquitous ideological confrontations and bloodshed:

> The idea of *Mir Iskusstva*--wide, all-encompassing, humanitarian Utopia--so characteristic to public psychology at the end of the nineteenth century became ill-timed during antebellum preceding the world-slaughter of the First World War and during recovery years. Instead of reconciling under the symbol of beauty, the slogan in all walks of life was never-ending war. In artistic movements such enormous changes happened that it was really very difficult to dream about harmony of contrasts…The war ended on the fields of Mars but it continued on Apollo's hill and there was no end of it… Everyone who would ignore the psychology of the moment, and show up with an olive branch, would earn-not without a reason-the reputation of a silly simpleton.[50]

In the twentieth century there were not many brave souls who would "ignore the psychology of the moment," yet Alexander Tcherepnin was one of them. He picked up "an olive branch" and used uplifting Apollonian aesthetic ideals in all four of his stylistic periods.[51]

Tcherepnin himself outlined his creative periods by giving titles and approximate dates to them. The first period (1899-1918), which Tcherepnin called "Search," included early works of spontaneous character, such as *Bagatelles*, *Sonatine Romantique* and Piano Sonata No.1. The second period (1918-1927) the composer entitled the "Nine-step scale and Interpoint" and was characterized by exploration and innovation. At that time

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[49] Tcherepnin, Thoughts, 142.

[50] Alexander Benois, Vozniknovenie "Mira Iskusstva" (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1994, 1928) 56, trans. by the present author.

[51] Korabelnikova, 223.

Tcherepnin began using a nine-step scale and interpoint consciously, whereas before, this period his approach to these techniques had been predominantly intuitive. This period, which began in Tbilisi and finished in Paris, includes more complicated compositions: *Inventions* Op. 13, Symphony No. 1 Op. 42 and Quintet Op. 44. The third period (1927-47), which the composer named a "Folk Cure," was characterized by evolution of his music under the influence of "Eurasian"[52] ideas. In works of this period can be traced influences of Russian and Eastern origins, as well as the synthesis of both styles. *Russian Dances* Op. 50 inspired by Russian folklore, and *Etudes for Piano on the Pentatonic Scale*, *Five Etudes de Concert* Op. 52 and ballet *Trepak* Op. 55 were inspired by Eastern folklore. These elements were combined in the opera *Marriage of Zobeida*, Duo for Violin and Cello, and Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra.

The fourth period (1947-58) the composer named "Synthesis." It was the culmination of his career, in which he combined elements from all his earlier periods. His most important works, such as Symphony No. 2 Op. 77, Divertimento Op. 90 and Symphony No. 4 Op. 91 all fall into this category. Guy Wuellner, an expert on Tcherepnin's music, a former student, and the author of a dissertation on Tcherepnin's piano music, made the following observation about Tcherepnin's fourth style period:

> Overall the technical devices which Tcherepnin used in the "Synthesis" (1949-58) can be traced like a "mainstream of thought" through much of his work, and are not so much new ideas as old ones developed (or continued) and brought to fuller fruition. His freer handling of forms could be thought of as a natural outcome of his preference for varied or avoided reprises apparent as early as the *Bagatelles*, Op. 5 Nos. 3, 4, 5. Again as early as the fourth *Bagatelle* of Op. 5 an effort to write rhythms imitating prose (rather than poetry) is already met; and in the very first *Bagatelle* Tcherepnin's love of extreme registers is boldly displayed.[53]

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[52]Tcherepnin, Autobiography, 17.

[53] Wuellner, 113.

In their observations about Tcherepnin, many experts, such as Wuellner, Reich, Korabelnikova, Wallerstein and Belaiev have come to a consensus that the composer's style did not undergo radical changes throughout his life; rather, it evolved and matured. Thus it is possible to grasp the main stylistic traits of the composer by being exposed to a few compositions without undermining the need for wider investigation and research.

Tcherepnin left a detailed description of the technical elements that he devised and used in his compositions in a treatise entitled "The Basic Elements of My Musical Language." In this treatise he thoroughly explained the "nine-step scale" and "intrapoint," for example. However, except for some succinct thoughtful statements about mission, or about the role of music, Tcherepnin did not write down an explanation of his aesthetic principles. Perhaps the composer felt that it would be redundant to write about the ideas that were "flying in the air" and available for anyone to grasp anyway.

Because Tcherepnin intended his music to convey a message, all musical elements are subordinate to the purpose of transmitting the message. The best way to communicate the message in Apollonian style is rhapsodic, where the narrator is impassioned and tells the epic story in a detached style. All elements in Tcherepnin's music, such as form, texture, rhythm, harmony, melody and dynamics, serve to highlight the Apollonian nature of his works.

With utmost care Tcherepnin chose the form because he considered form in music to be the main carrier of a message and never to be a goal in itself: "It is the form and not the musical language that makes the composition to live long. Every musical language becomes outdated sooner or later, but the message expressed by it in adequate form

survives."[54] Tcherepnin was not afraid to use simple, balanced and logical Classical forms, derived from Greek aesthetic and belonging to the Apollonian category. Thorough attention to form in Tcherepnin's music has been noted by many critics, including Wuellner, who said: "Tcherepnin demonstrates a mastery of proportion for any time span—from a short one-minute solo piece to a half-concerto with orchestra…Most of Tcherepnin's form-types derive from the Classical and Romantic periods." [55] Sonata-form, etude, invention and the character piece are the favorite forms in Tcherepnin's piano music.

For example, *Sonatine Romantique* Op. 4 is written in four movements, where the first and the fourth movements are in sonata form. The first movement *Allegro* is in F-sharp minor, this key was used by many nineteenth century composers for works of mournful and brooding character. The primary theme is in F-sharp minor, in extreme low register, and its chant-like melody produces an effect of a funeral mass:

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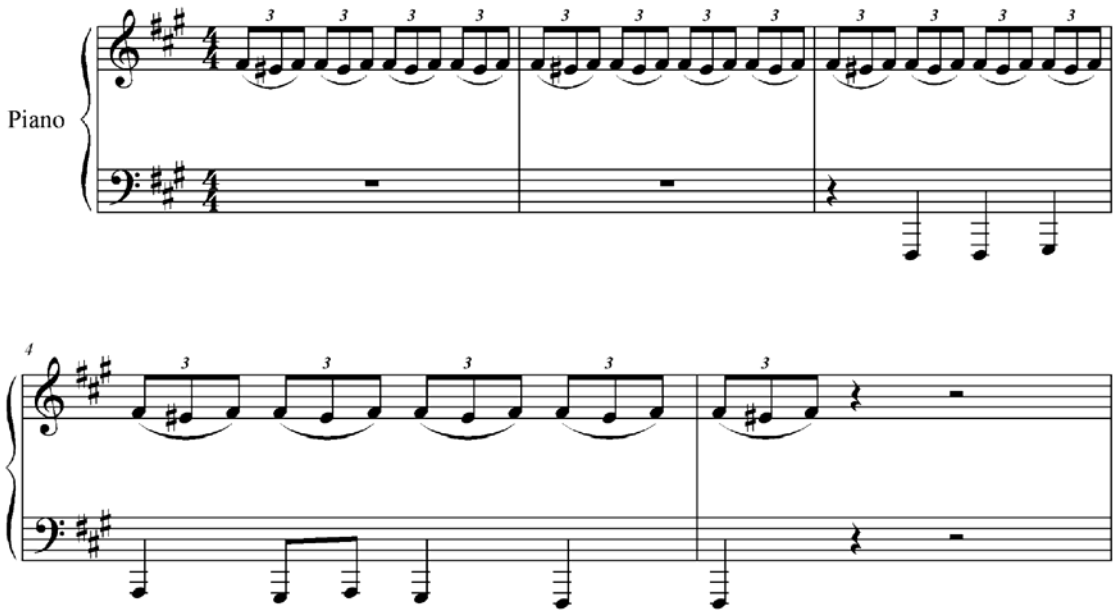
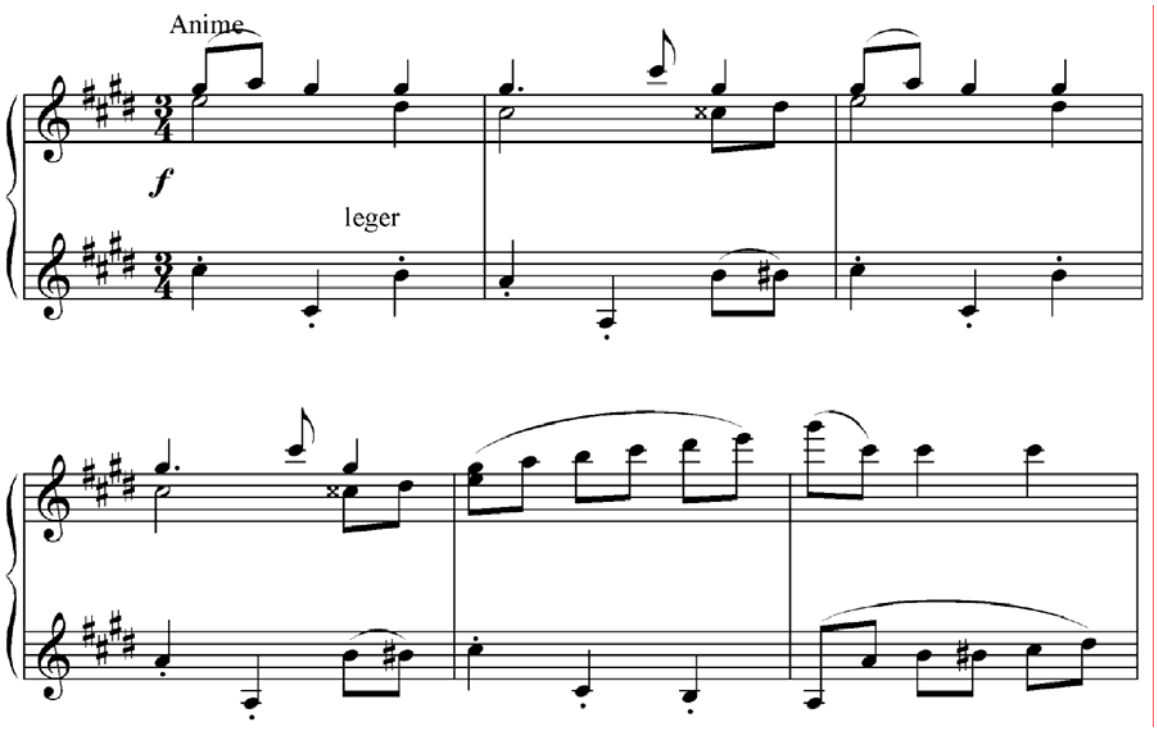
[54] Tcherepnin, Thoughts, 143.

[55] Wuellner, 25.



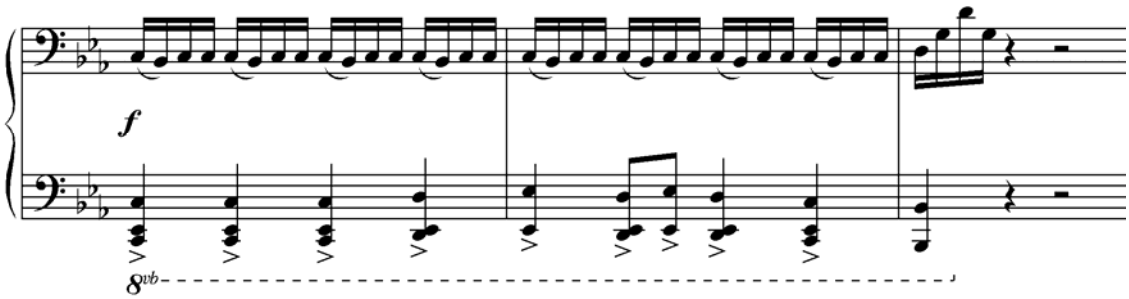
Ex. 11. Alexander Tcherepnin, Sonatine Romantique Op. 4, first movement, opening.

The secondary theme is in dominant C-sharp minor and in triple meter creating a more carefree dance-like atmosphere. The character is lighter and brighter, with both hands in the upper register:



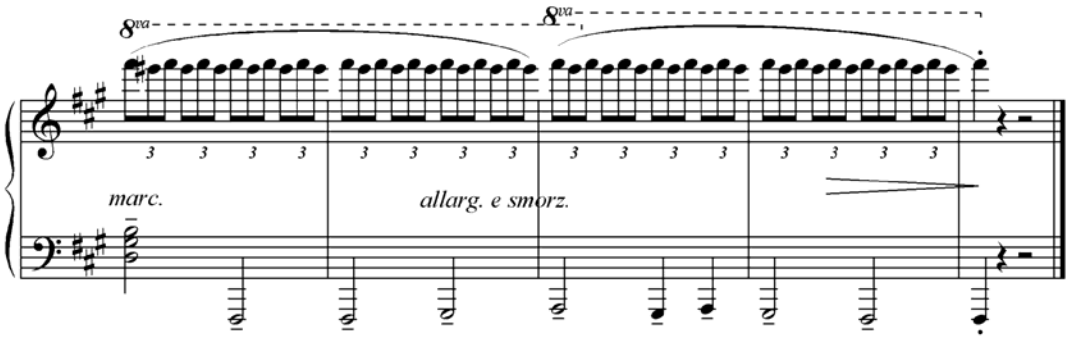
Ex. 12. Alexander Tcherepnin, Sonatine Romantique Op. 4, first movement, mm. 29-34.

The last movement, *Tempestoso*, is in sonata form too. It contains material from the first movement, thus providing unity of an entire sonata-cycle. The movement begins in C-minor (the key of the secondary theme in the first movement):



Ex. 13. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Sonatine Romantique* Op. 4, fourth movement, mm. 4-5.

The recapitulation returns to the original brooding key of F-sharp minor, finishing on the same chant melody sounding even more surreal this time, because of extremely wide space between registers, *pianissimo* and *smorzando*:

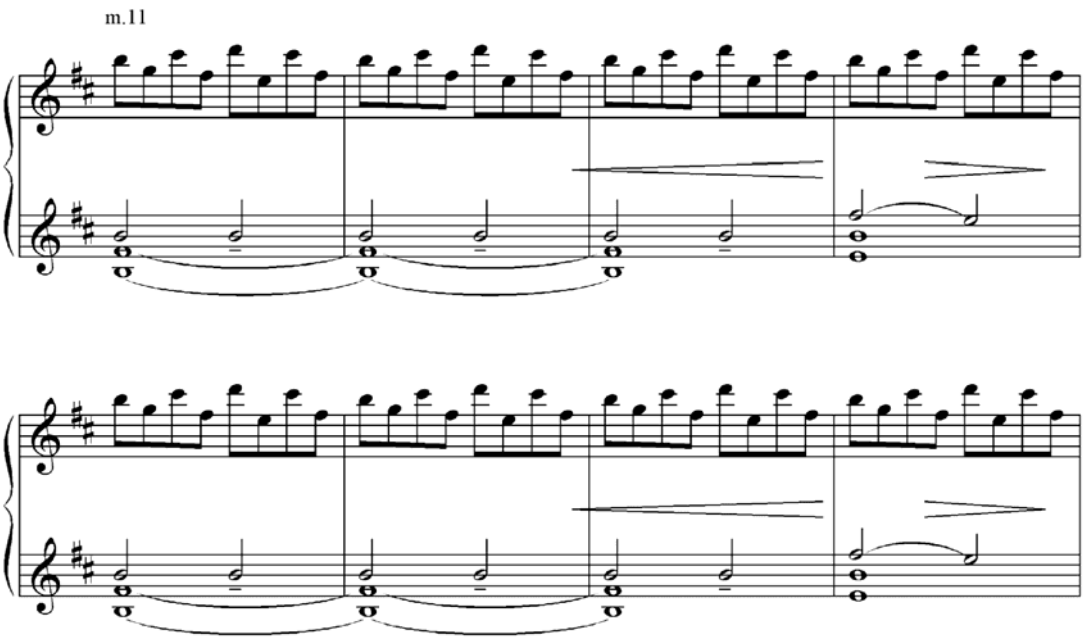


Ex. 14. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Sonatine Romantique* Op. 4, fourth movement, the end.

Belaiev wrote about the composer's return to a "starting point"[56] and his refusal to follow the line of "progress" of Wagner and Strauss, which only would bring a metamorphosis from quality into quantity. The point of departure should not be lusciousness of sonority, but the interest of musical thought valuable in itself, without musical excesses.

Tcherepnin's textures are transparent, clear, light and economical, similar to Prokofiev's. Tcherepnin loves to use extreme registers with wide spaces in the middle, which creates an effect of lightness and air. The following example is taken from the Second movement from *Sonatine Romantique* titled "Canzonetta," where the spacing of wide open chords creates an effect of transparency:

[56] Belaiev, 139.



Ex. 15. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Sonatine Romantique* Op. 4, mm. 11-15.

This movement was "freely adapted from previously composed chanson by Tcherepnin."[57] Simplicity and balance, in this movement, correspond with Apollonian aestheticism, where there is no need to escape reality and plunge the listener into an erratic or psychologically pathological state of mind.

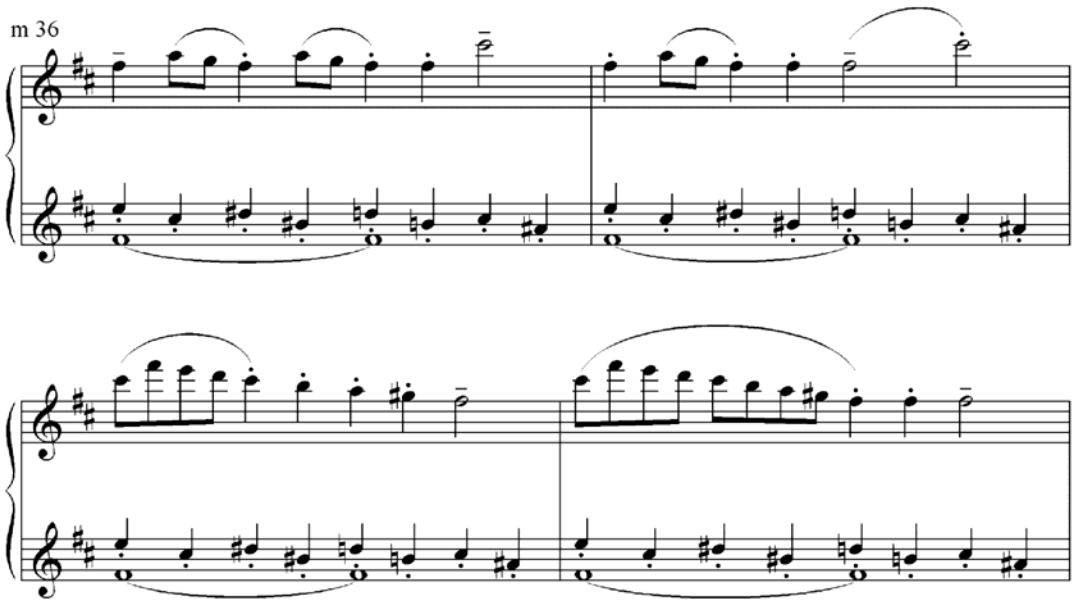
Tcherepnin's rhythm is recognizable by its tendency "to be dance-like and vital,"[58] with frequent use of free 'prosodic' sections. Tcherepnin liked to use "the rhythm of the spoken word on many occasions…"[59] Again, like in all other elements,

[57] Wuellner, 167.

[58] Ibid. 31.

[59] Ibid. 31.

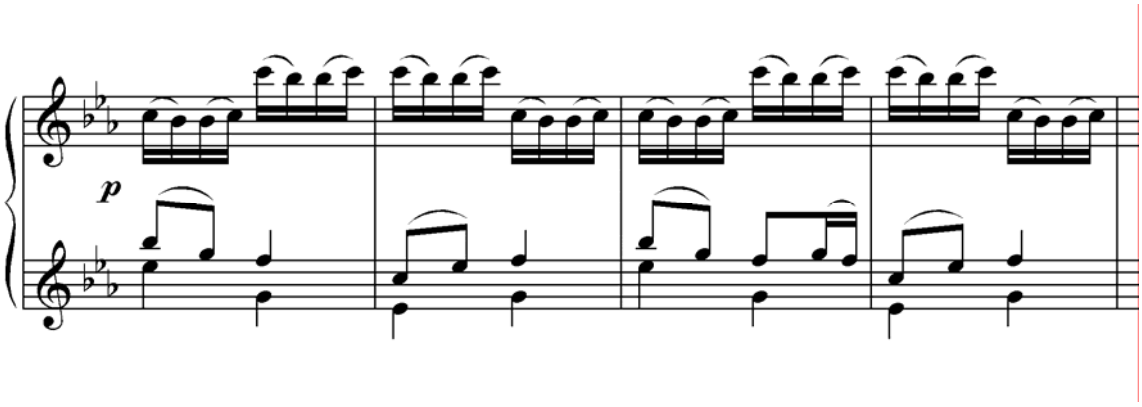
Tcherepnin's rhythm is derived out of human-related activities, such as dance and speech.



Ex. 16. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Sonatine Romantique* Op. 4, mm. 36-39.

The previous example was taken from *Sonatine Romantique*, Second movement, middle section. Here independent short melodies in different voices sound like Russian polyphonic folk singing, which was always accompanied by dance.

The melody is in the middle voice: simple, short and rhythmic:



Ex. 17. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Five Etudes de Concert* Op. 52, first movement *Shadow Play* m. 53.

Tcherepnin's approach to rhythm is additive. He takes a rhythmic cell and adds to it while not changing the rhythm itself. Tcherepnin commented about this technique when he observed folk singing in China. But it was not his first encounter with this technique, because it was used by Stravinsky, who influenced Tcherepnin immensely.

In harmony, Tcherepnin is not yielding his "inborn artistic convictions,"[60]and in this aspect he is a very unique twentieth-century composer.

> To be a tonal composer today—means not to be modern, but obsolete. But Tcherepnin succeeds to be at the same time modern and tonal composer, and in this he is a happy exception. By not being afraid of 'primitive' 'Haydn-like' forms, he is not afraid of simple harmonies or regular modulations, using them with unusual ingenuousness, achieving extraordinary freshness of expression.[61]

We don't know if Tcherepnin knew the Delphic warning against an extreme in human life, inscribed on the temple of Apollo: "Know thyself." But we do know that Tcherepnin did not experiment with extremes in music, such as serialism, so popular in the twentieth century, and used simple harmonies and modulations without fear, which allowed him to achieve a "freshness of impression."[62] Tcherepnin simplified his harmonic language by using neutral modes: major-minor or pentatonic. Tcherepnin was definitely not striving for originality, but for a better way of presenting things in that calm and detached rhapsodic manner.

A favorite scale of Tcherepnin is the pentatonic. The following excerpt from *Homage to China* (mm. 53-56) from *Five Etudes de Concert* shows Tcherepnin's usage of the pentatonic scale, where the composer depicts the idiomatic sound of *kou chin*:

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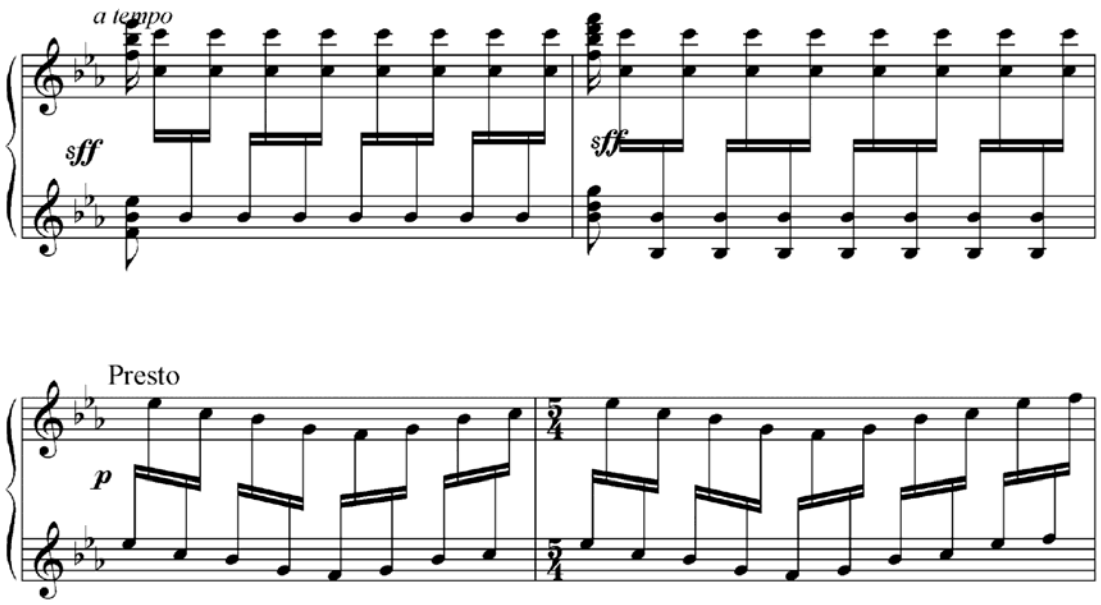
[60] Belaiev, 139.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.



Ex. 18. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Five Etudes de Concert* Op. 52, *Homage to China*, mm. 53-56.

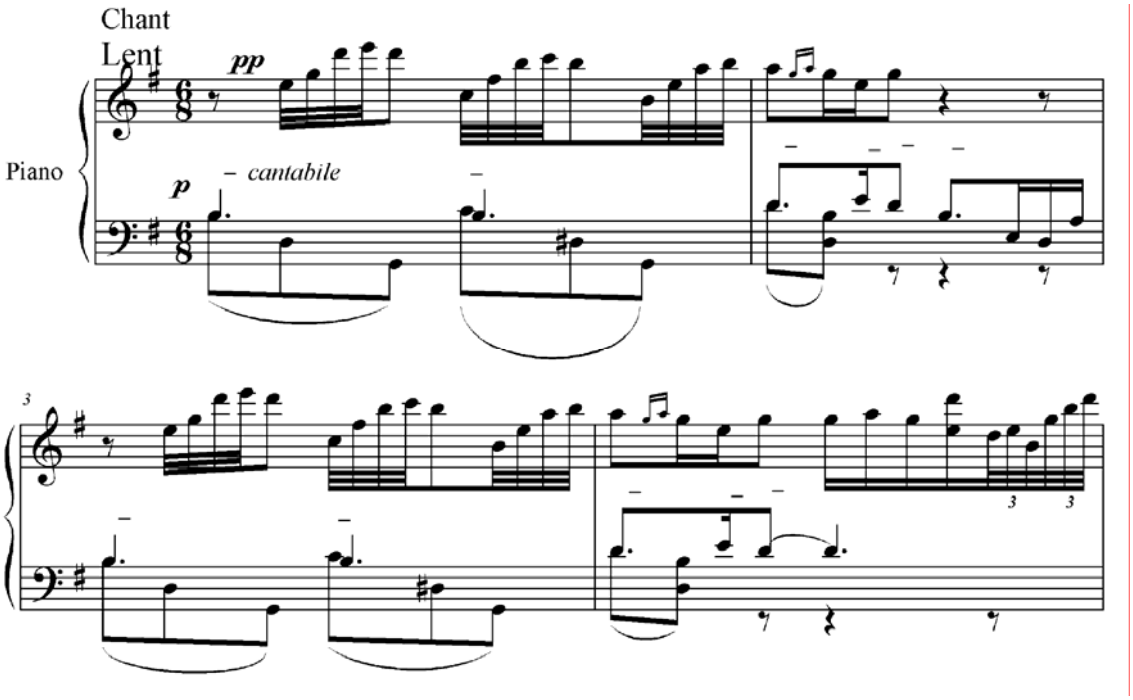
Different modes of the pentatonic scale create an unending variety of color, which again creates cool objectivity, with a distance between the "narrator" and the events of the story. This gives a feeling of dignity, constraint and sincere warmth.

Tcherepnin's melodies are sincere, simple, sometimes naïve, without any shadow of pose or pretense. His melodies come from the heart, not from "deep heartfelt confessions," but from the composer's "natural sociability and naïve openness."[63] All of Tcherepnin's melodies have a singing nature: their origins are in chants, folk songs and dance tunes of various geographical regions.

Here is an example from *Chant et Refrain*. The melodic cell, which is in the middle voice, begins with slow dotted quarter notes and is two measures long; then it is

[63] Belaiev, 140.

repeated with a slight variation. Beautiful azure ornamentation on top and widely spaced triads on the bottom creates a serene atmosphere:



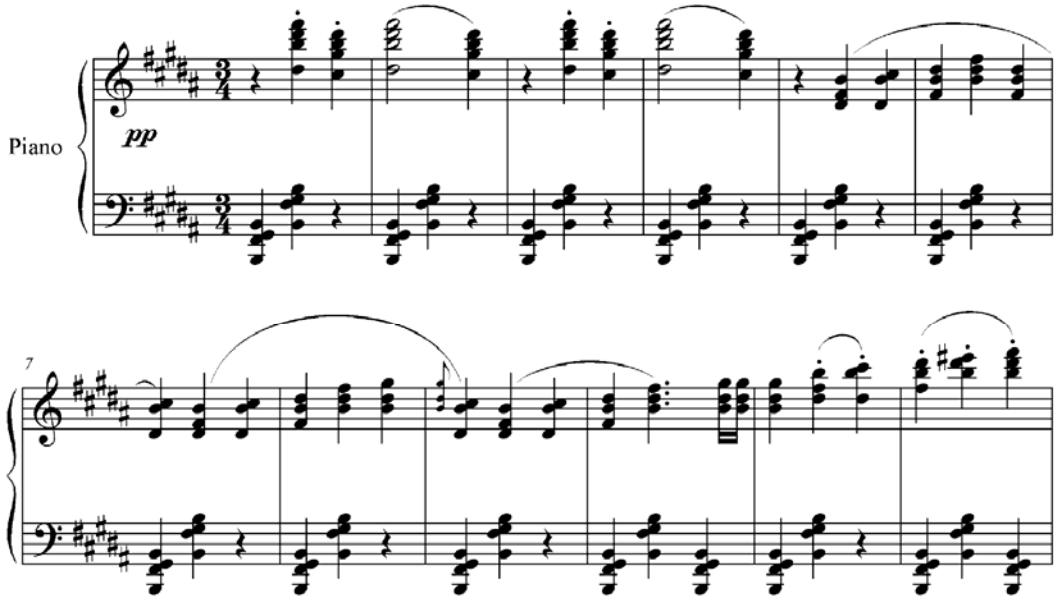
Ex. 19. Alexander Tcherepnin, *Chant et Refrain* Op. 66, *Chant*, opening.

Tcherepnin's melodies do not carry heavy psychological meaning; instead they are delightful, calm and tuneful. As in all other elements of Tcherepnin's musical language, it is not hard to see parallels with the Apollonian aesthetic.

Tcherepnin's dynamics are also a part of his rhapsodic style of narration. The composer is never an "actor:"[64] he remains calm and distanced, as if protecting his emotions from being trampled upon or from turning banal, base or trivial. In

[64]Nietzsche Birth of Tragedy 61: "What matters here is not the substance of the events depicted…the power of the epic-Apolline is so extraordinary that …casts a spell over even the most terrifying things before our very eyes. The poet…remains calm, unmoved gaze which sees the images *before* it with eyes wide open. In this dramatized epic the actor remains fundamentally a rhapsode; the consecrated aura of inward dreaming lies over all his actions, so that he is never fully an actor." Tcherepnin, definitely, is a rhapsode, not an actor described by Nietzsche : "If I say something sad my eyes fill with tears; but if what I say is terrible and horrifying, the hairs on my head stand on end from dread, and my heart pounds.' There is not a trace left here of the epic condition of losing oneself in semblance, of the dispassionate coolness of the true actor… it is impossible for it to achieve the Apolline effect of epic poetry…"

Tcherepnin's music there is no striving for ostentatious, overwhelming or nerve-racking effects. For example, the third movement of *Sonatine Romantique*, which is ninety one measures long, depicts ringing of the bells on Easter Sunday. The main dynamic marking is pianissimo (pp) with a short climax section (eight measures) at fortissimo. For instance, in Rachmaninoff's Suite No. 2 for two pianos (movement entitled *Easter*), or in *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Musorgsky (movement entitled *The Great Gate of Kiev*) the grandiose sound in bell-ringing sections creates an apotheosis. Tcherepnin's bell ringing, on the other hand, is delicate and gentle. The listener hears the "ringing of the bells" in an almost surreal atmosphere



Ex. 20. Alexander Tcherepnin, Sonatine Romantique Op. 4, third movement, opening.

This unconventional approach to dynamics in this particular piece creates not only a sonorous effect but also an emotional one, emphasizing the composer's deep and heartfelt connection to this sound, which does not overwhelm but brings warm feelings instead.

Belaiev, who taught Tcherepnin in St. Petersburg, wrote the article "Contemporary Music and Alexander Tcherepnin." Belaiev's article was published in 1925, and this article remains the sole article printed in Russia about the composer[65] (see Appendix). Because Tcherepnin emigrated, he was erased from cultural life in Russia, and the article itself was forgotten; however, it contains the best "music portrait" of this composer, coming from an expert of all contemporary Russian music.[66] The insight and seriousness of the article were especially dear to Tcherepnin, and he expressed his gratitude to the author many years after:

> Your article…the *first* article about me is providential: you guessed 42 years ago what even today not many could understand, even I myself did not really comprehend, but only now I am gradually trying to grasp. You let me go "as the ship from the docks," –and even how and where I am going, you foresaw and foretold.[67]

This article is completely unknown in the West because it has not been translated. Belaiev showed the evolution of the young St. Petersburg composer raised on the traditions of the New Russian Music School and its refractions in the twentieth century. Belaiev also commented on subtle differences and similarities between Tcherepnin's music and that of his contemporaries in Western Europe. Belaiev saw the most important style characteristics of the young composer in his naïve disposition: "The main psychological 'tone' penetrating all works of Tcherepnin, remained as a profound, artistic, naive frankness, which allowed him to approach creativity from unexpected points of view…"[68]

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[65] Korabelnikova, 107, trans. by the present author.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Belaiev, 141, translation by the present author.

The musicologist Larry Sitsky wrote a valuable and fascinating book about repressed Russian composers, where one chapter is dedicated to Tcherepnin. Sitsky observed Tcherepnin's "disarming naïvete," but failed to understand it. Sitsky saw Tcherepnin's simplicity and naïvete as a negative trait, as lack of depth and profundity. He could not be blamed for it, because, according to Nietzsche, people, for some inexplicable reason, are "thirsting" for cruelty,[69] distancing themselves far from the Apollonian realm. Friedrich Schiller, the great German poet, philosopher and aesthetician, whose ideas were widely utilized by Nietzsche, asserted: "Wherever we encounter the 'naïve' in art we have to recognize that it is the supreme effect of Apolline culture."[70]

Any work of art is the manifestation of the human mind, spirit or reason, and is an indication of the level of oppression in the society. The suppression of mind leads, like in Hindu cultures, to the perception of the outside world as an illusion. Suppression of spirit leads to an escape to the world of numbers and science, like in Ancient Egypt where death was the foremost preoccupation. Human reason, which may exist only when the human mind and spirit are liberated, does not seek an escape to supernatural or superhuman realms, but seeks the preservation of the existing real world.[71]

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[69] Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil.

[70] Friedrich Schiller, Naïve and Sentimental Poetry and on the Sublime (Frederich Ungar Publishing Co. New York, 1966) p. 24. Schiller's book "Naïve and Sentimental Poetry and on the Sublime" was one of the sources which Nietzsche used for writing "Birth of Tragedy."

[71] Edith Hamilton (1867-1963), educator, writer, historian and the honorary citizen of Athens wrote: "A Hindoo temple is a conglomeration of adornment. The lines of the building are completely hidden by the decorations…The conviction underlying it can be perceived: each bit of the exquisitely wrought detail had a mystical meaning…It is decoration not architecture. Again, the gigantic temples of Egypt, those massive immensities of granite…The science and the spirit are there, but what is there most of all is force, unhuman force, calm, but tremendous, overwhelming. It reduces to nothingness all that belongs to man. He is annihilated. The Greek temple is the perfect expression of the pure intellect illuminated by the spirit. No other great buildings anywhere approach its simplicity. Majestic but human, truly Greek. No

To be naïve is an act of bravery, because a naïve person should slay all creatures of the irrational world, such as supernatural monsters and superhuman titans. So, if Tcherepnin's main trait was "naïvete" then he was not only an Apollonian composer, but according to Schiller, he was a genius: "Every true genius must be naïve, or he is not a genius."[72]

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superhuman force as in Egypt, no strange supernatural shapes as in India; the Parthenon is the home of humanity at ease, calm, ordered, sure of itself and the world. To the Greek architect man was master of the world. His mind could understand its laws; his spirit could discover its beauty. The Gothic cathedral was raised in awe and reverence to Almighty God, the expression of the aspiration of the lowly…The Parthenon was raised in triumph, to express the beauty and the power and the splendor of man." The Greek Way (W. W. Norton Inc., New York, 1958) 67-68

[72] Schiller, 96.

Beauty is now underfoot wherever we take the trouble to look.
Cage *Silence*

Chapter IV
CONCLUSION: TCHEREPNIN AND AESTHETIC OF SURVIVAL

The aesthetic convictions discussed in the previous chapters, based on the combination of the aestheticism of *Mir Iskusstva* and traditional Russian humanism, pertain to Tcherepnin only among twentieth century composers. His artistic and philosophical principles were synthesized out of the necessity for survival at the epicenter of the cultural wars at the beginning of the twentieth century in Russia. However, elements of Tcherepnin's aesthetic manifestation are identical to George Rochberg's[73] principles of the "aesthetic of survival."[74] Perhaps this similarity serves as proof of the applicability of Apollonian ecumenism aesthetic to other times and places, including America in the late twentieth century.

It is quite natural that an artist who synthesized old and new artistic solutions to the Russian "tormented question" was born in St. Petersburg, the cradle of the Silver Age. Founded by Peter the Great in 1703, the city became Russian capital of liberalism and secular revolution that caused severe cultural clashes. The emergence of Apollonian ecumenism was possible only in St. Petersburg, where the struggle for liberation from ideological oppression became very heated.

The belief in art's healing and transforming power was not utterly utopian. History proved that human life is not only "justified as an aesthetic phenomenon" but

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[73] George Rochberg (1918-2005) an American serial composer who converted to tonal composition.

[74]George. Rochberg, The Aesthetics of Survival: a Composer's View of Twentieth-Century Music. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984).

also transformed by an aesthetic. It is common knowledge that the idea of Apollonian art was first conceived by Homer (ca 800 BC), who manifested an Apollonian aesthetic in an art form: the classic epics *Odyssey* and *Iliad*. An artist through artistic form projected his vision of the rational world, governed by reason. Homer's vision materialized three centuries after his death (ca 500 BC) because it was loved by Greeks and viewed as a manual for their way of life.

This undeniable fact of art causing societal changes and not vice versa, remained relevant for Russian artists of the Silver Age, including Tcherepnin. The composer's belief in the power of art, inherited from St. Petersburg artistic traditions, was tested often, including in France (1921-1947) and in America (1947-1977). The Russian Diaspora was very large; it was scattered throughout Europe, North and South America and Australia. In hundreds of cities, Russian refugees continued accomplishing their cultural mission of maintaining their traditions, including the musical. In 1921 Tcherepnin arrived not so much in France as in a country which did not exist on any map: Russia Abroad.[75]

Tcherepnin's documents include several statements about his complete formation as a composer before his 1921 arrival in Paris. In 1967 Tcherepnin gave an interview to *Soviet Music* magazine:

> My two Paris Conservatory teachers did not fathom the following: the first instructor did not know that I am playing and the second that I am composing. When Philipp[76] saw my pieces, he was very surprised and introduced me to the publisher. It was very important, because over the next three years, pieces that I wrote back in Russia and then published in France were my main source of

[75] Korabelnikova, 65.

[76] Philipp, Isidor (1863-1958 eminent French pianist and pedagogue of Hungarian descent.

> income. …Thus it is possible to suppose that I was already accomplished in theory, composition and piano before my departure from Russia in 1921.[77]

Living in France for more than thirty years helped Tcherepnin to remain a Russian composer, because the Parisian artistic climate supported everybody's thinking in their own language and encouraged the preservation of uniqueness and national identity.[78] Tcherepnin became a member of a group of composers that was formed in Paris, predominantly of Eastern European descent, called *Le Cinq*, or *Ecole de Paris*.[79] Polish composer Alexander Tansman, who was also a member of this group, recollects that this was not a school, but rather a group united by friendship and an attachment to French culture: "Of course, our interests were closely intertwined with period of our youth, but we never built an 'ivory tower,' or indulged in a collective composition under any technical or aesthetical banner."[80] Members of *Le Cinq* were stylistically independent from each other, contrary to *Les Six*, where members were oriented toward a more unified musical philosophy. This atmosphere was conducive for Tcherepnin to retain his individuality as a composer.

After World War Two, in 1947, Tcherepnin was invited to teach at De Paul University in Chicago. He gladly accepted the invitation, arrived in America and found himself in the midst of a raging war behind academia walls. Although the domination of

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[77] Korabelnikova, 97.

[78] Korabelnikova, 97. Nadia Boulanger's teaching principle was: "be the one that you are."

[79] Andre Ceuroy, "Ecole de Paris" Larousse de la Musique: Dictionnaire Encyclopedique. En 2 vol. V. 2 (Paris: Larousse, 1957) 162.

[80] Tansman qtd. in Korabelnikova p. 98.

avant-garde inside academia walls[81] did not change Tcherepnin's steadfastness to his roots, it often caused bitter contemplations about his own music.[82] This self-doubt was caused by the belligerent mainstream's demands that every composer be a part of the avant-garde.

Tcherepnin's modernism belongs to humanist traditions, maintaining the message of universal synthesis and renewing musical language through modernist practices. Modernism is contrary to the avant-garde: modernism incorporates new elements of expression without breaking with traditions, while the avant-garde shows militant antagonism and countercultural hostility. According to Taruskin:

> The term [avant-garde] does not properly signify mere possession or use of "advanced" technique. That could be called elite modernism or modernist professionalism if a term is needed…An avant-garde is something else. The term is military, and it implies belligerence: countercultural hostility, antagonism to existing institutions and traditions. [83]

"Avant-garde" and "new" are not synonyms; the avant-garde's belligerence toward existing institutions and traditions is opposite to humanism.

Many artistic figures expressed similar viewpoints about an anti-humanist aesthetic but very few dared to see in anti-humanism a direct link to virtual human survival, as did Rochberg:

> In remaking ourselves it would be well to remember that for countless millennia before the dawn of the age of science man survived without science as we know it. Instead of science he had a profound relation to the cosmos, however fantastic or superstitious that relation may appear from our vantage point. He survived not through rational knowledge or science and technology but through cosmology which peopled his imagination with myth and symbol, poetry and metaphor,

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[81] Cisler, Valerie. *Sonatas of Robert Muczynski*. Dissertation: Thesis (DMA) University ofOcklahoma, 1993 p. 39.

[82] Korabelnikova, 232.

[83] Taruskin, Defining Russia, 87.

> image and story and song. He ritualized his existence, propitiated the gods, surrounded himself with magic. He developed the arts of language, music, dance, painting, sculpture. He learned the rhythms of his world and fitted himself into them. He survived… And we? What are our chances? Can we survive our rational madness, our science and technology, our obsession for progress and change, our avant-garde, our aberrant passions for new sensations, our refusal to accept the limits of our own being. The same attitudes of mind and spirit which have brought us to this pass will not lead us out of it. [84]

Rochberg points to rational madness, science and obsession with progress as detrimental, forcing art to turn away from life and the world's natural rhythms. He sees composers' aspiration to be scientists-researchers as madness, which will lead humankind to its twilight. Rochberg's proposed solution to humankind's survival[85] was in substituting the present-day avant-garde aesthetic with a new art that would combine all known devices and techniques: "The use of every device and every technique appropriate to its specific gestural repertory in combination with every other device and technique, until theoretically all that we are and all that we know is bodied forth in the richest most diverse music ever known to man: *ars combinatoria.*"[86]

This *ars combinatoria* is identical with *Mir Iskusstva's* aesthetic program, which encompassed "every form of expression that raised humanity above mundane, utilitarian concerns."[87] The group aimed at the combination of all *humanistic* artistic manifestations from all places and time periods. Rochberg, throughout his entire book, states that art's aesthetic must be based on human's role in the universe, as part of the cosmos. Rochberg described all characteristics of an Apollonian aesthetic as the only aesthetic which was,

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[84] Rochberg, 231.

[85] Crawford, 363.

[86] Rochberg, 238.

[87] Jannet Kennedy *The Mir Iskusstva Group and Russian Art 1898-1912* (New York, Garland Pub., 1977) 2.

and is, instrumental in human survival during "countless millennia." But again, as *Mir Iskusstva* did earlier, Rochberg failed to formulate an exact name for this aesthetic of "survival" and he also failed to specify the criteria which will be used in identifying "devices and techniques" that should replace modern day avant-garde. Nevertheless, Rochberg addressed composers, urging them to create humanistic music that would affect people and turn their lives from bleak and disorderly to balanced and healthy. He bemoaned the art aesthetic which was, based on absence of wisdom and beauty, "exceeding limits of our own being,"[88] and artists who settled for a simple reflection of the disorderly and disturbing reality of life.

For example, American "music-anarchist" John Cage cleverly reflected the real life around him in music and literary works, declaring that if real life is dark, imperfect and disorganized, then music's role must be an honest reflection of these traits of life:

> If there were a part of life dark enough to keep out of it a light
> from art, I would want to be in that darkness, fumbling around if
> necessary, but alive I'd rather think that contemporary
> music would be there in the dark too, bumping into things, knocking
> others over and in general adding to the disorder that characterizes
> life (if it is opposed to art) rather than adding to the
> order and stabilized truth beauty and power that characterize
> a masterpiece (if it is opposed to life). And is it? Yes
> it is[89]

Cage understood the interconnectedness of life and art, and saw art as the product shaped by life's circumstances. For example, "Organ2/ASLAP," which stands for "as slow as possible," is going to be performed for more than six centuries with just a few notes played once a year. Cage's inventiveness is exciting and fascinating, but remoteness

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[88]Rochberg.

[89]John. Cage, Silence. (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961) 46.

from natural human musical language is a manifestation of an escape from real life. The need for an escape from real life is an indication of societal conditions which suppress mind or spirit.

Great works of art are great because they manifest humanism by overcoming life's inimical obstacles and circumstances; ordinary works of art are ordinary because they manifest only these obstacles and circumstances. Tcherepnin's works manifest humanism, elevated to a degree of Apollonian ecumenism.

For Tcherepnin, who is humanist who loves "people and love[s] to associate with them,"[90] it would be unnatural to accept attitudes of hostility. Willi Reich called Tcherepnin a "Musical Citizen of the World,"[91] which was not an exaggeration but a proper definition of the composer-humanist, who was "able to bridge cultures and generations to an uncommon degree."[92] Gerry Wallerstein wrote that Tcherepnin was an: "…innovative composer who has culled the best qualities from his highly varied heritage and experience, his music …is able to bridge cultures and generations to an uncommon degree…he never abandoned the musical ecumenism…"[93]Tcherepnin's ability to see, appreciate and integrate different cultures of the world, according to Wallerstein, is ecumenical. Belonging to the East and to the West is a genuine trait of any true Russian composer, including Tcherepnin.[94]

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[90] Tcherepnin, Autobiography, 18.

[91] Willi Reich, Alexander Tscherepnin. (Bonn: M. P. Belaief, 1961) 61.

[92] Gerry Wallerstein "Happy Birthday to A. Tcherepnin," *Clavier*, 13 (January 1974) 11.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Korabelnikova 15.

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Appendix

Victor Belaiev: "Contemporary Music and Alexander Tcherepnin."

Even though Russian music is still very young as national music, it has already managed to go through several clearly and precisely delineated stages of development. One of the stages is the activity of the so called "New Russian School," concluding with Glazunov. The end of this stage, like any other stage, is indicated by the culmination of its style in achieving a certain level of technical mastery, which is then able to develop its own momentum in further occurrences which are foreign to this stage. One such occurrence actually already foreign to the "New Russian School" but hereditarily connected with it is the creativity of N. N. Tcherepnin. As a composer he developed within the traditions of the "New Russian School" but later sharply broke away from those traditions for the sake of the search for new artistic ideals. Breaking with the "New Russian School," he did not break with traditions of its mastery but understood his new artistic mission as bringing more sophistication and refinement to his technique, whose main characteristics he borrowed from the "New Russian School." In this aspect he was simultaneously the "son of his musical fathers," and on the other hand, the denouncer of their artistic principles, on which was based the creativity of his first period. However, his "denouncement" was of more negative then positive character, because by not being able to completely abandon old traditions, he in some way artistically "discredited" his own creativity of the later period.

What was not possible for N. N. Tcherepnin was brilliantly achieved by Igor Stravinsky, a composer of the younger generation. Even though he began his compositional activity in the bosom of the "New Russian School," this famous

contemporary composer went at first the same way as N. N. Tcherepnin, the way of breaking away from the “New Russian School” by raising the level of complexity and refining his technique. But he did not stop there like N.N. Tcherepnin did; he went ahead to create a new style, in the direction of rejecting complexity and turning to primitivism, which doubtlessly must be considered the style of our epoch.

That this is right, e.g., that primitivism is a style of our era, is seen from a series of facts, and the circumstance that our era is the era of the beginning of a new style makes it extraordinarily interesting. We, contemporaries of this era, cannot understand it in all details, but we may state that this is an era, undoubtedly, of certain “hardening” of musical tastes and ideals, especially if we are talking about Western European countries. I think I won’t be mistaken to say that the feel of real depth of musical creativity in contemporary Western Europe is lost, and that aspiration for musical primitivism is certainly a yearning for rest from the intensity of the previous era and, on the other hand, is the result of a desire to become “oblivious” of the heavy circumstances of post-war life, which is unstable politically and economically. This is why contemporary European primitivism has acquired a certain “hedonistic” character so different from the serious primitivism of Stravinsky. If we look closer at contemporary European primitivism, we find different national dynamics, which, however, do not change its real essence.

Work of the Russian composers living currently in the USSR goes by an absolutely different channel then the work of Stravinsky and his Western primitivist contemporaries. Their [Russian composers living in USSR] music is mostly psychological, e.g., originating and inspired from the depths of psychological experiences, not out of a desire to depict the world as something that it is not, as Western

primitivists do. By immersion into psychology and self-analysis Russian composers do not pay attention to the development of musical form and by doing so follow the already beaten path of their predecessors. At the same time, for the European constructivist composers, formal matters are almost of paramount importance. Hedonistic musical mentality is absolutely foreign to Russian composers, who view lightness of creativity as synonymous with thoughtlessness, and they are rejecting it.

This is the present situation in contemporary music: on the one hand –inertia, manifesting itself in the sophisticating and deepening of the vital sides of old traditions; on the other hand—aspiration, by rejection of the old tradition, to create a new style by developing new elements. The latter tendency is characteristic of the new generation of contemporary composers, to which without doubt belongs A. Tcherepnin, who during the last four years has not only formed into a creative figure, but also successfully occupied one of the visible positions among European composers.

Tcherepnin displayed his talent as a composer very early. Already when he entered the conservatory, where he was for such a short time, he had in his “portfolio” at least six piano sonatas and a lot of short pieces. Currently he is the author of the opera “Ol-Ol” (after “Days of our Life”), the ballet “Ajanta”, two concertos for chamber orchestra, two piano concertos, two sonatas and “Georgian Rhapsody” for cello; one violin sonata, one piano sonata, a number of small piano works and songs (altogether around 130 compositions).

From the very beginning of his compositional career Tcherepnin showed himself to be an adherent of a new direction in music, not following the line of his father, the “psychological” approach, which was characteristic of Russian composers in general.

Living in Europe helped him to see more clearly his creative ideals, and now he is a composer who cultivates his own simple and naïve style of this really new era, deeply connected to the basic artistic ideals of preceding periods, but also different by manner of expression.

Tcherepnin did not live through, like his father, the period of "rebellion" against old traditions. He did not live through, like Stravinsky, the evolution from the old style to the new. As if he were born with the new style, it became for him the most natural way of creativity. He did not go through the temptation of sophisticating and refining his style; he did not bring with it the elements of senility. By not experiencing the tragedy of denouncing the old, he could not take stand on the principle of *innovation.* At the same time, he experienced one of the most wholesome influences in his life—the influence of Prokofiev, who ideally synthesized all the positive characteristics which distinguish any Russian composer from composers of other countries. Being exposed to the wholesome and healthy influence of Prokofiev, Tcherepnin did not lose the spontaneity and "childishness" of his creative nature, carrying in it Haydn and Mozart's naïve sound-perception. But Russian influences are not limited to Prokofiev. In Tcherepnin's works we can trace the influence of Mussorgsky and although it may be strange, the influence of conservative composers, such as Medtner and others. All these influences create for Tcherepnin an extraordinary situation, because owing to these facts, he can now impart some Russian musical "ideas" to Western European music, which were previously not accepted in their original form.

Being a Russian composer in essence and a "primitivist" by the manner of

expression of his ideas, Tcherepnin finds in his creative work a common language with new European composers with whom he has many points of contact in the way of solving technical and formal problems. This commonality of interests between Tcherepnin and [composers] of Western Europe is not fake and artificial; on the contrary, it is caused by specific traits of the composer's personality and specific situations in the area of contemporary music which we are observing today. The same needs bring the same results, and the same goals bring artists to the same areas.

This is the position of Tcherepnin as a composer, connecting contemporary Russian music with music of contemporary Europe. What are the specific traits of his music that distinguish him from other Russian composers? In the first attempts of Tcherepnin's composition was a lack of constructivist experience. They even seemed to lack a sense of form. But it was from the point of view of old form-awareness, demanding "impressive" works of "impressive" sizes. In reality what could seem a shortcoming from the old traditional point of view, from a "primitive" point of view will be a merit. Thus from the very first creative attempts of Tcherepnin, we can clearly observe the main inclinations that later have been developed completely. In any case he is using extremely simple forms and treating them with the utmost artistry and ingenuity in his larger works, such as chamber concertos, which approach the practice of early German Classicists, works which were written when the form was not yet completely crystallized, and thus was more flexible.

Tcherepnin's turn to Classicism, like the turn of all contemporary music to it, signifies the return of the former to some new starting point for achieving those aims of musical progress which could not be achieved in any other way. Really, where will the

"planned" development of the Wagner and Strauss orchestra bring us, if not to over-complication until the *nec plus ultra* of that colossal orchestra apparatus which we have now? Does musical progress need to be transformed into the quantitative instead of the qualitative? Won't this progress, after reaching a certain point, become a regress, a reduction of musical content for the sake of physiology of sonority? Primitivism, which is a new movement in today's music, definitely announces its refusal to participate in the quantitative progress of music and its slogan of today, and the nearest future is the struggle for the qualitative progress in music, with its point of departure being the interest of the musical idea, valuable on its own, without its outer excesses.

Walking in step with this movement, Tcherepnin's artistic realization of his own principles does not sacrifice his natural artistic convictions and remains unique. One of the most distinctive traits of his works is harmony, which is extremely simple, distinguishing Tcherepnin from other contemporary composers. The contemporary harmonic situation is extremely complex. Occuring in the present, a fundamental change in harmonic thinking has created two terms which were never used before but now have come into common usage: "polytonality" and "atonality," which do not exhaust, however, the complexity of the harmonic problem. Almost all contemporary composers are either critics or supporters of polytonalists, and/or atonalists because of the complex and bizarre harmonic structure in their works. Being a *tonal* composer today means being non-contemporary, obsolete, outdated in time and style. Tcherepnin is able, however, to be at the same time a tonal and a contemporary composer, and in this he is a fortunate exception. By not being afraid of "primitive," "Haydn-like" and "pre-Haydn" forms (of course, this is an imprecise term), he is not afraid of simple harmonies and modulations,

using them with ingenuity and achieving with them a freshness of impression. Not being afraid of simple harmonies, he is not afraid of sound "poverty," very often limiting the texture to two or three voices. In opposition to his polytonal and atonal colleagues-contemporaries, Tcherepnin almost exclusively uses a nine-step major-minor scale which he invented (D, E-flat, F, F-sharp, G, A, B-flat, B C-sharp) and often limits himself to the key of D. This scale, being very simple structurally, is at the same time very gratifying in an artistic sense. Tcherepnin's multifaceted usage of this scale is a proof that a Russian composer's sound perception is profoundly different from that of his Western European colleague, whereas the latter often hears completely exhausted in an artistic sense harmonic means, streaming his thinking along the circle pattern of harmonic relations, the Russian composer finds a treasure trove of harmonic gems. I think that this phenomenon is the basis of Stravinsky's harmonic innovation: whereas for Schoenberg there are already not enough music combinations compiled out of all 12 semitones of the octave, Stravinsky achieves new effects by simple two-voice combinations.

The main psychological "tone" penetrating all works of Tcherepnin, remained as a profound, artistic, naive frankness, which allowed him to approach creativity from unexpected points of view different from those used by "serious" musicians and based on a familiarity with the traditions of musical fashion, understood in a gallant "societal" meaning. Songs of Tcherepnin are not heavy-weight German *durchkomponierte Lieder* (songs structured from the beginning to the end with a meaningful musical task), but light and tender watercolors, impressions of fleeting and graceful feelings. In Tcherepnin's songs there is something even of [Rimsky-] Korsakov's formal and emotional detachment. Piano pieces of Tcherepnin are extremely picturesque and intimate, with

affectionate sincerity. This sincerity does not come from secrets or deep confessions. This is, rather, the result of a natural amiable disposition and naïve candor. Tcherepnin is not an anchorite or hermit, hiding from others the depth of his creative feelings; he is a rather pleasant and lively interlocutor, more brilliant the larger friendly society surrounds him. Because of this he is fresher and more impressive in the genres of concerto and brilliant stage compositions than in more introspective character works. Here he is brighter and bolder with the talent of a gifted beginner, not corrupted by life experiences, and strong by his innate aptitude.

The positive traits of Tcherepnin's creative personality are the freshness and sincerity of his artistic perception, conspicuous talent, pioneering curiosity, naïve artistic "bravery" and graceful musicality, intertwined with his ability to sense the pulse of his time.

Tcherepnin is the opposite of all Russian composers who develop in their art psychological problems. By his work Tcherepnin is widening the range of Russian musical creativity to the realm of unconditional and lustrous musical optimism, the realm that is so needed and so valuable to us.

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Translated by Svetlana Yashirin.