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# Rudolf Barshai: The Path of a Violist and His Viola Arrangements.

by Elena Artamonova<sup>1</sup>

*all these samples and the photo are the courtesy of Mrs Helena Barshai, private archive of Rudolf and Helena Barshai, Switzerland.*

## **Internationally renowned musician and conductor**

The name of Rudolf Borisovich Barshai (1924-2010)—a violist, arranger, and conductor—is recognised around the globe. One of the legendary musicians of the second half of the twentieth century, his tireless and far-reaching commitment and enduring dedication to music are striking even today. He actively collaborated with Dmitry Shostakovich, Serge Prokofiev, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, David Oistrakh, Leonid Kogan, Isaac Stern, Mstislav Rostropovich, Steven Isserlis CBE, Emil Gilels, Sviatoslav Richter, Peter Donohoe CBE, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Julia Varady, Dame Janet Baker, Sir Thomas Allen—and many more. It is almost impossible to give a full list of all the orchestras that Barshai conducted because of the limited scope of this article. Among them were the LSO, the LPO, the BBC Philharmonic, the Royal Philharmonic and the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre National de France, the Orchestre de Paris, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, as well as many others in Europe, the Far East and America.

The recipient of international awards, including the Gramophone Award and Cannes Classical Music Award, Barshai's numerous recordings starting from the early 1950s on the Melodiya, EMI, Brilliant Classics, Laurel Records, BIS, CBC Records, Olympia, ICA, Decca and Deutsche Grammophon labels won critical acclaim. The complete cycle of Shostakovich's fifteen symphonies with the WDR Symphony Orchestra,

Cologne, under Barshai's direction rightfully became a reference recording (Brilliant Classics) being described as a 'superb' and 'outstanding' authentic performance of 'pure Shostakovich' (Music Web International). Such highly admirable remarks are in a sense anticipated. Barshai and Shostakovich enjoyed mutual appreciation towards each other from their first rehearsal of the future Borodin Quartet playing Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 1* op. 49 in one of the classrooms of the Moscow Conservatoire in 1946, when Barshai was still a student.<sup>2</sup> Barshai regularly consulted Shostakovich after this on his compositional and instrumental pursuits, gradually expanding from arrangements for viola solo, viola and piano, viola and orchestra, string quartets and chamber ensembles to large scores for chamber orchestras and symphonic works. Barshai rightfully regarded Shostakovich as his teacher, with their friendship and lifelong collaboration—also on concert stages—lasting for 30 years Shostakovich died in 1975. Shostakovich's *Fourteenth Symphony* op. 135 was composed, scored for, and then premiered by the celebrated Moscow Chamber Orchestra (MCO) under Barshai's baton in 1969.

The MCO was the first ever chamber orchestra in the USSR founded by Barshai in 1955 and directed by him until his relocation to the West in 1977. It soon earned international acclaim for exceptional first-class performances and introduced audiences to many compositions, especially of Baroque music in original instrumentation, which were virtually unknown in the USSR at the time. Their concert programmes also consisted of music from Classical and Romantic eras, as well as music of their contemporaries, including Sir Michael Tippett, Benjamin Britten, Bohuslav Martinů, and Igor Stravinsky. To perform with him was a great privilege, just as much as performing within his ensemble. As well as Shostakovich, Mieczysław

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Weinberg, Revol Bunin, Boris Tchaikovsky, Kara Karaev, and Alexander Lokshin dedicated their compositions and premiered them with this unique ensemble and its conductor.

Barshai's own arrangements of Prokofiev's *Fugitives op. 22* and so-called *Chamber Symphonies*, including those after Borodin's *String Quartet No. 2* and after Shostakovich's *String Quartets No. 1, 3, 4, 8 and 10* (op. 49a, op. 73a, op. 83a, op. 110a and op. 118a respectively), are now among the works of the core repertoire for chamber orchestras today.<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Barshai was the man who, in 2000, completed, orchestrated, and then brought to concert stages the *Tenth Symphony* by Gustav Mahler, who left his 'swan song' in almost unreadable sketches.<sup>4</sup> This truly incredible zest of devotion occupied Barshai for over ten years; as a result, the performing version of Barshai, which received high praise from Mahler's scholar Jonathan Carr, has been enjoyed by audiences from Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, St. Petersburg, and Tokyo to Sydney and other world capitals. The list of Barshai's arrangements and editions goes on, with a good number of them still being unpublished. However, it was the love for the viola that became the impulse and drive of the maestro in many of his capacities towards the heights of the professional world of classical music.

### **Family background**

Barshai's path to musical prominence was rocky to say the least, made more difficult because it coincided with the tragic and troubled history of Soviet Russia, including the purges and WWII. It was exceptional because Barshai started to play the violin at the late age of 13 but managed to master the seven-year violin programme of a music school in two years. This is an extraordinary task for anyone. Nevertheless, Barshai's talent, hard work, and astounding motivation based on sincere love for music that he cherished throughout his life helped to achieve what may have seemed unachievable. Such a remarkable accomplishment deserves an explanation, especially as Barshai's years of upbringing and maturity as a violist are not broadly known.

Rudolf was born in Southern Russia, in Kuban' in Krasnodar Krai, in 1924, into a cultured and well-off family of Cossack-landlords, who were amateur musicians. Barshai's maternal grandfather, David Alekseev, was an *ataman*—or in other words a supreme commander of the local Cossack army—who converted

to Judaism (a movement called *Subbotniks*) and provided his daughter Maria (Barshai's mother) with a good upbringing and education. Barshai's father Boris (originally Benyamin or Benjamin) was a business agent/broker, a descendant of a Jewish family from Belorussia. According to Barshai's personal notes dated 2006, his mother played the piano and his father played the cello; Rudolf described his early years as the years spent in heaven.<sup>5</sup> Everything suddenly changed for them with the news of a relative's arrest. The so-called cleansing or *chistki* among those who did not comply with the socialist authorities re-intensified across the country from the late 1920s. Such wealthy roots and social position would hardly have endured Barshai's family to the new dispensation in Soviet society, in which only the destitute could feel out of danger. Rudolf, only four years old, had to pack essential belongings overnight and flee with his family, in fear of a possible arrest by the *OGPU* and persecution.<sup>6</sup> In search of a safe haven where they would not be recognised, the family was constantly on the move, escaping at first to Tashkent (Uzbekistan), then moving on to other cities, including Baku (Azerbaijan), and Kirovabad (today Ganja, Azerbaijan), eventually settling in Kalinin (today Tver', 180 km northwest of Moscow).<sup>7</sup>

### **First musical experiences and violin self-studies**

Rudolf was registered at a local school and was soon signed up by his schoolteacher to a local children's choir. This was all the musical experience he had until he once happened upon a local pianist practicing Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* at school. Rudolf was so overwhelmed by this music that in his own words he "dreamt of it the whole night."<sup>8</sup> The following morning he insisted that his father buy him a piano so he could play that beautiful music he heard. It turned out that a piano was far too expensive and thus unaffordable, and instead his father bought him a violin with a Stradivarius sticker inside for 100 roubles at a local market.<sup>9</sup> Its only association with the famous Italian luthier was a sticker, because it was certainly a forgery produced and sold in substantial numbers everywhere. Thus, at the age of 13, a rather late age for a future string player to become a professional soloist—as Rudolf was told later by a violin professor from Moscow—Rudolf began attending regular violin lessons with a local teacher. Rudolf thoroughly enjoyed the violin, but lessons ceased after the forced retirement of his teacher. A fiasco in Moscow at a consultation lesson with the violin professor Vladimir Mironovich Wulfman (a former student of Lucien Capet) totally devastated

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Rudolf, who wanted to continue his violin studies there. He was explicitly told of his musical talent but was advised to turn his desires and hopes to other school subjects because he was far behind his peers.<sup>10</sup>

Rudolf returned to Kalinin but soon resumed playing the violin literally day and night—setting his alarm clock for practice as early as 6 am—and taught himself from a study book he purchased in a local bookshop. This incredible self-determination and desire to succeed, as well as a thorough approach to perfect his left-hand technique and sound qualities, were worthwhile. In a few months of self-study, Rudolf made such remarkable progress that the same violin professor from Moscow was simply stunned by his playing of Bach's *Siciliana* and agreed to teach Rudolf once a week. He prepared Rudolf for entry exams at the Central Music School but instead Rudolf was accepted straight to the Moscow Conservatoire Music College (the Merzliakov Music College), because by that point at the age of 14 he was eligible to study there. Moreover, Professor Lev Moiseevich Tseitlin (1881-1952), one of the best former students of the celebrated Hungarian violinist Leopold Auer at the tsarist St. Petersburg Conservatoire and then later a student of Eugène Ysaÿe in Brussels, wanted to teach Barshai. After so many struggles, this was equal to a miracle for the young Barshai. The tuition he received from Tseitlin, not only a brilliant violin soloist but one of the best professors of his generation, laid a fine and firm foundation for Rudolf's rapid development as an exceptional string player, despite many upcoming obstacles, hard work and tragic events of WWII with the interruption of studies with Tseitlin due to evacuation from Moscow, hunger, and epidemic of typhus fever that brought him to the verge of death.

### Lev Tseitlin

Among the first works Rudolf studied under Tseitlin was the *Sonatas-Partitas for Solo Violin* BWV 1001-1006 by J.S. Bach, who was among the favourite composers of the professor. This adoration was naturally very influential and lasted throughout Barshai's own life.<sup>11</sup> It is for this reason that one of Barshai's first viola arrangements was Bach's *Partita no. 2 in D minor* BWV 1004, including the *Chaconne* for solo violin, which he performed with great success at his final viola recital as a student of the Moscow Conservatoire in 1948 and then many times in recitals and recordings.<sup>12</sup> Another interesting observation and possibly the legacy of Tseitlin, adopted

and broadly used by Barshai in his later years of maturity, was the use of blue and red pencils in his manuscripts, instrumental parts, and printed music scores used in concert programmes to mark specific sections, underline important changes of dynamics, bowings, etc. Tseitlin's favourite two pencils in red and blue were well-known among his students and colleagues from the years of his leadership of the *Persimfans*, the orchestra without a conductor founded by Tseitlin 1922 and led until 1932.<sup>13</sup> In a way, Barshai followed the steps of his teacher by simultaneously playing and conducting his own MCO in 1955, but soon felt the necessity to acquire professional conducting skills that he learnt from the legendary Ilya Aleksandrovich Musin (1904-1999), but this is a different chapter of Barshai's legacy.

The teaching methods of Tseitlin and the unique father-son-like relationship that quickly formed between Rudolf and his violin professor, which lasted until the death of Tseitlin in 1952, deserve a separate publication. The limited scope of this article does not allow to go into much detail of Tseitlin's approach but even many years later Barshai remembered with great love and appreciation Tseitlin's lessons, his sincere dedication, musicianship, and input. His immaculate attention to rhythm and its precision, readiness for action of left-hand fingers on fingerboard like the action of keyboard hammers, bow motion and clarity in different bow parts and various musical contexts and strokes, as well as great respect for composer texts were the essential ingredients of Tseitlin's set menu of violin playing. Tseitlin's letters to Rudolf dated 1941-43, written on small pieces of paper but with beautiful and almost calligraphic handwriting, are full of warmth and care about Rudya or Rudik (diminutive forms from the name Rudolf) and his parents, about Rudik's progress in violin studies, and about evacuation and incessant attempts of Tseitlin to get official permission from the high authorities for his student's return to Moscow in 1943 from evacuation in Tashkent. A quote from one of these letters dated 5 October 1943, in which Tseitlin informs Rudolf that he received the travel permit for him, was included in the booklet notes to the CD box *A Tribute to Rudolf Barshai* that contains 20 CDs of rare unique recordings of Barshai as a viola soloist, a chamber musician, and conductor.<sup>14</sup>

Within weeks, Rudolf returned to Moscow, passed the entry exam to the Moscow Conservatoire with Paganini's *Concerto in D major* and from January 1944 continued



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his violin tuition twice a week with Tseitlin, now as a student of the Conservatoire.<sup>15</sup> Tough times usually are like an inner reflection-mirror of people as their genuine personality naturally emerges to the surface. One of the former students of Tseitlin, Iakov Milkis, remembered with warm gratitude many years later, when on his return from evacuation to study with Tseitlin, he incidentally bumped into Rudolf in one of the corridors of the Moscow Conservatoire in the late autumn of 1944.<sup>16</sup> Rudolf, himself a hungry adolescent student, lived with his aunt—because the room that he shared before the war with his parents in a communal flat was occupied by people who lost everything—and had to practice his violin in a bathroom because there was no other space available.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, Rudolf instantly helped his school friend, brought him home, fed him, warmed him up, and only then took him to see their violin Professor who on that day taught at the Central Music School.

### String quartet playing

As soon as Barshai resumed his studies in Moscow, he wanted to form a string quartet, since the musical literature for such ensembles is very rich. However, he soon faced a fundamental problem: despite numerous attempts and a thorough search among fellow students, the viola position remained vacant because of the inadequate performance level of violists at the time. Rudolf decided to try, play, and adjust to the viola himself, and even experimented with the extension and strengthening of the muscles of his left-hand fingers. His viola experiments were successful, and he simply started to enjoy playing the instrument, at first, within the string quartet repertoire. The feeling of being at the centre of all voices and timbres and the ability to form an integral part of harmony-polyphony were also evidently important for him. The latter explains why Barshai started to arrange various works for fellow student ensembles at their request, which became very popular within student circles. Some of Barshai's early quartet arrangements survived in a form of individual instrumental parts kept at his archive. What is apparent is that despite the hard times with the shortage of basic resources, including music manuscript paper, his neat, beautiful handwriting is immediately recognisable and has hardly any corrections. Rudolf knew and heard with his inner hearing precisely what he wanted to put on paper. Only essential elements are there, including occasional fingering and bowing – the style Barshai would maintain in his manuscripts throughout his life.

It is worth quoting at length Barshai's unpublished comments written in 2006 about the importance of playing in a string quartet that he regarded vital for maturity not only for string players but also for future conductors:

Playing in a quartet develops the feeling of an ensemble and of balance. It underlines the impact of intonation on sound quality, but most importantly – it provides boundless enjoyment from playing the most wonderful music. A person who has not learnt how to feel himself/herself in the centre of an ensemble or harmony or even more importantly – of polyphony, can never become a conductor. It is well-known that J.S. Bach preferred to play the viola or any other middle voiced instrument in an ensemble or orchestra. When asked: why? – he answered that he is in the centre of plexus (connection) of all voices and takes the most pleasure from polyphony.<sup>18</sup>

### Violist and his first viola arrangements



*Figure 1: Rudolf Barshai in the foyer of the Bolshoi (Big) Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire with his Granchino viola, 1940s.*

Indeed, Barshai's chamber ensemble and quartet studies at the Conservatoire led by Professor Evgeny Mikhailovich Guzikov (1887-1969, former pupil of Ivan Grzhimali and Lucien Capet) and by Professor Michael Nikitovich Terian (1905-1987) were very successful. Terian was a fine violist of the famous Komitas Quartet and naturally helped Rudolf in his first steps of mastering the viola. According to Barshai's spoken memoir-monologue recorded in the form of a documentary a few weeks before his death and posthumously published as a book called "Nota [Music Key]", his first viola (a copy of Guarneri) was given to him by Terian and was made by the famous luthier Timofey Podgorny (1873-1958).<sup>19</sup> Barshai was a perfect match with the viola. This was so obvious that Professor Tseitlin, despite his sincere aspirations for Barshai as a violinist, decided to introduce him to his colleague, the distinguished viola Professor Vadim Vasilevich Borisovsky, who does not require any further introductions, especially in viola circles.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, with Tseitlin's own blessing Barshai switched to the viola. From this moment on, Barshai's activities as a violist grew day by day. From 1946, his String Quartet started to give public concerts and from 1947 under the name of the Quartet of The Moscow Philharmonic. In 1946, whilst still a student Barshai was offered a rank-and-file viola position and a few months later the position of the viola leader with the Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra, which in those days was regarded the best in the capital. It is curious but his work at the Bolshoi Theatre played a contributing role in strengthening Barshai's aspirations as a fine arranger.

### Prokofiev's *Romeo & Juliet*

Among Barshai's first known arrangements for viola are *Five Pieces for Viola and Piano: The Street Awakens, Dance of the Antilles, Masques, Friar Laurence, and Death of Mercutio* from Serge Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo & Juliet* op. 64, in which Barshai kept the original keys. The manuscript is not dated and not yet published. In his memoirs Barshai reminisces on rehearsals of the stage production of the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* under the direction of the choreographer Leonid Lavrovsky and the conductor Yuri Fayer, which were regularly attended by the composer at the Bolshoi Theatre. At one of these rehearsals Barshai bravely approached Prokofiev and asked if he could show him his arrangements for viola and piano from the ballet, to which Prokofiev readily agreed and invited the young arranger to come to his house. Prokofiev was surprised by some technical elements that Barshai implemented in his score and questioned if they were playable on the viola. Barshai immediately demonstrated, without hesitation.

Looking at the score today, one may assume that these were highly technical elements undoubtedly influenced by violin technique and skilfully applied to the viola. For example, in the *Masques*, the last beat marked down-bow 4 measures before the end of the piece with the passage in 12 consecutive double stops of minor sixths written in thirty-second notes covering three octaves. This challenging technique was first introduced by Paganini and becomes highly virtuosic on the viola, especially in such brisk tempo.



Figure 1: *Masques*, mm.35-36.

Another example, 3 measures before the end in the *Dance of the Antilles*, where Barshai used glissando on minor third written pizzicato on thick C-G strings requires in-depth firm control but also a flexible touch in the left-hand fingers. A quick combination of octaves, sevenths, and sixths in high positions in measures 22-24 in *Friar Laurence* demands adjustments in fingering for reliable intonation and smooth technical execution. The violin-like approach of the arranger is also evident in *The Street Awakens* with Barshai's use of double-stops played pizzicato in the left-hand on D-A strings and simultaneous sustained D played arco on C string in the right-hand. The play of timbres and tone colour were also very important for Barshai. Apart from the usual ponticello, marcato, spiccato, ricochet, mute, natural and artificial harmonics, etc. he used an unusual perfect unison on C-sharp (in the second octave) in measure 29 in the *Masques* to intensify the colouring and dynamics. Additionally, both instruments—viola and piano—are equal partners in the musical dialogue and in their depiction of the contrasting characters from the famous Shakespeare-Prokofiev's tragedy.



Figure 2: Friar Laurence, mm.22-24.

This was the start of the Prokofiev-Barshai collaboration. The premiere of this ballet production at the Bolshoi Theatre took place on 28 December 1946, which means that by late Autumn/early Winter of 1946, Barshai had already arranged if not all, at least some, of these pieces and showed his manuscripts to Prokofiev. Moreover, in 1948, Barshai arranged the first two pieces similar to his viola arrangement of *Romeo* and pieces no. 16, 10 and 3 from Prokofiev's *Vision Fugitive* op. 22 (originally for piano) for a string quartet and showed them to the composer.<sup>21</sup> The latter manuscript, dated 1948, has the

marks of Prokofiev in pencil. The analysis of these string quartet arrangements from *Romeo* reveals that Barshai without doubt gave the viola precedence, especially in the *Dance of the Antilles*, which repeats the viola part writing from his viola arrangement almost throughout the whole piece, thus giving the viola the leading role.

Barshai's excellent display of virtuosity and varied palette of sound colouring, in a recording of his viola arrangement of these five pieces at the Moscow radio studio with the pianist Vladimir Shraibman, is dated 1956.<sup>22</sup> This brings one to the conclusion that Barshai drew his attention to Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* on the viola earlier than Vadim Borisovsky did. Borisovsky's manuscripts of his brilliant arrangements from *Romeo* (13 pieces in total) are dated from 1950 onwards and were published in Moscow for the first time in blocks in 1961 and 1977 by Sovetsky kompozitor, and in 1967 by Muzyka. There is no doubt that Barshai and Borisovsky approached their arrangements independently and certainly there was no competition of any kind between them, only sincere mutual respect. Besides, only two pieces (out of five of Barshai's choice), *The Street Awakens* and the *Death of Mercutio* were also arranged by Borisovsky in 1953-55 and in 1953-54 respectively, and his execution of Prokofiev's score was notably different. The other three pieces chosen by Barshai were and remain the only viola arrangements of these pieces of Prokofiev, and they are simply fascinating.

#### **Khandoshkin's Concerto for Viola and Orchestra**

The arrangement of this Concerto was another major work that attracted Barshai as early as 1953, two years before the formation of his own orchestra, the MCO. The start of Barshai's international acclaim as a violist with the prize awarded at the Second World Festival-Competition for Young People and Students in Budapest in 1949, paved the way to Barshai's growing concert activities and consequent enlargement of his repertoire. This Concerto offered not only a fresh opportunity for a solo performance, but also a chance to take Barshai's own compositional talents from chamber music to orchestral level. The manuscript of the Concerto scored for viola solo and string orchestra was found in 1947 and was attributed to Ivan Khandoshkin, a Russian violin virtuoso and prolific composer of the late eighteenth century. Today it is known that this Concerto was not of Khandoshkin but of a violinist Mikhail Goldstein. Nevertheless, it does not diminish its fine musical and

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technical qualities and remains an attractive concertante work for violists.

Barshai edited the structure of the first and second movements by repeating and shortening some sections and changing registers and bow strokes of themes in da capo, wrote virtuoso cadenzas to the first and third movements, and reorchestrated the whole concerto. In other words, Barshai was looking for more brightness, array of string techniques, instrumental colouring, and timbre contrast in the orchestral sound and of the soloist. The first attempt with the addition of two flutes to the original string orchestra did not satisfy Barshai and after a few opening pages he put his initial score aside and started a new one. This second manuscript is dated 1953 and is scored for flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani C-G, and the full set of strings. Barshai consulted Shostakovich about his orchestration, who laudably commented on Barshai's sensible use of French horns, thus maintaining clarity and minimum elements in the score. The manuscript of the cadenzas is dated 1954. They are well-written in structure with a wonderful display of virtuoso and melodious possibilities of the viola with long sections of double-stops and chords passages, extensive use of high positions in contrast with the low positions, thus emphasising the variety of timbre and sound palette. This was the edition that Barshai performed as a soloist and conductor and recorded with the MCO in January 1956.<sup>23</sup> In 1997, Barshai revised his orchestration, and it was published by Sikorski Verlag.

### **Handel-Casadesus *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra***

In 1955, Barshai completed his yet unpublished arrangement of the *Concerto in B minor* for viola and orchestra by Handel-Casadesus. This Concerto has been very popular since the publication of its piano reduction by Max Eschig Editions in Paris in 1924 and unsurprisingly became an admirable work of educational and concertante repertoire of violists.<sup>24</sup> Barshai's focus was primarily on the orchestral score. The original score published by the same publisher in Paris in 1925 was written for 2 flutes, 2 bassoons and the full set of strings. Barshai's edition is scored for one flute, 2 oboes, one bassoon, first and second violins, violas, cellos, cembalo, and double basses. Such instrumentation provides a lighter and more colourful timbre play and transparency of instruments that enrich the palette of the orchestra, thus supporting the challenging solo viola display. Barshai's 1959 recording of this Concerto is a living

record of his impressive execution in both roles as a violist and conductor of the MCO.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout 1950s-1960s, Barshai was an active viola recitalist and a quartet player of the Borodin Quartet (until 1953) and the Tchaikovsky Quartet (until 1956) led by Yulian Sitkovetsky. Barshai was also in high demand as a chamber musician with the crème-de-la-crème of musicians of the time performing string trios by Beethoven and Alyabyev, *Piano Quartet No. 1* op. 15 by Faure, *Piano Quintet in G minor* op. 57 by Shostakovich with the author at the piano, Debussy's *Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp*, and Tchaikovsky's *String Sextet in D minor* op.70 'Souvenir de Florence' among others. Many contemporary composers wrote and dedicated their works to Barshai throughout his lifetime. Thus, *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra* op. 22 (1953), by Revol Bunin (1924-1976) was dedicated to Barshai and premiered by him in November 1954 in Saratov, followed by many subsequent performances. Barshai edited the viola part of this Concerto for its viola and piano reduction made by the composer and published in Moscow by the State Music Publishers in 1958. Barshai was a dedicatee of Andrei Volkonsky's *Sonata for Viola and Piano* op. 8 and gave the premiere of this work with the composer at the piano in 1955. In the same year of 1955, Bunin completed his *Sonata for Viola and Piano* op. 26, which Barshai soon premiered and edited the viola part of its publication by the Edition Peters, Leipzig.

Fortunately, a good number of Barshai's recordings survived and present a broad and varied repertoire of Barshai the violist, in which his interpretations of Baroque to contemporary music were equally convincing. The sound of his legendary Stradivarius (1715) from the USSR state collection and of his viola made by Grancino are instantly recognisable. One can hear that this exceptional violist with characteristic richness, firmness, and inner energy, but at the same time warmth and elegance of sound could play anything. Barshai successfully performed Borisovsky's arrangements, including pieces by Debussy, Chopin, Grieg, Ravel's *Pavane*, and many original works for the viola, including Schumann's *Märchenbilder* op. 113, Glinka's *Unfinished Sonata* for viola and piano and Vladimir Kriukov's *Sonata in D minor for Viola and Piano* op. 15 with Tatiana Nikolaeva at the piano, Hindemith *Sonata for Solo Viola* op. 25 no. 1, and the *Trauermusik* with the MCO,



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Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*, Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* in E flat major K.201 with David Oistrakh, Leonid Kogan, and with Menuhin.

The private archive of Barshai that contains his correspondence, unique photos, concert programmes, and his written notes about the essence of music and its interpretation, reveal the soul and spirit of the Maestro totally immersed in music. His scores and sets of instrumental parts of orchestral works he performed and brought with him to rehearsals for distribution among players contain his bow markings, fingering, dynamics change, etc. that he regarded as vital in bringing the interpretation of a musical work up to its original intention of the composer-author. Indeed, Barshai's recorded performances of Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Berlioz, Mahler, Shostakovich, Lokshin, Weinberg, and many others are the living testament of the above. This legacy of Barshai, along with his arrangements and editions continue to live on and inspire people of other generations. His integrity in music, emotional wealth, and sincerity of expression, combined with purity of intonation and articulation and incredible technical capacity that further extended instrumental capabilities on the viola, encourage us to search and strive for our own perfection in string playing and for discoveries of the yet undiscovered in music.

Footnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> A word of sincere gratitude goes to the widow of Rudolf Barshai, Mrs Helena Barshai, a fine organist and harpsichordist, a devoted wife and partner of the Maestro for 37 years, for her trust, generosity and support of this research work and assistance with family archival materials.
- <sup>2</sup> This young group called themselves the Moscow Conservatoire String Quartet and apart from Barshai (viola), consisted of Rostislav Dubinsky (first violin), Vladimir Rabei (second violin, in 1947 replaced by Nina Barshai-Markova and in 1952 by Yaroslav Alexandrov), and Valentin Berlinsky (cello, replaced Mstislav Rostropovich who decided to focus on his solo career). From 1955, the group was renamed the Borodin Quartet, internationally known for its numerous recordings and its close collaboration with Shostakovich.
- <sup>3</sup> These arrangements of Barshai are published: Sergei Prokofiev, *Vision Fugitive* op. 22a; *15 Pieces for String Orchestra* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel Verlag, 2011);

Alexander Borodin, *Kammersinfonie* (after String Quartet No. 2) *for String Orchestra*, Boosey & Hawkes, 2005; All Chamber Symphonies of Shostakovich arranged by Barshai were published by Sikorski Musikverlag, Hamburg (in 2019 Sikorski merged with Boosey & Hawkes). For other published arrangements of Barshai for chamber/string orchestras see: [https://www.boosey.com/cr/catalogue/ps/powersearch\\_results.cshhtml?search=Barshai&x=10&y=7](https://www.boosey.com/cr/catalogue/ps/powersearch_results.cshhtml?search=Barshai&x=10&y=7), Accessed March 30, 2023.

- <sup>4</sup> Barshai knew the performing edition of Deryck Cooke of 1972 and performed it in Vienna in 1981 with the Austrian Radio Orchestra. Symphony no. 10 reconstructed from Mahler's manuscript and orchestrated by Rudolf Barshai was published by Universal Edition, Vienna.
- <sup>5</sup> Rudolf Barshai, Personal notes in Russian dated July 10, 2006, Barshai's personal archive, Switzerland; All quotations from Barshai's archival sources and Russian publications used in this paper were translated into English by the author of this paper, Elena Artamonova.
- <sup>6</sup> OGPU – Joint State Political Directorate or the secret police in the USSR in 1923-34.
- <sup>7</sup> *Nota. Zhizn' Rudolfa Barshaia, rasskazannaia im v fil'me Olega Dormana* [Music Key. The Life of Rudolf Barshai as Described by Him in a Film of Oleg Dorman], ed. Oleg Dorman (Moscow: AST, 2015), 24-32.
- <sup>8</sup> Tamara Grum-Grzhimailo, "Mne nilas' eta muzyka [I Dreamt of This Music]," Interview with Rudolf Barshai, Nedelia, *Vesma znachitel'nye litsa* [Very Important Persons], May 13, 1993: 9.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> *Nota*, 41.
- <sup>11</sup> Thus, in the words of Mrs Barshai, the last fugue in D minor from Bach's incomplete Art of Fugue BWV 1080 sounded in their house every day and its subject became like an inseparable musical theme of the house. Barshai revised and perfected his completion of this great last work of Bach arranged by him for chamber orchestra for decades until his death, although his first version was approved with great fervour and described as being 'excellent' by Dmitri Shostakovich. Barshai's completion of the Art of Fugue by J.S. Bach was published by Sikorski Musikverlag, Hamburg.
- <sup>12</sup> Lionel Tertis performed the Chaconne from 1906 and recorded it in 1924 for the Columbia Graphophone Company. In Moscow of the mid-1940s', Barshai certainly did not know of Tertis' arrangement and recording. See: "Lionel Tertis. The Complete Columbia

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- recordings, 1924-33,” CD recording, Biddulph Recordings 80216-2, 2005.
- <sup>13</sup> “Lev Tseitlin, Pis'ma [Letters] in Arthur Shtilman, Lev Moiseevich Tseitlin,” <http://7iskusstv.com/2009/Nomer1/Shtilman1.php>, Accessed March 30, 2023.
- <sup>14</sup> “A Tribute to Rudolf Barshai,” booklet notes, CD recording, ICA Classics, ICAB 5136, 2015: 40; These recordings were collected, prepared, remastered, and released thanks to the dedication, devotion, and generosity of Mrs Barshai.
- <sup>15</sup> *Nota*, 73.
- <sup>16</sup> “Iakov Milkis, Vospominaniia muzykanta. Pamiatnye gody obshcheniia s L.M. Tseitlinym (vospominaniia uchenika) [Reminiscences of a Musician. Memorable Years of Collaboration with Lev Tseitlin (Reminiscences of a Pupil)],” <https://berkovich-zametki.com/2008/Zametki/Nomer6/Milkis1.php>, Accessed March 30, 2023.
- <sup>17</sup> Conversations of the author of this paper with Mrs. Barshai, March 2023.
- <sup>18</sup> Rudolf Barshai, Personal notes in Russian dated July 10, 2006, Barshai's personal archive, Switzerland.
- <sup>19</sup> *Nota*, 96.
- <sup>20</sup> For further reading on Vadim Borisovsky and his rich viola legacy see: 1. Elena Artamonova, “Vadim Borisovsky and His Viola Arrangements: Recent Discoveries in Russian Archives and Libraries, Part II”, *Journal of the American Viola Society*, 2015, No. 1, Vol. 31, 19-30, <https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/26196/> ; Elena Artamonova, “Vadim Borisovsky and His Viola Arrangements: Recent Discoveries in Russian Archives and Libraries, Part I”, *Journal of the American Viola Society*, 2014, No. 2, Vol. 30, 27-36. <https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/26194/> .
- <sup>21</sup> Barshai's arrangement was published as a pocket score: Sergei Prokofiev, *Vision Fugitive* op. 22, no. 16, 10, 3, 14, 13, 17. and of two pieces from *Romeo & Juliet: The Street Awakens, Dance of the Antilles* arr. for string quartet by Rudolf Barshai (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1955).
- <sup>22</sup> “A Tribute to Rudolf Barshai,” CD recording, CD 1.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, CD 3; For further recordings, see also 'Rudolf Barshai, Anniversary recordings' (11 Tracks), YouTube.
- <sup>24</sup> It was not until 1967 that it was proved that this composition was not a reconstruction by Henri Casadesus, but his own concerto written in the style of Handel. Hans Joachim Marx and Steffen Voss, *The Compositions attributed to G.F. Handel* (Zurich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2017), 222-223.