

## Vyacheslav Artyomov

### - Biography -

**Vyacheslav Artyomov** was born on 29 June 1940 in Moscow as the son of a music teacher. He began playing the piano at the age of six. He occupied himself with physics and mathematics during his childhood and youth – among other reasons, because his parents dreamed of a scientific career for their son. In 1958 he successfully passed the entrance examinations at Moscow University and, at the same time, the Music School of the Moscow Conservatory. At this time he made up his mind to become a professional musician and renounced university studies.

In 1958–62 he studied composition at the Music School of the Moscow Conservatory with Alexander Pirumov, then at the Moscow Conservatory, where he completed his studies with Nikolai Sidelnikov in 1968.

During the "thaw period" – the late 1950s and early 1960s – Artyomov discovered for himself, like many of his contemporaries, the most important works of Prokofiev (including the operas "The Gambler" and "The Fiery Angel" and Symphonies 2–4), the late works of Stravinsky, music of Stockhausen, Messiaen, Berio and the Polish avant-garde. Honegger's "Symphonie Liturgique" and works by Varèse exercised the strongest influence on him. He received further creative impulses from Russian folk music (around 1965 he undertook expeditions in the north of Russia searching for ancient songs), the traditional music of the East as well as of musical romanticism, in the continuity of which the composer regards himself today. Artyomov did not digest all these influences musically, but "spiritually." Any musical folklorism is foreign to him – he never uses exact quotations. He is equally remote from any kind of neo-tradition – Artyomov never copies another style.

He founded the group "Astreya" in 1975 together with Sofia Gubaidulina and Viktor Suslin for improvisations with "exotic" instruments not found in standard ensembles (the basis for this was his own collection of such instruments).

In 1968–77 Artyomov was a reader at "Muzyka" publishers; since then he has been a freelance composer in Moscow. His works are frequently performed at home and abroad by the most renowned interpreters (at festivals in Paris, Cologne, Venice, London, Warsaw, etc.).

For many listeners in Russia, Artyomov's *Requiem* (1985/88) is a symbol of "Perestroika;" this work, which represents a stage in his oeuvre, is at the same time a memorial for the victims of Stalinism in Soviet musical culture.

Artyomov's compositional development reflects his interests in aleatoricism and stasis in the new music of the 1960s. But his affinity for magic, ritual and archaic elements, for non-European cultures and "non-classical" types of consciousness are more essential for his poetics and technical system of composition. Static and meditative states are important in Artyomov's style, as are structures with improvisatory effects (but the composer never uses pure improvisations or "open forms"). Artyomov appeals more to the unconscious and intuitive levels of the psyche than to its rational levels; Eastern principles of meditation are of significance to him: *Girljanda rečitacij* [Garland of Recitations] for flute, oboe (or clarinet), saxophone (or clarinet), bassoon and orchestra (1975/81), *Sinfonia elegia* for two violins, six percussionists and strings (1977) as well as his compositions for percussion instruments.

There are both "heathen" and Christian references in Artyomov's production. For example, he pursues "heathen" elements in *Totem* for six percussionists (1976), the *Sonata razmyšlenij* [Meditation Sonata] for four percussionists (1978) and *Zaklinanija* [Invocations] for soprano and four percussionists (to his own text, 1979/81). Traditional Christian subjects such as the Last Judgement, eternal peace and expiation are developed in the ballet *Sola Fide* (after Alexei N. Tolstoy, 1985/87), in the great *Requiem* for soloists, choirs and orchestra (1985/88) and in *Ave Maria* for soprano, mixed choir and orchestra (1989).

In an initial phase, Artyomov saw his "compositional task in the creation of a personal system of an expressive intonation." He first solved this problem in his *Sonata* for clarinet solo (1966), but also in the *Rečitacii* [Recitations] I–X for solo woodwind instruments (1975/81). In chamber works – e.g. *Sceny* [Scenes] for clarinet, piano, violin, double bass and percussion (1970), *Variacii: Ptenec Ancali* [Variations: The Bird-Boy Antsali] for flute and piano (1974) – one notices his interest in improvisation, but also in new instrumental combinations and unconventional playing techniques. – In a second phase, Artyomov pursues "the rhythmic expression and melodic qualities of percussion instruments." Characteristic of this is the variation, development and combination of brief rhythmic formulas in *Totem*. In the *Invocations* he combines freely chosen syllables which receive their meaning from the musical context in the sense of sound magic through colours and colour combinations. Here, Artyomov follows the experiments of the futuristic poet Velemir Chlebnikov. – In a third phase, the composer turns towards "Polyphony," to the "same combination of different structures, characters and ideas" (Artyomov 1990): examples are *Sinfonia elegia*, *Put' k Olimpu* [Path to Olympus] for orchestra (1978/84), *Sola Fide*, *Requiem*, *Ave Maria*.