

Notes on the Program by Jay Roberts
February 13, 2014

In the early nineties, Christian Lindberg was approached by Robert von Bahr to record a series of Russian Trombone music. Lindberg, a well-respected and world renowned Swedish trombonist, was at first “unsure how to fill the available time.” After tips and help from friends and colleagues Lindberg collected enough material that he thought, “what should I select from all the interesting rarities which I had been sent.”¹

Even with Lindberg’s *Russian Trombone* CD released in 1991, not much has changed in the past 23 years. With the exception of several Russian solos and studies from Lebedev, Rimsky-Korsakov and Blazhevich, very little of Russian trombone compositions are included in the current American standard trombone repertoire.

For over 20 years, Douglas Yeo, retired Bass Trombonist of the Boston Symphony and current professor of trombone at ASU, and Victor Venglovsky, former Principal Trombonist of the Leningrad Symphony, engaged in a pen-pal friendship. Although they never met face to face, they exchanged music, LP recordings and trombone accessories by mail.

After learning that I had lived in Russia for two years and had studied both music and Russian linguistics at Brigham Young University, Professor Yeo loaned me several trombone and tuba solo books that had been sent to him by Venglovsky some years ago. Many of the solos contained in these books were composed by Soviet composers we had never heard of. Was the music good? You be the judge. All of the pieces except Sofia Goubaidulina’s *Descensio* performed on tonight’s recital come from the books loaned to me by Professor Yeo.

Like Christian Lindberg, I have come to the conclusion that there are many outstanding Russian compositions for trombone that could be filling university recital halls and featured on professional recordings. How do we get them from behind the long ago collapsed iron curtain? I have found out that we just need to ask.... okay and pay some money too. The great pieces performed tonight are but the very tip of the iceberg.

Concertino - **Pavel Saliman-Vladimirov** (b.1929)

Very little is yet known to us about P. Saliman-Vladimirov. We know he was the oldest son of David Fyodorovich Saliman-Vladimirov (b. 1903) who was a well-respected composer known for his band music.² According to Sergei Chebotaryov (composer of the *Rondo for Tuba* later in the program) P. Saliman-Vladimirov also has an *Intermezzo* for trombone.

P. Saliman-Vladimirov’s *Concertino* is more like a concerto than a concertino since it is a fifteen-minute long composition in three contrasting movements. While the

¹ Christian Lindberg and Roland Pöntinen. *The Russian Trombone*. © 1990 by Grammofon AB BIS, Djursholm. CD.

² Allan Benedict Ho and Dmitry Feofanov. *Biographical Dictionary of Russian/Soviet Composers*. New York, Greenwood Press. 1989.

music is not marked, this is the only piece on tonight's program that was possibly written for the bass trombone. I am performing this piece in its original form.

The first movement is a heroic anthem alternating between duple and compound meter that has very slight jazz nuances. The middle of the movement has a short but beautiful melody followed by a lengthy and somewhat technical cadenza. The end of the movement effectively depicts the conquering hero! The second movement is a very colorful jazz ballad with many different twists and turns in the melody that keep the listener on his/her toes. The last movement is a light dance that also switches from compound to duple meter, only this time the compound meter is more complex alternating between 5/8 and 6/8 to add an extra layer of excitement. Listen for an awkward yet beautiful melody that enters and exits throughout the dance.

Choral Variations - **Edison Denisov** (1929-1996)

Edison Denisov was the son of a radio physicist who named his son after the great American inventor Thomas Edison.³ Denisov was among the first composers to take advantage of relaxed post-Stalin Soviet regulations on the arts. While government leaders allowed more artistic freedom, the staunch established musical conservatives were brutally critical of upcoming composers such as Denisov, Sofia Goubaidulina and Alfred Schnittke. Many referred to these uprising composers as "young composers" even as they became respected, well-known and established in their distinguished careers.⁴

After using the trombone in a chamber piece for clarinet, cello, trombone and piano, Denisov composed this *Choral Variations* for trombone in a deeply contemplative style.⁵ Denisov's use of the mute offers different timbres and colors throughout. This is a serial composition that contains passages using quarter tones and three-quarter tones. Quarter tones are notes that should sound slightly out-of-tune. This effect offers a very dissonant sound that is not commonly used in Western 12-tone music. I have adapted this tenor trombone solo for bass trombone. Christian Lindberg recorded this solo on his 1991 album *The Russian Trombone*.

Rondo for Tuba - **Sergei Chebotaryov** (b. 1949)

Sergei Chebotaryov currently lives in Moscow, Russia and works for the Russian publishing house, "MUZYKA." I had the great opportunity to speak with Sergei Borisovich over the phone and when I asked him what he would like included in the program notes he said, "I would love to tell you something interesting about the piece but I don't even remember what year I wrote it!"

³ Boosey and Hawkes Biographies. "Edsion Denisov," accessed 12 February 2014. http://www.boosey.com/pages/cr/composer/composer_main.asp?composerid=2702

⁴ Peter J. Schmeltz, "Andrey Volkonsky and the Beginnings of Unofficial Music in the Soviet Union." *Journal of the American Musicology Society* 58 (2005): 139-207.

⁵ Christian Lindberg and Roland Pöntinen. *The Russian Trombone*. © 1990 by Grammofon AB BIS, Djursholm. CD.

This short Rondo for Tuba, in my opinion, is a gem. The piano and tuba part compliment each other really well in this energetic and fast piece. For this evening's performance I will be performing Chebotaryov's Rondo on a Thein F contrabass trombone. There is no musical reason why I am performing this wonderful piece on the contrabass trombone. This piece is comfortably played on the bass trombone but it is my turn to study the contrabass this semester. So why not play this on an instrument I have been playing for 7 weeks? In case you are wondering after listening to this piece, there should be no quarter tones.

Descensio – **Sofia Goubaidulina** (b. 1931)

Sofia Gubaidulina was born in Chistopol in the Tatar Republic of the Soviet Union in 1931. After instruction in piano and composition at the Kazan Conservatory, she studied composition with Nikolai Peiko at the Moscow Conservatory. She then pursued her graduate studies under Vissarion Shebalin. Goubaidulina's primary residence is currently in Germany, outside Hamburg. Gubaidulina made her first visit to North America in 1987 as a guest of Louisville's "Sound Celebration." She has returned many times since then as a featured composer of festivals including "Light of the End" by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Kurt Masur in 2003.⁶

A profoundly religious person, Goubaidulina associates music with human transcendence and mystical spiritualism. The sound world in her compositions is an immediate expression of this. For example, she associates the indeterminate nature of percussive timbres, which are prominent in *Descensio*, with the mystical freedom of human transcendence.

She is preoccupied by experimentation with non-traditional methods of sound production, and with unusual combinations of instruments. The two composers, as she points out herself, to whom she experiences a constant devotion are J.S. Bach and Webern.

Descensio is dedicated to pianist/conductor Pyotr Meshchaninov; commissioned by the Ministere de la Culture Francaise, and first performed in Paris in 1981.

"I am a religious Russian Orthodox person and I understand 'religion' in the literal meaning of the word, as 're-ligio', that is to say the restoration of connection, the restoration of the 'legato' of life. There is no more serious task for music than this."⁷

- Sofia Goubaidulina

While this piece was performed by the Vancouver Symphony in April of last year, we are unaware of any previous U.S. performances. Thank you to my colleagues for their willingness to share their time and talent on this project.

Concertino – **Vadim Kulyov** (b. 1948)

Vadim Kulyov studied composition at the Moscow Conservatory (at one point under Tatyana Chudova). He currently is an active composer and lecturer in the Moscow

⁶ G. Schirmer Composers short-bio. "Sofia Goubaidulina," accessed 12 February 2014. <http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/short-bio/2908>

⁷ Thank you to the Vancouver Symphony for providing these program notes.

area. He taught theory for many years at the Stravinsky Children's School of the Arts in Moscow.⁸

Kulyov's *Concertino* for trombone is a fast jazz-influenced energetic piece with lots of glissandi, flutter tonguing and falls. This piece was originally composed for tenor trombone and I have adapted it for bass trombone by leaving some sections high for a challenge and dropping other sections down an octave... or two for fun. Unlike Saliman-Vladimirov's concertino, Kulyov's composition is a traditional concertino in one movement. However, like Saliman-Vladimirov's concertino, Kulyov also incorporated a slow and beautiful jazz ballad to contrast his energetic main theme. A technical cadenza then sets up an exhilarating finish.

⁸ Wikipedia. "Kulyov, Vadim Veniaminovich," accessed 12 February 2014.
http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Кулёв,_Вадим_Вениаминович