

The Ukrainian Violin Concerto TNC CD-1545

By Virko Baley

The three violin concertos on this disc represent a specific tradition in Ukrainian music of the second half of the 20th century. The "generation of the sixties" in Ukraine produced two distinct styles: music of highly abstract nature, that grew out of the experience of the European avant-garde (the so-called "Kiev avant-garde") and music that can be described as "the new folklorism", the precursor of "new romanticism", a movement that reached its full development in the 1980s. To a lesser or greater extent, it was a continuation of the socialist realism school, represented at its best by such composers as Shostakovich and Prokofiev, but now transformed by the example of the modernists into a more individual language of "new romanticism". The three composers on this disc, Shtoharenko, Hubarenko and Skoryk rejected the avant-garde aesthetics to different degrees, but accepted a number of the modernist positions, especially Skoryk.

Andriy Shtoharenko's life (1902-1992) covered the many terrors and accomplishments of Ukrainian 20th century history. He lived through two world wars, the Revolution, the ages of Stalin and Brezhnev – but long enough to also experience the liberalizations that produced the 60s and the independence of Ukraine 1990-91. Throughout his active life, he occupied several key administrative positions in the musical hierarchy of the Ukrainian SSR: secretary to the Turkmenian Composers' Union during World War II; vice-chairman (1947-56) and chairman (1968-89) of the Union of Composers of Ukraine; vice-chairman of the USSR Union of Composers (1948-54); teacher of composition and rector of the Kiev Conservatory (1954-68) and head of the composition faculty (1968 until his death). His awards include two State Prizes (1946, 1952), the People's Artist of the Ukrainian SSR (1971) and the People's Artist of the USSR (1972), the Shevchenko prize in 1974 and the Hero of Socialist Work (1980). After the death of Boris Lyatoshynsky, Shtoharenko became the "official voice" of Ukrainian music during the Brezhnev years. A prolific composer of considerable but very uneven talent, his eclectic style is an amalgam of the M. Lysenko national school, the Russian "five" (primarily Mussorgsky and Borodin), Bartok's more folk-indebted opuses and fellow composer and friend Mykola Kolyada (1907-35, whose brilliant talent was tragically cut short). But he resurrected his talent with the compositions written in the post-Stalinist years, such as the extremely well crafted and inspired Symphony No. 2 in D Major for strings (1965), which also defined his style: the mainstream of Slavic "modern conservatism", neoclassical phrase structures, aphoristic themes, motoric rhythmic patterns, clear harmonic construction and broad gestures. Most of his music also tends to be programmatic, but, in the best, the "message" is an underlying feeling that is handled with subtlety (Symphony No. 3, Kyiv). The Violin Concerto (1968-9) belongs to this collection of late works (his third period). The 3-movement structure shows Shoharenko's compositional fingerprints with clarity and many inspirational touches.

Vitily Serhiyovych Hubarenko (1934-2000), was born in Kharkiv, and died in Kyiv. After completing his training at the Kharkiv Conservatory in 1960 (class of Dmytro Klebanov), he first taught theory and music literature at the Children's Music School

(1958-60) and from 1961 to 1972 he taught theory and composition at the Kharkiv Conservatory. Soon after he moved to Kyiv and worked as an independent composer. Winner of the Ostrovsky Prize, Honored Artist of Ukraine, in 1984 Hubarenko received the prestigious Shevchenko Prize. His output was prolific and varied, including symphonies, ballets, sonatas, quartets, and many vocal works; he was especially productive in the field of opera. Hubarenko achieved fame immediately following the premiere of the opera *Zahybel Eskadry* (1967), which exhibits the conflictive dramaturgy of a neoromantic style modeled on Boris Lyatoshynsky and Dmitri Shostakovich. An excellent knowledge of orchestral colors enhances his essentially lyrical dramatic style that also has much in common with Samuel Barber and Ralph Vaughn Williams (a good example is the early, Concerto for flute and chamber orchestra, Op. 10). His carefully structured dramaturgy permeates his instrumental music as well. Vitaliy Hubarenko's Chamber Symphony for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 14 (he wrote four such chamber symphonies, two for solo violin, one for two violins and one for cello) is modeled on a two part Italian operatic form: an aria (1st movement) followed by a cabaletta (second movement). This is a form that Hubarenko favors in a number of works. It allows him to fully explore the dramatic contrasts between the lyrical melodic and the virtuosic dramatic. The voice is never far from Hubarenko's ear, no matter what instrument he is writing for, and it gives his music a very unique and personal character.

Myroslav Skoryk (born on July 13, 1938 in Lviv), entered the Lviv Music School in 1945, but in 1947 he and his parents were deported to Siberia and were not permitted to return to Ukraine until 1955. He was then accepted to the Lviv Conservatory, where he studied composition with S. Lyudkevych, P. Simovych, and A. Soltys. From 1960 to 1964 he studied at the Moscow Conservatory in the doctoral program with Dmitri Kabalevsky. Upon graduation, he joined the faculty of the Lviv Conservatory and, in 1967, the Kyiv Conservatory. His many students include such prominent contemporary composers as Y. Stankovych, I. Karabyts, O. Kiva, and O. Balakauskas. He is the winner of the prestigious Shevchenko Prize (1985) for his Cello Concerto, the Ostrovsky Republican Prize and holds the title "People's Artist of Ukraine." Myroslav Skoryk is also a respected musicologist, specializing in contemporary music. He is the author of numerous articles and two books, *The Modal System of Prokofiev* (1969) and *The Structural and Expressive Aspects of Chords in 20th Century Music* (1983). Skoryk became interested in the revival of what can be described as "the new folklorism", the precursor of "new romanticism" in Ukraine. The reliance on ethnographic sources as a base for a national artistic movement attracted the young Skoryk. His music from the mid 1960s through the seventies is very much wedded to folklore, especially Carpatho-Ukrainian. And his first mature realization of it was in the music to the film by Sergei Paradjanov, "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" from which derived his first popular success, "The Hutsul Triptych". With the Violin Concerto No. 1 (1969), Skoryk fully realized his style of building a work from short melismas (derived by synthesizing idiomatic folk rhythms and melodic gestures) that tend to be a succession of asymmetrical phrases which expand by means of troping. In this Violin Concerto No. 1 his voice speaks with clarity, originality and emotional richness that places him in the front ranks of late 20th century Ukrainian composers. In the 3rd movement of the Violin Concerto No. 1 (he has written at least 5 additional ones) Skoryk utilizes a kind of parody

of jazz – something that later led him to explore various pop elements in other works. A brilliant work, this concerto stands as an example of music that explores the territory of both modernism and tradition based on ethnographic research.

Skoryk's works are regularly performed throughout Ukraine, the other republics of the former Soviet Union, as well as in Germany, France, Austria, Holland, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Canada, and in recent years, in the United States.