

**GALINA USTVOLSKAYA**

NEW MUSIC CONCERTS PRESENTS

GALINA USTVOLSKAYA

She stands defiantly alone: a composer who would prefer her works to be performed in churches rather than concert halls, discourages any theoretical analysis of her compositions, and is particularly adamant that her music not be celebrated because of her gender. A woman whose fierce sense of independence compels her to insist that she has never been influenced by any other composer, nor to have ever influenced others herself. A musical alchemist who refuses to make distinctions between orchestral and chamber works: "*my music is never chamber music, not even in the case of a solo sonata.*"

Galina Ivanovna Ustvol'skaya, born June 19, 1919, to this day remains secluded in the city of her birth: the old Imperial Capital of Russia, variously known in this century as St. Petersburg, Petrograd, Leningrad, and again, St. Petersburg.

Ustvol'skaya received her early musical training (1937-1939) at the Leningrad Arts School, a college closely associated with the Leningrad Conservatory. In 1940 she graduated to the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory. Her principal instructors at these institutions were Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) and Maximilian Steinberg. Described by Shostakovich as "a dry and didactic person", Steinberg (1883-1946) was Rimsky-Korsakov's son-in-law. A notorious taskmaster, he taught at the Conservatory for four decades, becoming dean and then rector of the institution. As a composer he was noted for the incorporation of folk music into his works. In contrast, the dynamic Shostakovich began teaching the 18-year old aspiring composer in the year which saw the triumphant première of his *Symphony No. 5*, described in the notorious (though anonymous) program notes for the first performance as "the creative reply of a Soviet artist to justified criticism". More importantly, it was the composition that signalled the beginning of his artistic maturity.

The relationship between teacher and pupil transcended the usual pedagogical arrangements. Long after their studies ended Shostakovich regularly sent works in progress to his pupil for her opinion and presented her with the manuscripts of several of his scores. Nevertheless Ustvol'skaya remained, in the picturesque words of musicologist Viktor Suslin, "the only one of Shostakovich's pupils able to attain the cosmic velocity needed to escape the gravitational field of a 'massive planet' such as Shostakovich." Indeed, the composer once wrote to her, "*It is not you who are influenced by me; rather, it is I who am influenced by you.*"

Their studies together were shattered in June of 1941 with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. Like Shostakovich, who served in the volunteer fire brigade, Ustvol'skaya served in a military hospital during the crisis and was unable to complete her studies with him until 1945-47. Shostakovich was dismissed from the Conservatory shortly after she began

her post-graduate studies the following autumn; as a result Ustvol'skaya became a student of yet another of Rimsky's relatives, this time a nephew, Georgy Rimsky-Korsakov (1901-1965), an expert in the field of acoustics and an early proponent of quarter-tone music. She began teaching at the Conservatory (not without considerable opposition) prior to her graduation in 1950 and maintained her position there until her retirement in 1977. These were decades of intense yet often reclusive musical effort that saw on the one hand the composition of a certain number of propagandistic film scores and patriotic choral works of the "soviet realism" school (with titles like "Dawn over the Fatherland" and "The Hero's Exploits") and on the other a small yet significant collection of visionary works that would remain unheard and unpublished for twenty years. Even a clearly accessible work like her *Trio* (1949) for clarinet, violin and piano (though known to Shostakovich and in fact quoted by him in his *String Quartet No. 5* of 1952) was not heard in public until 1968. Though Ustvol'skaya's more progressive music was more often ignored than suppressed, Shostakovich, painfully aware that expulsion from the Union of Soviet Composers would lead to the termination of her professional career, felt compelled on several occasions to speak out on her behalf, most notably when Ustvol'skaya found herself criticised by her colleagues for her "obstinacy and narrow-mindedness". Shostakovich's belief in her talents were forcefully conveyed in one of his exceedingly rare personal endorsements: *"I am convinced that the music of G.I. Ustvol'skaya will achieve worldwide renown, to be valued by all who perceive truth in music to be of paramount importance."*

New Music Concerts, in co-operation with the Association of Canadian Women Composers, will present the Canadian premières of three pivotal works by Ustvol'skaya. The **Trio** of 1949 is the earliest work in which the composer's unique personality was evidenced. **Composition No. 1**, "Dona nobis pacem" (1970-71), for piccolo, tuba and piano, is the first in a trinity of devotional works and represents the maturity of the composer's vision. **Symphony No. 5** (1989-90), a powerful setting of the Lord's Prayer for narrator (Yuri Tsivtsivadze) and ensemble, is to date the conclusive work in the catalogue of Galina Ustvol'skaya.

Shostakovich's **Twelfth Quartet** (1968) marks the onset of the final period of his creativity. Though it retains the allegiance to tonality characteristic of its composer, its diatonic passages are dramatically confronted by a number of themes derived from the twelve tones of the chromatic scale. Montréal's **Quatuor Morency** returns to Toronto with their performance of this exhilarating, programmatic work.

The event, which takes place at the **duMaurier Theatre Centre** on **Sunday, October 23, 1994**, begins at **7:00 pm** with the North American première of a compelling exploration of the composer and her works by Dutch film-maker Cherry Duyns in collaboration with pianist and Ustvol'skaya enthusiast Reinbert de Leeuw, with a concert following at **8:15 pm**.

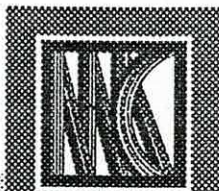
# New Music Concerts

**1** Sunday, October 23, 1994  
duMaurier Theatre Centre  
Harbourfront Centre  
Galina Ustvolskaya

**2** Sunday, November 27, 1994  
Premiere Dance Theatre  
Harbourfront Centre  
Norma Beecroft

**3** Sunday, February 5, 1995  
Art Gallery of Ontario  
Walker Court  
Erwin Schulhoff

**4** Sunday, March 19, 1995  
Premiere Dance Theatre  
Harbourfront Centre  
Tan Dun/Melissa Hui



Premieres  
Personalities  
Portraits

94  
5 season

Sunday, April 9, 1995  
Premiere Dance Theatre  
Harbourfront Centre  
Udo Kasemets **5**

Sunday, April 30, 1995  
The Great Hall at Hart House  
University of Toronto  
Olivier Messiaen **6**

Sunday, April 30, 1995  
Premiere Dance Theatre  
Harbourfront Centre  
Olivier Messiaen **7**

Sunday, May 28, 1995  
duMaurier Theatre Centre  
Harbourfront Centre  
Estrada/Scodanibbio **8**

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