

Ключевые слова

Николай Сидельников, школа композиции, преподавание композиции, техника композиции, индивидуальность, Владимир Мартынов, Владимир Тарнопольский, Кирилл Уманский, Иван Соколов.

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Аннотация

Николай Сидельников (1930—1992) долгие годы был одним из ведущих преподавателей композиции в Московской консерватории; среди его учеников — ряд известнейших композиторов, представляющих самые разные стилистические направления. Феномен школы Сидельникова доныне не исследован. Его метод называют уникальным. В настоящей статье делается попытка анализа того, в чем состоит его уникальная методика преподавания теории и практики композиции.

Key Words

Nikolay Sidelnikov, composition school, composition teaching, composition technique, individuality, Vladimir Martinov, Vladimir Tarnopolsky, Kirill Umansky, Ivan Sokolov.

Margarita Katunyan

Nikolay Sidelnikov's School of Composition

Abstract

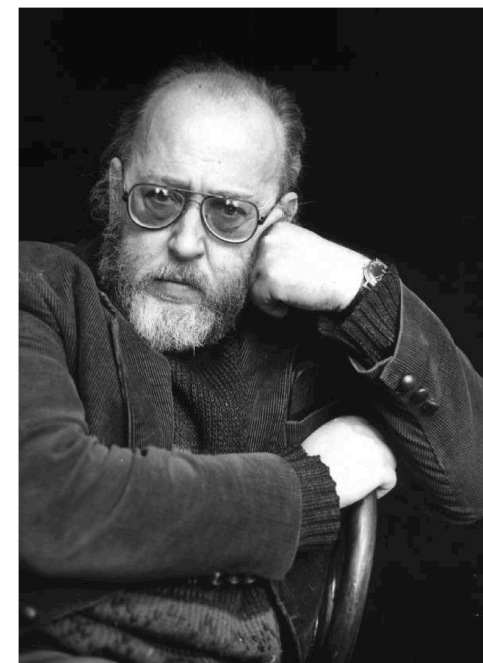
Nikolay Sidelnikov (1930–1992) was one of the leading composition teachers at the Moscow Conservatoire; his pupils include a number of the most noteworthy Moscow composers representing various stylistic directions. The phenomenon of Sidelnikov's school has not been explored yet. His pedagogical method has been called unique. The present article makes an attempt at analyzing wherein lies Sidelnikov's unique methodology of teaching the theory and practice of composition.

The concept of composition school is often related to some 'canon' or is an umbrella term for a group or generation of composers. In such cases it usually embraces some particular types of composition, writing techniques, genre preferences, and spiritual and aesthetic principles. Such are the Notre Dame school, the Franco-Flemish school, the Venetian school, the Mannheim school, the Viennese classical school, as well as the Russian 'Five', the French 'Six', the New Viennese school, the Darmstadt school, etc. Schools are centres of culture influencing the development of musical art.

In this sense, the phenomenon of Nikolay Sidelnikov's school is paradoxical. On the one part, it was a centre of culture, and highly influential at that. Sidelnikov's composition class was one of the strongest in the Moscow Conservatoire. A number of the most noteworthy Moscow composers were his pupils. On the other part, Sidelnikov's pupils realized themselves as bright individuals absolutely different from each other. Masters of contemporary musical language, they evolved in different, at times opposite, directions in conformity with the vectors of their interests.

Eduard Artem'yev: the founder of electronic music in the USSR and Russia; electronic avant-garde, later electronic art rock and electronic World Music. **Vyacheslav Artëmov**, **Dmitriy Smirnov** (Great Britain), **Vladimir Tarnopolsky**, **Kirill Umansky**, **Anton Rovner**, **Bozhidar Spasov** (Bulgaria, Germany), **Jamilya Zhazilbekova** (Germany): various avant-garde idioms. **Vladimir Martinov**: post-avant-garde, minimalism, conceptual art, multimedia. **Tatyana Mikheyeva**: experimental ethno-techno music, World Music. **Iraida Yusupova**: post-avant-garde, conceptualism, ambient. **Ivan Sokolov**: happening, neoromanticism. Naturally enough, a question arises: is there anything that unites so dissimilar and unordinary musical personalities?

Nikolay Sidelnikov's method of teaching is regarded as unique. In order to grasp its essence, it was necessary to address his pupils, the presently working composers, to read their published reminiscences of their teacher, and to meet with them. As was to be expected, live communication format revealed new information, new details and new issues for discussion. I



am grateful for that to Kirill Umansky, Vladimir Martinov, Vladimir Tarnopolsky and Ivan Sokolov.

The reminiscences of my interlocutors are so vivid that they bring into high relief the individuality of each of them, and this is valuable on its own account. At the same time, the recollections are closely allied in key points, which allows their systematization. The following key points were selected: the teacher's personality; his relationships with students; lesson structure; the circle of composers being studied; technical aspects of music composition; the teacher's personality-2; individual outcomes.

The Teacher's Personality

Nikolay Sidelnikov entered the Moscow Conservatoire in 1950. After two years of study under Anatoliy Aleksandrov, he was expelled but reentered in 1953. Yuriy Shaporin was his postgraduate tutor. Sidelnikov taught at the composition department from 1958 to 1992.

Yevgeniy Messner, his composition teacher, produced a beneficial influence on Sidelnikov's personality development: he provided him with a solid professional base and laid the foundation of his erudition. These two components of Sidelnikov's creative image – professionalism and erudition – were the roots of his qualities as a teacher.

Vladimir Martīnov's artistic consciousness was formed under a powerful influence of his teacher Nikolay Sidelnikov, especially in the period of intensive studies under his guidance at the age of 14–16, when Vladimir experienced the magic impact of his teacher's personality ('unique', 'of a grandiose human level') and the scope of his knowledge, as well as, in some way, of Sidelnikov's communication sphere, which included such great men as pianist Heinrich Neuhaus, philosopher Valentin Asmus, poet Boris Pasternak, and composer Andrey Volkonsky. 'Sidelnikov was my guru <...> I had a real teacher. Many do not know what it means <...> If I have any achievements, they are due to my getting into unique surroundings and obtaining a possibility to enjoy true Schooling'.¹ 'Each lesson promised most interesting discoveries. At times I left Sidelnikov in a state of intellectual shock'.²

'A lot of stories were told about his remarkable erudition», – says Tarnopolsky. 'He often quoted Spengler and Nietzsche; he knew Russian philosophy, the Bible, the Talmud, and the Koran perfectly well. To say nothing of his brilliant knowledge of the history of music – from Dutch polyphonists to jazz stars'.³ To add to this: he was keen on history, studied chronicles and was a connoisseur in fine art and poetry.

His personality is described by his pupils in such terms as 'unique', 'of grandiose human level', 'strict', 'tough'; 'careful hands of a tutor'; 'unshakable spiritual creative attitude'; 'a Russian futurist'; 'impetuous', 'explosive'; 'almost physical protest against any form of coercion, against everything that impedes creative freedom'; 'mask of irony and bravado concealing a tragic face'; 'a guru arousing admiration and veneration'; 'tremendous efficiency'; 'sparkling humour'; 'inward sense of freedom and utmost sincerity'; 'a man of the future'...

His favourite composers: Wagner, Stravinsky, Brahms, Schubert, Musorgsky, Debussy, Ravel, Berg, Bartók, Monteverdi, Mozart, Pärt. He liked jazz. He felt the influence of Stravinsky most strongly. Tarnopolsky: 'Sidelnikov was among the first who revived Stravinsky in Russia'.⁴

The Method

My interlocutors found it difficult to define Sidelnikov's method. However, recalling their lessons they actually answered my question about it. 'There was no method at all', said Martīnov, but in fact he described it

¹ From this author's interview with Vladimir Martīnov. April 1996.

² Мартынов В. Учитель жизни // Музыкальная Академия. 2001. № 1. С. 111.

³ Тарнопольский В. Русский футурист // Музыкальная Академия. 2001. № 1. С. 112.

⁴ V. Tarnopolsky. Interview 10 September 2016.

recalling the lessons he started to take at the age of 13. Lessons began with an analysis of Beethoven's sonatas. Then Sidelnikov went over to the pupil's compositions. 'Those were analyses made by a composer, lessons of communication between him and the author. It was shock and revelation; I couldn't believe anything like this was possible'.⁵ 'He had his own system, different from many others. In addition to a discussion of purely professional matters we talked on various subjects having to do with culture. Guided by Nikolay Nikolayevich, I discovered for myself the names of such artists and poets as Klee, Miró, Khlebnikov, and other great 20th century masters'.⁶

Judging by these recollections, Sidelnikov moulded professionals in his pupils: he taught them to learn from masters, to perceive music as a composer does and to see how a composition has been done. The same as young painters view a master's piece: they come close to the canvas to examine the painting technique in detail. Besides, Sidelnikov expanded the students' knowledge of arts, philosophy and culture, thus developing their personalities. He educated his pupils in many areas previously unknown to them. He was raising artists who were to become mature personalities.

When Sidelnikov saw that Ivan Sokolov was an excellent pianist, he found a special approach to him: he asked Ivan to play at sight Debussy's preludes, the *Adagio* from Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata, Schubert's sonatas, Scarlatti's sonatas, Mozart's variations, and more. 'We examined the music. It was important to him that the composer should investigate a piece by fingers – play it rather than listen to a recording. The communication with the composer should do without an interpreter, without a mediator'.⁷

Ivan Sokolov expressed a surprising idea: 'Sidelnikov's method consisted in that he had a separate method for each student'. Meantime, all his students were present in the classroom. 'Our timetable provided two hours a week, but he wanted us to sit from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. We skipped lessons on other subjects; he managed to arrange it with the dean's office'.⁸

One more subtle idea: 'The main thing is that he was concerned about the student rather than about music. Students were more important for him than the music they wrote. He "got the feel" of each student. For him, there was no bad music as such. There was music that did not reveal student's individuality. That is why all musicians he taught found themselves. He sometimes said to me quoting Stanislavsky: "I don't

⁵ V. Martīnov. Interview 10 August 2016.

⁶ Мартынов В. Указ. соч. С. 111.

⁷ From this author's interview with I. Sokolov. 15 September 2016.

⁸ Ibid.

believe you". That is, my music appeared insincere to him although I wrote it experiencing genuine feelings. He found it to be not mine. He saw me differently'.⁹

'The ultimate goal of my teaching is to draw individuality from you'. Iraida Yusupova quotes this Sidelnikov's statement and adds: 'He never taught us to write music in the direct, didactic meaning of the word, but he did inspire us immensely'.¹⁰

Sokolov: 'He said: "Listen to your self. Come to appreciate the uniqueness of your personality. You all are absolutely unique creatures, and you must create your own individual, inimitable styles". That was his primary idea'.¹¹

Sokolov explains what 'he inspired us' means: 'Sidelnikov fired us up with his intonation, enthusiasm, attitude to work, and his love for music. He stimulated intuition and encouraged us by a glance, gesture, or intonation: "Ah, what a nice use of strings!", "What a chord!", "What a climax!"'¹²

The results were achieved not only through such effects. The individual tone of conversation with each student created an atmosphere of confidentiality and informal creative communication. This allowed to ease diffidence, stiffness or constraint if it inhibited creative freedom.

Umansky: 'He had an ability to activate human energy and let it out. He could act as a doctor: he noticed the features that seemed to him negative and hampering creative work. He said to me: "You appear as a youthful buttoned-up old man. But you are really young and it's a pleasure to look at you". He called on natural manifestations of one's self, urged to express oneself spontaneously, "on the level of the first signaling system", as he said, and used to repeat: "We should learn from animals. Look how logical and beautiful is everything in their movements"'¹³

All his pupils are unanimous in that Sidelnikov was not striving to train a student in a particular composition technique; he would not provide technological instructions concerning some writing style. He was concerned with individuality. The ways of finding one's own self are inscrutable. Freedom is a no easy thing to get. One has to gain the knowledge of freedom. And the teacher led his students in this direction unbendingly but tactfully and carefully at the same time. 'He threw a human being into some kind of solitude, watched him dangling there

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Ibid.

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Юсупова И. Он писал до последнего вдоха // Музыкальная Академия. 2001. № 1. С. 116.

11

I. Sokolov. Interview.

12

Ibid.

13

From this author's interview with Kirill Umansky. July 2016.

and just suggested: "This can be here, and that can be there"¹⁴ A Spartan method of education, indeed.

Solitude for student meant freedom to Sidelnikov. He never tired of watching his student floundering about. He would not interfere much but waited patiently to see where his pupil would emerge, to be more exact, what fairway he would choose to swim freely in the vast space of opportunities.

Umansky: 'He said: "You should make abstract categories to become yours". I felt I began thinking in abstract categories as if they were mine. And I saw as if a glade, a gleam of light'.¹⁵

Lessons

All students gathered at the lessons, but Professor worked with each of them separately. Severe critical remarks were pronounced openly in the presence of the whole class, which caused discomfort and constraint. Umansky gives an eloquent explanation of the educational function of such a lesson: 'Student's individuality was alienated and regarded as something in a state of formation. <...> In this way he, first, eradicated the sense of narcissism in us and, second, let us develop independently, that is, feel ourselves to be self-sufficient'.¹⁶

The lesson took the form of a spirited monologue. There was a flow of associations, quotations, switchings from music to literature, philosophy, fine arts, and vice versa. Umansky again comments eloquently on the expediency of such intellectual attacks: Sidelnikov strove 'to blow out of us all that was trifle and casual by his philosophical-literary hailstorm. Every time I left the classroom I experienced the same shock that I underwent after my first meeting with Sidelnikov'.¹⁷

A great part of the lessons was devoted to listening to music with scores. The students listened to Wagner's operas, to the symphonies by Brahms and Mahler, to Berg, Debussy, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Webern and Bartók, to Monteverdi, Beethoven's quarters, Mozart's string quintets, Ligeti, Stockhausen, Nono, and Berio.

Listening with score was accompanied by technical, philosophical and cultural-historical comments. Sidelnikov scrutinized each score. His analyses contained an element of mysterious communication between composers, when one makes an analytical study of the other's work.

14

Ibid.

15

Ibid.

16

Уманский К. «Искусство создают личности» // Музыкальная Академия. 2001. № 1. С. 116.

17

Там же. С. 117.

Sidelnikov's analysis touched upon the form, thematic construction, instrumentation, and other music elements. But there was one more thing mentioned by Ivan Sokolov:

'If he liked something, he emphasized it: "What trombones!", "What a chromatic progression in *Non morir* from [Monteverdi's] *L'incoronazione di Poppea!*" He highlighted all that impressed him: the orchestra, part-writing, expression, the beauty and harmony of form; he was enthralled with creative energy and creative fervour'.¹⁸

Creative energy and creative fervour deserve special mention as, in all probability, it was only in Sidelnikov's composition class that such indefinable features of a musical work as composer's creative energy and creative fervour were taken into consideration and held up as an example. Listening to music as a composer meant not only making an analysis of elements of the musical substance, but also seeing the composition in the process of its creation, as it were, that is, both in its integrity and in the course of creative thought boiling at the moment of creation. This is how Sidelnikov did it! He often repeated his famous expressions: 'to strike against a masterpiece', 'to strike against a genius'.

There were also his ecstatic remarks concerning superior mastership with provocative absurdist associations, for instance: 'What a modulation! Look, Schubert passed from A minor to A flat minor in one touch, like Maradona'.¹⁹

The Tasks

Group lessons, with each student attended to personally, excluded one and the same assignments for all. Sidelnikov issued a separate challenge for each student. That is, he 'drew' (as he used to say) something individual from the student precisely by giving him or her full freedom. Then he would offer his comments to help remove the shortcomings. Umansky: 'For me, it was to become less "hermetic". It was different with Yusupova; in her case, there was distortion of another sort – too much intuition and emotions – and he led her away from it'.²⁰

Sokolov: 'If a student immersed himself in some single trend, he got under a severe critique. For instance, if a person started writing dodecaphony. Not for any other reason but just because it is easy to hide oneself behind dodecaphony. Or if a person started writing à la Sviridov. He said: "It's not your face. You hide behind Sviridov. It's a mask. It's easy to hide behind a mask and forget your individuality. Try to find your self".

¹⁸ I. Sokolov. Interview.
¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ K. Umansky. Interview.

And the man wrote wonderful music. I remember that all was licked clean. But he [Sidelnikov] rejected it'.²¹

Students were to bring to the classroom their own music. Sidelnikov would turn down a borrowed style. That is why he did not teach techniques in the habitual sense of the word. To teach techniques means to form the pupil's style from the outside. That is, the teacher shapes the pupil's style. Sidelnikov held that 'to teach techniques means to cover up the lack of talent',²² to hide behind technique or style means to harm one's individuality. In his view, technology excludes the *fervour* of a creative personality, which reveals the latter's natural uniqueness. Sidelnikov nurtured personality.

Technique is something rudimentary; it comes before authorship. Harmony and polyphony techniques were studied in Yuriy Kholopov's class. His course covered historical techniques from the Middle Ages to the present day. Assimilating those techniques, the future composer could try various paths, find his bearings and choose a path conformable to his nature using his own musical language and technical arsenal. Young Mart'nov treated dodecaphony with much ingenuity proceeding from the idea of a piece and finally brought it nearly to minimalism. The language of his twelve-tone String Sonata was so individual that Sidelnikov accepted it unconditionally.

Technical Details

Sidelnikov required natural material from his pupils – something that cannot be learnt. When such material was produced, he urged them to find ways of developing it that stemmed from its nature. He then helped unobtrusively. The material must be unique; the teacher barred self-repetition. He required new material as well as new quality of working with it.

Sokolov: 'Copying devices is the same as hiding behind somebody else's style – he struggled against it like a tiger. If the music was rough or somewhat strange, he accepted it. But if it was smooth, glossed over and sounding nicely, next to being readily published, he would most likely reject it'.²³

This might be rather offensive for such vulnerable persons as composers but, as we see, his pupils drew proper conclusions.

So, the pupils say in one voice that the main thing was his personality.

²¹ I. Sokolov. Interview.
²² K. Umansky. Interview.
²³ I. Sokolov. Interview.

The Teacher's Personality-2

Psychologist. Individual attitude to a pupil, his emotional state and spiritual constitution was of primary importance for Sidelnikov. Remember Umansky's words that he, like a doctor, was able 'to activate human energy and let it out'.

Severe critic. A merciless critic, one may say. To Umansky: 'Never do it again'; to Martinov: 'You distressed me greatly', etc. Umansky: That was a 'healing devaluation of what seemed valuable to you'.²⁴

Sokolov: 'He was utterly tough. When I fell for Denisov's style in the third year, I wrote the first movement of a Violin Concerto, and I got a grandiose reprimand. In very sharp words. I played my piece to him and he said to me: "You know, Vanechka [pet name of Ivan], you have very good music paper". I was hurt. I had had a recondite, a purely cerebral idea. I proceeded not from sound but from the number, from the series. Boulez-like structuralism, as it were. Sidelnikov rejected it sharply, and he was right. Later I wrote ten pieces in Denisov's style. These he liked. There was live music in them'.²⁵

Father. Liberal creative contacts were maintained both in the classroom and in everyday life without any particular bounds between the two spheres. 'Sidelnikov showed us his new compositions and played excerpts from them' (Sokolov). Students visited him at his country house, where they were treated generously and listened to Stockhausen, Berio, Xenakis..., whom they could not listen to in the Conservatoire (Tarnopolsky).

Sidelnikov did not train his students for exams; his main task was to raise free artists. Yet, they had to pass tests and write something for exams. Nurturing a free creative personality, he was at the same time fully aware of the problems the students might encounter at tests and exams. He cared for his pupils and their study progress and advised them to write different things for lessons and exams. It was a dual situation. There was full freedom in Sidelnikov's class. Vladimir Bitkin wrote a cantata with a Hebrew text (in the 1970!). But something like this was clearly inappropriate for exams. Something 'placid' was needed for a student to be promoted.

On the one hand, he reared some moral principles in his pupils, while on the other he would encourage them to betray these very principles for the sake of smooth progress towards the graduation. Dmitriy Smirnov called this 'double standards'.

²⁴ K. Umansky. Interview.

²⁵ I. Sokolov. Interview.

A deep conflict about it occurred between Sidelnikov and his favourite pupil Martinov. How come discussing Klee, Miró, Khlebnikov, Guillaume de Machaut, playing the Goldbergs on the one hand, and writing a diploma on a Lenin-related topic, on the other?²⁶ Martinov judged such tactics harshly as a kind of Soviet conformism.²⁷ However, his teacher's forced tactics was a protective one: in the 1960s and 1970s, a retreat from academic composition, to say nothing of allusions to political subjects, could entail administrative consequences. Sidelnikov safeguarded the destinies of the young against such consequences to the best of his ability.

Tutor. As concerns high ethics, Sidelnikov would not teach his pupils to become their own image-makers. That was not his nature (he never promoted himself either); image-making was outside the sphere of his moral values. This is evident from the performance history of his works. His pupils note that Sidelnikov as a truly grand composer deserves more attention. Tarnopolsky: 'Sidelnikov was one of the most talented composers of his generation – by his artistry, his melodic gift, the inimitable plasticity of his intonation, and his true musicianship'.²⁸

Martinov: 'It's disappointing that the place given today to Sidelnikov in Russian music does not correspond to the real nature of his talent – an utmost important vertebra has been removed from our history, and so much the worse for us...'.²⁹

Personal Outcomes

Umansky: I would have been different not only in music composition but in life too.³⁰

Martinov: I was taught art in the highest sense of the word, not only that of composition.³¹ He had a great influence on me. First, his 1968 composition *Russian Fairy Tales* gave me a most powerful spur to minimalism. Second, <...> Sidelnikov found an absolutely new conceptual approach to the problem of finale – with the help of sudden modulation to a different style. <...> The transition to extramusical categories was effected in this way.³²

²⁶ V. Martinov and N. Kondorf graduated from the Conservatoire in 1970, the year of Lenin's 100th birthday anniversary. The rector's and the composition department's offices demanded that all graduates of the composition department present cantatas devoted to Lenin at the exams.

²⁷ V. Martinov. Interview.

²⁸ Тарнопольский В. Указ. соч. С. 112.

²⁹ Мартынов В. Указ. соч. С. 111.

³⁰ K. Umansky. Interview.

³¹ V. Martinov. Interview.

³² Мартынов В. Указ. соч. С. 111.

Tarnopolsky: Paradoxically, my communication with Sidelnikov led me to a few absolutely contrasting thoughts:

1. Not to be a distilled purist irrespective of whether it is serial purism or the dogmatic socialist realism.
2. Not to become eclectic at that!
3. To master composition techniques thoroughly.
4. Not to write profusely. Write only what definitely has to be written. Not to engage in hackwork in the cinema, which, in my view, exerted a negative influence on nearly all composers of Sidelnikov's generation.
5. Not to be a slave of some 'musical ideology'.³³

Sokolov: He opened up freedom to us. The sense of unfreedom, the sense that we live in some terrible fettered state where this is allowed and that is prohibited. This sense had been weeded out of us during five years of studies. I remember I felt myself comfortable in my creative work.³⁴

The essence of Nikolay Sidelnikov's composition school, in fact, consists in the combination of all the mentioned aspects.

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³³ V. Tarnopolsky. Interview.

³⁴ I. Sokolov. Interview.