

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF RUSSIAN
MUSICIANS WITH JĀZEPS VĪTOLS AFTER HIS
DEPARTURE FROM ST. PETERSBURG
(REGARDING RARE VĪTOLIANA SOURCES AT THE
LATVIAN ACADEMY OF MUSIC)

Lolita Fūrmane

Summary

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The focus of this paper is the important epistolary aspect of the heritage of Jāzeps Vītols, which today is stored at the Latvian Academy of Music, in the composer's memorial room. They are letters from Russian musicians – Vītols' former colleagues at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, friends, and students – to their authoritative and beloved professor, written after Vītols' departure from Russia in August of 1918. In accordance with the very decision by the St. Petersburg Conservatory (the corresponding meeting minutes from the artistic council meeting on August 14, 1918 are stored at the St. Petersburg Central State Literature and Art Archive), Vītols was granted *leave without pay* until January 1919 so, as was stated, that he could participate in the founding of the "Latvian National Opera". However, unexpected events intervened. On November 18, 1918, the independent Latvian nation was proclaimed, and, at the same time in Russia, civil war forced many of the members of the intelligentsia to emigrate. Vītols himself believed that his relationship with the St. Petersburg Conservatory was only concluded *ex officio*, in other words, *de facto* it still existed, since "as long as at least one of my friends and colleagues still works there, then I will still feel attached to my *alma mater*" (Jāzeps Vītols. *Manas dzīves atmiņas* [Jāzeps Vītols. *Memories of My Life*] (edited by Jānis Rudzītis). Uppsala: Daugava, 1963, p. 91). Even in the 1930s, when writing about his life in Riga in his memoirs, paradoxically, he used the term *open-ended leave* (!).

This preamble explains the unique connection that linked Jāzeps Vītols with St. Petersburg and its cultural community. We must remember that it was in St. Petersburg itself where, for almost forty years, the notable Latvian musician lived (1880–1918), and the city developed him as a personality with a specific professional and ethical orientation (or standards) – a refined and noble academic, a respectful view of traditions, a disciplined compositional technique and a systematic knowledge. The analysed epistolary heritage in this paper offers a deeper and, in specifically more varied contexts, review of this characteristic of Vītols' life and personality.

In the Latvian Academy of Music collection there are more than 500 letters written to Professor Vītols by varied persons from the summer of 1919 to the autumn of 1934. In 1954, work began on the organization of Vītols' archive – letters were carefully placed in dust-covers by Latvian culture source documentation specialist Milda Zālīte (1903–1981). In the summer of 1944, prior to Vītols fleeing to Germany as a refugee, she had spoken with the composer personally about how to securely store his writings. It is likely that, after World War II, the composer's writings, along with other items and his grand piano, were taken from his apartment in Riga and stored at, as it was known at the time, the Latvian SSR State Conservatory.

Among the authors of the preserved letters are many musicians that were known world-wide (Leopold Auer, Vincent d'Indy, Henri Marteau, Daniele Amfitheatrof, Victor Babin), as well cultural personalities who have been revealed in specific contexts (Nikolai Artsybushev) and Vītols family members. Considering the research goals of this paper, only the letters of the Russian musicians have been considered. In the attachment, there is a table of contents for the letters compiled by the author.

Up until now, these analysed letters have been minimally discussed publically. Most often, this is simply the fact that there is little knowledge of even the collection's existence (there is no publically available information or databases about them) that there has been a dearth of vital scientific discussions, especially when considering that, for many years, the discussion factor in *vitoliana* have not even been considered. The correspondence between the Russian musicians and Jāzepe Vītols improves this situation somewhat. Among the broad range of personas, we cannot miss the powerful and uniting axis of the St. Petersburg intelligentsia – their human and professional relationships reflect a refined cultural web. Among the authors whose correspondences have been analysed in this paper are Witold Maliszewski (1873–1939), Alexander Gretchaninov (*Гречанинов*, 1864–1956), Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov (*Ипполитов-Иванов*, 1859–1935), Vera Vinogradova (*Виноградова*, 1895–1982), Alexander Vyshnegradsky (*Вышнеградский*, 1867–1925) – the father of Ivan Vyshnegradsky, one of the originators of microtone music in 20th century music, Vsevolod Pastukhov (*Пастухов*, 1894–1967), and many other musicians.

The letters of Russian composer Daniele Amfitheatrof (*Амфитеатров*, 1901–1983), later an Italian and American citizen, to Jāzepe Vītols have been reflected with particular detail in this paper. This musician, who, during a very turbulent time in Russian history (1916–1917), only briefly studied with Vītols at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in his theoretical subjects class, as a composer inherited many of characteristics of the Rimsky-Korsakov school (also considering the educational nuances

of his Italian teacher Ottorino Respighi), including orchestra coloristic art. Amfiteatrof's nine letters at the Latvian Academy of Music can be considered a rare find, as those reflect not just biographical facts (events) with an interesting contextual emanation, but also expresses a view of Vītols as being one of the most powerful and serious supports at the St. Petersburg Conservatory after the deaths of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Anatoly Lyadov at the beginning of the 20th century. The other significant source is Russian composer and chairman of the Russian Composers' and Musicians' Curator Council Nikolai Artsybushev's (*Артусьбушев*, 1858–1937) expansive collection of letters (altogether 93 letters, written in the period from 1920 to 1934). These letters reveal the fate of Belyayev's sheet music publishing house in Leipzig, as well as certain facts regarding Vītols' creative work – for example, his orchestral suite *Dārgakmeņi* (*Jewels*).

These sources conclusively confirm that Jāzeps Vītols' correspondence with his former musician colleagues in St. Petersburg did not cease while he lived in Latvia. They continued and were even very stable. His correspondence with many musicians reveal that Vītols was aware of the most alarming and burning events that transpired, and was also aware of the fates of Russian emigres – something he also shared with them, but on a more emotional level. After he departed his *alma mater*, Vītols, in a *spiritual* sense, remained closely linked with it, even though in a physical sense he had begun a new phase in his life in his homeland. The analysis of the letters included in this paper could be very topical for the research of both Russian and Latvian music.