

JĀZEPS LIPŠĀNS (1929–1989) IN LATVIAN MUSIC AND PEDAGOGY

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Summary

The paper provides an insight into a little-known personality in Latvian music, composer and educator Jāzeps Lipšāns (1929–1989), who led an active musical life in Latvia as a piano accompanist, a composition teacher at the Emīls Dārziņš Music School and a member of the Latvian Composers' Union. The authors analyse Lipšāns as a person as well as his musical oeuvre and contribution to the methodical repertoire in piano pedagogy.

This study shows that Lipšāns provided a significant contribution to Latvian music and educated many students over the course of more than thirty years. Some of those students, including the composer Rihards Dubra, are now well-known names in the field of music. Interviews with Dubra and other contemporaries – students and colleagues – reveal that Lipšāns was perceived as an inspiring, creative, cheerful, dynamic and sociable person. The traits of his musical style include a broad use of Latvian folk music as well as exotic motifs from foreign cultures, elements of jazz music, and experimentation with unusual tone colours (mostly in chamber music). Oriental melodies and harmonies weave through many of his compositions – a legacy of having spent three years teaching in Mongolia (1972–1975) and another three years working in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (1981–1984).

In addition to composing symphonic works, ballets and chamber music, Lipšāns' vocation as a pedagogue also led him to compose many pedagogical pieces for different solo instruments and vocal studies. However, having himself mastered piano technique and the many possibilities it provides, he realised most of his ideas in piano music. His arrangements of Latvian folk songs are widely used in music schools as pedagogical repertoire for beginning piano students. Many of these arrangements are included in various publications for piano teaching. In music pedagogy, the use of traditional melodies is considered very helpful in forming a child's musical perspective. When asked about Lipšāns' folk song arrangements, the interviewed piano teachers (Māris Švinka, Māra Juhņēviča) commented that they are suitable for children to begin learning the piano because they are melodies that children easily perceive and like, the fingering is good, and the arrangements help to develop both technical and musical qualities in children's performance (see AGP, or the Private Archive of Astra Graudiņa: Švinka 2009, Juhņēviča 2016).

Amongst Lipšāns' considerable number of piano miniatures, some bear the mark of Soviet cultural politics by having socialist-themed titles. It is advisable to take into consideration the conditions under which Soviet composers lived and worked – in order for their work to be recognised and to not jeopardise their careers, they were forced to also write conjunctural music (Kruks 2008: 12–36). But these compositions can still be performed today if their titles are analysed; the historical context in which they were written should be explained in a way that is comprehensible to students.

Lipšāns' piano compositions suitable for the repertoire of music college/academy students or performing pianists include Seven Preludes, *Skumju prelīde* (Prelude of Sorrows), Ballade, and Variations on a Theme by Lully. His original pieces for piano are rarely performed nowadays, presumably because of the lack of new sheet music, which would be advisable for Lipšāns' works.