

VALENTĪNS UTKINS IN THE MUSIC HISTORY OF LATVIA: BIOGRAPHICAL, PEDAGOGICAL AND CREATIVE HERITAGE

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Summary

The aim of this article is to contextualize the personality of composer, pianist and pedagogue Valentīns Utkins (1904–1995) in the music history of Latvia. The impulse of this research came from a deep personal interest as the author is also a musician and the granddaughter of Valentīns Utkins.

The research was carried out through collecting the information from the State History Archive of the National Archive of Latvia (LVVA), the National Archive of Latvia (LVA), the National Library of Latvia, the library of the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, the Museum of Literature and Music, the private archives of Valentīns Utkins and the author. Besides, an analysis of the information found in press and literature sources was provided. The article tackles the personality of Valentīns Utkins, including his biography (with many facts that have been revealed for the first time), his teaching and composing activities as well as the periodization and characterization of his scores.

The first part of the article mainly uncovers the life of Valentīns Utkins. He was born in Riga and spent most of his life there. He was a passionate pianist in his youth. However, it was the meeting with Jāzeps Vītols (1863–1948), the composer, pedagogue, music critic and founder of the Latvian Academy of Music, that persuaded him to leave law studies in 1935 and enter into the Latvian Conservatory to study composition instead. Utkins graduated in 1939, and continued his learning in Vītols' workshop until 1940.

The second part deals with Utkins' contribution to teaching young composers in Latvia. He taught in the State Conservatory of the Latvian SSR for several decades (1944–1986) and held the position of professor since 1972. Many locally and internationally known composers, such as Viktors Sams (1919–1991), Indulis Dālmanis (1922–1983), Jurijs Glagoļevs (1926–2013), Aldonis Kalniņš (1928), Jāzeps Lipšāns (1929–1989), Jānis Kaijaks (1931–2021), Oļegs Barskovs (1935–2002), Pauls Dambis (1936), Pēteris Vasks (1946), Pēteris Plakidis (1947–2017), Egīls Straume (1950), Ilze Arne (1953), Arturs Maskats (1957), and others were graduates of his class. From 1973 to 1981, Utkins was the Head of the Composition Department. In 1974, he became the first tutor in composition who prepared the graduates for postgraduate studies. He also started the initiative of student concerts in secondary music schools in different cities.

The article also reminds us about Utkins' contribution to the methodology of music theory and its related works. In 1951, the book *Elementary theory of music: study book for secondary music schools* by Utkins and Lija Krasinska (1911–2009), a musicologist and

professor from the State Conservatory of Latvia, was published. This book currently has seven editions (1953, 1959, 1965, 1965, 1981, 1991, 2007).

The third part of the article provides a periodization of Valentīns Utkins' scores (the most characteristic opuses of different genres are displayed in the table attached).

The first period (1926–1941) shows the influence of Jāzeps Vītols that followed Utkins' studies in the Latvian Conservatory. During this period, he composed the First symphony (1936, score was lost), the First piano sonata (1939), music for piano, vocal chamber music and choir music.

The second period (1941–1958), is the creative awakening of the composer, particularly reflected in his piano sonatas and influenced by his personal life and conditions. The second creative period is the most fruitful in terms of new and noteworthy scores, the Second symphony (1944) and Third symphony (1957, the score was lost), the next six piano sonatas (1946, 1947, 1949, 1955, 1956, 1956), piano music, vocal chamber music and choir music.

The third period of the composer's creative heritage (1960–1985) shows the change in his focus. It is somehow related to his teaching activities in the conservatory. The list of the works composed during this period contains the Eighth symphony for piano (1959), a work for piano, a vocal cycle and several methodological pieces for different instruments and ensembles.

Several sources, including the testimonies and observations of his contemporaries reveal the peculiarity of Valentīns Utkins as a composer. This peculiarity includes the intonations of initially Russian, and later Latvian folk music, absorbed and assimilated into his original music language. Further research of this musical language remains a task to explore in the future.