Viktor Voloshinov (1905-1960) - Concerto for violin and organ

I. Grave - Allegro moderato
II. Adagio
III. Allegro

Victor Voloshinov is a notable Russian/Soviet composer of the middle of the 20th century. He was born in 1905 in Kiev in the family of teachers, music lovers. His grandmother graduated from the Moscow Conservatory with Nikolai Rubinstein, and his father studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in piano and composition. Victor started on the piano early and showed a great interest in composition and improvisation at the age of 10. His first teacher in composition was Anatoly Boutskoy (student of Gliere). In 1925 Voloshinov moved to Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and entered the Conservatory as a composition major, studying under Scherbachev (student of Steinberg) and Chernov (student of Rimsky-Korsakov). Both teachers played a decisive role in the formation of Voloshinov as a composer. Scherbachev put special focus on melody and its dynamic development, often referring to the work of Taneyev and Rachmaninoff. Chernov appealed to the colorful orchestration and widespread use of Russian folk songs.

Musical life of 1920-30’s in Leningrad had a great influence on the composer: he interacted with conductors Klemperer, Walter, Obentrot, Suk, Malko; composers Schreker, Milhaud, and Casella, Glazunov; pianists Petri, Schnabel, Sofronitsky; violinists Heifetz, Sigetti, Polyaikin, and many, many others. During that period and with great attention Voloshinov studied the works of Prokofiev and Stravinsky.

Upon completion of his postgraduate studies Voloshinov was invited to teach at the conservatory. From 1948 until his death in 1960 he headed the composition department of the Leningrad Conservatory. The most important works created by the composer are in chamber music (piano trio, string quartet, piano and violin sonatas), and in vocal and instrumental genres. A special place among Voloshinov’s works belongs to the Concerto for violin and organ. The concerto was created in 1929-1930 for the “New Organ Works” competition and was awarded the 1st Prize. Performance of the first edition of the Concerto for Violin and Organ took place in 1933, by conservatory professors Eidlin, violin (student of Leopold Auer), and Braude, organ. Braude’s educational activities have greatly contributed to the creation of concert pieces for organ by Soviet (Leningrad) composers.

However, such an expanded form as a romantic concerto in three movements for two solo instruments, violin and organ, was (and still is) a unique phenomenon in the global musical culture. Concert practice at that time was limited to the works of old masters for violin and figured bass, or transcriptions of small pieces of Romantic composers. Despite the positive reviews, Voloshinov’s Concerto for Violin and Organ was performed only once in 1930s. A new generation of artists had to evolve to restore this work to the concert stage.

In the late 40’s the name of a renowned Soviet violinist Mikhail Vaiman (student of Eidlin) was beginning to appear with increasing frequency on the posters of concert halls. His brilliant violin skills (beautiful and diverse sound, virtuosity, and mastery of performance) as well as his interest in contemporary music inspired new violin works by Soviet composers. One of the first ones was Voloshinov. The collaboration between a young and talented composer and a performer resulted in the creation of Voloshinov’s Sonata for Violin and Piano. The first performance of this work by Vaiman and Perelman took place in 1949. It was after this performance that the composer approached the violinist with a request to edit the violin part, and to perform the Concerto for violin and organ. This project involved a very close collaboration between the composer and the performer. In the new edition of the Concerto, Vaiman managed to give a greater scope and declamatory expression to the violin part, which corresponded best to the ensemble goals of the work. The first performance of the Concerto in its new edition by Vaiman and Oksentyan took place in 1959, in the Leningrad Philharmonic Great Hall. After numerous performances of Voloshinov’s Concerto for Violin and Organ it was recorded in 1965 and published in 1968.