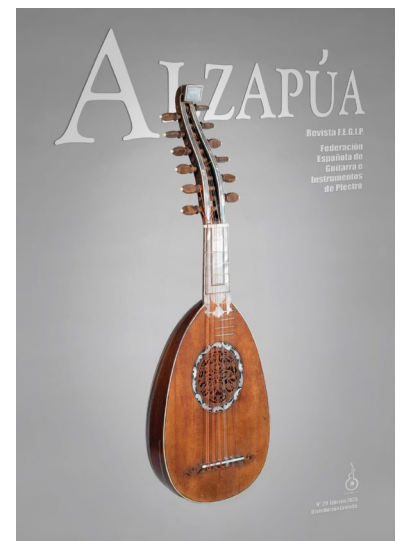


ALZAPÚA

Revista F.E.G.I.P.

Nº 29 Edición 2023

Documentos Adicionales



NATALIA KORSAK

El mundo de la mandolina llora a Nikolai Marezki

Versión original en inglés



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The mandolin world mourns Nikolai Marezki

An obituary by Natalia Korsak

Nikolai Marezki (*12.4.1953), Belarusian domra and mandolin player, artist of the Belarusian State Philharmonic Orchestra and from 1979 to 2018 lecturer at the Belarusian State Academy of Music Minsk passed away unexpectedly on 9 September 2021. He was a laureate of numerous international competitions:

- Second Prize at the Union Inter-Union Artists' Competition in duo with Valery Zhivaleuski, in Moscow (Russia), 1983;
- First prize at the International Competition of Performers on Folk Instruments "Nord Pokal" in Cherepovets (Russia), 1992;
- Third Prize at the International Competition in Castelfidardo (Italy), 1995;
- First prize at the International Competition Klingenthal in duo with I. Otradnov, in Klingenthal (Germany), 1996;
- First prize at the International Chamber Music Competition in Schweinfurt (Germany), 2001.

Marezki brought about the renaissance of the mandolin in Belarus

Nikolai Marezki was not only an important artist in his home country, but he also did a lot for the mandolin world as a whole. After all, it was thanks to him that the mandolin, after it had been banned as too "bourgeois" for political reasons in 1950, was once again heard in Belarus together with the accordion and saxophone. More precisely, it was in 1982 when Antonio Vivaldi's "Concertos in C Major and G Major for Two Mandolins" were performed on the stage of the Belarusian State Philharmonic by Nikolau Marezki, accompanied by the Belarus Chamber Orchestra.

From that moment on, the Belarusian renaissance of the mandolin began. For Belarus, it was unusual until then for the mandolin to play together with other instruments. Marezki, for example, combined the mandolin and button accordion, had two mandolins play together, as well as mandolin, domra and button accordion or a mandolin with guitar or piano. Something special was therefore the participation of a mandolin quartet led by Nikolai Marezki (consisting of N. Marezki, J. Volasiuk, O. Kaljadka and A. Sokalovskaya) in the performance of the ballet "Romeo and Juliet" by Sergei Prokofiev. This was a performance with the National Opera and Ballet Theatre of Lithuania under the baton of the great Russian musician Mstislav Rostropovich.

Marezki's commitment to the creation of playing material

The newly discovered possibilities of playing the mandolin together with other instruments prompted Marezki to adapt pieces of music for his instrument and they demanded new pieces of music. He therefore collaborated with a number of composers to create new works. The Belarusian composer Vladimir Korolchuk, for example, wrote a "Suite pro et contra in D" for mandolin and button accordion, which he later adapted for mandolin and piano or for mandolin and string quartet. It was also integrated into the suite "In Baroque Style" and published by the music publisher "Vogt & Fritz" (Germany).

Other composers have also written pieces for Marezki, including: Vladimir Kurian with "Two fives" and "At the crossroads", Vladimir Yankovich with "Lemonade Joe" and Evgenij Gridiushko with "Sauka d Gryshka" for two mandolins and guitar.

Nikolai Marezki also transcribed many pieces himself to make them playable for mandolin, for example by D. Scarlatti, N. Paganini, F. Couperin, A. Shpenev, E. Glebov and many others. His concert activity was extensive: in addition to frequent performances in the cities of Belarus and abroad, he gave annual solo concerts in the Belarusian State Philharmonic Orchestra Minsk. Numerous concert tours have taken him to Germany, Greece, Syria, Egypt, Italy, Poland, Russia and Ukraine.

Marezki's commitment to national and international networking

The list of organisations and musical events in which he has been involved as a mandolinist and as a founder and organiser is long: as early as 1992, the "Belarusian Association of Domra and Mandolin Players" was founded. Nikolai Marezki was one of its organisers and idea givers, also its vice-president and later its president. The association was a member of the European Guitar and Mandolin Association (EGMA), which resulted in valuable musical contacts for Belarusian musicians. Marezki himself, for example, took part as an artist in each of the "Eurofestivals Zupfmusik" in Friedrichshafen in 2002, in Bamberg in 2006, in Bruchsal in 2010 and in 2014.

In 1998 Nikolai Marezki organised the festival "Slawischer Kranz" and from 2007 to 2018 the festival "Mandolinissimo", which regularly took place on the stage of the Belarusian State Philharmonic in Minsk and was attended by internationally renowned mandolinists and guitarists, including: Ricardo Sandoval, Steffen Trekel, Vincent Beer-Demander, Sabine Marzé, Christian Laier, Katsia Prakopchyk, Michael Tröster, Jan Skryhan, Matthias Collet, Ako Ito, Masanobu Nisigaki and Karoline Laier. As if that were not enough, Marezki founded and conducted the "Expression Plucked String Orchestra", which participated annually in the "Mandolinissimo" festival. The orchestra recorded a CD with music by Gerhard Baumann in 2016 and the CD "Morija" with music by Elke Tober-Vogt in 2017. In 2004, together with the ensemble "Chamber Soloist of Minsk" conducted by Dmitri Zubov, he recorded a CD with all of Antonio Vivaldi's concertos for mandolin. Nikolai Marezki also played for many years in the duo and trio Capriccio together with Natalia Korsak, one of his music students.

In France, Marezki worked as an honorary co-organiser and co-founder of the "Festival International de Mandoline de Castellar". Under his leadership, a concert was held in 2005 at the Minsk Philharmonic Hall dedicated to the Japanese mandolinist and composer

Yasuo Kuwahara (1946-2003). Natalia Korsak and Ilya Dragunov performed his six solo pieces for mandolin, as well as duets and orchestral works by the composer. In March 2006, the Belarusian premiere of Arnold Schoenberg's "Serenade for Strings opus 24" took place in Minsk, with Nikolai Marezki playing the mandolin part, of course. As part of the 2009 "Mandolinissimo" festival, a concert was given dedicated to the Italian mandolin virtuoso, composer and instrument maker Raffaele Calace (1863-1934).

Marezki was an internationally sought-after expert

Nikolai Marezki was repeatedly appointed to the jury of national and international mandolin competitions, e.g. the "I. Zhinovich International Competition for Folk Instruments" (Belarus), "International Competition of Performers on Folk Instruments "Nord Pokal" (Russia), International

Mandolin Competition of the "European Guitar and Mandolin Association" 2007 in Patras (Greece) and the solo mandolin competition "ARTE - Mandolistica" in Osaka (Japan).

Maretzki tirelessly imparted his extensive knowledge of domra and mandolin playing to music students and music teachers. He regularly offered master classes for teachers at music schools and music colleges in Belarus. In 2008 he was a participant in the 4th International Mandolin Symposium in Trossingen. On his initiative, a mandolin class was opened at the Belarusian State Academy of Music in 2005 and a special programme for the main subject mandolin was developed. Many of Nikolai Maretzki's students have also played the mandolin in parallel with the domra and have won several prizes at international competitions, for example Natalia Zmitrovitch, Katsia Prakopchyk, Olga Dubowskaja, Elena Ivanova, Natalia Korsak, Marina Slabodskaja, Dimitri Titov and many others.

Résumé

Nikolai Maretzki has made a great contribution to the foundation and development of the Domra and Mandolin School in Belarus. He has trained a whole series of music teachers who in turn teach children and young people how to play the domra and mandolin. Many of his former students now teach as music teachers themselves, not only in Belarus, but far beyond the country's borders in Russia, Germany, France, the USA and Israel. Because of what Nikolai Maretzki taught us, his students, and because of his love for music, the mandolin and the domra will always remain a part of our lives.

(Translation from the German by Rüdiger Grambow)