

Galina Ustvol'skaya

Complete Works for Violin and Piano

Sonata (1952) | Duet (1964)



Evgeny Sorkin violin

Natalia Andreeva piano

Galina Ustvolskaya (1919-2006)

Complete works for Violin and Piano

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1952)

19:48

1	I. (crotchet=112)	2:18
2	II. (crotchet=112)	9:36
3	III. Più mosso	2:25
4	IV. Tempo I	5:28

Duet for Violin and Piano (1964)

29:30

5	I. Espressivo	4:22
6	II. Very rhythmical beat (fugato)	5:47
7	III. Tempo I	2:54
8	IV. Not faster (fugato)	4:49
9	V. Meno mosso	1:20
10	VI. Tempo I	3:00
11	VII. (in tempo)	7:16

Total duration

49:19

Evgeny Sorkin violin

Natalia Andreeva piano

The music

Introduction and notes by Natalia Andreeva

This recording is proudly dedicated to the memory of Galina Ustvol'skaya on the 100th anniversary of her birth.

*"Ustvol'skaya did paddle upstream, against one all-powerful current, and never once deviated from her course. That is why she is a Hero, not of, but against the Soviet Union. There was no less desirable music written in the imperium of Stalin and his successors than hers. And every subsequent piece was yet more undesirable, because it was more impossible and inaccessible than the previous one."*¹

In 2006, in Chicago, I opened the score of Ustvol'skaya's Fifth Piano Sonata.

This was the first of Ustvol'skaya's compositions that I ever started working on. I could not then imagine that it was a beginning of a very long journey: I read countless resources (I had the great advantage of reading both in English and Russian), practiced for hours and hours, performed Ustvol'skaya's works, held lecture-recitals, wrote my PhD thesis dedicated to Ustvol'skaya's piano works, and the list goes on.

Most notably, I recorded her Six Piano Sonatas and Preludes in St. Petersburg – the home city of both Ustvol'skaya and myself. The resulting 2-CD album, "Ustvol'skaya's Complete Piano Works", was published by Divine Art in 2015 as volume 11 of its "Russian Piano Music" series. Now, finally, after meeting with Ustvol'skaya's widower Konstantin Bagrenin in 2017 in St. Petersburg for the second time I am recording her music for violin and piano – Ustvol'skaya's Violin Sonata and the Duet for Violin and Piano 11 completed at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with the Russian-born violinist Evgeny Sorkin.

¹ Elmer Schonberger (translation Jonathan Reeder) "Ustvol'skaya, hero, not of, but against the Soviet Union." (<http://www.elmerschonberger.com/english/images/Ustvol'skaya.pdf>)

There were so many people involved in these projects – so many who helped and supported me through these years.

My very special thanks go to Stephen Sutton and his staff (The Divine Art); to my teacher and friend – the concert pianist Andrej Hoteev; to Frau Heidy Zimmermann (Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel); and to Professor Anna Reid (the Dean of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music).

I would like to preface these Program Notes by saying that they are so much less ‘academic’ than those my recording of Ustvol'skaya's Complete Piano Works. I would prefer to call these notes “Performers’ notes” – very emotional and very subjective.

“My music is certainly not chamber music...”² - Galina Ustvol'skaya

Many years ago the little girl Galya Ustvol'skaya became very impressed with the sound of the Symphony Orchestra – first time in her life! She said: “I want to be an orchestra!”³

According to Peter Grahame Woolf: “The piano is absolutely central in Ustvol'skaya's music...”⁴

I believe that Ustvol'skaya's piano perception is absolutely orchestral... searching for the orchestral colours, dynamics and balance was my biggest challenge as Evgeny and I worked on this recording.

But, there was another very important matter regarding this recording: when Evgeny and I started learning these compositions, we noticed some unclear notation in the existing editions of the scores. Thanks to the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, I was giving the chance to compare the most dubious notation (not the whole score) in the published editions with the composer's manuscript. I have discovered a number of mismatches. For this recording, on stumbling upon these mismatches, we followed the notation in Ustvol'skaya's manuscript.

² France C. Lemaire “Galina Ustvol'skaya” <http://www.megadisc-classics.com/album/galina-ustvol'skaya-3>

³ Gladkova, Olga. *Galina Ustvol'skaya – Muzuka Kak Navojdenie* (in Russian) (Music as Obsession).

Translated by Natalia Andreeva. St. Petersburg: Muzuka, 199, p 26.

⁴ Peter Graham Woolf. *Galina Ustvol'skaya and the Piano*.

(<http://www.musicweb-international.com/sandh/Nov99/ustvol'skaya.htm>)

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1952)

21

Handwritten musical score for page 21 of the Sonata for Violin and Piano (1952). The page features three systems of staves. Each system has a violin staff on top and a piano staff on the bottom. The notation is handwritten in black ink. The first system includes a red bracket under the piano staff and a circled '30' above the violin staff. The second system includes a red bracket under the piano staff, a circled '31' above the violin staff, and a circled '32' above the piano staff. The third system includes a red bracket under the piano staff, a circled '33' above the violin staff, and a circled '34' above the piano staff. A red 'X' is marked on the right side of the page.

Page 21 from the manuscript score of the Sonata
reproduced by permission of the Paul Sacher Foundation

Valentina Kholopova used the opening of this Sonata “as an example of a unique metrical idea – the measure 1/4...”⁵. This “unique metrical idea” – the pulse of crotchets in the violin’s part until the end of the exposition... What did it mean for us?⁶

To me and Evgeny, the time signature 1/4 stresses the importance of every single note. There are no ‘weak’ beats... There is no ‘time to relax’ for the performers – there is a high emotional intensity throughout the whole composition; there is in fact a high emotional intensity in every single beat.

What this music is about?

This Sonata was composed one year before Stalin’s death. From the 1930s to the 1950s: “...The USSR’s population had declined from 175 million to 135 million as a result of Soviet state terror.”⁷

“Russia in the late 1930s was not a good place to be. People really did sleep in their outdoor clothes, with a ready-packed suitcase at their bedside, waiting for the NKVD (the secret police) to knock on the door.”⁸

In our interpretation, the first two phrases played by the left hand in the piano part are an imitation of steps at night: those bringing horror, pain, suffering... in the Coda – *Col legno* (at around 18:45 into the work) in the violin part is an imitation of that “knocking on the door” which terrified the people of Stalin’s era.

Evgeny and I discussed these ideas, and as we started working Evgeny told me: “You know, Natasha, this music is *beautiful*...”. It was a ‘turning point’.

⁵ *Ten Composers from the former USSR* Valeria Tsenova (ed.); Verlag Ernst Kuhn – Berli, p 110; originally cited in the book: Kholopova V. *Russian musical rhythm*. Moscow, 1983, pp250-251.

⁶ Although we refer to Exposition, Development, Recapitulation and Coda – it is not a ‘strict’ musicological analysis; it simply helped us to see the big picture of this composition.

⁷ Davies, Sarah. *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia: Terror. Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-1941*. (Cambridge University Press, 1977)

⁸ Noel Malcolm reviews *The Forsaken: From the Great Depression to the Gulags* by Tim Tzouliadis. (https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non_fictionreviews/3556836/The-Forsaken-Americans-in-Stalins-gulags.html)

We became fascinated (or even obsessed!) with the beauty of the “falling interval of a third” (Elmer Schönberger); the chorales, the lamenting motives of major and minor seconds, with the long (“bell like”) octaves and chords in the piano part.

From the performance perspective, the exposition was the most difficult. Evgeny had to try different ways to play the 5-note *leitmotif* (A flat-E flat- A flat-A flat-E flat).

Olga Gladkova in her book “The Music as Obsession” was writing about “declamation and percussive affects” in relation to this *leitmotif*. What we have found, and what had become our ‘final’ interpretative idea, is that in the exposition the violin is following the shaping and dynamics in the piano part: from ‘forte’ to the softest ‘*pianissimo*’.

Chorales and Bells.

The Russian pianist and teacher Lev Naumov once stated “If I were asked to write an *ode* (a kind of poem), I would dedicate it to the Russian bell–ring...”. These ‘bells’ appear for the first time in the Violin Sonata during the big piano solo at the end of the exposition. In the sonata’s development, there is an exceptionally beautiful section based on the bell-sound effects (at around 5:04). The *leitmotif* which first appeared in the violin part is played by the piano (without the rests) in the middle layer surrounded by long chords and octaves in the high and low registers. In my interpretation that motif mirrors the resonance created by the bells.

No one can describe the beauty of the Chorales in this Violin Sonata. There are some short Chorale-like phrases. A long episode exists in the development which is based on the Chorale, bell-like effects and the theme with the “falling third” in the middle layer in the piano part (10:09).

The recapitulation (track 4) is a Requiem. I emphasized the lamenting motifs in the piano part, but without the shaping which was used in the exposition. Lev Naumov believed that sometimes “inexpressive playing ... is a secret, a colour... It brings something absolutely new.”⁹

⁹(Lev Naumov. *Pod Znakom Neigauza*. Translated by Natalia Andreeva. Muz. Obozrenie (Russian), 2002. p 65.

In the beginning of the Coda, Ustvolskaya's notation for the violin part is: *col legno* : "Tap on the top of the instrument with the wood of the bow, or on the bottom with the thumb of the right hand."¹⁰ As I have noted earlier, in our interpretation this sound is associated with the 'knocking on the door.' The theme with the "falling third" in the piano part sounds under that knock ... (very softly).

This quote from Solomon Volkov's "Testimony" – how it appeared on the website of the San Francisco Symphony (created by Michael Tilson Thomas)¹¹ – was a particular emotional influence on my search for the character of this theme in the Coda.

*"It's as if someone were beating you with a stick and saying, 'Your business is rejoicing, your business is rejoicing, your business is rejoicing,' and you rise, shaky, and go marching off, muttering, 'Our business is rejoicing, our business is rejoicing.'"*¹²

Duet for Violin and Piano (1964)

The first time Evgeny Sorkin and I performed the Duet in Sydney was in 2009.

We discovered that Ustvolskaya's compositional features such as clusters and extreme registers (which are present in her previous works) were used in a more extreme form in the Duet. Although I would disagree with Gladkova, who insisted that "the Duet's music is very aggressive"¹³, I had to admit that Ustvolskaya's view of the piano in the Duet was different from the piano works composed up to 1957. Very often she included notations such as: "Very rhythmical beat like a motor"¹⁴, "sharply"¹⁵, "clearly,

¹⁰Ustvolskaya, Galina." Sonata for Violin and Piano" in *Exempla Nova* 291 (edition Sikorski 1991). Hamburg: Musikverlag Hans Sikorski, p30.

¹¹ Music born of fear. Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5
(<https://www.keepingsscore.org/interactive/pages/shostakovich/opinions-march>)

¹² May have been said by Shostakovich in the early 1970s to Solomon Volkov.

¹³ Gladkova, 114.

¹⁴ Ustvolskaya, Galina. "Duet for Violin and Piano" in *Exempla Nova* 292 (edition Sikorski 1992). Hamburg: Musikverlag Hans Sikorski, p 4.

¹⁵ Sikorski, 12.

sharply”¹⁶. According to Olga Gladkova the violin in this composition performs as a “mini- orchestra”¹⁷. All these details were important.

However, nine years later, in 2018, we started our rehearsals on the Duet with a big question –

Why “Duet”? Why not “The Second Sonata for Violin and Piano”?

In our interpretation the Duet became a Drama – a story about two people. While writing these Notes, I have been constantly looking through the score of the Duet. A great number of my handwritten comments cover almost every page...

Unfortunately, there is no proven evidence regarding the ‘key motifs’ or ‘key notes’ (similar to BACH¹⁸) used by Ustvol'skaya in her works. Although, we had two ‘key notes’ in mind which helped us to make the Duet’s ‘plot’, this ‘discovery’ was very subjective and might be interesting **only** from our perspective as performers. Our ‘key note’ in the Coda (especially on its last page) was the G flat. It appeared seven times in the violin’s part. This is the note which alone finishes the Duet. That one final note lasts (sounds) for seven crotchets and disappears with ‘pppp’.¹⁹

One of the Duet’s heroes (or maybe the heroine) remained behind...

¹⁶ Sikorski, 15.

¹⁷ Gladkova, 114.

¹⁸ The Russian musicologist Olga Surminova provides many examples of the composers’ monograms or cryptograms in their works: SHCHED – Shchedrin; ESG – Gubaidulina, etc... (<https://culture.wikireading.ru/7298/>)

¹⁹ Sikorski, 40.

The musicians: Evgeny Sorkin

Russian born violinist **Evgeny Sorkin** has been in demand as performer from a very early age. At the age of 10 Isaac Stern chose Evgeny to perform a concert tour of the USA including a performance at the Department of State in Washington. At 16 after hearing Evgeny perform, Sir Yehudi Menuhin likened his playing to that of the young David Oistrakh.

Evgeny attended the Moscow State Conservatorium receiving a *cum laude* upon his graduation. After moving to Australia, Evgeny studied with Alice Waten at the Australian National Academy of Music and at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music where he was the first person ever to receive a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Sydney.

Evgeny Sorkin was a member of The International Holland Music Sessions from 2006. He toured over 15 countries as a soloist appearing in venues such as the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatorium. He is a Prize winner in international competitions including 1st prize at the 2002 6th Togliatti International Violin Competition, and 2nd Prize at the 2003 18th Caltanissetta International Chamber Music Competition, and Prizes in Taneyev International Competition and Gisborne International Music Competition. For promotion of contemporary music, Evgeny was awarded an Honorary Medal from the Union of Russian Composers in 2003.

From 2006 Evgeny began teaching violin at the Australian National Academy of Music in Melbourne. In 2009 he became a staff member at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and balances his teaching with a busy recital schedule.



Evgeny Sorkin

The musicians: Natalia Andreeva

The Russian pianist and researcher **Natalia Andreeva** was born in St. Petersburg. She started learning piano at the age of five. She graduated from the Rimsky-Korsakov Musical College and the State Conservatorium of Music. Natalia continued her musical education in Chicago as the Fulbright scholar. In 2007 she performed Galina Ustvolskaya's piano Sonata No. 5 at the Ganz Recital Hall in Chicago.

In 2013 she completed her PhD in Piano Performance in Australia, at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. She studied under the Russian pianist, Professor Viktor Abramov and the international concert pianist Andrej Hoteev (an assistant to the legendary Lev Naumov).

Natalia performs as a solo pianist and with a number of different chamber groups in Russia and Australia. She also makes recordings for Russian and Australian broadcasters including ABC classic FM, Sydney. She has recorded several piano solo CDs at the former recording studio "Melodiya" in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Natalia currently holds the position of the Lecturer in Piano at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Australia.

Natalia started her 'Ustvolskaya project' in 2006 in Chicago. Since then, she has regularly included Ustvolskaya's solo piano and chamber works into her recitals. In 2012 she completed a recording of all Ustvolskaya's piano works, released on Divine Art in 2015 as well as two albums of mainstream piano sonatas and other works.



Natalia Andreeva



Galina Ustvolskaya

Complete works for Solo Piano

Piano Sonatas 1-6
Preludes 1-12

Natalia Andreeva

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Notes by Natalia Andreeva

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