

# Nikolay Diletsky's Four-part Concertos: the Unknown Pages of Russian Baroque Music

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**Abstract**—Music of the mid-17<sup>th</sup>-early 18<sup>th</sup> century is a little-known and poorly studied part of Russian culture. The manuscripts found in the archives during the last decades have modified our notions about the artistic heritage of the greatest composers of that time. In 2013, the present author discovered 36 previously unknown four-part concertos by Diletsky. On the basis of the preserved part-books, 32 scores have been compiled and edited; currently they are being prepared for publication. The paper considers the manuscript sources, the concertos' verbal texts and various forms of the interaction between text and music.

**Keywords**—*Nikolay Diletsky; part-singing style; concerto; Russian Baroque Music*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Baroque era in Russian music begins in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in a difficult period of social and Church reforms when the cultural paradigm was changing. Monophony, which had been prevailing in Russian music for about 5 centuries, as well as various types of *bezlineynoye* (staveless) polyphony (such as *troyestrochiye* (archaic three-stave polyphony) and *demestvo* (archaic 'domestic' polyphony)), was replaced by the *partesniy* (part-singing) concert style (from lat. *partes* — voices, pl. from lat. *pars* — part, participation; in a figurative sense — choral part). This style is based on the principles of concertato performance: alternation of solo singing, ensemble singing and tutti, opposition of homophonic and polyphonic (imitation) texture, contrasts of duple and triple time, etc.

At that time, the main genre of the *partesniy* style — concerto for choir a capella — evolves as a result of the adaptation of West European music in Russia by musicians from East Slavic Lands, Little Russia, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the *partesniy* concert style had taken a leading role in Russia. Such prevalence of the new style throughout the country is explained not only by its strong state support, but also by the so-called 'counter-currents' in Russian culture, which was ready to accept and adapt external influences. Throughout Russia, for decades, new musical centres were formed, dozens of composers were active, hundreds of chant books appeared, a new harmonic language was established, and new, previously unknown genres and forms were developed.

The choral culture achieved unprecedented heights; the practice of polychoral singing flourished. The *partesniy* style became one of the historical cornerstones of Russian professional music, and the Russian baroque gradually integrated into the context of the world musical culture.

The music of the mid-17<sup>th</sup>-early 18<sup>th</sup> century is a little-known and poorly studied part of Russian culture [1]. The manuscripts found in the archives during the last decades have considerably enriched and even modified our idea of the artistic heritage left by the greatest composers of that time: Vasilii Titov, Nikolay Diletsky (Mikołaj Dylecki), Ioann (Jan) Kalenda, and others. In 2013, I discovered 36 previously unknown four-part concertos by Diletsky (as well as his Divine Service [Sluzhba Bozhiya], Vespers, and four three-part concertos), which were introduced into scientific circulation in my article 'Nikolay Diletsky's Compositions: New Discoveries' [2].

## II. NIKOLAY DILETSKY: HIS LIFE AND ARTISTIC HERITAGE

Little is known about Nikolay Pavlovich Diletsky's biography. He was born, presumably, in 1630, although some historians date his birth 1650. He was referred to as 'a resident of the city of Kiev'. In 1675 he was in Vilnius and in 1669/70~1674/75 he probably studied at the Vilnius Jesuit Academy. In 1675 he presented the magistrate of the city with his work 'Golden Toga' ('Toga złota'), which apparently had a panegyric content. This work did not survive. The same year he wrote in Polish a textbook for singers and composers, entitled 'Music Grammar', the so-called Vilnius treatise. It has not been preserved, either. In 1677 in Smolensk Diletsky translated his Vilnius treatise into 'Slavic dialect'.

In 1679 he arrived in Moscow where he created one more version of the treatise called 'The Idea of Music Grammar' ('Idea grammatiki musikiyskoy') and gave it as a present to G. D. Stroganov. One of Russia's richest industrialists, Stroganov appreciated the *partesniy* concert style, kept choirs in Usov's and in Moscow and engaged Ukrainian singers. Diletsky died, supposedly, in 1681, although some scholars believe that he personally took part in the 1723 edition of his treatise.

Until the late 1960s, Nikolay Diletsky was considered exclusively a theorist, the author of *Music Grammar*, regarded as the first treatise on the theory of music which laid the foundation for Russian and Ukrainian music of the modern time. In 1979, a fundamental edition of the treatise was prepared [3]. It was based on the manuscript kept in Russian State Library and contained a description of 25 other preserved handwritten copies.

In 1981, the first publication of Diletsky's choral works appeared [4]. It included Diletsky's four-part compositions — Divine Service and concerto *Izhe obrazu Tvoemu* (Those, who Thy Image) — and his eight-part works: *Canon of Resurrection*, *Kievskaya* and *Preportsial'naya* Divine services, and concertos *The Body of Christ* and *Voshel esi v Tserkov* (Thou has entered the Church). Separate parts of the following eight-part Services are also extant: *Moskovskaya*, *Smolenskaya*, *Rekvial'naya* and *Vechernya* (Vespers).

The fact that there were only few one-movement concertos written by Diletsky appeared uncommon in terms of great creative productivity of Baroque composers. There seemed to be a certain contradiction between the theory masterly developed in *Music Grammar* and Diletsky's own creative work.

### III. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

I was able to attribute 33 four-part compositions by Diletsky from a manuscript kept in the Department of Rare books and Manuscripts of the State Public Scientific and Technical Library of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Novosibirsk), collection of M. N. Tikhomirov, No. 503.

The manuscript has a format 4° (20.3 x 15.5 cm) and contains 238 folios. According to the filigree of the paper, it dates from the first decades of the 18th century (1707-1714). The manuscript comprises 177 works: the first half includes Vespers and Divine Services, the second one consists of concertos. It is only one part from a four-part set, mostly bass. However, some pieces are also notated in tenor, violin and treble clefs; this is conditioned by the peculiarities of a choir type. The words are written in Ukrainian shorthand.

The manuscript is unique, since there are 59 indications of the authors' names, while dozens of Russian musical manuscripts are usually anonymous. Diletsky's surname prevails: it appears 33 times in the music text and twice in the register. There are also names of Vasiliy Titov (14), I. Kalenda (5), A. Tsibul'sky (3), Fatyanov (2). Of particular interest is the first, major group of 16 concertos by Diletsky (Nos. 1-16). His further compositions are placed without a specific order under the numbers 18, 19, 23, 24, 26, 27, 48, 50, 54, 55, 57, 58, 62, 66, 71.

The second manuscript, which served as the basis for my attribution, is kept in Moscow, in the Department of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library, f. 37 (T. F. Bolshakov), No. 383 (8°, 217 f.). A group of seven compositions by Diletsky at the end of the manuscript (f. 200-207 rev. vol.) is introduced by a cinnabar record

*Concerto in D* (four) parts. Alto/Creation of Mikolay Dyletski. Two concertos from this group — No. 2 *My most gracious Queen* and No. 4 *Oh, sweet bliss* — coincide with the ones in manuscript Tikh.503, and therefore they have a double attribution, which confirms the authenticity of the notes with indications of authorship in both books. The manuscript was probably written during Diletsky's lifetime, as it contains a Polychronion (*Many years*) to Tsar Feodor Alekseevich (who died on 27 April 1682).

Further research task was to compare musical texts of attributed and non-attributed compositions with identical titles, to identify existing copies and to decide on the possibility of forming complete four-part scores of Diletsky's compositions. At the present time, Diletsky's four-part concertos are found in 45 manuscripts. There are four full sets of parts and several incomplete sets: 3 sets of three parts each, 4 sets of two parts, and 12 storage units containing one part only.

The manuscripts are stored in Moscow (State Historical Museum, Russian National Museum of Music); in St. Petersburg (Russian National Library, Russian Library of the Academy of Sciences, Institute of Russian Literature); in the State Archives in Tobolsk and Tver Region; and in two foreign archives: in Finland in the library of the New Valamo Monastery and in Lviv (Ukraine) in the Andrei Sheptytsky National Museum.

The data on the structure of the manuscripts and the number of copies are provided in the table. The manuscripts of the 1680-90s contain the largest number of Diletsky's concertos. By the middle of the 18th century the number of his concertos in the manuscripts declines, and some of the late manuscripts, dated from the 1760-70s, include but one concerto.

The most popular and frequently copied among Diletsky's concertos was *Rejoice, the Life-giving Cross*, which could be sung on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and also on the third Sunday of Lent, devoted to Adoration of the Cross. Copies of this concerto have been found in 15 compilations. Other popular concertos were *My most gracious Queen* based on the text of the prayer to the Mother of God (13 copies) and *Let the trumpets ring out today* on the Feast of The Dormition of the Mother of God (12 copies).

On the basis of the preserved part-books, 32 scores have been compiled and edited; currently they are being prepared for publication.

### IV. CLASSIFICATION OF THE CONCERTO'S VERBAL TEXTS

The sources of the concertos' verbal texts can be divided into four groups: the Old Testament texts, the New Testament texts, liturgical texts, and paraliturgical sacred texts. The reasons why this or that text was chosen are not clear. We have no exact information on what particular circumstances in a composer's personal and creative life were that caused him to create a concerto on a specific text. Furthermore, it is unclear, whether concertos were

commissioned to a composer, and, if so, by whom they were commissioned, where and when they were performed, etc.

#### A. Texts of the Old Testament

1) *The book of Job*: The composer combines two Bible lines that show Job's humiliation in front of the misfortunes that befell him: Job expresses not despair, but blessing of the name of God. 'We have accepted good from the hand of the Lord, will we not accept trouble?' (2:10). 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, as the Lord wished and so it happened: blessed be the name of the Lord from now and unto the ages!' (1:21). The opening section illustrates how the solo voices, which are traditional for Western European music, interlace with the basso continuo in a four-part a cappella harmony.

2) *The Psalter*: The Psalter is one of favourite sources for Russian authors of spiritual music. Four of Diletsky's compositions are based on psalms 98, 47, 27 and 118. The concertos in minor keys 'The Lord is my light' and 'When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord' can be characterized as passionate. The concertos 'Sing to the Lord a new song' and 'Clap your hands, all you nations' are joyful, bright and solemn. They appeal to praise the Lord, in particular with songs and applause.

The hallmarks of these compositions are repetitive rhythms and abundance of short notes (sixteenths). It is easy to notice that the texture can be reduced to just two lines: two trebles sing in parallel, and the second bass as if "replaces" the basso continuo.

#### B. Texts of the New Testament: Acts of the Holy Apostles

The New Testament texts rarely became a basis for concertos. Diletsky turns to 'The Acts of the Holy Apostles' only once, adopting the text 'When the day of Pentecost came' (Acts 2:1-4). He was possibly attracted by the text's picturesque quality, especially in the description of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and the image of a sound that came 'like the blowing of a violent wind'.

#### C. Texts of Liturgical Hymns

- Hymns of the twelve great feasts and easter: Diletsky wrote four concertos based on several troparia of different odes of the Easter Canon by Saint John of Damascus: the first ('Let the heavens rejoice in a worthy manner'), the fourth ('David, the forefather of our divine Lord'), the fifth ('Thy boundless compassion'), and the seventh ('We celebrate the death of death'). Major key and the division of trebles into two or even three parts underline a bright and joyful character of Easter concertos.

Among the compositions on the Twelve Great Feasts, the predominance of Theotokian hymns is obvious. Feasts mentioned are: the Nativity of the Theotokos, the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple, the Dormition of the Theotokos and the Annunciation, which is closely related to this group of feasts. The group of Theotokian concertos

includes two compositions based on the Katabasis on all days of the year ('I shall open my mouth' and 'Each one born on earth') and 'To the Theotokos diligently' based on the Canon to the Most Holy Mother of God.

- Among the hymns of the Lenten Triodion, worth noting is the concerto 'O, Thou Guide unto Wisdom' (its source is the kontakion tone 6 on Cheese-Fare Sunday): *The text of this hymn seems to have attracted Diletsky with the word 'wisdom', which was set to music of special harmonic complexity and sophistication.*

In this section the composer uses a refrain which goes through notes d-c-b-e and contains an unexpected tritone leap.

The cadence structure of the concerto can be described as follows:...

- Hymns in honor of the saints (from liturgical singing book 'Trezvony' and akathists): *A group of hymns in honour of saints is constituted by two compositions in honour of Archangel Michael and a concerto to Saint Martyr Tatyana.*

I suppose that the origin of the concerto based on the troparion to Saint Martyr Tatyana was related to Princess Tatyana Mikhaylovna (5 January 1636~24 August 1706), who was the sister of the Russian Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich, aunt of Peter the Great, and a very influential person at the Court. She was an active supporter of Patriarch Nikon's Church reforms and regularly donated money to the New Jerusalem Monastery. In 1691 Tatyana Mikhaylovna granted the monastery the ark with holy relics — a palm of St. Martyr Tatyana. Presumably, Diletsky had close connections with the New Jerusalem school of hymnography, especially with Hieromonk German (Voskresensky), and therefore he could be acquainted with the princess, who patronized new trends in Russian arts.

- Hymns of the burial service.
- Hymns of canons and prayers: Of particular interest is the concerto based on the prayer to the Holy Spirit 'Come, Thy Venerable Accomplisher of all'. According to some sources, the text belonged to Saint Maximus the Greek, the author of the 'Canon to the Divine, Worshipful and All-Holy Spirit, the Paraclete'. It is not known, why Diletsky was interested in this text and where he could get it from at the time when the Official Church had not admitted it yet. The fact is that no other composer of the Baroque era, apart from Diletsky, wrote a musical work with such a title.
- Hymns against heretics: The theme of denunciation of heresies is reflected in Diletsky's concertos 'Kto Ti, Spase, rizu razdra' ('Who tore Thy Robe, oh Saviour') and 'Izhe obrazu Tvoyemu' ('Those, who Thy image'). The first text is included into the service to

the Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. Its origin is associated with the name of Saint Peter of Alexandria, who lived not long before the first Ecumenical Council, at which the Arian heresy was condemned. According to tradition, he had a vision of Christ clothed in a torn robe. It was at the time when the Arian heresy was only being formulated and secretly growing. On some icons Saint Peter is depicted with his hands lifted to Christ Child. It is believed that he addressed to Christ with woeful exclamation, *‘Who tore Thy robe, oh Lord?’* and heard the answer *‘Arius’*.

The concerto *‘Izhe obrazu Tvoyemu’* (*‘Those, who Thy image’*) is associated with the period of Iconoclasm in the mid-9th century that ended with the victory over various heresies and the establishment of the order of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. In the South Russian compilations — *Heirmologia* — this text is entitled *‘A Sticheron on Condemnation of Heretics’*. In Diletsky’s times it acquires special relevance and an explicit polemic value due to the opposition to the Union of Brest of 1596 and its supporters.

#### V. PARALITURGICAL SPIRITUAL TEXTS

Diletsky used some principles of paraphrase, realized in paraliturgical sacred texts (see about it: [5]). For example, the concerto *‘Weep, oh my soul’* does not have one particular source. It is actually a combination of pieces of several (at least four) well-known texts: a) Penitential sticheron on *‘Lord I call’* (Sunday Vespers, tone 8); b) A prayer of Manasseh, king of Judah, from the Order of the 12 Psalms; c) Canon of repentance to our Lord Jesus Christ (tone 6, ode 1); d) The prayer *‘Open to Me the Doors of Repentance’*. The composite nature of this concert’s text does not affect the integrity of its content. The phrases used here were familiar to everyone and therefore such a combination did not violate the idea of repentance.

#### VI. JOYFUL AND SORROWFUL *‘MUSIKIA’* (MUSIC) IN DILETSKIY’S CONCERTOS

The interplay of text and music manifests itself already in the choice of mode. In the beginning of his treatise Diletsky asks: *‘What is musikia (music)?’* — *‘Musikia is what with its voice excites joy or sorrow in human hearts’*.

Diletsky divides six notes of the hexachord into two parts: *‘Ut (C), Mi (E), Sol (G)’* for the joyful singing and *‘Re (D)-Fa (F)-La (A)’* for the sorrowful singing [6]. Thus, he takes a step towards a double-mode system depending on a concord that lies in the basis of the composition.

To a certain degree, Diletsky’s works are based on the system of ecclesiastical modes, characteristic of Western European musical tradition. On the whole, Diletsky’s concertos can be categorised into two groups: compositions in major keys the ones in minor keys (fourteen and twenty-three respectively). Eleven concertos in minor keys are in Aeolian mode, and just as many — in Dorian mode, with final chords on D, G, and C. In the manuscripts of the concertos in C Dorian there are sometimes two flats

indicated as key signature, and sometimes — just one. Other accidentals are put by the notes. However, their placement is rather irregular; hence, the manuscripts have to be edited. Eight concertos in major keys are in Ionian mode. Two of these concertos end with a chord on C, whereas six others — on F. Five concertos in major keys are in G Myxolydian, and one — in B flat Lydian.

Mourning and repentance are two central themes of the concertos in minor keys. Two requiems are imbued with grief (*‘Koye raslucheniye, o, bratiye’, ‘Priidite, posledneye tselovamiye’*). Two other concertos are related to the Great Penitential Canon and other similar texts (*‘Dushe moya, vostani’, ‘Plachi, dushe moya’*). Other concertos include prayers for mercy, absolution and intercession, addressed either to God (*‘Isuse Sladchayshiy’*) or to Virgin Mary (*‘Ko Bogoroditse prilezhno’, ‘Tsaritsa moya preblagaya’*). The theme of repentance is characteristic also of psalms in minor keys. This is especially true for *‘Ot skorbi prizvakh Gospoda’*, whereas the concerto *‘Gospod’ prosveshtcheniye moye’*, based on Psalm 26, sounds more energetic and forceful. The same severe tone prevails in two other concertos in minor key, directed against heresies (*‘Izhe obrazu tvoyemu’, ‘Kto ti, spase, rizu razdra’*).

The concertos in minor keys can also be lyrical and touching, which is characteristic of some cantos (*kantī*) and psalmas (*psal’mī*) — spiritual songs that became widespread first in Ukraine and later in Russia. In the first lines of these concertos words *‘sweet’* and *‘sweetest’* are used: *‘Oh, sweet light’* (*Oh, sladkiy svete*), *‘Oh, sweetest bliss’* (*Oh, sladkoye blazhenstvo*), *‘Our sweetest Lady’* (*‘Sladchayshaya Devo Marie’*).

The concertos in major keys are related first of all to the Easter Service and to the feasts dedicated to Blessed Virgin Mary. In the first lines of these compositions, the word *‘rejoice’* (*raduysya*) is often present: *‘Rejoice, the Life-giving Cross’* (*‘Raduisya, zhivonosni Kreste’*), *‘Let David rejoice’* (*‘Da raduetsya David’*).

#### VII. SOME TECHNIQUES OF *‘AMPLIFICATION’* IN DILETSKIY’S FOUR-PART CONCERTOS

In his treatise, Diletsky gives a number of recommendations how to work with this material. The source material, i.e. the musical idea, on which a composition is based, is referred to by Diletsky as *‘singing’* or, rarely, *‘fantasy’*. Diletsky quite concisely poses the main ways of working with *‘fantasy’* or *‘singing’* and gives practical recommendations in the section *‘On the amplification, that is, on expanding the singing’*. In fiction and oratorical speech, amplification is one of the ways to enhance the poetic expressiveness of speech with the help of repetitions of different kinds, including variations.

The easiest and at the same time a very efficient way to enhance singing is the exact repetition. As a rule, a composer uses exact repetitions of a polyphonic passage when he wants to emphasize especially important words and phrases and to strengthen their expressiveness. The figure of palilogia (derived from the Greek *‘repetition’*) was usually employed in expressive requests and appeals.

In the concerto *‘Rejoice, the Life-giving Cross’*, there is a double repetition of each word of the verse *‘weapon undefeated’* (a a b b) at the point of the golden section, in the semantic climax. Both verbal and musical repetitions seem to represent this unconquerable weapon and its unyielding spiritual strength. In the concerto *‘What separation, oh brothers’* the repetition of the words *‘gives He Himself to death’* becomes a symbol of a tragic numbness, the inevitability of severance, the departure of a loved one to another world.

Diletsky considers the exchange of parts (Stimmtausch) to be one of the methods of amplification. As he puts it, *‘At times the extension is also such a technique, when what the first part sang is transmitted to the second one’* [7]. The most typical Stimmtausch technique in Diletsky’s compositions is the double endless canon of the 1st category. On the pages of his four-part concertos there are numerous varieties of such a texture.

The interval of entry of parts in each pair is always an unison and the distance varies from one quarter (ad minimam) to one bar, although the most frequently used distance is half a bar. Principally, these episodes express rejoicing and exultation and most of them are written in major mode.

In the concerto *‘Let the trumpets ring out today’* there are two blocks of double canon of Stimmtausch type with different cadences (G–C, C–C), with a half-bar distance between entries and with a reversal of the parts. Besides, the half note, which created a rhythmic contrast to the passage of trebles, is replaced with a syncopated rhythm with an ascending octave leap, as if the music is depicting a vast space (*‘air’*):

Likewise, Diletsky describes a repetition with a change from minor to major mode and vice versa, which he calls *‘the rule contrary, which is named in Latin regula contraria’*, *‘this is used when you transpose a sorrowful singing into a joyful one and a joyful singing into a sorrowful one’*.

The repetition as a chain of sequences (the figure known as climax) has an important dramaturgic value in the concerto *‘Who tore Thy robe, oh Saviour?’* The work starts with a dialogue between a man (according to the tradition, Saint Peter of Alexandria) questioning, who tore the robes of Christ, and the Lord Himself, answering *‘Arius’*. The questions are put by the choir and the answers are performed by the bass voice (probably solo).

Such a vocal personification of the Saviour, though brief, never occurred in Orthodox singing. It recalls the traditions of the Passion performance in the Western Christian Church, where the part of the Evangelist was sung by a tenor and the part of Christ was performed by the bass. The replies of the bass are slow, as if the initial rhythm (dotted quarter plus eighth note) in them is doubled.

Diletsky gives examples of the transformation of singing by changing the time, by diminution, inversion, and retrograde movement (cancrizans).

## VIII. CONCLUSION

In 2013, 37 Nikolai Diletsky’s four-part concertos were introduced into scientific circulation by the author of the article. Our scientific mission was to find and to study different manuscript sources, to make full four-part scores of concertos. Their verbal texts represent a wide variety of sources that attracted the attention of masters of the Baroque period. These compositions established a new for Russia *partesniy* (part-singing) style and formed the aesthetics of the Baroque era. That is why their verbal framework, which became the starting point for the author of music, is of particular interest. Especially thought-provoking is the comparison of the development methods used by Diletsky in his concertos with the rules and recommendations described by the composer himself in his famous treatise *Musikiyskaya Grammatika* (*‘Musical Grammar’*).

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