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# THE GRETCHEN R. IBEN ARTS SERIES

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25 February 2024

## Westminster Church of Peoria

(Presbyterian Church, USA)

1420 West Moss Avenue

Peoria 61606

*[www.westminsterpeoria.org](http://www.westminsterpeoria.org)*

# Ukrainian Tribute

25 February 2024

Four O'clock

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The Gretchen R. Iben Arts Series  
presents

“No culture of its Own”?  
in a program of Solo and Chamber Music  
by Ukrainian Composers

from *Tarasovi Doumy*

Ihor Shamo (1925-1982)

No. 3, Ukraine Was Worried

No. 4, My Heart Takes Me to a Quiet Garden, in Ukraine

No. 5, Break the Chains!

Born to a Jewish family and educated from the Lysenko Music School in Kyiv, **Ihor Shamo** studied medicine until WWII broke eastward and the Soviet government sent him to the front in 1942. He did not return until 1946 and his experiences of war find expression in many of his works. Notoriously, he declined a teaching appointment in Moscow, preferring to stay in his beloved Kyiv. His popular song Kyieve Mii (My Kyiv) is considered the city's unofficial anthem. Perhaps one reason he is not better known in the West is his name allows for multiple transliterations in the Latin alphabet: should his first name appear as “Igor” or “Ihor”? Last name: “Shamo,” “Schamo,” “Schemo,” or “Shemo”? The *Tarasovi Doumy* are six novellas for piano inspired by the collection of poems called *Kobzar* by Ukraine's poet laureate, Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861). These stories describe the history, splendor, and dark ages of Ukraine, and find in Shamo's music a rich, intense, expressive, and epic counterpart.

**Silent Prayer**

**Mikhail Shukh (1952-2018)**

This short, meditative work was originally composed for voices without text. Mikhail Shukh was a prominent composer, teacher, and conductor in Ukraine. A very spiritual man, Shukh presents an offering of our hearts and thoughts to everyone affected by this devastation.

## Chaconne

Svitlana Ostrova (b.1961)

**Svitlana Ostrova** was born and raised in Kiev, where she studied organ, composition and conducting at the Music Academy. A devoted music educator, she teaches at children's music schools and directs a vocal ensemble in Kyiv. The *Chaconne* has four sections: a simple presentation of the theme in block chords, an improvisatory variation in expressive 16<sup>th</sup> notes, a triplet version, and a final chromatic version with an elegant flourish to the top of the keyboard at the conclusion.

Special thanks to Gail Archer of Vassar and Barnard College for her help in locating this repertoire.

## Melody

Myroslav Skoryk (1938-2020)

Composed for the 1982 war film *High Pass*, this piece was originally written for flute and piano. *Melody* uses patterns popular in Ukrainian folk music and is regarded as the spiritual hymn of Ukraine. It accompanied Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the United States Congress in March of 2022 to appeal for aid as a video of the destruction to his country played. Skoryk was the youngest professor ever appointed at the Lviv Conservatory before becoming professor of composition at the Kyiv Conservatory. His last major work, *Moses* (2001), was the first Ukrainian opera on a biblical subject to be composed in over a century; in it, Moses' struggles to lead the ancient Israelites into the Promised Land are likened to Ukraine's struggle as a nation to emerge from the Soviet yoke.

## Nocturne in F-sharp minor, Op. 9, No. 3

Viktor Kosenko (1896-1938)

The music of Viktor Kosenko is filled with refined grief and melancholy, and he may fairly be regarded as one of the great Romanticists of his generation. Born in St. Petersburg to an officer's family, he grew up in Warsaw, Poland, then taught piano and music theory in Zhytomyr in western Ukraine, eventually becoming director of the Zhytomyr Music School. Conflicts with Stalin's government moved him and his family to Kyiv where he died of kidney cancer, but not before leaving some 250 compositions, 100 of which are for solo piano. The Nocturne from his early Op. 9 set displays his unique synthesis of Chopin, Liszt, and Slavic folksong idioms, also demonstrating the composer's complete facility at the piano.

## Esquisses de Crimée (Crimean Impressions), Op. 8

Sergei Bortkiewicz (1877-1952)

- I. *Les rochers d'Outche-Couche* (The Rocky Crags of the Utch-Kosch Gorge)
- II. *Caprices de la mer* (Whims of the Sea)
- III a. *Les Promenades d'Aloupka* (Walks in Alupka). *Idylle orientale* (Oriental Idyll)
- III b. *Les Promenades d'Aloupka* (Walks in Alupka). *Chaos*

The inclusion of **Sergei Bortkiewicz** on this program may be considered controversial as there is lively scholarly debate over whether he regarded himself as Russian or Ukrainian. Ukrainian musicians in recent decades vociferously claim him as one of their own. Born in Kharkiv, the second-largest city in Ukraine, to parents of Polish nobility, owing to WWI, the Bolshevik Revolution, and WWII he lived for extended periods in Berlin, Constantinople, and Vienna, where he and his wife are buried. "Only someone who has been torn forcibly from the soil of his homeland can know how painful this feeling can be sometimes. Perhaps the yearning for his homeland grips most strongly the creative artist, the author, the composer. He would like to go 'back to the mother,' as Goethe says, to the source, to the native soil, in order to gather new forces, to refresh his fantasy, to live again. Because art is and will remain national," he wrote in exile. Bortkiewicz eschewed musical Modernism in favor of a late Romanticism informed by Chopin, Paderewski, Rachmaninoff, and Russian and Ukrainian folksong. Much of his life

remains a mystery since many of his belongings and manuscripts were destroyed in WWII, but a Bortkiewicz Society presently exists to promote his two symphonies, two concertos, chamber music, and voluminous body of piano music. The landscapes in Crimea that Bortkiewicz depicts in his Op. 8 display a philo-Orientalism then in vogue (e.g., the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz' *Crimean Sonnets*) and would have been recognized by cosmopolitan audiences as identical to a series of famous postcards.

**Piano Trio No. 2 in G minor, Op. 41**

**Borys Lyatoshynsky (1895-1968)**

- I. Introduction. Maestoso
- II. Ballade. Andante sostenuto
- III. Intermezzo. Allegretto pastorale, quasi allegro
- IV. Theme and Variations. Andante sostenuto

The influence of **Borys Lyatoshynsky** on 20<sup>th</sup>-century Ukrainian composers, conductors, and educators is difficult to overstate. He wrote in all musical forms including symphony, opera, ballet, chamber music, choral music, solo works, and arrangements of Tajik and Ukrainian folksongs. His Symphony No. 3 ("Peace Will Defeat War") and Piano Quintet ("Ukrainian") are particularly outstanding. While on occasion receiving denunciations from Soviet authorities for not adopting Socialist Realism in his music the way, say, Dmitri Kabalevsky did, he also received commendations and appointments from the Soviet cultural apparatus. Lyatoshynsky appears to be the first Ukrainian symphonist since the 18<sup>th</sup>-century composer Maksym Berezovsky and is posthumously regarded as the most important Ukrainian composer since the death of Dmitri Bortniansky in 1825. He taught at Kyiv Conservatory where his many students included Myroslav Skoryk, Ihor Shamo, and Valentyn Silvestrov.

Composed in 1942, Lyatoshynsky's half-hour *Piano Trio No. 2* is in four movements, all *attacca*. The first is a majestic introduction rather than a customary sonata-allegro, loud from start to almost-finish (the last utterance is a mysterious pizzicato, marked pianissimo.) The second-movement Ballade introduces a haunting melody in the piano that is taken up by the violin and cello. Next comes a rustic Intermezzo in triple meter, replete with running 16ths in all parts and open fifths in the piano left hand. The Finale is longer than the three previous movements combined, introducing a folklike theme of similar character to the Ballade followed by eleven majestic variations and a coda of searing intensity.

**Paraphrase on Dizzy Gillespie's *Manteca* for 2 Pianos, Op. 129**

**Nikolai Kapustin (1937-2020)**

Nikolai Kapustin was born in Horlovka – which lies in the hotly contested Donetsk Oblast region of eastern Ukraine – and died in Moscow. His music fuses Tin Pan Alley jazz with classical music structures and is ideally suited to classically trained pianists who love jazz but feel uncomfortable improvising. Most of his oeuvre is piano-centered, including 20 sonatas, 24 preludes and fugues, six concertos, and numerous etudes, suites, bagatelles, chamber works, big band works, and stand-alone shorter pieces. Kapustin's *Manteca* paraphrase kicks off with a big introduction, next states the theme in simple ternary form, and proceeds with a slightly expanded set of variations ("false improvisations"), reprise, and coda. It mostly follows Dizzy Gillespie's 1946 recording but also incorporates part of his 1992 recording as well.

## *about the musicians ...*

**Polly Purcell Brecht** returned to her hometown of Galesburg, Illinois in 2021 after living in Nashville, TN for over 30 years. There she was Professor of Music and Collaborative Pianist at Vanderbilt University, as well as Organist at Westminster Presbyterian Church. She has also been Associate Professor of Music at Middle Tennessee State University and served many churches in Illinois, Indiana, Florida, Texas, and Tennessee. She holds degrees in organ and piano performance from Indiana University, as well as a Doctorate from Florida State. She also has a certificate in Harpsichord Performance and holds the coveted Performer's Certificate from Indiana University. Dr. Brecht has been a finalist in many national competitions, most notably the American Guild of Organists Nationals in Detroit.

Her teachers include Mrs. C.E. Van Norman, Clyde Holloway, Enrica Cavallo Gulli, Betty Ruth Thomforde, Wilma Jensen, Penny Crawford, Karyl Louwenaar, and Russell Saunders. Dr. Brecht has taught university classes in theory, form and analysis, improvisation, and service playing. She especially enjoys collaborating with others on organ, piano, and harpsichord. Currently she serves Westminster Presbyterian Peoria as Organist/Choirmaster and is a collaborative artist at Bradley and Knox College.

Early music is a distinct passion of Dr. Brecht's. She is especially excited to share some of her favorite works by J.S. Bach for the 2024 Bachfest.

**Adrián Gómez Hernández** started his musical studies in the Conservatory of Music in Seville (Spain). His musical career in Spain led him to perform in numerous orchestras, including the Orquesta Académica de Granada, Orquesta Bética de Sevilla, Orquesta Sinfónica del Aljarafe, Orquesta Filarmonía de Madrid, and the Film Symphony Orchestra. With the FSO, Adrián toured all the major auditoriums in Spain, performing for audiences as large as 10,000 people. Since coming to the US, Adrián performs regularly with orchestras in the Midwest, including the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony, Ottumwa Symphony, Southeast Iowa Symphony, Quincy Symphony, and Orchestra Iowa. Adrián has been playing with the Knox-Galesburg Symphony since 2022. He is also a regular member of the Missouri Symphony Orchestra, where he holds the position of Orchestra Manager.

In his facet as a teacher, Adrián has taught at the prestigious Preucil School of Music for the last 4 years, where he followed the Suzuki philosophy of "every child can." Prior to that, he was the cello and chamber music faculty at the Missouri Conservatory. His teaching philosophy is that every person can learn, regardless of their age and background. Adrián prioritizes the nurturing of the love for music and body-wellness. Adrián believes that music, and the desire and joy to participate in it, is inherent to the human nature; it empowers us to show the best of us.

**Marcia Henry Liebenow**, violinist, is Concertmaster of the Peoria Symphony Orchestra and professor of Violin, Viola and Chamber Music at Bradley University. She is in demand as a recitalist, chamber musician, soloist, and highly regarded as a teacher. She is a founding member of the Concordia String Trio and the River City String Quartet. In the summer, Marcia is a faculty artist at the Red Lodge Music Festival in Montana and the Birch Creek Symphony Academy in Wisconsin. Her CD of the Grieg Violin Sonatas with internationally acclaimed pianist Antonio Pompa-Baldi is on the Centaur label, and the Concordia String Trio has two CDs—*American Vistas* and *Viennese String Trios*, also on Centaur.

Her work has been recognized with the Outstanding Studio Teacher Award from Illinois ASTA, the Distinguished Alumni Award in Music from Ohio University, and the 25 Women in Leadership Award by

WEEK. Marcia earned degrees in Violin Performance from the New England Conservatory of Music and Ohio University.

**Karen Martin** grew up in Grand Junction, Colorado, attending the Aspen Music Festival, and the Colorado Philharmonic (now the National Repertory Orchestra) during the summers, as well as the Meadowmount School in upstate New York. She received her education at the University of Denver, continuing at the Mannes College of Music in New York City where she received a Bachelors of Music degree, with further studies at Western Illinois University for Suzuki teacher training. Her teachers have included Shirley Givens, David Cerone, Patti Kopec, James Maurer, Lee Foli, and Oscar Chassow, as well as Nancy Jackson for Suzuki training. Karen's professional musical life has included the Oklahoma Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra of Oklahoma City, the Omaha Symphony and Chamber Orchestra, the Lincoln (Nebraska) Symphony, and the Nebraska Chamber Orchestra, the Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) Opera Orchestra, the Breckenridge (Colorado) Music Institute, and the Eastern Music Festival in North Carolina. Since moving to Macomb in 1996, she has performed regularly with the Quad Cities Symphony, the Illinois Symphony, Quincy Symphony Orchestra, Peoria Symphony, Southeast Iowa Symphony, and the Knox Galesburg Symphony. As a Suzuki and traditional teacher, Karen enjoys the time spent with her many wonderful students in the Macomb area, as well as working with a string ensemble of youngsters through the Community Music School at Western Illinois University. She begins teaching through Lessons@SymphonyCenter and Monmouth College in 2024. When not involved in musical pursuits, Karen enjoys working with clay in the pottery studio.

**John Orfe** has fulfilled commissions from choirs, orchestras, and chamber ensembles including the American Guild of Organists, Illinois Wesleyan University, Two Rivers Chorale, Duo Montagnard, Dez Cordas, the Music Institute of Chicago, and the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra. Ensembles that have performed his music include the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Minnesota Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Spokane Symphony Orchestra, Mannes American Composers Ensemble, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, John Alexander Singers, and new music ensembles at the North Carolina School of the Arts, and Bowling Green State University. He is a winner of a Jacob K. Javits Fellowship, the Heckscher Prize for Excellence in Chamber Music Composition from Ithaca College, a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Otto Eckstein Family Fellowship from the Tanglewood Music Center, the Morton Gould Award from ASCAP, the William Schuman and Boudleaux Bryant Prizes from BMI, and first prizes in competitions held by NACUSA, the Pacific Chorale, Chorale Arts Ensemble, Eastern Trombone Workshop, and New Music Delaware. He was a featured composer for SIU-Carbondale's 2022 Outside the Box new music festival. His music has been performed on five continents and appears on the Centaur, Delos, and Nonesuch labels.

As pianist, Orfe has earned critical acclaim for his interpretations of five centuries of Keyboard repertoire ranging from the canonic to the arcane. The core pianist and a founding member of Alarm Will Sound, Orfe also serves as keyboardist for the Milwaukee-based Present Music. He has performed at music festivals in London, Paris, Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen, Cork, Amsterdam, Bolzano, Krakow, Seoul, Beijing, Lima, San Jose, and Sao Paõlo. He has recorded on the Cantaloupe, Nonesuch, Kairos, Parma, and Albany Records labels. He holds undergraduate degrees from the Eastman School of Music and graduate degrees including the DMA from the Yale School of Music. Presently he serves as Organist at First United Methodist Church in Peoria, Illinois, where he also served as Interim Music Director. He held the Peoria Symphony Orchestra's first Composer-in-Residence position in 2010-2012.

THIS SERIES is largely underwritten by the Gretchen Iben trust established in her memory by Westminster Church. We also ask that if you are interested in great music here at Westminster that you join in supporting these events. All donations over \$25 are recognized in programs throughout the season. Checks should be made out to Westminster Presbyterian Church and noted for the Iben Series. There are offering plates in the Narthex as you leave. If you would like to make a donation to the series, you can leave your offering there ... with our thanks!

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