KOPYLOV

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And yet another forgotten Russian composer.

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Kopylov was born in St Petersburg on 14 July 1854 when Balakirev was 18 and Tchaikovsky was 14.

Kopylov studied the violin with Mayer, the piano with Rybasov and composition with Hunke and Koplov became a violinist composer and teacher. These teachers are now forgotten as well.

Like many of his contemporaries, he was associated with the Belaieff circle (sometimes the name is spelt Belyayev). He was a wealthy philanthropist (1836-1904) forming a group of Russian composers, organising concerts and publishing many of their works.

During the 1870s, Kopylov undertook further composition lessons with Liadov (1855-1914). This is surprising because Liadov was not a front line composer and did not enjoy a good reputation. Yet, in his defence, Tchaikovsky admired Liadov who, like Scriabin, began to experiment with some weird ideas. Kopylov also studied at the this time with Rimsky-Korsakov in the subjects of instrumentation and form. Kopylov dedicates his Symphony in C minor Op 14 to Lyadov.

Kopylov taught at the Court Chapel from 1872 to 1897 and played in the Aleksandrovsky Theatre Orchestra.

It is said that his music was heavily influenced by Tchaikovsky but that is not clear to me. Kopylov's String Quartet no 2 Op 23 was written in memory of Tchaikovsky,

At the time, Russian, and other composers, were writing virtuosic pieces for piano but the Kopylov piano works I have seen are not like that. They are playable and, in addition, he wrote some enchanting pieces for young pianists and these are also well worth study.

Unlike many, he was not primarily confined to piano music. He wrote a Symphony in C minor Op 14 and four string quartets.

He is only remembered, if at all, by his contribution to the composite string quartet Les Vendredis composed along with Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin and others,

He died in Streina on 5 March 1911. He was 56.

As he died over 70 years ago I take it that his music is out of copyright and therefore append some PDFs of his music.

Quartet No. 1, op. 15

5 Morceaux for Piano, op. 20

Deux Etudes pour Piano, op. 60