

## VIKTOR KOSENKO

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Viktor Stepanovich Kosenko (sometimes spelt Kossenko) was a Ukrainian composer, teacher and concert pianist. He composed a one movement powerful and impressive piano concerto in 1928, a violin concerto in 1919, a string quartet in 1930, and instrumental sonatas for violin and piano, viola and piano, cello and piano as well as three piano sonatas. His vocal works are extensive including songs for children and arrangements of folk songs. His music is a combination of Romanticism and a nationalistic style.

He was born in St Petersburg in 1896 but, in 1898, his family moved to Warsaw. His father, Stephan, was a military man and wanted his son to follow in that line. Viktor's older sister, Maria, did not like anyone else playing her music and would lock it away.

Viktor attended many concerts and took piano lessons including those at St Petersburg Conservatoire with Irina Miklashovskaya. He was especially noted for his ability in sight reading and transposition.

He studied composition with Mikhail Sokolov who had been a pupil of Rimsky Korsakov and graduated in 1918. His source of income came from his being an accompanist at the Marinsky Theatre.

His Violin concerto of 1919 is a twenty minute one movement work and is very well written. It is attractive and memorable.

His Nine Studies in the form of ancient dances Op 19 for piano is a supreme example of marvellous writing for the piano. The music is not derivative but original and not trammelled by clichés and anachronisms. The writing is melodic and when it is virtuosic it is not virtuosic for virtuosity's sake but a natural progression of the music. Such amazing piano music like this is very rare and it eclipses much piano music in the regular repertoire and by some of the famous composers of the piano. This is 75 minutes of sheer delight combining a non-sentimental lyricism with brilliant passage work which evolves as opposed to being merely for effect. This composer knows what he is doing and doing it well. The piano sonatas are well worth investigation.

He spent ten years to 1929 in Zhytomyr in the Ukraine where most of his family lived. He was one of the founders of the Leontovych Musical Society. With the violinist Vladimir Skorokhod and the cellist Vasyly Kolomyitsev, he formed a piano trio giving innumerable concerts between 1919 and 1923 throughout the Ukraine. In September 1922, he gave his first concert of his own music.

From 1927 to 1938 he was associated with Kharkov, then the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and, later, with Kiev. At all of his concerts, he was received with enthusiasm.

The Lysenko Institute of Music and Drama in Kiev offered him a teaching post in 1929. Kosenko composed a lot of music for films and music for children. He collected folk songs from Moldova.

In February 1920 he married Angelina Kanep who had two children from her first marriage. The family were poor but they often shared their food with people who came in off the streets.

In 1938 the government gave them a three room apartment in Kiev but, by now, Kosenko was seriously ill with kidney cancer and died on 3 October 1938.

This is a composer that really deserves promotion.

(550)