

Leokadiya Kashperova

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## 1 Biography: A Life in Music

Graham Griffiths

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*She was well known in St Petersburg, and Rimsky had praised her  
 though her name would not appear in Grove or Riemann.  
 I think she might have been listed in a Russian dictionary of the time.*

Igor Stravinsky<sup>1</sup>

*You want to know whence came the stars above us?  
 Oh, my child!  
 The wisest men on earth have tried in vain  
 To solve the mystery of the stars.*

From *Where Do The Stars Come From?*<sup>2</sup>

Leokadiya Aleksandrovna Kashperova (1872–1940) – the stress is on the second syllable, KashPERova<sup>3</sup> – was a Russian concert pianist, composer and piano teacher (see Figure 1). She also possessed a poetic gift, writing the Romantic lyrics to several of her own songs in both Russian and German. As a pianist, she performed regularly in St Petersburg and Moscow, making one foreign tour in 1907; her creativity spanned over fifty years (see Catalogue of Compositions). She was a dedicated teacher in the Russian tradition of combining performance with a full timetable of piano teaching, counting amongst her more celebrated pupils Igor Stravinsky and Alexander Tcherepnin. In later years, she would set down her memoirs (see Section 2) and write a study of her great teacher, Anton Rubinstein (see Section 3). In 1912, the *Russian Musical Gazette* reviewed a ‘Clavierabend’ presented by Kashperova, describing her as ‘a most welcome phenomenon of St Petersburg’s musical life’.<sup>4</sup> The programme included the premiere of two major compositions: a Piano Trio in A Minor (which Kashperova considered to be her finest work) for the unusual combination of viola, cello and piano; and *Hommage aux œuvres de Pietro Canonica*, a tribute to the Italian sculptor in seven movements. It was her largest composition for solo piano. Both works were enthusiastically reviewed. Both were subsequently lost amidst the upheavals of the 1917 Revolution and the composer’s hurried flight from Petrograd. So, too, was her four-movement

<sup>1</sup> Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Memories and Commentaries* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Where Do the Stars Come From?* (1902). Legend for soprano, baritone, SSAA and pf. Lyrics: Yakov Polonsky. Music: L. A. Kashperova. (All translations in the Biography are by the author unless otherwise stated.)

<sup>3</sup> KashperOVA should be avoided. KASHperova is an alternative, particularly in the masculine form: KASHperov.

<sup>4</sup> *Russkaya Muzikal'naya Gazyeta* [*Russian Musical Gazette*], no. 16 (15 April 1912): Khronika [Chronicle], sections 393–4.



**Figure 1** Leokadiya A. Kashperova ca. 1900 around the time she premiered her Piano Concerto op. 2 in Moscow and St Petersburg, and was teaching Igor Stravinsky.<sup>5</sup>

**Image:** courtesy of the Russian National Museum of Music, with thanks to Mikhail Bryzgalov and Olga Kuzina.

Sonata no. 3 in F for cello and piano. Such were the disruptions, it appears that after 1916 hardly a note of Kashperova's music was performed again, not in Imperial Russia nor in the USSR. Following her death in 1940, even her name, once so familiar, joined her fine music in historical anonymity and oblivion.

My research into Kashperova began in 2002 at the University of Bristol, where I explored the impact of her teaching upon Stravinsky's emergence as a concert pianist in the early 1920s.<sup>6</sup> By the time my thesis was completed at Oxford in 2008,

<sup>5</sup> Figures 1–4 (using numbers) appear in this Biography. Figures A, AA, and so on (using letters) are available online: [www.cambridge.org/Graham\\_Online](http://www.cambridge.org/Graham_Online) appendix.

<sup>6</sup> See Graham Griffiths, 'Leokadiya Kashperova and Stravinsky: The Making of a Concert Pianist', in Graham Griffiths (ed.), *Stravinsky in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 24–33.

I had placed Stravinsky's absorption with pianism's constructive processes at the centre of his creative re-invention as a neoclassicist – now viewed from the perspective of his relationship with the piano. My subsequent monograph tested this premise against Stravinsky's whole output: eighty-five compositions are considered.<sup>7</sup> The book's analytical focus derived, in embryo, from Stravinsky's undoubtedly transformational experience between 1899 and 1901 as a student of Kashperova, whom he describes in his autobiography as 'this excellent musician'.<sup>8</sup>

Little did I expect the next phase of my research to reveal that 'Stravinsky's piano teacher' was also, indeed primarily, a talented and very successful composer. In my first visit to St Petersburg in April 2014, I was able to locate some of her scores that had lain undisturbed for over a century in the city's libraries and archives. The most important of these early discoveries was her Symphony in B Minor, which had been performed in 1905 in Moscow and St Petersburg, later in Berlin.<sup>9</sup> In 2016 came an important break-through: an archive of materials was located at the Glinka State Consortium of Musical Culture, leading to the editing and restoration of other scores, some from manuscript.<sup>10</sup> Since then, research into Kashperova's biography has continued apace and, thanks to the generous support of other researchers in the United Kingdom, Germany and Russia (see Acknowledgements), it is now possible to publish this short biography, together with Kashperova's writings, in this single Element. Thus another significant landmark has been reached in the restoration of Kashperova to her rightful place in music history: as Russia's foremost woman composer of the early twentieth century – composition representing but one of her many talents.

Leokadiya Aleksandrovna Kashperova – or as she is referred to in Russian and Soviet encyclopaedias Кашперова Леокадия (Александровна) – was born on 4 May Old Style (16 May New Style) 1872 in Lyubim, a village in the Yaroslavl district, 300 km north-east of Moscow.<sup>11</sup> She died on 3 December 1940 in Moscow,

<sup>7</sup> Graham Griffiths, *Stravinsky's Piano: Genesis of a Musical Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography (1903–1934)* (London: Marion Boyars, 1990), p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> As a consequence of this discovery, the Symphony would also be performed in London – by the BBC Concert Orchestra under Jane Glover, and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 – on International Women's Day (8 March) 2018. See also the final page of the Acknowledgements.

<sup>10</sup> From this material, the Kashperova Edition was created by Boosey & Hawkes (London) with the full authorization of the (re-named) Russian National Museum of Music, Moscow: [www.boosey.com/composer/Leokadiya+Kashperova](http://www.boosey.com/composer/Leokadiya+Kashperova).

<sup>11</sup> Central State Historical Archive of St Petersburg: Archive 361/Inventory 3/File 3051. Amid several crossings-out it appears that 6 May is eventually preferred over 4 May although a more reliable source has '4/16 May 1872': L. A. Kashperova, Воспоминания [*Memoirs*], ed. N. G. Fesenkova, in Музыкальное наследие [*Musical Legacy*], vol. 2, pt 2 (Moscow: Muzyka, 1968), p. 135. Fesenkova would have conferred with Alexei Kashperov with whom she compiled the Kashperova archive (no. 345) at the Russian National Museum of Music, Moscow.

though, at the time of going to press, it has not been possible to confirm the location of her grave. In official documents her first name is given as Elikonida; for example in her two St Petersburg Conservatoire diplomas (1893, 1895)<sup>12</sup> and in her Passport for Life (1898).<sup>13</sup> Following her marriage in 1916 to Sergei Andropov, she performed under the name of Leokadiya Kashperova-Andropova. She was a relative of the Moscow-based pianist and composer Elizaveta (Vladimirovna) Kashperova (1871–1945), a piano teacher at the Moscow Conservatoire between 1921 and 1931. She was therefore also related to the opera composer, Elizaveta’s father, Vladimir (Nikitich) Kashperov (1826–94), a professor at the Moscow Conservatoire between 1866 and 1872. Vladimir Kashperov had enjoyed considerable success in Italy with productions of his operas *Maria Tudor* (Milan), *Rienzi* (Florence) and *Consuelo* (Venice) staged between 1859 and 1865. He attended Glinka’s funeral in Paris in 1857. Later, in Moscow, he was a close associate of Tchaikovsky, Nikolai Rubinstein, Herzen, Ogarëv and Turgenev, and set librettos to works by Ostrovsky (*The Storm*, 1867) and Gogol (*Taras Bulba*, 1893).<sup>14</sup>

Leokadiya’s unusual, un-Russian ‘official’ name, Elikonida, was surely the result of the tradition, prevalent in rural Russia where she was born, of leaving the responsibility of naming a new arrival to the Orthodox priest who officiates at the child’s baptism. As Kashperova was born on 4/16 May her christening would have fallen close to 28 May, the saint’s day for St Elikonida of Thessaloniki.

Kashperova’s father, Aleksandr Vladimirovich Kashperov (1838–98), had studied law at the Demidov Lyceum in Yaroslavl. Documents held in the archive of the regional assembly in nearby Kostroma – the stress is on the last syllable, Kostroma – reveal that he was subsequently enlisted for military service and was decorated with a bronze medal for his participation in the ‘pacification of the mutiny in the Kingdom of Poland’, referred to nowadays as the January Uprising, of 1863–4.<sup>15</sup> The following year, Lieutenant Kashperov returned home to take up his first post, as a judge in the rural district of Lyubim from 1866. He was subsequently elected to the Honorable Justices of Bui County in 1878 and re-elected in 1884. The family was descended from the noble line of ‘Kashpirovs’ whose roots can be traced to the eighteenth century. By the time of Leokadiya Kashperova’s birth in 1872, the family regularly wintered in

<sup>12</sup> Central State Historical Archive of St Petersburg: Archive 7/Inventory 2/File 1793.

<sup>13</sup> Issued on 30 July 1898. Central State Historical Archive of St Petersburg: Archive 361/Inventory 3/File 3051.

<sup>14</sup> Olga Kuzina, ‘Неизвестные автографы П. И. Чайковского в архиве В. Ф. Одоевского’ [Unknown Tchaikovsky Manuscripts in the Odoyevsky Archive] in *Almanac*, no. 2, ed. M. P. Rakhmanova (Moscow: Glinka State Consortium of Musical Culture, 2003), pp. 298–306 (p. 300).

<sup>15</sup> Information researched by local historians Larisa Pukhacheva (Kostroma) and Irina Ivanovna Zenkina (Yaroslavl), July 2019 in the Kostroma Region Historical Archives (scans 2800–40).

Kostroma, spending the summer months in their architecturally splendid mansion at Bochatino, which had been built around 1830 and modelled on the fashionable English Regency style (See Figure A).<sup>16</sup> The estate extended to over 400 acres. In her memoirs, Kashperova acknowledges her upbringing within the ‘landed gentry’, giving this as the reason for the breadth and intensity of her early tutoring, particularly in foreign languages and the creative arts.

Her mother, Maria Aleksandrovna (1849–1929), performed a significant role in guiding her family’s musical and cultural education.<sup>17</sup> She played the piano, painted and also wrote poetry, providing the lyrics for Kashperova’s eight *Children’s Tales in Song* (1907). Leokadiya was one of four children, three girls and an older brother; she would later compose a piano suite *In the Midst of Nature* (1910) for her younger sister Elizaveta. Kashperova learned the piano from the age of four, initially from her mother, then with Zinaida (Fedorovna) Khomutova, who at one time had studied with Katerina (Kristoforovna) Rubinstein, the mother of the two celebrated Rubinstein brothers, Anton and Nikolai, founders of the St Petersburg and Moscow Conservatoires. From the age of six, Kashperova had lessons from Maria (Fedorovna) Fiuson, who introduced to her young pupil the music of Mozart and Beethoven by reading through many of their symphonies at the piano, in duet arrangement.

Kashperova’s upbringing had been immersed in literature. At a tender age she was already copying out poems, prayers and psalms in German and English, often intended as affectionate Mother’s Day offerings: ‘She sets me on her knee / Very often, for some kisses / Oh! How good I’ll try to be / For such a dear Mamma as this is’ being a typical example, written when she was barely seven.<sup>18</sup> Life in the remote countryside was enlivened by theatrical performances in the music room (‘with white columns’), Kashperova and her sisters writing the plays themselves. There, the narrative of Polonsky’s dramatic ballad *The Eagle and the Snake*, which she would later choose as a song lyric, might well have first come to her attention, being ideal for enactment via informal, improvised representation.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Bochatino was designed by the same architect, N. I. Mitkin, as a prominent mansion built a few years earlier in the centre of Kostroma. This would become the London Hotel, so-named for its architectural style and, from 1857, the provincial court-house. Figure A, see: [www.cambridge.org/Graham\\_Online\\_appendix](http://www.cambridge.org/Graham_Online_appendix).

<sup>17</sup> From the age of seven, Kashperova was learning English and German under her mother’s guidance. Documents held at the Russian National Museum of Music (Moscow) reveal that between 1879 and 1881 Kashperova enjoyed copying out favourite texts – for instance, a prayer in German (‘Hilf’, Herr Jesu’), a psalm in English (‘Psalm XXIII’) and poetry (‘To my dear Mamma’, ‘Time flies’, ‘Flowers’, ‘Thanks’). These were all addressed to her mother and written in neat calligraphy: Archive 345/104–112.

<sup>18</sup> Archive 345/108.

<sup>19</sup> Yakov Polonsky (1819–98) was highly regarded in his day for maintaining the lyrical tradition of Russian Romantic poetry, especially that of its greatest figure, Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837).

In 1883, at the age of eleven, she was enrolled at the music academy in Moscow directed by Nadezhda Muromtseva, a former pupil of Nikolai Rubinstein at the Moscow Conservatoire. There, she began to perform piano solos in public whilst acquiring a passion for chamber music and for the music of Beethoven. In her memoirs, she recalls attending Anton Rubinstein's performance of Sonata op. 109 and how the beauty of the theme in the 'Theme and Variations' finale had woken her up during the night to hear 'an authentic human voice penetrate my soul. This voice brought me to tears.'

By 1888, Kashperova, now aged sixteen, was established in St Petersburg in an apartment close to the Conservatoire, at Ofitserskaya ulitsa, no. 26 apt. 30. (The street was later renamed Rimsky-Korsakov Prospekt.)<sup>20</sup> The Central State Historical Archive of St Petersburg holds a letter (2 August 1888) signed by Kashperova's mother addressed to the Conservatoire's admissions office. She requests that her daughter be admitted to attend 'courses in piano, theory of composition and other academic subjects as an external student'.<sup>21</sup> At the second attempt she was granted a place, studying at the St Petersburg Conservatoire for a total of seven years, from 1888 to 1895 (See Figure AA).<sup>22</sup> In 1893, the year she graduated from Rubinstein's Special Piano class, she was awarded the Schröder Pianoforte Prize.<sup>23</sup> In 1895, she graduated for a second time, from Nikolai Solovyov's theory and composition class. At her graduation concert, even though Rubinstein had been vehemently opposed to women conductors ('just a farcical idea'; see Section 3), Kashperova directed soloists, chorus and orchestra in her own composition *Orvasi* (1895), a cantata with texts by the Symbolist poet Dmitri Merezhkovsky (1866–1941).<sup>24</sup>

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His poetry was set by a wide range of prominent Russian composers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

<sup>20</sup> In 1892 she was living at 2 Yamskaya Street, Apartment 15. In December 1896 César Cui wrote to her at 1 Dmitrovsky Pereulok [Lane] which is located close to Dostoevsky's former residence, now the 'F. M. Dostoevsky Literary-Memorial Museum'.

<sup>21</sup> Central State Historical Archive of St Petersburg: Archive 361/Inventory 3/File 3051. The address given on this letter is: Kostromskaya guberniya [region], Buiski uезд [parish], Bochatino mansion, on the river Volga. Written in the margin of this letter is a note in Kashperova's hand (signed and dated 30 May 1898) indicating that the Conservatoire had returned all her personal documents. The archive also holds an earlier letter from Kashperova to the Conservatoire (dated 20 March 1893); it demonstrates that as an external student she is obliged formally to request permission from the Conservatoire director to be allowed to sit the exam for 'Special Piano' as a pupil of Anton Rubinstein.

<sup>22</sup> Figure AA see: [www.cambridge.org/Graham\\_Online](http://www.cambridge.org/Graham_Online) appendix

<sup>23</sup> A prize awarded annually by the St Petersburg-based piano manufacturers C. M. Schröder (1818–1917).

<sup>24</sup> Ludmila Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin: The Saga of a Russian Emigré Composer* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), p. 6.

The four years she spent in the Special Piano class of Anton Rubinstein, that towering figure of Russian music, are generously documented by Kashperova (see Section 3). As for her experience of studying with Solovyov, one must rely upon a single witness statement from fellow student Samuel Maikapar (1867–1938), whose canon of children’s piano works is still held in high regard. Solovyov, famed to this day for his comic squib, surely intentionally so (namely, that Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto no. 1 ‘like the first pancake, is a flop’),<sup>25</sup> was evidently fond of the *bon mot*. His teaching style probably reflected as much, to the distaste of Kashperova who, daily, would have compared his lightness with the gravitas of the great and (since his death in 1894) immortal Rubinstein. Maikapar reminisces:

[Kashperova] had spent four years in the piano class of A. G. Rubinstein. Gifted in both [piano and composition] she also stood apart for her serious attitude to study and her extraordinary directness of character. In his lectures Solovyov liked to make jokes, but not always successfully. I remember one occasion, after some particularly unsuccessful witticisms, that displeasure was registered very clearly across Kashperova’s face. Noting this, Solovyov enquired: ‘Didn’t you like that?’ ‘No, I didn’t like it at all!’ she replied, frankly. Solovyov wasn’t angry with her, but just laughed and continued with his lecture. A few years after graduation she presented me with a printed score of her symphony and its piano transcription in the Bessel edition [St Petersburg’s leading music publishers].<sup>26</sup>

The Central State Historical Archive also preserves Kashperova’s two diplomas, the first (29 May 1893)<sup>27</sup> recording her graduation from Rubinstein’s ‘Special Piano’ class. This confirms that she ‘completed all examined subjects and has shown her abilities in her main subjects: piano performance in the class of the Rector A. G. Rubinstein: *Excellent*. And in secondary subjects: Theory of Music (special class: Fugue) and Encyclopaedia: *Excellent*’. The second diploma (26 May 1895) records Kashperova’s graduation from Solovyov’s composition class and that, as a consequence of this, she has been awarded the title of Free Artist. The fourteen signatories include Anna Esipova (pianist), Felix Blumenfeld (conductor), F. Czerny (piano teacher and future colleague at the St Petersburg Music School), Anatoly K. Lyadov (1855–1914) and N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908) (see Figure B: [www.cambridge.org/Graham\\_Online](http://www.cambridge.org/Graham_Online) appendix)

<sup>25</sup> ‘Novoye Vremya’, St Petersburg, 13 November 1875.

<sup>26</sup> S. M. Maikapar, *The Years of Study and Musical Activity* (Moscow, 1938). This is an excerpt from chapter 4: ‘Professor N. F. Solovyov: My Completion of His Course in Compositional Theory’. Available online: [www.beethoven.ru/en/node/987](http://www.beethoven.ru/en/node/987) (accessed 7 April 2021). In chapter 2, Maikapar recalls studying ‘ensemble’ with Leopold Auer.

<sup>27</sup> The text of the diploma has 26 May.

Hardly had the ink dried on her diploma than Kashperova was completing her first major unsupervised composition. As she describes in her memoirs:

My first independent composition was a sonata for cello and piano. I wrote it in the summer following my graduation from the Conservatoire [1895] and wanted to show it to Aleksandr Verzhbilovich [the cello professor] in the autumn but changed my mind. Later, I timidly admitted that I had written a sonata. After we played the first movement through he exclaimed: ‘What a surprising young lady you are! How beautiful it is and how well it suits the cello!’ Verzhbilovich showed it to Rimsky-Korsakov and Lyadov who were both pleased with the composition, Lyadov suggesting some changes. But my friends and I did not like these, so I decided to publish it in its original form. I soon wrote a second sonata which Verzhbilovich also played beautifully in St Petersburg and Moscow.<sup>28</sup>

These early cello sonatas, particularly their luxuriant piano parts, mark Kashperova’s spectacular entry into St Petersburg’s professional concert world as the Conservatoire’s prize-winning Rubinstein protegee. Yet, her personal reflections on their composition, despite such enthusiastic reception, reveal an emerging composer who needed the support of her fellow students to resist the interference of (male) authority intent on ‘correcting’ her music. Lyadov’s suggestions were rejected – this, surely, a significant moment of self-assertion.

Kashperova’s Cello Sonatas, op. 1, no. 1 in G and no. 2 in E Minor were composed between 1895 and 1896. Both works are in four expansive movements and display such compositional assurance and breadth of expression they must surely rank amongst the most impressive ‘opus 1’ creations by any young composer. These qualities also define her Piano Concerto in A Minor (1900) and Symphony in B Minor (1905), not least in the memorable passages for solo cello that feature in both works. (Such quirks of orchestration would later invoke Balakirev’s displeasure, but they are evidence that Kashperova distanced herself from the Russian nationalist style.) The Cello Sonatas present considerable yet deeply rewarding challenges to the performers, particularly the pianist, for the brilliance of the piano writing gives a clear indication of Kashperova’s elevated technique. Both works offer musical audiences today a substantial feast of Russian Romanticism at its most lyrical.

According to a concert review that autumn in one of St Petersburg’s German-language newspapers (*Mährisches Tagblatt*, 20 November 1895), Kashperova was singled out, following a recital presented by all the former Rubinstein students, as ‘*die Allerbegabteste*’ (‘the most gifted of them all’). Even the

<sup>28</sup> Translation: Patricia Cockrell, 2019. See Section 2. Kashperova was the pianist in this cello–piano duo, which would perform regularly until Verzhbilovich’s death in 1911.



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cello professor was keen to form an artistic partnership with this brilliant young graduate. Aleksandr Verzhbilovich, dedicatee of the Sonatas, was also section leader of the Maryinsky Theatre Orchestra.<sup>29</sup> Together with the distinguished violinist and teacher Leopold Auer, a regular chamber ensemble was formed and, thus, the piano trio became a favourite genre for Kashperova, not least for giving value on several occasions during her career to both her talents as composer and performer. A week after the recital, Kashperova performed Rubinstein's Piano Quartet, op. 66, with Auer, Fyodor Hildebrandt and Verzhbilovich at the Fifth Quartet Meeting of the Russian Musical Society (on 28 November). This momentous year ended on an even higher note, with Kashperova as the soloist in Rubinstein's Piano Concerto no. 5 (op. 94, in E-flat) at the Tenth Symphonic Meeting of the Russian Musical Society under the direction of Max von Erdmansdörfer.<sup>30</sup>

1898

As Kashperova began to establish her career she also indulged her long-standing interest in poetry by becoming personally acquainted with Yakov Polonsky, and often attended his literary gatherings. When the poet died in 1898, Kashperova responded by setting one of his most celebrated ballads, *The Eagle and the Snake*, for the benefit of the memorial fund established to support Polonsky's widow and family.<sup>31</sup> Kashperova's setting, for baritone and piano, displays her intuitive sense of drama and atmosphere, qualities that had become intrinsic to all her compositions. No evidence survives of a public rendition of this dramatic 'ballad' although, given the circumstances, it was surely performed privately on numerous occasions, especially at 'Les Vendredis Polonsky'. As Kashperova mentions in her memoirs, she herself regularly hosted 'musical evenings at home on Tuesdays'. It is therefore highly likely that in this domestic context she would have programmed *The Eagle and the Snake* (1902) alongside renditions of her *Songs of Love: 12 Romances* (1904) long before these were published.

1899

Within a few years, Kashperova had become a regular feature of the city's musical calendar, frequently performing in the most august company. On 15 March 1899, César Cui (1835–1918) wrote to Balakirev inviting him to attend

<sup>29</sup> Among Verzhbilovich's pupils would be Leopold, b.1892, father of Mstislav Rostropovich, 1927–2007.

<sup>30</sup> Erdmansdörfer may have demonstrated empathy with Kashperova's creativity: he was married to the Austrian pianist-composer Pauline Fichtner (1847–1916).

<sup>31</sup> Polonsky's daughter Natalia would later marry Stravinsky's cousin Nikolai Yelachich.

an informal demonstration of arias from his new opera *Saracen* (1898) ‘tomorrow, Wednesday, at 8 p.m.’.<sup>32</sup> Among the guests would be the most respected music critic of the time, Vladimir Stasov; also Ilya Repin, the famous portrait painter. Cui signs off his invitation with ‘Kashperova accompanies, I sing’. No first name or further explanation was required.

In 1899, Kashperova was invited by Fyodor Stravinsky, principal baritone at the Maryinsky Opera House, to give regular piano lessons to his son, Igor (see Figure BB: [www.cambridge.org/Graham\\_online](http://www.cambridge.org/Graham_online) appendix).<sup>33</sup> Fyodor might have been prompted to extend this invitation to Kashperova having seen her or, possibly, conversed with her at Polonsky’s funeral, which they had both attended the previous November; the celebrated Pushkinist poet had died on 30 October 1898. Around the same time, Kashperova began composing her Piano Concerto in A Minor, op. 2, completing it in 1900. She premiered this work, her first major orchestral score, on 17 January 1901 in Moscow under the direction of Vasily Safonov – later, principal conductor of the New York Philharmonic from 1906 until Gustav Mahler’s appointment in 1909. The concerto was performed again on 3 February in St Petersburg under the direction of Max Fiedler (who later conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1908 to 1912). These experiences brought Kashperova wider recognition and inaugurated a decade of increasingly ambitious and prestigious engagements and commissions.

The orchestral colours that Kashperova employs in her Piano Concerto are often achieved by allocating generous solos to the wind and brass, this sonority becoming a characteristic of her preferred orchestral palette. Noteworthy, too, are unexpected glimpses of chamber music, in the last movement for example, when the piano combines fleetingly with solo violin and solo cello in passages that illustrate the composer’s declared fondness for the piano trio genre, and might possibly have been written with her professional colleagues in mind. The concerto’s quick outer movements (*Molto allegro* and *Allegro con anima*) admirably portray the vivacious personality of their composer, recalled by Monika Hunnius as offering those around her ‘an abundance of joy, excitement and fun ... She never ceases to surprise us all!’<sup>34</sup> The central movement, by contrast, is a tender *Andante* which offers the listener a gem of musical poetry.

<sup>32</sup> César A. Cui, *Избранные письма* [*Selected Letters*], ed. I. L. Gusin (Leningrad: State Music Publishers, 1955), letter 272, p. 199.

<sup>33</sup> The first of many entries in Fyodor Stravinsky’s account books that mention Kashperova appears on 12 [24] January 1900. See the top line: ‘To the piano teacher L. A. Kashperova. 5 lessons given to Igor since 1 December 1899 – 25 roubles’. (Fyodor S. Akimenko was later paid 6 roubles for four lessons on the theory of music.) Image courtesy of the F. I. Stravinsky Family Fund (Moscow & Venice).

<sup>34</sup> Monika Hunnius, *Mein Weg zur Kunst* [*My Path to Art*] (Hamburg: Verlag tradition-GmbH, 1925), p. 252; see also pp. 253–7. (Hunnius was related to the author Hermann Hesse.)