

96084

BRILLIANT  
CLASSICS

# US VOL SKA YA

SUITES  
&  
POEMS

Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra

Yevgeny Mravinsky  
Arvīds Jansons  
and others

## Galina Ivanovna Ustvol'skaya 1919–2006

CD1  
Suites 37'50

### Young Pioneers' Suite (1953)

- |                                 |      |
|---------------------------------|------|
| 1. A Trumpet Calls!             | 1'38 |
| 2. In the Forest – A Fairy Tale | 2'24 |
| 3. At Leisure                   | 2'11 |
| 4. A Game                       | 0'36 |
| 5. A Celebration                | 2'14 |
| 6. A Trumpet Calls! (Final)     | 1'49 |

Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra  
Arvīds Jansons *conductor*

### Children's Suite\* (1955)

- |                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| 7. Morning               | 1'44 |
| 8. Cheerful walk         | 1'36 |
| 9. Ballerina Doll        | 1'35 |
| 10. Bears' dance         | 1'44 |
| 11. 'Touch-last'         | 1'04 |
| 12. In the glade         | 1'38 |
| 13. 'Battle'             | 0'57 |
| 14. Dance and a cry-baby | 1'27 |
| 15. Evening              | 2'30 |

Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra  
Yevgeny Mravinsky *conductor*

### Sports' Suite (Suite)\* (1959)

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| 16. I. Very quickly, cheerfully                         | 0'31 |
| 17. II. Moderately, briskly                             | 0'53 |
| 18. III. Melodiously, at a leisurely pace               | 2'09 |
| 19. <i>da Capo I</i>                                    | 0'33 |
| 20. IV. Quickly   | 1'03 |
| 21. V. Quickly  | 1'19 |
| 22. <i>da Capo V</i>                                    | 0'41 |
| 23. <i>da Capo I</i>                                    | 0'34 |
| 24. VI. Quickly   | 1'16 |
| 25. VII. Moderately                                     | 1'45 |
| 26. VIII. Very quickly, cheerfully – <i>da Capo I</i>   | 0'33 |
| 27. IX. Moderately, briskly – <i>Finale, da Capo II</i> | 1'12 |

Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra  
Arvīds Jansons *conductor*

CD2  
Poems 42'51

### 1. Lights in the Steppe (Poem No.1) (1959) 19'45

Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra  
Arvīds Jansons *conductor*

### 2. Hero's Exploit (Poem No.2) (1957) 10'06

The Leningrad Radio Youth Symphony Orchestra  
Igor Borisoglebsky *conductor*

### 3. Poem on Peace (Song of Praise)\* (1961) 12'57

*Words by Sergey Davydov*

Ensemble-in-residence at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory 'The Studio for New Music'  
Vladislav Lavrik *conductor*

Moscow Boys Choir (School No. 1234)  
Bogdan Petrenko *choir director*

Mikhail Turpanov *piano*

*Notes: The composer's own latest titles for the works, that are used in modern concerts, are given in brackets.*

*Live recordings are marked with an asterisk.*

All the recordings are published for the first time, except for *Children's Suite* and *Lights in the Steppe*, that were published on vinyl in the USSR (*Children's Suite* was also issued in Japan on a CD). The recordings of the performances of *Young Pioneers' Suite*, *Sports' Suite*, *Hero's Exploit* and *Poem on Peace* (the only ones known in Russia) have never been published before.

All tracks are in Mono except for *Poem on Peace*.



Yevgeny Mravinsky and Galina Ustvol'skaya after the performance of Children's Suite in 1957. Author unknown.

the Conservatory as the only female student in his class. Shostakovich highly valued Ustvol'skaya's work and later said of her: 'I am convinced that the music of G. I. Ustvol'skaya will achieve worldwide renown, valued by all who perceive truth in music as paramount in importance'. After the release of the notorious February 1948 Resolution, Ustvol'skaya, like many other composers, was accused of Formalism, an abstract, audience-alienating approach to composition. She thereafter had to create accessible works 'for the people'. In the 1950s Ustvol'skaya wrote a number of vocal and instrumental works in a socialist realist style, most of which were performed once or twice – even in this official idiom, her music was considered too idiosyncratic. She subsequently excluded these works from her catalog, going to considerable lengths to destroy all traces of their existence. Her attitude towards the few manuscripts that

Galina Ustvol'skaya's entire life (17 June 1919–22 December 2006) is bound up with one and the same city. She was born in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg), completed the 10-year program of the music school affiliated with the N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov Leningrad Conservatory, and in 1939 entered Dmitri Shostakovich's composition class at

survived was that they were written 'for the money'. From 1962, despite difficult financial circumstances, Ustvol'skaya devoted herself exclusively to true, 'spiritual, non-religious creativity'.

#### Galina Ustvol'skaya as 'Soviet composer'

In 1962 Galina Ivanovna Ustvol'skaya wrote the last piece of music she was to compose at the behest of the Soviet authorities: *Poem on Peace*, with words by Sergey Davydov. Its premiere took place on 9 April in the Small Hall of the Leningrad Philharmonia, in elite company. The *Poem* was performed after a Prokofiev *Overture* (Op.42) and Milhaud's *Creation of the World*, and was followed, after the interval, by Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*. The performers were soloists of the Symphonic Orchestra of the Leningrad Philharmonic, conducted by Gennady Rozhdestvensky and the boys' choir of the M. I. Glinka Choral Academy. The US composer Samuel Barber, then visiting the USSR, was present in the concert hall. The composer Dmitry Tolstoy, a colleague of Galina Ustvol'skaya at the conservatory, later recalled:

*'The talented Ustvol'skaya was, at that time, a representative of the extreme avant-garde in Leningrad. She loved to experiment with sharp, harsh dissonances: the more terrible the harmonies to the ear, the more they seemed to her better and more valuable. The snare drum crackled, the trumpets played in minor seconds and fourths, the boys sang in recitative style on one note, and this dramatic, ill-tempered music continued for more than a quarter of an hour. Having listened to*



The cover of the first and only edition of Children's Suite

*Ustvol'skaya's Poem, Barber said: "If that is peace, I prefer war".'*

The tone for this piece of music was set, in particular, according to the composer and songwriter Vasily Solov'yov-Sedoi, then chair of the Leningrad Composers' Union, 'by N. S. Khrushchev's wonderful speech, permeated as it was with a passionate striving to free the peoples from the horrors of world wars.' The Caribbean Crisis was approaching and the newspapers at that time were full of articles on the theme of 'the struggle for peace.' In April 1962 alone, in *Leningradskaya pravda* there was a large number of publications of this kind. Beneath titles such as 'Peace to the world!', 'Ban propaganda of war' and 'The threat to peace,' the articles proclaimed that 'the enemies of peace are doing everything possible to bring the world to the edge of war. But the Soviet Union stands at the head of the camp of peace.' Davydov's poem, that Ustvol'skaya was obliged to put to music, repeats this rhetoric, demanding, 'For everyone! Light, light, light, light for all people!', moving on to a description of the horror of war and ending with a secular prayer for peace: 'Let peace become stronger! Peace! Stand up, World, for peace! Stand up, World, for peace! Glory to peace!'. Ustvol'skaya was a ready convert to such a repetitive, passionate style, although with completely different content, and portrayed in a frank manner 'the war for peace.' The zeal of the *Poem*, evidently, so frightened the Soviet authorities, that it was never performed again, and nothing was written about it in the newspapers or journals. Never again would an official be so bold as to commission Ustvol'skaya to write something on a particular theme. And she herself at that time broke all links with conformism: a *Symphony on the Cosmos* that figured in her creative plans for the years 1962–63, as set out in documents in the archive of the Leningrad Composers' Union, was to remain forever unwritten. One can imagine just how astonishing this work could have been in which the exploit of Yuri Gagarin would be described by a composer from the 'black hole' – a metaphor she often used to describe her own serious work.

Ustvol'skaya began to write music 'for the people' and 'for money' in February 1948, when, like many others, she was obliged to undergo a 'profound reorientation'. A year later she wrote *Dream of Stepan Razin*, music on the theme of the Russian legendary folk hero, that received high praise, twice opened the 1949 season of the Leningrad Philharmonic, and was nominated for a Stalin Prize. All Ustvol'skaya's subsequent works written under Stalin were criticised and performed only once: the symphonic poem *Blossom and Prosper, Youth* (1949), for a four-voice choir with orchestral accompaniment; *Sinfonietta* in three parts on Russian themes (1950); a vocal-symphonic tone poem *Man from Vysokaya Mount* for baritone, male choir and orchestra (1952); and a symphonic poem for orchestra and children's choir, *Dawn above the Fatherland* (1952).

After Stalin's death, Ustvol'skaya's work began to reach a wider public. The second half of the 1950s was the peak of her career as a 'Soviet composer.' In this decade she composed three suites: *Young Pioneers' Suite* (4 April 1954, Daniil Tyulin), *Children's Suite* (23 October 1955, Karl Eliasberg), *Sports' Suite* (8 October 1961, Arvids Jansons); two symphonic poems – *Hero's Exploit* (6 November 1957, Yevgeny Mravinsky) and *Lights in the Steppe* (9 January 1959, Arvids Jansons); and music for the feature film *The Girl and the Crocodile* (1956). The music Ustvol'skaya wrote on 'children's themes' was the most popular with the public. According to the recollections of her contemporaries, in those years Galina Ivanovna was herself a person of a childlike and pure nature. It was at that time that she created her sombre *First Symphony*, the central theme of which was the suffering of children. Its emotional antithesis was to be the soaring music of her two 'children's suites.' The second of them – *Children's Suite* – turned out to be Ustvol'skaya's most popular work in the Soviet era. It was performed often, put on for foreign delegations and never criticized, which for a composer at that time was very rare. The two other suites were much less fortunate: performed a couple of times and then forgotten. The first in the series, later renamed *Young Pioneers' Suite*, is notable for being the only one of



Page 80 of the manuscript of *Lights in the Steppe*

contemporary themes. The symphonic poem *Hero's Exploit* won second prize in a nationwide competition to mark the 40th anniversary of the Soviet regime (no one

Ustvolskaya's works about which a review by Shostakovich appeared in the press. In the newspaper *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, he wrote: 'The suite is brilliantly orchestrated and one hears it with interest. It contains a genuine joy and love of life. I very much hope G. Ustvolskaya will continue in future to compose works for a young audience.' Ustvolskaya used this possibility to escape from Soviet reality on two further occasions: in *Children's Suite* and in the music for the film, *The Girl and the Crocodile*. She probably enjoyed composing for children, who are little affected by ideology and have much less that is 'false' about them, which is very significant – the composer's main works are characterised by an unbearable honesty.

It was not possible, however, to take refuge in the niche of children's music for very long: the composer was again called upon to take up

received first prize). The concert programme for the premiere stated,

*'This is not a tale about any event in the [civil] war, but the psychological portrait of one of its unknown heroes'. The composer strives to show the inner world of this hero, to show how determination to accomplish an exploit is born and matures in his soul. [...] After the culmination there is a calm, bright and lucid conclusion. The hero achieves a spiritual clarity by taking the decision which required so much courage.'*

Critics praised the work but in the concert halls it was never heard again. One year later, Ustvolskaya was commissioned to write a piece to mark the 40th anniversary of the Leninist Young Communist League (the Komsomol). Her new symphonic poem, *Lights in the Steppe*, was dedicated 'to the glorious Soviet youth, achieving feats of labour in the Virgin Lands.' The concert programme for the premiere, held to mark the latest plenum of the organising committee of the Composers' Union of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic, informed the Soviet concert-goer about the symphonic poem as follows:

*'Its "subject" is straightforward (there is no programmatic statement by the composer, but this can be easily "deduced" from the music): the wide spaces of the desolate, sleepy steppe are awoken by the whistle of a locomotive and the ringing song of Komsomol members. Having overcome difficulties, experienced failures and been energised by a new wave of strength, the young people achieve victories through labour. [...] In the steppe that was until recently lost in darkness appear the bright lights of new buildings!'*

Of 150 works performed, participants in the plenum paid special attention to the *Lights of the Steppe*, adopting a resolution that branded it as an ideological failure. Shostakovich, then close to Ustvolskaya, said in a speech at the plenum that the symphonic poem created 'the very strongest and best impression,' but that 'in conversations with comrades I have had, of course to agree,' that it expresses 'the

wonderful [Soviet] contemporaneity [...] with imperfect musical means.’ At that time, heroic music was in demand and composers were castigated for being ‘falsely dramatic.’ Ustvol’skaya, unlike Shostakovich, was poorly equipped to accommodate herself to the agenda of the day. She accepted Soviet ideals with difficulty and had her own personal views about heroism in music. Two months later, at a special session of the Composers’ Union dedicated to a discussion of *Lights in the Steppe*, the work received widely differing evaluations from fellow composers. At the end of the discussion the chair, the composer Orest Evlakhov, advised Ustvol’skaya to remove the ‘heavy basses’ and ‘a certain gloominess from a number of episodes’ (‘the menacing steppe’ and ‘the terrible train’), and to add ‘melodic breath’ and Komsomol enthusiasm. The first, ‘unsuccessful’, variant of the symphonic poem has not been preserved. The second was performed in 1962 and recorded on vinyl. The work was then forgotten for decades.

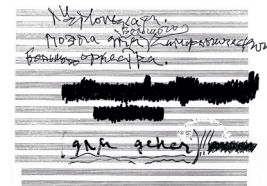
At the end of the 1980s, when Ustvol’skaya was discovered by the West, she drew up a catalogue of her works for the Sikorski Music Publishers. This contained none of the suites or symphonic poems, but only her ‘true, spiritual, but not religious, work.’ Several years later her husband persuaded her to include in the catalogue *Suite (Sports’ Suite)* and *Poem (Lights in the Steppe)*, then *Poem No.2 (Hero’s Exploit)* and *Dream of Stepan Razin*. It was at that time that Ustvol’skaya carried out a ‘purge’ of her works: everywhere, both where it was possible and where it should never have been done, she removed (or rather her husband did, at her request) the old names from the musical scores of these three works, cutting off the title pages. The inclusion of the remaining works at that moment was not even discussed – the children’s suites could not, of course, be placed side by side with the symphonies! There probably has never been a composer who so severely demarcated their own work into two specific categories – ‘accidental’ work, and those compositions that were the result of her heartfelt strivings. Most of all Ustvol’skaya was troubled by the existence of the musical score for *Song of Praise* (the new title of *Poem on Peace* since 1974), a copy of which had already turned up in the West in 1984. If she had been unhappy that she

had been obliged to use the words of Gianni Rodari in her *First Symphony* (‘the text should be stronger!!!’ she wrote on the manuscript), then all the more so in this case: the chorus of the poem was written to the words of a Soviet poet on the ‘topic of the day.’ She was absolutely dissatisfied with this. She needed a strong and balanced catalogue, she was ashamed of these ‘accidental compositions’ and was afraid that they would obscure her ‘real creative work.’ These fears have now gone. Ustvol’skaya is known thanks to her sonatas, compositions and symphonies that already have a prominent place in the world’s musical heritage. Her secondary works all this time remained in the shadows, but for all that they also have a grain of her genius in them and enrich our understanding of the personality of a composer also capable of writing beautiful tonal music. Today they sound like a symbolic *come back* of socialist realism in a country that can very accurately be described as neo-Soviet.

In this text the expression ‘Soviet composer’ is placed in quotation marks. Although Ustvol’skaya lived all her life in the USSR, to a greater degree than Prokofiev she deserves to be called a Russian composer since the *basis* of her creative work is in no way related to the Soviet system of values. This is also demonstrated by the fact that all Ustvol’skaya’s work in the spirit of socialist realism (with the exception of her *Children’s Suite*) was ignored, despite her great talent and brilliance. By contrast, it is Shostakovich, Khrennikov and Kabalevsky, convinced communists, who were Soviet composers. However, Ustvol’skaya herself spurned these subtleties. She was indifferent to how she was called so long as her real music was performed ‘at the very best level.’

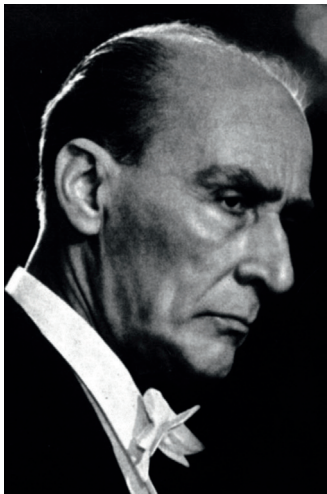
© Andrei Bakhmin – Ustvol’skaya.org

Translated from the Russian by Simon Cosgrove



‘For the money!!!’ – the title of *Lights in the Steppe* later corrected by the composer





**Yevgeny Mravinsky** (1903–1988) was a Soviet conductor. From 1938 to 1988 he was principal conductor of the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO), where he had made his debut as a conductor in 1931. Under Mravinsky, the Leningrad Philharmonic gained a legendary reputation, particularly in Russian music such as Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich. He conducted four of Ustvolskaya's orchestral works in 1949–1962, including the premières of *Dream of Stepan Razin*, *Man from Vysokaya Mount* and *Hero's Exploit*.



**Arvids Jansons** (1914–1984) was a Latvian conductor and father of conductor Mariss Jansons. In 1944 he was appointed conductor of Riga Opera, then the Latvian Radio Orchestra (1947–1952). In 1952 Jansons was appointed reserve conductor, and tour conductor, of the Leningrad Philharmonic behind Yevgeny Mravinsky and Kurt Sanderling. He conducted premières of Ustvolskaya's *Concerto*, *Lights in the Steppe*, *Sports' Suite* and *First Symphony*. Jansons became principal guest conductor of the Hallé Orchestra in 1965. He collapsed and died from a heart attack in 1984 while conducting a concert with the Hallé.

**Igor Borisoglebsky** (1919–1978) completed the 10-year secondary school (Capella) attached to the Leningrad Conservatory in 1937, where he was in the same class as Galina Ustvol'skaya. He twice graduated from the Leningrad Conservatory (as choir and orchestra conductor) and during the war served in the Soviet Army on the North Caucasian Front, receiving military awards and honours. He worked as chief editor of Leningrad TV and Radio for 31 years. In 1958 he organised a youth orchestra at the Radio Committee that also performed successfully in the city's concert halls. It also toured many Komsomol construction sites and virgin lands.



**Vladislav Lavrik** (b. 1980) is a Russian trumpet soloist and conductor. After receiving his Master's Degree in trumpet performance at the Moscow Conservatory, he graduated as conductor from the Gnesin Academy of Music, where his major professor was Maestro Vladimir Fedoseyev. Lavrik is a prize winner of several international trumpet competitions. In 2010 he made his conducting debut with the Russian National Orchestra at Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow. Since then he has conducted several Russian and American orchestras.



**Mikhail Turpanov** (b. 1989) is a Russian pianist studied at the Moscow Conservatory with Nikolai Petrov and Mikhail Voskresensky. Prize winner of numerous international piano competitions. As a renowned soloist Turpanov has appeared at many festivals and concert halls in Europe and Russia. His repertoire consists primarily of contemporary music. He is now teaching at the Moscow Conservatory.

*Special thanks to Konstantin Bagrenin*

Recordings: 7 January 1954 (Young Pioneer's Suite); 20 March 1957 (Children's Suite); 8 October 1961 (Sport's Suite); 7 October 1962 (Lights in the Steppe); 16 February 1958 (Hero's Exploit); 23 October 2016 (Poem on Peace)

Project by Alexei Lubimov

All materials provided by Ustvol'skaya.org

Restoration and mastering: Elena Sych

Restoration supervision: Eugene Platonov

Performers' photographs: Mravinsky: with kind permission of Mrs. Mravinsky; Jansons: by Zennosuke Yamamoto; © Lavrik; © Turpanov

© & © 2019 Brilliant Classics