

## **Pletnev documentary (2007), dedicated to his 50th anniversary**

Filmdirector and producer: Juriy Borisov

### **Part 2 (25 min)**

00:17 **P.: In general I don't contemplate much. One gets headaches from it, or wrinkles and signs of aging like boldness (laughs). Just stop it, it's useless.**

00:36: P. plays the First Piano Concerto by Beethoven, rehearsal in Canada 2006. **P.: Indeed, I think that such great talents like Tchaikovsky and Beethoven could not but understand their destination, their purpose. Maybe that's why Beethoven wanted to end his life and created his Heiligenstadt Testament. He didn't commit this act, though he knew what a bitter end was awaiting him.** (P. plays the Third Piano Concerto in the same year at the same place.)

02:18 Did Chopin had similar situation? **P.: You see, Chopin was ill. in the early age he was diagnosed with TB, poor lungs disease, which eventually put him to grave. Majorca, persistent cough. Imagine, he goes to Majorca with the family, and everyone on the island avoids him as 'plague' in fear of getting infected. Chopin was just 28 when he coughed out blood.**

03:14 P. plays Chopin's Prelude in D minor. **P.: In Majorca Chopin began to alienate himself from the world of the living, getting closer to the world of the dead. I was on Majorca in his dwelling – a small, humid room (monastery abode) with heavy arches above one's head. (Here is a video of that room.) P.: When the family came with a visit, he was sitting at a grand piano and said: I believe, you are all dead too. When writing these Preludes he got physically prepared to leave this world. That's why his music is not only romantic but carries a tragic undertone. - Did Chopin overcome this mood? - No, to overcome this was impossible! The pain stayed always in him, deep down. The time of great Polonaises and merry dances had gone, left behind long time ago, back in his youth.**

05:43 Chopin, Waltz in D minor, Moscow 2006.

06:55 **P.: I look at everything from the point of a wheel which is going to run over something. It's like: where have I gotten to? The dirt, the clay?! [The host: Then, push on the brake?!] P. : I couldn't and cannot use the brakes, the wheel goes on to where it has to, with the turn of the vehicle. It feels as if some separate force is turning me. The wheel itself cannot turn even if it wants to. Probably, predetermination exists.**

07:34 **Mother: Maybe his fate is such, but he is moving towards it himself.** [Host: So, when you as a child, started studying music and building musical instruments, it was predestined for you?] **P.: Yes, and all attempts to deviate from the path didn't bring me anywhere else. You cannot fight your destiny. According to the wisdom of the Native Americans, 'He who follows his nature, never commits a sin'. But most important is to figure out what your nature is.** (Again, P. plays the Fifth Concerto by Beethoven)

10:16 A fragment from Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in 1978 where P. was receiving the 1<sup>st</sup> prize. Prior to that he gave an interview on TV. **The young P. talked about his teacher** at the

Moscow State Conservatory, **Yakov V. Flier (2)** with admiration and appreciation. P. was the 4<sup>th</sup> year student then.

10: 49 (The video shows the classroom of Flier who was a legendary pianist and revered teacher at the Conservatory.) **Mother: I adored Flier, followed closely his musical career.** She has been especially honoured by being around him when possible.

11:06 Documentary video fragment of Yakov Flier playing piano. **Mother kept this cutting** from a newspaper with Flier's portrait for many years and passed it to her son only when he became a Laureate of the Competition.

12:07 **Young P.** in his speech after the victory: **At our last lesson Flier took hold of a very old music manuscript, which was bound by some antique books dealer. It turned to be the Spanish Fantasia by F. Liszt. I looked inside and saw the music of incredible difficulty. Flier said dreamily that he used to play the piece with a great success in the past. Then he looked at me and said: Wouldn't it be nice if you try to play this 'little piece'?** (Young P. plays The Spanish Fantasia by Liszt.)

13:45 **Mother: At the last round of Tchaikovsky Competition Misha (Michail) needed to wear a tuxedo. We tried to find or order one, but then Flier offered his old costume. It's interesting that Misha looked very comfortable in Flier's tuxedo as if wearing it all his life.** (In a flashback) 10:15 and number 38 – these were the time slot and the number assigned to the young P. for the Competition.

14:20 The last round of the Competition, P. plays the 1<sup>st</sup> Concerto of Tchaikovsky , Moscow 1978

15:14 **Mother: By the way, during the Competition someone from Kazakhstan asked Misha to correct the scores of the opera Eugene Onegin, and he did it, and he also played soccer in the meanwhile. The music was very organic to him, like breathing.**

16:00 Video of the festive Moscow, the fireworks on the red Square. Then the end of his performance is shown, ovations, flowers. His triumph.

16:27. **P. : I don't know, I look at my film and don't recognize the guy, what kind of person he is. [Young P.: Maybe the longer one thinks, the more sad thoughts he gets]. I remember vaguely what I was then doing. As if it's not me, but somebody else who has already died. [Young P. : maybe it's better not to analyse the problems with which we are confronted. Here is a citation from Ecclesiastes: Much wisdom amounts to much sorrow]. I watch him with curiosity, who's this type, what is he doing ? It's a little funny.**

Interviewer : Your father could share your success ? **P. : he didn't live long after, but he saw me winning the Competition and being invited to play abroad.**

**P.S. 21:35 P. : The musicians, conductors are considered to be clever and wise and have something important to say. They are not, just average or silly performers. And other people, without any talent, can talk cleverly. A good pianist can feel and grasp something valuable from the thin air but he wouldn't make a theory out of it or explain what he did. But musicologists, music critics can use lots of scientific terms in their speech and writing. That's why you'd better film the nature.**

## Notes:

1. Pletnev's father played bayan [https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bajan\\_\(accordeon\)](https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bajan_(accordeon))
2. Pletnev's professor Yakov Flier [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yakov\\_Flier](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yakov_Flier)
3. Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini [https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arturo\\_Toscanini](https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arturo_Toscanini)
4. Pianist Svyatoslav Richter [https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Svjatoslav\\_Richter](https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Svjatoslav_Richter)
5. Vladimir Horowitz  
<https://www.google.com/gasearch?q=horowitz&tbm=&source=sh/x/gm2/5>
6. Soviet Patriotic Song 'Wide Is My Motherland' 1936  
[https://youtu.be/waZhr3Rk1mQ?si=n06ugmcNslw6\\_v9g](https://youtu.be/waZhr3Rk1mQ?si=n06ugmcNslw6_v9g)
7. Legendary bas Feodor Chaliapin [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feodor\\_Chaliapin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feodor_Chaliapin)

## Additional material:

1. Wiki over Pletnev  
[https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michail\\_Pletnjov](https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michail_Pletnjov)
2. July 2010 incident in Thailand  
<https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2010/jul/07/mikhail-pletnev-child-molesting-thailand>
3. "Who starts wars" Pletnev's interview September 2, 2022  
<https://www.riorchestra.org/news/pletnev-interview>