

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

Filmdirector and producer: Juriy Borisov

Part 4 (20 min)

P.: A person has his own tuning fork which can evolve and transform into a hammer or an axe. This is conscience. He who acts against it, will be unhappy sooner or later. All religions teach: do not commit an evil action against another person. In Christianity one should even turn another cheek to his abuser; in Buddhism simply do not hamper another one performing his karma. (Excerpt from the old film about the Tsar-Bell in the Kremlin)

02:05 P.: Russian soul? – it's a very big substance. It can comprise anything, everything, the whole world's culture. Maybe due to the big size of the territory, the soul of a Russian person is also very large, attuned to the spaciousness of the country. Russians have a song: "So vast is my native country"(6)... and a similar feeling: nothing is beyond their reach, beyond their power in a sense. I don't want to say that they are better, or to boast about my Russianness. No, not better. They can be worse in many aspects, with some ugly character qualities. Simply their soul is very broad. There are numerous possibilities, many of which are not realized by them and still others have been realized the wrong way. There is an inclination for extremes, up to cruelty and betrayal. But the soul stays large all the way, so that if betrayal, it would also reach oversized proportions. Likewise if we have a dictator, he wouldn't know any limits. That's why the music is such as it is.

05:00 P.: The ability of comparison is peculiar to rational beings. A monkey wouldn't know who lives better, it doesn't envy, let's say, a rabbit. Envious people, using to the full their ability to compare (whose salary is higher?) never get rest. In Thailand for example and some other Asian countries with Buddhist approach one doesn't learn to compare each other's lot, doesn't aspire to take somebody else's place. Each has his or her own karma, occupies the predestined place. Many people there live in dwellings made of cardboard and three planks, but they will be greeting you with the same kind smile. They are not embittered, are free from harmful complexes. Such as: others live better than we, so they should be deprived, expropriated. Or: we live very well, and they (who are challenging us) should be shot dead, quartered, in each case tortured. You don't see it there, nor in any religious teaching... Thailand is a sort of paradise on earth, the people living there resemble me according to the character. Good, kind people.

06:50 Mother (laughing a bit sceptically): Yes, there are many strange things there. But the people are of a different mentality, a little different intellectually.

P.: Exactly – just like me, not so intelligent, but good and kind.

09:08 P.: Once I went with Marta to the Fado restaurant, where there was wine, lots of wine. She was preparing a solo concert with two grand pianos. I lamented the scarcity of existing repertoire for two instruments, and she said: Yes, so maybe you can do something about it in order to enrich the repertoire. I consented - the Fado music and red wine have disposed me in favour of a sworn promise. Next morning I remembered it with a shock and started thinking, what can be transferred, ending up with 'Zoloeshka' (Cinderella). I don't know why, it turned to be a very difficult task. Romantic music would be easier to transfer, I

could add or change something, but there were just three notes - Prokofiev didn't use many notes there. Meanwhile a pianist still needs to perform on the two grand pianos with these few notes at her disposal. I had to be inventive and to my mind, discovered a new principle. Have I used my constructor's experience? Me, a watch-maker? They write such nonsense about me... You read this, I don't... And 50 years of age, is it much? – Too many years!

11:03 P.: In general I just liked to make draughts of mechanisms, not of a time-machine - I wouldn't know how to sketch it...

12:40 P.: I have a feeling that we here began with my young years, then my reminiscences followed, till the moment of 'carrying-out the body', flowers... I think that flowers should be given a man at his funeral, then it's beautiful and suits well the occasion. For women flowers are becoming always. But here, in the semidarkness of a concert hall, with something black and shiny in the centre of the podium, resembling a coffin, all these people bringing flowers with solemn faces...

15:00 P.: The utmost pleasure I get from flying is a feeling of absolute freedom – you can go where you want. In order to attain such a feeling in the air one should know exactly, sitting at the steering control, which tumbler to switch and how to make a curve. If I cannot make it smoothly, then the feeling of freedom disappears, and some uncertainties arise. And apprehension is enemy to freedom.

15:35 P.: The same in music. When a person has reached the highest level of mastership, he can produce any effect he wants. Like Feodor Chaliapin (7) would say at the entrance to the scene: Let's bet that they all will be weeping now, and he sang and played his role with such a convincing tragicalness that the public couldn't help shedding tears. So how did it go?- Chaliapin would ask winking at his opponent... That's why you don't want to be the second pilot in the plane. For the lack of freedom. And yet, conducting music is comparable with taking a secondary position in the plane or with sitting at the back of a motorcycle – no absolute freedom...

18:20 Mother: It's telephone, doesn't matter, let it ring... But maybe, it's Misha? Shall I go and answer?

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
3. Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arturo_Toscanini
4. Pianist Svyatoslav Richter https://nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Svjatoslav_Richter
5. Vladimir Horowitz
<https://www.google.com/gasearch?q=horowitz&tbm=&source=sh/x/gs/m2/5>
6. Soviet Patriotic Song 'Wide Is My Motherland' 1936
https://youtu.be/waZhr3Rk1mQ?si=n06ugmcNslw6_v9g
7. Legendary bas Feodor Chaliapin https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feodor_Chaliapin

Additional material:

1. Wiki over Pletnev

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>