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The Kazan Conservatory School of Composition: Paths of Development*

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Abstract. In 2025, the Kazan Conservatory celebrates its 80th anniversary. This article examines the development stage of the music university's composition school, which played an important role in training the first composers of the national republics of the Russian Federation: Tatarstan, Mari El, Chuvashia, Udmurtia, Mordovia, Bashkortostan, Tuva, Komi, Kalmykia, and Altai. In particular, it reveals the outstanding role of Nazib Zhiganov, founder of the Kazan Conservatory, who managed, in the difficult post-war years, to lay a solid foundation for the systematic and exemplary work of the higher education institution. Zhiganov quickly assembled a teaching staff that also included musicians relocated from Leningrad and Moscow, who served as inheritors and bearers of the traditions of these major cultural centres. In the development of the Kazan Conservatory's composition school, the contributions of Mikhail Yudin, Albert Lehman, and Genrich Litinsky are particularly noted. Together with Zhiganov, they developed a unique concept for the comprehensive training of young composers, taking into account their national character and the preservation of the distinctive features of their musical language. The works of outstanding teachers, who took an active part in creating Tatar music especially that based on developing the expressiveness of traditional pentatonic melodic material, significantly enriched the repertoire of the republic's musical performing ensembles.

Keywords: Nazib Zhiganov, Mikhail Yudin, Genrich Litinsky, Albert Lehman, Kazan Conservatory, national schools of composition

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Школа композиции Казанской консерватории: пути становления

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Аннотация. В 2025 году Казанская консерватория отмечает свой 80-летний юбилей. В статье рассматривается этап становления школы композиции музыкального вуза, сыгравшей важную роль в подготовке первых композиторов национальных республик Российской Федерации — Татарстана, Марий Эл, Чувашии, Удмуртии, Мордовии, Башкортостана, Тувы, Коми, Калмыкии, Алтая. Раскрывается выдающаяся роль основателя Казанской консерватории Назиба Жиганова, сумевшего в сложные послевоенные годы заложить прочную основу для системной и высокопрофессиональной работы высшего учебного заведения. Жиганов в кратчайшие сроки сформировал педагогический коллектив, в который также вошли эвакуированные из Ленинграда и Москвы музыканты — представители и наследники традиций столичных консерваторий. В становлении композиторской школы Казанской консерватории особо отмечается вклад Михаила Юдина, Альберта Лемана, Генриха Литинского, которые вместе с Жигановым выработали уникальную концепцию всесторонней подготовки молодых композиторов, в том числе с учётом их национальной природы и сохранения особых черт музыкального языка. Выдающиеся педагоги принимали непосредственное участие и в создании татарской профессиональной музыки на основе претворения выразительности пентатонного мелоса; их сочинения существенно обогатили репертуар музыкальных творческих коллективов республики.

Ключевые слова: Назиб Жиганов, Михаил Юдин, Генрих Литинский, Альберт Леман, Казанская консерватория, национальные композиторские школы

Благодарность: Работа выполнена за счёт гранта, предоставленного Академией наук Республики Татарстан образовательным организациям высшего образования, научным и иным организациям на поддержку планов развития кадрового потенциала в части стимулирования их научных и научно-педагогических работников к защите докторских диссертаций и выполнению научно-исследовательских работ.

Introduction

The Kazan Conservatory's School of Composition, which was formed largely due to the enthusiasm and extensive creative work of certain outstanding musicians, quickly established a unique niche in the system of training Russian national composers. The Kazan Conservatory trained an entire constellation of composers largely drawn from the republics of the Volga region and other

constituent nations of the Russian Federation, including Mari El, Chuvashia, Udmurtia, Mordovia, Bashkortostan, Tuva, Komi, Kalmykia, and Altai. Some of the university's graduates went on to become the founders of music schools in their respective republics. The Kazan Conservatory's reputation was further enhanced by the outstanding graduates who gained worldwide renown, including jazz musician Oleg Lundstrem and composer Sofia Gubaidulina.

Nazib Zhiganov – Founder of the Kazan Conservatory

The formation and development of the Kazan school of composition was largely determined by the activities of its initial teachers, who laid the foundations for the unique traditions of the conservatory. The leader and primary instigator of this process was the acknowledged founder of the Kazan Conservatory, Nazib Gayazovich Zhiganov (1911–1988).

Zhiganov's creative destiny is inextricably linked with the historical process of the development of Tatar musical culture. From the beginning of his professional career, he set out to fulfil an important task facing Soviet multinational art: to form a national school of composition. In Tatarstan, the development of such a national school took place largely thanks to the vital creativity and extensive social, musical and educational activities of Zhiganov.

His active work in Kazan began at the turn of the 1930s and 1940s. Zhiganov was the first Tatar musician to receive a higher academic musical education in composition from the Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory. Wholly absorbed by the idea of strengthening and honourably developing Tatar music within the context of Soviet art, he “pursued genuine mastery and high professionalism based on his belief in the communicative power of Tatar musical art and its ability to hold its own on the world stage.” [1, p. 81] It was this idea that became the “dominant” in the composer's creative consciousness, driving his urge to organically synthesise both creative and social activities.

Fully immersing himself in the process of cultural development in Tatarstan, Nazib Zhiganov combined creative and administrative work with remarkable energy. His was the first pen to write nationally-oriented works in the academic genres of symphonic and

musical-theatrical music. In particular, these include his First Symphony, performed at the opening of the Tatar Philharmonic in 1937, and the opera *Kachkyn*, which launched the Tatar State Opera Theater in 1939. [2, p. 50]

As evidenced by the lines in one of his letters from 1939, Zhiganov was possessed by an urgent desire to educate young composers: “Today I spent the day at the music college — I finally agreed to work with the creative group. In total, 6–7 people. Of course, there was no agreement on payment ... in all likelihood, it will be paltry. However, this will require some time. Nobody obliges me, but I feel that it is necessary.” [3] At the same time, Zhiganov was also given responsibility for the composers' “brotherhood” of the republic: “Moscow entrusts me with the organisation of the Union of Soviet Composers in Tatarstan.” [4, p. 10]

The event that became the catalyst for the creation of the Kazan Conservatory was Zhiganov's participation in the Decade of Soviet Music of the Transcaucasian Republics, which took place in Tbilisi in December 1944, where he was invited as part of a delegation from the Union of Composers of the USSR. Although praising the level of personnel in the Transcaucasian musical groups, Nazib Gayazovich expressed serious concerns: “Here it can be clearly seen how our republic is lagging behind ... I am alarmed by the lack of young composers among us. So, something needs to be done.” [5] The words of Uzeyir Hajibeyov, spoken at that time to Zhiganov, determined the programme of his further actions: “If you do not ensure the opening of a conservatory in Kazan, it will not be possible to raise the level of Tatar musical culture.” [6]

The Kazan Conservatory was opened in 1945 on the order of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (Order No. 6068-p of 13.04.1995). From his first days as the young rector, Nazib Zhiganov, began addressing the issue of staffing the university's teaching

roll. In addition to the Kazan musicians who also taught at the music school, musicians from Moscow and Leningrad were invited to the conservatory, including composer and conductor, professor Mikhail Yudin, musicologist Alexandra Korsunskaya, composer and pianist Albert Lehman, violinist Anatoly Lukatsky, cellist Alexander Brown, and others.

Formation of the Kazan School of Composition

In the history of the formation of the Kazan Conservatory's school of composition, particularly significant roles were played by Mikhail Alekseyevich Yudin (1893–1948), Genrich Ilyich Litinsky (1901–1985) and Albert Semyonovich Lehman (1915–1998). While the Kazan period may not have been the longest stage in the creative lives of these composers, it undoubtedly served as among the most fruitful in their professional careers, since it was their activities at the Kazan Conservatory that determined the main course of development of the Tatar school of composition.

Zhiganov himself supervised the orchestration for the composers. In the memoirs of his students, he appears as a strict teacher who did not tolerate superficial knowledge, sloppiness or irresponsibility, and held the firm belief that “for a real composer it is not enough to master musical techniques, but one must also be a highly cultured person with a broad outlook.” [7, pp. 232–233] On the issue of educating national composers, Zhiganov believed that “it is necessary to take into account the national nature of the student, but every composer must be a highly educated musician, well-versed in world musical culture, be he Kalmyk, Chuvash or Mari.” [8, p. 18] Both in his creative work and in his teaching, Nazib Zhiganov developed

the traditions of the Russian and Soviet school of composition, which he absorbed in the class of Boris Lyatoshinsky during his years of study at the Moscow Conservatory.

A researcher of the life and work of Mikhail Yudin, Tatiana Kharitonova, noted his important mission in the development of the conservatory, “since he, together with N[azib] G[ayazovich] Zhiganov and A[lbert] S[emyonovich] Lehman, developed the concept of the young university and at the same time implemented his pedagogical views at once in two faculties.” [9, p. 17]

Upon arriving in Kazan,¹ Yudin quickly adapted to the needs of the local musicians. A few months after his family's evacuation to Kazan in February 1942, he joined the Union of Composers of the Tatar ASSR. During the war years, he taught at the Kazan Music College; afterwards, with the opening of the Kazan Conservatory, he became a professor of composition and dean of the conducting and choral faculty.

During his Kazan period, Yudin wrote two operas along with a number of instrumental, vocal and choral works, as well as producing arrangements of Tatar folk songs. The composer actively participated in the process of creating new Tatar music with its characteristic pentatonic melodic structure. According to Olga Yegorova, “Yudin was the personification of the connection between centuries and the continuity leading from the Russian pre-revolutionary tradition to the beginning of the 20th century. Although the style of his own work gravitated towards the polyphony of Glazunov, Taneyev and Shaporin, he easily and with a visible sense of creative satisfaction mastered the national intonation...” [10, p. 92]

¹ Yudin graduated from the Petrograd Conservatory in the composition class of Alexander Zhitomirsky. From 1926 to 1942 he taught at the Leningrad Conservatory.

Composition students Khusnulla Valiullin and Vladimir Evstratov began studying in Yudin's class; following their teacher's sudden death in 1948, they continued their studies in Albert Lehman's class.

The Kazan Conservatory became a kind of fairway for applicants from the national republics who wished to master the profession of composer. Fyodor Vasilyev² recalled that when he failed the entrance exams to the Moscow Conservatory, Zhiganov immediately sent him to Kazan, remarking that "there is nothing to count on in Moscow: even without us, the competition is high..." [11, p. 237]

The national and geographic contingent of composition students at the Kazan Conservatory expanded rapidly. In the 1950s and 1960s, representatives of the Chuvash, Tuvan and Mari republics studied in Kazan, then, during the 1960s and 1970s, they were supplemented by representatives of Altai and Bashkiria, while by the 1970s and 1980s, representatives of Udmurtia, Komi, Kalmykia and Mordovia had made their way to what was already becoming the USSR's de facto capital of national music composition.

The invitation extended by Zhiganov to his composition teacher, Genrich Litinsky (who had extensive experience in training national cadres of composers), to work at the Kazan Conservatory became an important strategic decision. Litinsky himself recognised the need to search for "appropriate ways of comprehensively training young composers who would serve as future founders of professional music schools of their respective peoples and republics." [12, p. 199]

Genrich Litinsky taught at the Kazan Conservatory for 15 years (1949–1964),

delivering a course in polyphony and promulgating deep-rooted traditions of the Moscow composition school related to the students' professional development (for more details, see: [13]). As evidenced by their correspondence, the friendship between Litinsky and Zhiganov continued in the following decades of the outstanding musicians' lives.

Albert Lehman's Role in the Formation and Development of the Kazan School of Composition

Albert Semyonovich Lehman played a fundamental role in the formation and development of the Tatarstan school of composition. The establishment of the Kazan Conservatory became, to some extent, a salvation for this musician, whose German origins during wartime resulted in a difficult destiny. Following his evacuation from Leningrad to Kazan in 1942, Lehman, as a descendant of Volga Germans, worked in the Volga NKVD camp on the construction of the Sviyazhsk-Ulyanovsk railway, where "as a camp inmate he repeatedly had to experience humiliations due to his ethnicity." [14, p. 6] Thanks to Zhiganov, who, "risking falling into disgrace and understanding Lehman's importance for the musical culture of Tatarstan, tirelessly and consistently petitioned the republic's authorities for support," [Ibid., p. 21] Lehman was released in 1945 and invited to the Kazan Conservatory to teach composition and piano. Until the 1960s, he headed the Department of Music Theory and Composition, while from 1964–1975 he also held the position of Vice-Rector for Academic and Research Work.³

² Fyodor Vasilyev (1920–2000) — composer, Honoured Artist of the RSFSR and the Chuvash ASSR.

³ After leaving Kazan, Lehman went on to head the Department of Music Theory and Composition at the Petrozavodsk branch of the Leningrad Conservatory (1967–1970) and the Department of Composition at the Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory (1971–1997).

Lehman's pedagogy was based on the traditions of teaching composition that developed during his years of study at the Leningrad Conservatory in the class of Mikhail Fabianovich Gnesin. Olga Yegorova's memoirs mention a meeting with Gnesin in Kazan, with whom she was introduced by Lehman, "the musical grandson of Rimsky-Korsakov." [10, p. 88] Gnesin, who was very worried about the fate of his student, wrote a letter to the secretary of the Tatar regional committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), Zinnat Muratov, where, in particular, he wrote: "And it was very difficult to learn that this highly cultured, energetic and patriotic figure of Soviet art, evacuated <...> in 1942 to Kazan <...> found himself in an extremely difficult situation here." [14, p. 18]

Albert Lehman trained several dozen composers, including outstanding Tatar composers Fasil Akhmetov, Enver Bakirov, Rafael Belyalov, Khusnulla Valiullin, Renat Yenikeev, Almaz Monasypov and Mirsaid Yarullin, as well as Mari composers Erik Sapaev and Vladislav Kupriyanov, Chuvash composers Fyodor Vasilyev and Anatoly Petrov, the Tuvan composer Alexey Chyrgal-ool, and many others. Recognising his involvement in the organisation of the Kazan Conservatory, Lehman noted: "This was a great step into the future of national musical cultures — not only of the Tatar people, but also of a whole range of cultures of the Volga region, as well as geographically very distant peoples (Tuva, Kalmykia and others). <...> The most

significant school of composition in the country emerged, novel in terms of its principles, and extraordinarily productive. A large number of outstanding professional composers have been trained, who work creatively in many musical centres of the country." [1, p. 89]

Like Mikhail Yudin, Albert Lehman took an active part in the creation of Tatar music. As well as both composing in the genres of symphonic, chamber-instrumental and vocal-choral music, neither were indifferent to the theatre.⁴ The creative work of these composers in the 1940s and 1950s served as a kind of laboratory for the search for synthesising the achievements of academic compositional writing and national style — primarily, Tatar music based around the pentatonic scale and unique expressive capabilities of Tatar folk songs. The skills acquired during this "practice" contributed to a strengthening of the methodological tools for training composers in the country's national republics.

The traditions of Lehman's compositional pedagogy were continued by his students: Anatoly Luppov,⁵ who headed the composition department at the Kazan Conservatory in 1971, as well as Mirsaid Yarullin, Leonid Lyubovsky, Fasil Akhmetov, Boris Trubin, Rafael Belyalov and others, who taught various theoretical and practical disciplines to composition students. A new, long-lasting stage in the development of the Kazan Conservatory's composition school during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries brought to light new names of bright and talented composers.

⁴ Mikhail Yudin's opera *Farida* was performed in 1945 at the Tatar Opera Theater. In addition, Lehman and Yudin created music for several dramatic performances at the Galiaskar Kamal Tatar Academic Theater, which became an important cultural centre in Kazan that has always enjoyed great popularity with audiences.

⁵ In this connection, we should pay tribute to Anatoly Borisovich Luppov (1929–2022), who was a professor, Honoured Artist of the RSFSR, Honoured Artist of the Mari ASSR, laureate of the State Prize of the Mari ASSR, Honoured Artist of the Republic of Tatarstan, laureate of the Gabdulla Tukay State Prize of the Republic of Tatarstan, and the composer of the first Mari ballet, *Forest Legend*. Luppov headed the Department of Composition from 1971 to 1991.

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