

Jelena Firsova

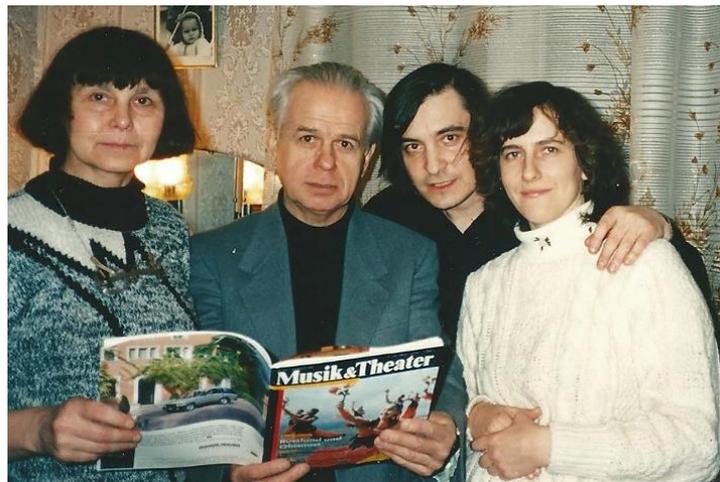
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Jelena Firsova was born in St. Petersburg and studied at the Moscow Conservatory with **Alexander Pirumov** (composition), **Yuri Cholopov** (analysis) and **Nikolai Raskatov** (orchestration). From 1975 she was in intensive musical contact with **Edison Denisov**, who also introduced her to **Philipp Herschkowitz**, one of the Webern pupils, who emigrated from Moscow to Vienna.

Beginning 1979 her works were first performed with great success in the West. In the same year, she and her husband, the composer **Dmitri Smirnov**, were attacked by the Soviet Composers Union as "**not Soviet-worthy**". In 1990, together with Edison Denisov, she **co-founded** the **Russian Society for New Music** (ASM). In the course of the **Perestroika**, Elena Firsova first received permission to travel abroad and moved to **England** in 1991, where she lives with her family and works as a lecturer and freelance composer.

Firsova is a master of the contemporary compositional techniques, and her compositional language is by no means one-sidedly oriented in style and expression. She further develops the **ideas of the Second Viennese School** and attaches particular importance to melodic motifs.



To date has created more than 100 works, including operas, cantatas, concerts, orchestral works, as well as chamber music. She received a composition commission for the Expo 2000. Her "Akhmatova Requiem" was premiered on September 2003 at the Berliner Konzerthaus am Gendarmenmarkt.

Text sources: Sikorski and Boosey & Hawkes.

Photos: Up Boosey & Hawkes, right in February 1989 with Sofia Gubaidulina, Edison Denisov, and Dmitri Smirnov. Photo D. Smirnov.

8 Questions for Jelena Firsova

August 2019. By Oxana Arkaeva



Jelena Firsova at the Schubert Hall at the Vienna Konzerthaus. Foto D. Smirnov

1. Why did you decide to become a composer? Why do you compose?

I decided to be a composer soon after I became 11 years old. I compose because I love to do it.

2. What does it mean for you to compose?

To write music for me. It is my way to show my love for love music. It is a form of my existence, my fate.

3. Who is your role-model composer?

Edison Denisov.

4. Do you still have connections to Russia?

I almost have not any connections with Russia, have not been there for 15 years, my music is performed there very rare.

5. Which is the motto of your compositions? Why do you think people should listen to your music?

Beauty will save the world. People can listen to my music or not - it is up to them.

6. Which are the most significant challenges/advantages of the female composers in the 21st century?

Never think about such things. For me there is no gender in composition. You either can compose or not. It is about music, talent, and devotion to the arts.

7. Tell us a bit more about "Here is the Wind"?

The song was first performed in the 2015 year in Italy on the music festival in Asiago. It was a commission of the festival. It was 100 years of important battle in that place during the First World War, and they wanted a song about an unknown soldier.

8. What is unique about the compositions for the voice and cello?

I love the combination of voice and cello. I have already written some compositions for this ensemble, where both artists are always equal and emotionally open, like a dialogue between two personalities.