

## Mikhail Chekalin. Profile

Michail Chekalin was born in May, 1959, in Moscow.

Composer, musician; producer & record artist; audio-visual performer.

On authority of British *Audion* (1993), "Chekalin is certainly one of the most radical and innovative synthesists, not only in Russia but globally" (A. Freeman), he "is now considered one of the top maverick modern composers in Russia" (*Zoltan's Progressive Rock WebPage*), "the ambient genius of Russia's" as Julian Cope puts it (02/07/2001). He practises composing since 1973.

The first reference to him was made in press in 1976 (newspaper *Moskovskaya Pravda*) in connection with his acquiring a Laureatship (he was awarded The First Prize) at the Concourse of Young Composers.

By the end of 70s, having found himself, of perforce, plunged into the *underground* art milieu, he acquires a profound expertise in the rock music as well as in the other unacademical genres, and consequently he comes up, in no uncertain terms, with an "aesthetic, social and political" credo "not to conform, mix or collaborate with anyone else" (*The Wire*, 2002, UK). He delves into his *independent electronic experiment*, which coincides with the burgeoning of electronic music in the West. Moreover, as states Dan Warburton in *Signal to Noise* (2002, USA): "To describe the reclusive M. Chekalin as Russia's Jean-Michel Jarre would be doing him (Chekalin) a disservice". The first release at the sound-record monopoly of a label, *Melodiya*, was issued in 1987 – LP album "Vocalize in Rapide" (records from '79-'85). This issue was of a major moment not only in terms of personal career of M. Chekalin but also in terms of national discography as a whole, since he succeeded not only in "breaking new musical ground" (*Billboard*, 1990) but also in establishing a whole new rubric "Electronic Music" in *Melodiya* Sound-Recording label Catalogue. "Vocalize in Rapido" was almost immediately followed by LP "Post-Pop – Non-Pop" which was highlighted by *Billboard* under the heading "Stars of the Soviet Music".

The legendary 12 LP albums Collection (*Melodiya*, M'Arts Gallery) was issued in 1991, more or less fully embracing the works from the 80s.

His professional pursuits, which, in its own time, had made him concern himself with the field of electronic synth music, set a paradoxical precedent of creating fundamental musical forms within limited bounds, technically and otherwise, of *underground* means & facilities. Interpreting music languages in a variety of aspects, his initial quest having been rooted in so called serious music both classic and modern, as well as in the "new" music originating within the bosom of rock culture or free jazz improvisational scene, the composer Mikhail Chekalin had articulated his own syntax, "eclectic philharmonic style", that "has taken the art of synth music way beyond its generic form" (*Audion*), thus having laid foundations for "philharmonic new age", in particular.

His debut in the West took place in 1993 – CD "Night Pulsation" (*Erdenklang*, Germany), reaffirming his reputation for being among those whose pioneering work was and still is focal for defining the vocabulary of electronic music.

For the Russian scene M. Chekalin proved to be the founder of "ambient".

The compositions that made up the legendary *Melodiyan* Collection had passed audition with the general public well before its actual release at *Melodiya*. And not at the so called *kvartyrnic's* as the usual routine demanded (unsanctionised music sessions hold at private apartments, *kvartyra* meaning 'flat', or some small community centres, deep in suburbs, haunted only by the initiates of this or that particular *inner circle*) but within the bounds of professional scene. During ten years Chekalin's "soundscapes" created

the sound *entourage* at the famous annual exhibition of the "Twenty Moscow Artists" at Malaya Gruzinskaya ulitsa in the 80s. Each spring this unorthodox Exhibition at Malaya Gruzinskaya, where a cluster of artistic ateliers are located (in the semi-basement of an apartment house in downtown), used to be visited by 70 up to 90 thousands of art aficionados. These most literally subterranean exhibition halls constituted an integral part of that actual Moscow *underground*, which has not yet become an euphemism for amateurish activities. Solid craft and artistic competence of the actual *unofficial* artists being the one and the only thing that had never aroused any suspicions with the art experts in plainclothes.

"Electronic Music & Light Graphic Dynamics Experimental Studio" (under M. Chekalin's Art-leadership as its founding Director) was "the immediate successor to the Scriabin Studio" according to *Keyboard* (June 1988) . Some well-known grounds where M. Chekalin presented his audio-visual performances in the late 70s – early 80s are MDM (Moscow Youth Palace), TseDREE (Workers' in the Field of Art Central Hall), TseDKha (Painters' Central Hall), Moscow Planetarium, to mention the few.

M. Chekalin's discography consists of more than 30 albums.

From the mid-80s he wrote music for theatre, films, ballets. Among those the ice-ballet "Faust. The XXth Century" (directed by Igor Bobrin, 1986), an event of unique stature. His works after 2000 –

"Last Seasons" (CCn'C Records, Germany, 2001) including "Black Square", concerto grosso in four movements for grand symphony orchestra, and "Last Seasons", chamber music cycle: "timeless avant-garde striving for the essence of life and music, powerful stream proceeding from Prokofiev, say, to Pärt, in the mystical tradition of Scriabin, Stravinsky, Schostakovitch..." (Christian Salvesen, CCn'C Records' Catalogue).

"Probability Symphony in the style of Jazz" ("Golden Years of the New Jazz". Vol. II, Leo Records, UK, 2002) appeals to yet another tradition: "This music is what we used to call 'progressive' before the name got misappropriated by *Yes*, *Pink Floyd*" (*Jazzwise*, 2002), "it's rich, eventful, consistently enjoyable", "much gripping improv and post-modern chamber music <here>" (*Jazz Review*, UK).

**"Concerto Grosso 1" & "Concerto Grosso 2"** (Boheme Music '01), ***an incredible long-lost gem not to be missed!*** (*Gibraltar Encyclopedia of Progressive Rock*) , **"Meditative Music for a Prepared Organ" Vol.1 & 2** as selected Works of 79-83rec (Citadel Records '03) which, according to *Exposé*, left one ***duly impressed with the man's creative depth.***

"Saturn. Izdeliye No..." ( CDL}, «Forte-Piano» {Citadel Records, Moscow),  
" A Pagan Suite",

3CD as "Selected Works of 79-89rec."(NEX,2004,Moscow),

DVD "Poruganiye Patsifika"(Direct-media ,2007, Moscow).

"Paradigm in Transition", "Untimely", "Poruganiye Patsifika" (Mir records/Eurock records USA2007) " MonoOpera for a dramatishe Actrice" (2008 DirectMedia Moscow Russia)

Unreleased as yet: "M. Chekalin and His Neo Classic Moscow Ensemble",

"Incantation Songs",

Post-electric Symphony(2007), The post-modern suite(2006), and others...

"Historic edition rec.70-s-80-s" in 14 CD and others...