

Vasily KALAFATI

PIANO MUSIC

NOCTURNE, LA NUIT À GOURSOUF, OP. 5

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Jeremy Thompson

THE PIANO MUSIC OF VASILY KALAFATI

by Jonathan Powell

If Vasily Pavlovich Kalafati (1869–1942) surfaces in music history at all, he gets a mention as one of Stravinsky's earliest teachers, or might appear among a list of the students of Rimsky-Korsakov, or the composers published by the maecenas Mitrofan Belaïeff. Recently, though, as scholars¹ and performers become interested in his work, more details emerge about this composer with an intriguing, partly Russified Greek name (originally Βασίλης Καλαφάτης), and one who, it seems, was a figure of some repute in the musical life of early-twentieth-century St Petersburg. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, foreigners and Russians of mixed parentage had played key roles in Russian musical life, starting with John Field, then Adolf von Henselt, and continuing with César Cui, Eduard Nápravník, Georgy Catoire, the Conus family and numerous others. While Kalafati 'always considered himself Greek',² and spent most of his life in Russia (barring brief trips abroad), he was certainly not alone as a non-Russian student at the St Petersburg Conservatoire in the 1890s. He was one among many who came from the outer reaches, or beyond the limits, of the Russian empire to study with Rimsky-Korsakov, whose cosmopolitan class, over a 35-year period, consisted of students from not only Russia but also Armenia, Azerbaijan, Italy (Respighi), Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine.

¹ Most notably Stanimira Dermendzhieva, who completed her Ph.D. thesis – *Vasily Pavlovich Kalafati (1869–1942): The Life and Works of the Forgotten Composer and Teacher of Russia*, Ionian University, Corfu, 2012 – and whom I heard present her paper 'Vasily Kalafati: Early Works and Study at the St Petersburg Conservatory with Rimsky-Korsakov' at a 2010 conference in St Petersburg, 'N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov and his Legacy in Historical Perspective'. I am indebted to her thorough and groundbreaking research for much of the information regarding Kalafati's life.

² Stanimira Dermendzhieva, in her booklet text for a Naxos recording of orchestral music by Kalafati: the Symphony in A minor, Op. 12 (1899–1912), *Légende*, Op. 20 (1928), and *Polonaise* in F major, Op. 14 (1905), with the Choir of the Music Department of the University of Athens and Athens Philharmonia conducted by Byron Fidetzis, on Naxos Greek Classics 8.574132, released in August 2020.

Kalafati was born to Greek parents in the seaside town of Yevpatoriya in Crimea. The town had been founded by Greeks around 500BC and had since been inhabited by Khazars, Tatars and Ottomans, as well as Russians. His father Pavel (presumably originally Pavlos) was a trader, tavern-keeper and teacher, and although it is known that his mother was called Alexandra Chrisikopoulou, it's not known when and from where the two of them arrived at this southern outpost of the Russian Empire. The fate of most of their twelve children remains unclear, except that Vasily's brother Dmitry became involved in the Russian Social Democratic Party during the early years of the twentieth century.

Yevpatoriya had long enjoyed the benefits of an international population, and Kalafati's first teacher of piano and composition was German and a graduate of the Leipzig Conservatoire, Gustav Karlovich Leo. He had previously taught at the St Petersburg Conservatoire but had moved to Crimea for health reasons. Kalafati later recalled that during the 'three years, of study with him, I acquired a fairly significant piano technique, familiarity with repertoire (mainly German composers) and learned to compose quite well.'³ His first compositions, including piano pieces and a duet for violins, date from this period but do not survive.

Kalafati first heard Rimsky-Korsakov's music while still in Yevpatoriya, and so it seems natural that he should choose to study with him in St Petersburg, especially given Gustav Leo's connection there. He entered the St Petersburg Conservatoire in 1892, also taking conducting classes with Nikolay Galkin (1856–1906). His composition studies with Rimsky-Korsakov lasted seven years, 'of which five consisted of basic musical education and two of work towards the diploma in composition.'⁴ During his student years, Kalafati made several trips back home to Crimea, taking part in concerts with his former teacher Leo in Yevpatoriya in 1894 and again two years later, when he played pieces by Haydn and participated in a performance of one of his own chamber works

³ 'Vasily Petrovich Kalafati', at <https://rusgreek.ru/kalafati>, accessed 31 July 2020.

⁴ Dermendzhieva, 'Vasily Kalafati: Early Works and Study at the St Petersburg Conservatory with Rimsky-Korsakov', in N. A. Римский-Корсаков и его наследие в исторической перспективе ('N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov and his Legacy in Historical Perspective'), ed. Lidia Ader, conference proceedings, GU, St Petersburg, 2010), p. 381.

(a minuet that later was developed into a movement of the Piano Quintet, Op. 7) at a charity event. As a student Kalafati abandoned an operatic setting of Byron's *Sardanapol*, but completed a one-act opera, *The Gypsies*, after Pushkin, of which he later thought highly enough to revise it in 1937. Extracts of the work were performed at a concert of music by recent graduates of the Conservatoire on 19 May 1899. Later that year, the first movement of Kalafati's Symphony, Op. 12, received its premiere (under the composer's baton) in the large hall of St Petersburg Conservatoire, probably in September or November, and Kalafati was awarded a diploma in composition a year later for the work as a whole.

After graduation, Kalafati's musical life in St Petersburg remained entwined with that of his teacher until the latter's death in 1908: presumably at Rimsky-Korsakov's bidding, Kalafati was appointed as a teacher in theoretical subjects (additional solfeggio, harmony, musical analysis and orchestration) at the St Petersburg Conservatoire on 1 September 1900. Having witnessed Kalafati's qualities as a teacher, in 1902 Rimsky-Korsakov sent the twenty-year-old Stravinsky to study harmony and counterpoint with him. Stravinsky had previously had weekly lessons with Fyodor Akimenko,⁵ whom he found 'unsympathetic'; Kalafati, according to Stephen Walsh, 'proved more congenial, and though Igor portrays him as a pedant, he cannot conceal the fact that he learnt important lessons from this "small, black-faced Greek with huge black moustaches"'.⁶ After two years of work together, Igor addressed him as 'Uncle Vasya', using the intimate *tī* pronoun. Most importantly, Stravinsky later recalled that 'Kalafaty [*sic*] taught me to appeal to my ear as the first and last test'.⁷

It was also presumably through Rimsky-Korsakov's influence that Kalafati attended the *pyatnitsi*, the musical gatherings held on Fridays at the house of Mitrofan Belaieff.⁸ Here, the elite of St Petersburg composers gathered to play, listen to and discuss their

⁵ Fyodor Stepanovich Akimenko, or Fedir Stepanovych Yakymenko in Ukrainian (1876–1945), was a composer and pianist born in Kharkiv; he died in Paris. He also studied with Rimsky-Korsakov in St Petersburg.

⁶ Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1999, pp. 57–58.

⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, source unknown.

⁸ Although Belyayev would be the correct transliteration according to the system used here, Belaieff is used because this version is employed to this day by the publishing house that he founded.

latest compositions. Kalafati would have met Glazunov, Lyadov, the critic Vladimir Stasov, Blumenfeld, Vitols and occasionally Skryabin. By 1900, scarcely out of the Conservatoire, Kalafati's first works had appeared under the prestigious and expensive-looking Belaieff imprint. On 12 January 1902, Kalafati's orchestral work *Adagio and Scherzo* was performed alongside Skryabin's Second Symphony (receiving its world premiere), and works by Taneyev and Rimsky-Korsakov, under the baton of the composer Anatoly Lyadov.⁹

In 1904 Rimsky-Korsakov asked Kalafati to prepare a revised edition of his *Practical Textbook in Harmony* (originally published in 1886). Alongside more senior colleagues such as Glazunov and Lyadov, Kalafati resigned from the Conservatoire over Rimsky-Korsakov's dismissal in 1905 (he had spoken in favour of students taking part in political demonstrations, but continued to teach his students from home). His Latvian composer-friend Jazeps Vitols later recalled that after Rimsky-Korsakov's death in 1908, the Chair of the Special Harmony Class was bestowed to 'the gifted composer Kalafati'.¹⁰ During this period, he also acted as Sub-Inspector of the Conservatoire, and apparently travelled to Germany and Switzerland for study.¹¹ Until the clampdown in the mid-1930s, Kalafati also made trips to Austria, France and Italy, describing himself as 'quite good at French, weaker at English, German and Italian'.¹² Two notable early successes were his being accepted as a member of the Belaieff circle, with his works being published by this important patron. That must have happened by 1902, because during that year Kalafati was invited to participate (with ten other Belaieff composers) in an orchestration of Schumann's *Carnaval*.¹³ Belaieff also commissioned Kalafati to

⁹ A. N. Skryabin, *Pisma* ('Letters'), ed. A. V. Kashperova, Muzika, Moscow, 2003, p. 256, footnote.

¹⁰ Jazeps Vitols (Ya. Vitol'), Воспоминания, статьи, письма ('Reminiscences, Articles, Letters'), Muzika, Leningrad, 1969, p. 79.

¹¹ Dermendzhieva, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

¹² <http://selwinski-gymnasium.ru/sample-page/znamenitye-vypuskniki-gimnazii/>, accessed 1 August 2020.

¹³ On 15 April 1902, Glazunov wrote to Stasov: 'I want to let you know that the rehearsals for *Carnaval* will take place on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday in the Great Hall of the Conservatoire. Entrance from the alley down the side of Torgovaya street'. Schumann's piano work was orchestrated by eleven composers – Rimsky-Korsakov, Arensky, Glazunov, Lyadov, Sokolov, Vitols, Winkler, Nikolay Cherepnin, Kalafati, A. Petrov and N. Klenovsky – and was first performed on 20 April 1902 as a ballet in the same venue as the rehearsal – cf. M. A. Ganina (ed.), A. K. Глазунов: Письма, статьи, воспоминания ('Letters, Articles, Reminiscences'), State Music Publishers, Moscow, 1958, p. 230.

produce piano-duet arrangements of orchestral works by other in-house composers, including Lyadov (*Kikimora*, *The Enchanted Lake*, *Baba Yaga*) and Skryabin (his Second Symphony).¹⁴

In 1907 Kalafati was awarded the Glinka prize for his Piano Quintet, Op. 7. Four years later *Sputnik muzikanta* ('The Musician's Handbook'), edited by Kalafati, was published, and it became one of the most popular works of its type in Russia during that period. According to Stanimira Dermendzhieva, Kalafati

succeeded in establishing a position in the musical life of the Russian capital not only as a composer, but also due to his personality, his mastery of orchestration, and as a conductor with special sensitivity to composers' wishes. Reviews of the period 1896–1913 regarding Kalafati as composer and conductor are positive and full of praise.¹⁵

By 1911,¹⁶ Kalafati was married to Yevgeniya Lvovna Bernshteyn (or Bernstein, born c. 1888), and they had two very long-lived children, both of whom went on to become well-respected scientists: Anatoly (1911–2014, a musician, and Honoured Artist of the Chuvash Republic)¹⁷ and Lidiya (latterly Eltkova, a geologist, 1912–2009). Their marriage was not to last: in 1918 Yevgeniya left to live with her sister in Finland – and on her return, two years later, Kalafati was not interested in resuming their relationship. Since then (or maybe even before then), he had met Olga Mikhaylovna Morrison (a Russian woman of English descent, born in 1891, date of death unknown), with whom he had a son, Mikhail, in 1918. Kalafati's most notable work of the early Soviet era is the

¹⁴ Skryabin wrote to Belaieff on 17/30 July 1902, commenting on the good quality of Kalafati's work, hoping that the latter 'would not be offended by the fact that I've made a few corrections (mostly simplifications)'. Kashperova *op. cit.*, p. 265.

¹⁵ Dermendzhieva, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

¹⁶ I have not been able to trace exactly when their wedding took place.

¹⁷ Anatoly was a veteran of the Second World War, and fought at the front on several occasions. He also organised an orchestra behind front lines and some of the music he wrote for it was disseminated widely among military bands. He took part in the liberation of Berlin while serving in the 65th Siberian Division. He later settled in Cheboksary, on the Volga, in western Russia, where he was active as a musician for several decades. During this period, he put together an archive of his father's materials, and systematically compiled a catalogue of compositions, thus preserving valuable information regarding the dates and first performances of his father's works. This archive was bought by the Music Studio of the Faculty of Music Education of the Ionian University and transported to Corfu. In January 2008, the archive, which consists of 138 printed scores and manuscripts, was exhibited at the Teloglion Arts Foundation at the University of Thessaloniki.

symphonic poem *Légende*, Op. 20, in memory of Schubert, written in 1928 and awarded a prize at that year's International Schubert Competition in Vienna.

Kalafati taught at the St Petersburg Conservatoire for some 29 years, being promoted to professor of composition in 1914. His influence was widespread, but particularly critical in the development of the Azeri national school since its founder Uzeir Hajibekov (1898–1950) was one of his students. They were not only composers but also pianists, conductors and musicologists, and several came from outside the USSR to work with him. Asafiev, Semyon Bogatirev, Heino Eller, Kristifor Kushnaryov, Vladimir Shcherbachyov, Viktor Trambitsky and Mariya Yudina all attended his classes. According to his daughter, Lidiya, he was eventually relieved of his duties there (aged 60) because of his old-fashioned teaching style.¹⁸

On 31 January 1936 Kalafati participated in a concert in memory of Rimsky-Korsakov in the Children's Palace of Culture in Leningrad. Called 'An Evening Meeting of the Honour Students in Music from Sixth Grade with N. Rimsky-Korsakov's Students and Children', the event also featured Mikhail Gnesin, Maksimilian Steinberg, Yuliya Weisberg and Aleksandr Zhitomirsky, who along with Kalafati shared their memories of Rimsky-Korsakov with the children and played some of their compositions. With the singer Sima Genadiyevna Balanina, Kalafati performed the romances *Ne penitsya more*, *V uyutnom ugolke* ('In the cosy corner') and *Pokhoroniye ptichki* ('Mourning Birds'), and gave the first performance of his new humorous children's song *Progulochnaya* ('Walking Song').¹⁹ Later the same year, in acknowledgement of his Greek heritage, he incorporated the folksong *Samiotissa* into a work for two male voices and piano.

Kalafati scored a final success at home at the beginning of 1942, winning a competition held during the siege of Leningrad for his march *Zvezdi kremlya* ('The Stars of the Kremlin', 1941). During the blockade, the Kalafati family (then Vasily, Olga and Mikhail) had remained in Leningrad. It is not known whether Kalafati had been offered the chance of evacuation (as had many other artists – in fact, some estimate that up to half the population of the city was eventually evacuated). During the first months

¹⁸ <https://rusgreek.ru/kalafati>, accessed on 1 August 2020.

¹⁹ For this information I am indebted to the research of Stanimira Dermendzhieva.

of 1942, their son Mikhail passed away, and then on 20 March Vasily Kalafati died in Olga's arms, his last words being 'Как жаль' ('Kak zhal', 'What a pity'). Up to a million-and-a-half Soviet soldiers and citizens died of hunger, disease and enemy bombardment during the siege, and so inevitably losses among the musical community were an almost daily occurrence. Shostakovich, who had passed through Kalafati's classes two decades previously, wrote on 31 March 1942 to his friend Isaak Davidovich Glikman:²⁰ 'Valerian Bogdanov-Berezovsky's mother brought me a letter from him. He told me that Golts, Kalafati, Fradkin, Budyakovsky and several other composers have died.'²¹

According to Stephen Walsh, 'to be published, be performed, to be received by Mitrofan Belyayev was the goal of every aspirant composer' in late nineteenth-century St Petersburg. In particular, Belaieff composers wrote lots of piano music – aimed at gifted amateurs – that was published with lavish, coloured title pages and then performed at the *pyatnitsi* held at his house. It is not hard to imagine that piano music accounted for the majority of the publisher's sales, and Belaieff paid composers per piece. As Walsh succinctly remarked, 'human nature being what it is, Belyayev naturally got the music he was paying for.'²²

In contrast to the piano music by *kuchkisti* (the five composers of the *kutchka*, 'The Mighty Handful'), and Musorgsky in particular, that by the Belaieff composers (Skryabin on occasion excepted) is refined, not prone to extremes, technically sophisticated; its sheer urbanity could be said to be its most obvious shortcoming – a sense of blandness prevails in some of the less inspired pieces. Some 'kuchkist' elements remain in the Belaieff piano music: the orientalism, the allusion to Russian (and sometimes Polish) folk-music, and the virtuosic demands made of the performer. The musicologist Izrail Yampol'sky remarks upon the emotional restraint of the music of the Belaieff group and Kalafati's 'polished form, and perfection of texture.'²³

²⁰ Glikman (1911–2003), literary critic, librettist and teacher at the Leningrad Conservatoire.

²¹ Glikman, *Story of a Friendship*, transl. Anthony Phillips, Faber & Faber, London/Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2001, p. 11.

²² Walsh, *op cit.*, p. 66.

²³ I. M. Yampol'sky, 'V. P. Kalafati', in *Музыкальная энциклопедия* ('Music Encyclopedia'), ed. Yu. Keldish, Sovetskaya Muzika, Moscow, 1973–82, accessed via www.musenc.ru/html/k/kalafati.html on 2 August 2020.

Kalafati's composing career was not short (spanning the period 1889 to 1941), and some 160 works survive. In addition to those works not already mentioned, Kalafati's *œuvre* consists also of *Reve ta stogne* (Ребе та сторне – 'It [the Dnipr] Roars and Moans'), a musical picture for chorus and orchestra after Shevchenko (in Ukrainian, written after 1917); an *Overture-Fantasia* and *Polonaise* for orchestra; an octet for mixed ensemble; two string quartets; choruses; and romances to words by poets including Aleksey Apukhtin, Nikolay Nekrasov, Pushkin, Aleksey Pleshcheyev and Aleksey Tolstoy.

The **Nocturne, *La Nuit à Goursouf, Op. 5*** [1], is a fairly substantial piece – its genre designation is perhaps slightly misleading – and is dated 'St Petersburg 1900', making it either one of the last works Kalafati wrote as a student, or one of the first after graduation. It is tempting to suggest that he visited Crimea during the summer of 1900 when the Conservatoire was closed, and on returning to the city wrote this reminiscence. Hurzuf is a small seaside resort on the south-eastern coast of Crimea, some 12km from Yalta (i.e., on the opposite coast from Yevpatoriya). At the time when Kalafati presumably visited, Anton Chekhov had a villa there, which was subsequently turned into a museum. Kalafati had written another nocturne two years previously, also with a littoral theme, entitled *Na beregu morya* ('On the Seashore', 1898), also Op. 5, but as part of an old system that he soon abandoned. Both pieces, according to Stanimira Dermendzhieva, 'demonstrate the young composer's melodic talent, his love of chromatic passages and harmonic gift'.²⁴ Kalafati must surely have been aware of Felix Blumenfeld's piano piece 'Une nuit à Magarach', the first of the Two Nocturnes, Op. 6 (1885), and may even have heard the elder composer perform his evocation of a Crimean night²⁵ at Beliaeff's *pyanitsi* gatherings.

Kalafati's piece starts with an intense cantilena which, having ascended to its highest point, is underpinned by a poignant dissonance, before a thicker contrapuntal texture gradually establishes itself. It soon clears and a long melody in the relative major key (D flat major) is heard, wrapped in a generous accompaniment. After a full-bodied restatement of this theme (replete with canonic imitation and chromatic alteration of

²⁴ Dermendzhieva, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

²⁵ Magarach is also in Crimea, and Blumenfeld's piece presumably evokes happy memories, as it is where he met his wife, Mariya.

the harmonies), a brief cadenza heralds the return of the thoughtful opening material. In the central section, the melodic material is pared down to one note per bar, which allows Kalafati to build tension over a long period while exploring more *recherché* harmonies. After a climactic passage of some flamboyance, the opening material reappears, but over restless lower voices which lend a symphonic character to the piano-writing; indeed, the repeated octaves heard just before the final reprise of the melody call out for a pair of horns. Throughout this piece, Kalafati uses a harmonic device (simultaneous raising of the fifth degree of the scale, and superimposing a diminished triad over the tonic²⁶) specifically linked to Russian composers' depiction of the Orient, which for them usually meant the south of the Russian Empire, where Hurzuf is situated. This device is employed repeatedly by Kalafati in a cadential manner during the last page of the nocturne, although it should be remembered that here, in contrast to the numerous examples by his august St Petersburg colleagues, this is a Crimean composer reminiscing about his home.

Miniatures, such as preludes, études, waltzes and mazurkas, were the staple fare of the publisher Belaïeff and the composers he sponsored. Rimsky-Korsakov's earlier antipathy to Chopin had certainly mollified by the last decade of the nineteenth century, and his students produced a vast number of piano works in these genres the Pole had made his own. Kalafati's **5 Preludes, Op. 7**, were written in 1901 and published the following year; Nos. 1 and 3 are dedicated to his sisters Yelena and Zinaïda, No. 2 to one Vera Roshchinina, and the last two to Glazunov. The first Prelude [2] – an *Allegro* in C major, subtitled 'Miniature' – follows a scheme found in numerous other small-scale piano works of the Belyayevtsi: a pattern of one bar's length is repeated for the duration of the work, tracing a journey through changes of harmony and register. The second, an *Andante* in F minor [3], alternates a plaintive recitative with arpeggiated flourishes,

²⁶ The device is used in pieces with a specifically Crimean connection, such as Blumenfeld's above-mentioned Nocturne, Op. 6, No. 1, and in the ballet *Fontan na Bakchisarai* by Kalafati's student Boris Asafiev. Curiously, Balakirev's *Méلودie espagnole*, written in the 1900s, is one of the most effective examples. A detailed consideration of this device, and Orientalism in nineteenth-century Russian composers more generally, is presented in the chapter 'Entoiling the Falconet' in Richard Taruskin's *Defining Russia Musically*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997, pp. 152–85.

while the third, an *Andantino* in D flat major [4], is a kind of berceuse, again employing a single pattern for the whole piece, over an almost constant pedal D flat. The fourth piece, an *Allegretto* in A major [5], is a rather leisurely mazurka. And the central stormy, chromatic and virtuosic material of the fifth Prelude, marked *Lento* and in B flat minor [6], is framed by sombre rumination.

Kalafati's *Deux Nouvellettes*, **Op. 6**, were written in St Petersburg in 1901 and published by Belaieff the following year. I have to admit that their dedicatees – Sophie Volkoff and Marie Gorohoff – have proven elusive, but the pieces share a highly physical, orchestral type of piano-writing full of octaves (the opening of Schumann's *8 Noveletten*, Op. 21, springs to mind), a triple metre, and muscular dotted rhythms throughout. One senses from the sombre first moments of the first *Nouvellette* [7] an almost Brahmsian sense of continuous symphonic development of small motifs, something not particularly associated with Russian music of this period. In the sunnier middle section, allusions are made to rhythms and melodic fragments associated with the mazurka. After a reprise of the opening section, the mazurka returns majestically.

Although they are student works – dating probably from 1895 – Kalafati's two sonatas, Op. 4, are noteworthy for their maturity, with virtuosic display, deft handling of material, ambitious formal scope, brilliant pianistic writing and an impressively wide harmonic palette. Among the piano works of Belaieff composers, large forms were not the norm, and so to make one's debut with two such works was a statement in itself. Dermendzhieva writes that 'judging by the very fact that Rimsky-Korsakov supported his students' best works by promoting their publication,²⁷ it would seem that these sonatas are Kalafati's first mature works. Kalafati performed the sonatas at examinations.'²⁸

The first movement, *Allegro moderato* [8], of **Sonata No. 1 in D major, Op. 4, No. 1**, is Classical in terms both of its material and of Kalafati's use of the piano – all but two final low octaves of the exposition could be performed on an instrument of Beethoven's time.

²⁷ On 3 August 1900 Glazunov wrote to Belaieff: 'I sent my Fifth Quartet in three versions, and Kalafati sent his two sonatas to Leipzig for printing': Ganina, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

²⁸ Dermendzhieva, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

Both first and second subjects contrast chordal *legato* writing with more balletic *staccato* material. Although the exposition is harmonically relatively unadventurous, it is in the development section that Kalafati's imagination is given freer rein, with a series of restatements of the opening in increasingly distant harmonic surroundings, eventually settling on a pedal F before a dramatic revisiting of the second-subject material. At the end of the movement, a harmonic progression over a pedal A reminds one that Tchaikovsky's influence is never far away.

The second movement [9] contains perhaps the most individual writing of the work. Inflections of folksong appear for the first time in the piece, and the texture of the introspective opening (in G minor) is close to that of string-quartet writing. In the initially carefree *Allegretto* episode (in G major), Kalafati places a pedal note and a chromatic tenor voice under florid right-hand writing, all the while using a modulation so favoured by the Belaieff composers (and their Kuchkist forebears) when depicting rural life. The opening material then reappears in E minor, and undergoes rather symphonic treatment before being reinstated in a full-blown quasi-orchestral texture. The tolling of bells, preceded by an echo of the *Allegretto* material, ushers in an unexpectedly serene ending.

The finale, *Allegro con brio* [10], engagingly pits three types of material against one another: a *moto perpetuo* toccata employing alternating hands, *staccato* balletic passages featuring abrupt dynamic contrast, and a tarantella that is subsumed by the other characters, only to make a final comeback and win the day. Again, Kalafati's harmonic imagination is engagingly fertile, and by saving the real fireworks until the very end he ensures that the constantly high energy never defeats itself.

The **3 Bagatelles, Op. 9**, present the latest music in this programme: they were written in 1905–6, the first in Reichenhall (in southern Germany, just over the border from Salzburg), the second in St Petersburg and the third in Weggis (in Switzerland, a stone's throw from where Rachmaninov would build his Villa Senar). The blithe insouciance of the 'Scherzino' [11] is scarcely dampened by the chromatic inflection of the central episode; as a whole, the piece demonstrates Kalafati's ability to make a small amount of material go a long way. The 'Valse-Impromptu' [12] leans heavily on Tchaikovsky,

although the luscious chromaticism of the central section betrays its early-twentieth-century provenance. The third Bagatelle [13] bears the unlikely title 'L'Enterrement d'un Oiseau' – 'The Burial of a Bird'. It's unlikely – though not impossible – that Kalafati would have been aware of Alkan's *Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un pappagallo* (1859), but the rarity of dead birds as subject-matter for music certainly forms an unexpected bond between these composers. The obsessive dotted rhythms lend Kalafati's piece Mahlerian overtones, and the persistent chirruping – rendered not only by the expected trills but by cascades of double-note arpeggios – heard for most of the piece unneringly falls silent at the top of the last page, being replaced by the repeated intoning of a bell.

From its very opening, *Allegro con brio* [14], Kalafati's **Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 4, No. 2**, shows itself to inhabit a totally different world from its elegant and apollonian sibling: the stormy associations of its D minor tonality are fully explored with rapid changes of register, chromatic harmony and rhythmic allusions to the hunt. The pastoral second subject also inhabits its key-archetype – F major – before a long transitional passage featuring hands alternating in *moto perpetuo*. A dotted *alla caccia* figuration heard at the start of the work dominates proceedings in the development section, until a reprise of the alternating-hand material heralds the return of the opening.

The *Andante* second movement [15] is a Schumannesque half song without words, half stately chorale. Its central section displays the contrapuntal and harmonic ingenuity that came naturally to any Rimsky-Korsakov student, until a brief peal of bells (so beloved of many Russians when writing for the piano) ushers in a reprise of the opening. Here, Kalafati allows himself some lyric expansiveness (even marking the passage *passionato*) before bringing the music to an introverted conclusion.

Unlike the D major sonata, the Second Sonata has four movements, and its third is, as convention would suggest, a scherzo of a rather Brahmsian flavour, marked *Allegro* [16]. A stern and robust theme (reinforced with octaves in both hands) is contrasted with a briefly stated lyrical element, and then a bucolic and playfully virtuosic episode (in place of the traditional trio). A cadenza built around falling diminished chords precedes a reprise of the opening music.

With its relentless drive and heavy octaves in the bass, the finale – an *Andante* which leads to a *Presto* ^[17] – pre-empts the last movements of two rather later Russian piano sonatas: Rachmaninov’s First (with which it also shares a key) and Blumenfeld’s *Sonate-Fantaisie*, which uses the triplet figure just as obsessively.²⁹ It is paradoxically in this movement that Kalafati’s gifts as a melodist can be savoured more thoroughly: first in the A minor episode marked *doloroso* (where the accompanimental figure comes directly from Tchaikovsky’s early C sharp minor Sonata), and secondly in the long *cantabile* passage in F major. The work ends as it began, in the grip of a tempest.

Jonathan Powell is a pianist, composer and writer on music. He was awarded a Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge for his thesis After Scriabin: Six Composers and the Development of Russian Music. He continues to write about music, usually for his own recordings. He has performed internationally. His recording of Sorabji’s Sequentia cyclica was awarded the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritiken in 2020; Igor Levit invited him to perform the work in the 2021 edition of the Heidelberger Frühling.

Jeremy Thompson was born in Dipper Harbour, a small fishing village in New Brunswick, Canada. He furthered his studies at McGill University in Montreal, studying with Marina Mdivani, who was herself a student of Emil Gilels. He was honoured with two of Canada’s most prestigious doctoral fellowships to pursue his doctoral studies and in 2005 he earned a Doctorate of Music in Piano Performance. During this time, he performed with orchestras including the Saint Petersburg State Academic Orchestra, the Saratov Philharmonic Orchestra, the Georgian National Orchestra and the McGill Symphony Orchestra, as well as appearing extensively in recital performances, not least a debut Atlantic tour of eastern Canada and three trips to the former Soviet Union.

He has performed in recital and concerto settings throughout North America. Recent performances include concerto appearances with the Charlottesville Symphony, North Carolina Symphony, Montreal Chamber Orchestra, Symphony New Brunswick and the Western Piedmont Symphony Orchestra, as well as recitals in Montreal, Philadelphia, Reading (Pennsylvania), Hamilton (Ontario), Potsdam (New York State), Louisville (Kentucky),

²⁹ Blumenfeld, as a Beliaeff composer, would surely have been aware of Kalafati’s piece.

Raleigh, Greensboro and Winston-Salem (all three in North Carolina). He regularly presents master-classes, and is a passionate teacher, with a focus on a relaxed and fluid technique and developing self-expression. He is also in high demand as a collaborative pianist. He is comfortable in music from all eras, but specialises in virtuoso repertoire.

He also studied organ performance with John Grew at McGill University and is currently a concertising organist and the Director of Music at the First Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, Virginia.

He recently released a recording of the organ music of Karl Höller on the Raven label. He has also recorded a programme of piano music from Quebec on the McGill label. His discography includes a recording of piano music by Skryabin on MSR, commemorating the centenary of the composer's death. Current projects include studies in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian organ music.





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VASILY KALAFATI Piano Music

- [1] **Nocturne, *La Nuit à Goursouf*, Op. 5** (1900) **6:59**
- 5 Preludes, Op. 7** (1901) **8:37**
- [2] No. 1 *Allegro*; C major 0:46
- [3] No. 2 *Andante*; F minor 2:37
- [4] No. 3 *Andantino*; D flat major 1:39
- [5] No. 4 *Allegretto*; A major 1:35
- [6] No. 6 *Lento*; B flat minor 2:00
- Deux Nouvellettes, Op. 6** (1901)
- [7] No. 1 *Allegro moderato* 5:30
- Piano Sonata No. 1 in D major, Op. 4, No. 1** (c. 1895) **20:59**
- [8] I *Allegro moderato* 6:14
- [9] II *Adagio – Allegretto* 8:50
- [10] III Finale. *Allegro con brio* 5:55
- 3 Bagatelles, Op. 9** (1905–6) **12:07**
- [11] No. 1 Scherzino 2:17
- [12] No. 2 Valse-Impromptu 6:11
- [13] No. 3 L'Enterrement d'un Oiseau 3:39
- Piano Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 4, No. 2** (c. 1895) **24:23**
- [14] I *Allegro con brio* 8:14
- [15] II *Andante* 5:22
- [16] III Scherzo. *Allegro* 4:10
- [17] IV Finale. *Andante – Presto* 6:37

Jeremy Thompson, piano

TT 78:38

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