

THE NEW SCHOOL OF RUSSIAN AND EASTERN EUROPEAN  
CLASSICAL GUITAR: THE POST-SOVIET RISE OF A GLOBAL  
CONTRIBUTOR

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the developments in the Russian and Eastern European classical guitar community after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, after which political circumstances supported increased access to Western resources. Six-string guitar performers from Russia and former Soviet Eastern European states are afforded primary attention over players of the seven-string Russian guitar (*semistrunnaya*). This is an introduction to Russia's and Eastern Europe's evolution from non-essential in the global classical guitar community, to its current status as a source of many of the world's most influential guitarists. The subjects of this thesis are recognized as part of the *New Russian and Eastern European School of Guitar* by their individual successes in major international guitar competitions in the twenty-first century, shared educational background and geographic origins, and overall success as classical musicians. This is not intended to be an exhaustive account of every Russian and Eastern European guitarist.

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## INTRODUCTION: BEFORE ALEXANDER FRAUCHI

The history of the guitar in Russia and Eastern Europe precedes the development of the modern six-string Spanish version of the instrument. Russians such as Andrei Sychra (ca.1773-1850) and Mikhail Vysotsky (ca.1791-1837) composed music that contributed to the instrument's popularity in these regions and established interest in contemporaneous versions of the guitar in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-centuries. It is this pre-Revolution era that can be understood as the *First Russian and Eastern European School of Guitar*. Regional popularity of the instrument followed the ebbs and flows of global trends until the October Revolution in 1917, after which Communist party policies and the economic realities of the Soviet Union cultivated a difficult environment for guitar music. Russian and Eastern European guitarists would not begin to gain widespread relevance until 2000, nearly a decade after the Soviet Union's 1991 dissolution. The post-Soviet influx of information from the West was paired with the continuation of Soviet education methods to create what this thesis refers to as the *New School of Russian and Eastern European Guitar*.

Relevance of guitar music and culture was assisted in twentieth-century Soviet states through the efforts of the seven-string bard culture, with players such as Vladimir Vysotsky (1938-1920), and later Sergei Orekhov (1935-1998) in the forefront.<sup>1</sup> Alexander Ivanov-Kramskoi (1912-1973) was among the six-string guitarists to sustain

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<sup>1</sup> Ilya Ovchinnikov, "Russian Strings," *Russian Life* 54, no. 3 (May/June 2011): 44, accessed January 13, 2018, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=bb862e6b-0725-4c7c-a867-de559f42c093%40sessionmgr4006>.

the instrument's meager growth in the early and mid-Soviet era, with Alexander Frauchi (Frautschi) (1954-2008) planting the seeds of a classical guitar revolution in the 1980s.

The Soviet Union's cultural isolation prevented guitar communities from advancing and evolving at the rate of other instruments whose practitioners were able to travel abroad, such as piano and violin players. Academic and casual guitarists began switching to the six-string Spanish version after Andres Segovia's first performances in Russia in 1926, but as this thesis will demonstrate, the financial and governmental support experienced by pianists and violinists was not afforded to classical guitar guitarists.<sup>2</sup> This cultural suppression hindered the ability of six-string guitarists to benefit from the compositional and technical developments in the greater global community.

Although variants of the guitar—e.g. electric and steel-string acoustic—are among the developed world's most popular instruments, in the global landscape of art music, the classical guitar is seldom as ubiquitous as other instruments and musicians. Guitar, however, is unlike piano and orchestral strings, which are among the instruments that have undergone limited fundamental change since the beginning of the nineteenth-century. This encouraged stability that resulted in the creation of global musical traditions in training and information exchange that remained in place after the 1917 Revolution. The continuation of such international musical relationships is partly responsible for allowing pianists and violinists to advance and evolve at rates closer to their potential. The classical guitar community in Russia and Eastern Europe, however, did not share this

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<sup>2</sup> Ophee, Matanya. "A Brief History of The Seven-String Guitar." Lecture, 2011 GFA festival, Columbus, Georgia). 1-19. Accessed January 13, 2018. [http://www.academia.edu/12785546/A\\_Brief\\_History\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_Seven-String\\_Guitar](http://www.academia.edu/12785546/A_Brief_History_of_the_Russian_Seven-String_Guitar).



long-standing changelessness and singular identity, and it competed with the popularity of the seven-string Russian guitar throughout the nineteenth-century.<sup>3</sup>

General Secretary of the Soviet Union Joseph Stalin's ideas regarding the six-string guitar's association with the Western bourgeoisie shaped government perspectives of the instrument for much of the Soviet Union's existence. Nevertheless, the guitar's popularity in the twentieth-century grew in the Soviet Union just as it did in the West, and Andres Segovia's classical guitar concerts in Russia made it necessary for the guitar's academic status to be addressed by the government. Stalin wished to have an instrument that represented the Soviet Union and the pride of its people, not Spain and other Western countries, nor the idea of globalization. The seven-string Russian guitar (*semistrunnaya*) was closer to this ideal and was therefore more openly supported in academic situations, despite being a folk instrument. The interest in classical guitar did not subside, however, and academics and classical musicians found ways to keep the six-string Spanish (classical) guitar relevant (see Chapter Four).

Although the Soviet Union did not receive visiting Western classical guitarists with the same frequency as players of other instruments, tours from a world-famous Spaniard during the communist state's early years remain among the most important events for guitar in the region. The community of six-string guitar players experienced tremendous growth in Russia following Andres Segovia's tours, the first of which was in 1926, during which he was in Russia for seven months, and the last in 1936.<sup>4</sup> March 2, 1926, is well-established as Segovia's first performance in Russia, but there is

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<sup>3</sup> G. Crosskey and C. Cooper, "Another Look at the Guitar in Russia," *Classical Guitar* 5 (August 1987): 40.

<sup>4</sup> Ophee, 96.

inconsistency regarding his total number of visits to the country. Published accounts suggest that he was there just three times; Segovia himself, however, confirmed that he toured the country four times.<sup>5</sup> Matanya Ophee, Guitar Foundation of America Hall of Fame musicologist and expert on Russian guitar, lists the specific years as 1926, 1927, 1930, and 1936, as gathered from a biography on the Spaniard.<sup>6</sup>

Segovia biographers Garno and Wade posit that Segovia did not return to Russia after 1936 due to the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in the same year. The authors make no mention of why he never returned, despite an active career for over four decades after the conflict's end.<sup>7</sup> Through Segovia's travels, the seeds of the six-string guitar were planted worldwide. Boris Perott wrote that prior to Segovia's tours of Russia, "The seven-string guitar practically monopolised Russian guitarists, it being perhaps only one player in a hundred who played on the six-string."<sup>8</sup> This changed when Segovia came to Russia, as whenever he concertized a region of the world a classical guitar boon seemed to follow; the Soviet Union was no different.

While interest in the six-string guitar grew after Segovia's tours, ministerial attitudes toward the instrument inhibited growth in the instrument's community, the effects of which extended beyond the scarcity of information exchange. The modern guitar's short history and lack of prioritization by party leadership left guitarists with fewer options than orchestral musicians, which lay the burden of instrument procurement

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<sup>5</sup> Crosskey, 40.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>7</sup> Gerard Garno and Graham Wade, *A New Look at Segovia: His Life, His Music*, vol. 2 (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications, Inc., 1997), 96.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 102.

solely on the guitarists and their families. Prior to Perestroika, “electronic instruments were few and far between [for most of] the Soviet [era] and had to be purchased on the black market for hard currency.”<sup>9</sup> Soviet rock and roll musicians were, to varying extents, harassed by authorities during the 1970s and into the 1980s, making the electric guitars they used ignored or unwelcome. It was during this period, however, that restrictive attitudes toward six-string guitars began to ease.

Soviets were not relegated to purchasing all six-string guitars from the black market, like electronic keyboards, but high-quality instruments were uncommon during this period, and black-market prices were out-of-reach for most citizens. The guitar was not yet economically viable, which meant that there were few guitar-makers, resulting in the proliferation of either expensive or low-quality instruments. That Soviet guitarists could sustain any growth at all during decades of political, artistic, and cultural isolation is noteworthy.

Toward the end of the USSR’s existence and into the 1990s, Russia began to develop an identity through the legacy of noted teachers such as Kramskoi and the Frauchis—Alexander and his father, Kamill Arturovich Frauchi (1923-1997)—as well as by the production of distinctly Russian guitar compositions and arrangements. The march toward the *New School of Russian and Eastern European Guitar (New School)* culture, as it looks in the twenty-first century, took its first steps through the heightened visibility of compositions by Nikita Koshkin (b. 1956) in the early 1980s, and Sergei Rudnev (b. 1955) in the 1990s. Both composers are indebted to Israeli-American musicologist

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<sup>9</sup> Rustem Hayroudinoff, “The Agony and the Ecstasy: My Musical Training in Soviet Russia,” Gramophone: The World’s Best Classical Music Reviews, April 10, 2013, accessed September 02, 2017, <https://www.gramophone.co.uk/features/focus/the-agony-and-the-ecstasy-my-musical-training-in-soviet-russia>.

Matanya Ophee (1932-2017) for his publications of their works.<sup>10</sup> Alexander Frauchi, Koshkin, Rudnev, Ophee, and performer Alexey Zimakov (b. 1971) were integral figures in the progress toward the *New School*.

The *New School* comprises guitarists from former Soviet states who are united by more than geographical and chronological commonality. They emerged as a new tradition of guitar virtuosi originating from former Soviet countries, whose distinct sound and approach to guitar playing have led to success at major international guitar competitions, thereby separating them from their regional peers. The *New School of Russian and Eastern European Guitar*'s competition success alone does not define them, as their achievements are a byproduct of their playing style and rigorous training under Soviet methods during and after the official dissolution of the USSR. While competition success alone does not define these musicians, the guitarists indeed gain considerable exposure as a result of doing well at such events. Within a decade of the fall of the Soviet Union, the *New School* was cultivated as a result of recently-acquired international access paired with the Soviet system of education, creating one of the major forces in the global guitar community.

### State of Research

Using competitions as a basis for studying the success of musicians is skewed heavily toward student development topics. Beyond empirical data collection and

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<sup>10</sup> Significant Koshkin and Rudnev works published by Ophee include "Usher Waltz" and "Lipa vekovaia," respectively. Some guitarists consulted for this thesis claim Ophee was Russian, but he does not claim this in his website autobiography or in any notable interviews.

quantitative research for instruction or comparison of the historical record, tracing careers based on competition results seems to be limited. However, notable research conducted about individual competitions reveals trends in prize winners.

The Queen Elisabeth Competition, held in Brussels, Belgium, is “one of the most prestigious competitions in classical music,” whose history was studied for a 2001 article on participant rankings and placement.<sup>11</sup> The research concluded that the competition’s history showed clear biases in results from 1956 through 1999. The data displayed the judges’ preference for men, musicians from the Soviet Union, and “innovation in the sense that musicians who perform a more recently composed concerto [obtained] a higher rank (prize).”<sup>12</sup> This trend has begun to change in the twenty-first century, even at the famed International Tchaikovsky Competition, in Moscow, where the new general manager implemented rule changes and more transparent judging policies—including a diverse judging panel—over recent competitions, leading to wider variation in the nationalities of recent winners.<sup>13</sup>

The revelations of the Queen Elisabeth Competition’s improprieties, followed by any new policies they made, and the changes to the International Tchaikovsky Competition was the period during which the *New School of Russian and Eastern European Classical Guitar* emerged. Regarding the competitions referenced in this thesis, no data has been aggregated to determine if major international guitar

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<sup>11</sup> Herbert Glejser and Bruno Heyndels, “Efficiency and Inefficiency in the Ranking in Competitions: the Case of the Queen Elisabeth Music Contest,” *Journal of Cultural Economics* 24, no. 2, (May 2001): 109, accessed March 18, 2018, [http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/stable/41810752?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/stable/41810752?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>13</sup> Tom Service, “Everything to Play for at the Tchaikovsky Competition,” *The Guardian*, September 20, 2011, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/sep/20/tchaikovsky-competition-moscow-gergiev>.

competitions have experienced biases and tendencies similar to those of the Queen Elisabeth Competition’s judges, which was to reward the playing of uncommon pieces, unique performance styles, and Soviet musicians. Similarly, Dr. Chia-Jung Tsay’s 2013 study on music competitions revealed the tendency for judges to reward first prizes to participants who display more visual cues through movement, termed by the author’s subjects as “passion.”<sup>14</sup> It is unclear if the visually demonstrative performance styles of some *New School* guitarists, as discussed in this thesis, benefitted from such judging propensities.

The International Tchaikovsky Competition states that the “main purpose of the musical competition is revealing new talent.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the Guitar Foundation of America promotes that their International Concert Artist Competition (GFA) “has been very helpful to [winners] in launching their performing careers with GFA-organized recital tours.”<sup>16</sup> These two major international competitions—piano, violin, cello, and voice for the Tchaikovsky; guitar for GFA— share similar goals, but the Tchaikovsky’s age eligibility is 16 to 32 for all but vocalists (19 to 32), a standard approximate age range for such events, whereas the GFA only has a minimum age (18).<sup>17</sup> This supports the notion that competitions aim to attract younger musicians attempting to build careers,

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<sup>14</sup> Chia-Jung Tsay, “Sight Over Sound in the Judgment of Music Performance,” *Proceedings of The National Academy of Sciences of The United States Of America* 110, no. 36 (2013): 14583, accessed March 18, 2018, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=e9859c19-e885-4dd4-a54b-6b3d8f0e8458%40sessionmgr120>.

<sup>15</sup> “About the International Tchaikovsky Competition,” 2018, accessed March 18, 2018, <http://tchaikovskycompetition.com/en/about/>.

<sup>16</sup> “History and Mission,” Guitar Foundation of America, accessed March 18, 2018, <http://www.guitarfoundation.org/?page=HistoryMission>.

<sup>17</sup> “International Tchaikovsky Competition General Rules,” 2015, accessed March 18, 2018, <http://tchaikovskycompetition.com/en/rules/>.

and in the case of some *New School of Russian and Eastern European Guitarist*, the added allure is to build a reputation for the region.

Peter Somerford's 2018 article on music competitions details how competitions are or should be focused on helping participants develop careers than they were in previous generations. The 1978 Tchaikovsky Competition winner is quoted as saying the support of competitions for winners "is crucial for developing and maintaining a career in such a highly competitive industry."<sup>18</sup> Development specialist Andrea Duncan furthers this by saying: "the ability to communicate well off stage, engaging with audiences, and winning the support of potential sponsors and benefactors" is a critical aspect of the competition experience.<sup>19</sup> This speaks to the importance of competitions beyond monetary prizes and recognition, and furthers the importance of event participation for guitarists trying to build careers.

Broad research of music competitions may be limited due to the potential for viewing career success as an obvious or likely outcome of competition success. However, processed data on this information was not found. Furthermore, most of the information and research that was located did not pertain to guitar competitions or their participants, rather the majority of published research focuses on piano, orchestra strings, and voice.

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<sup>18</sup> Peter Somerford, "More Than the Money: Traditionally, Important Music Competitions Have Awarded Substantial Cash Prizes, but Contests These Days are Focusing Increasingly on Long-Term Career Development Support," *Strad* 129, no. 1533 (January 2018): 13, accessed March 18, 2018, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=07e3a645-5783-468b-97a0-f2440603b710%40sessionmgr4007>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER ONE: IDENTIFYING THE *NEW SCHOOL*

The *New School of Russian and Eastern European Guitar* comprises nine musicians from the former Soviet Union. The early members of this group began to gain global attention when they started winning major international guitar competitions in the early-2000s (see Chapter Two). The guitarists consulted for this thesis emphasized that guitar competition success does not define them as musicians, but they do acknowledge the significant and positive impact these events have had in their careers.

Alexey Zimakov, although an important post-Soviet guitarist, is not the logical starting point of the *New School*. His first-place finish at the 1991 GFA occurred just months prior to the official dissolution of the Soviet Union, and he was the first win at a major international competition by a guitarist from the soon-to-be-former USSR.<sup>1</sup> The achievement's timing and visibility argue for characterizing Zimakov as the first of this new era, but he did not follow the GFA win with major international competition success, nor did he go on to a significant teaching career. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, the next major competition titles for former-Soviet-state guitarists would not be won until 2000.

To understand the differences between *New School* guitarists, they can be thought of as two subgroups corresponding to their style of playing (see Chapter Four), and where they live and teach now that they have achieved success (see Table 1). These subgroup

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<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that Zimakov's 1991 GFA result was not the first win in any international guitar competition by a former USSR musician, rather the first of what will be considered among the "major" international competitions. See Chapter Two: The Competitions for further clarification.



designations—a principal group and a transitional group—are not correlated to musical ability, rather their approach to guitar playing and the professional paths they have taken. Transitional group guitarists Marcin Dylla, Roman Viazovskiy, Irina Kulikova, Vladimir Gorbach, and Marko Topchii have had extensive training in the West subsequent to their Soviet-system education and no longer live in former Soviet countries.<sup>2</sup> Dylla is the exception to this last criterion, as he has worked in Poland and Germany. Conversely, the principal group were trained almost exclusively, and still reside and teach, in Russia: Dimitri Illarionov, Artyom Dervoed, Rovshan Mamedkuliev, and Anton Baranov. The exception is Dervoed’s two-year post-graduate studies in Germany, as well as some sporadic, short-term instruction.

Table 1 – New School of Russian and Eastern European Classical Guitarists

	<b>Principal Group</b>	<b>Transitional Group</b>
<b>First Phase</b>	Dimitri Illarionov (b.1979)	Marcin Dylla (b.1976)
		Roman Viazovskiy (b.1974)
<b>Second Phase</b>	Artyom Dervoed (b.1981)	Irina Kulikova (b.1982)
<b>Third Phase</b>	Rovshan Mamedkuliev (b.1986)	Vladimir Gorbach (b.1981)
	Anton Baranov (b.1984)	Marko Topchii (b.1991)

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<sup>2</sup> Marko Topchii is currently in the United States, but it is unclear if he will return to Ukraine after the completion of his studies.

Three guitarists mark the beginning of the *New School*: Dimitri Illarionov, in the principal group, and Marcin Dylla and Roman Viazovski, in the transitional group. Dimitri Illarionov (b. 1979) is known throughout the global classical guitar community for his technical and visually captivating performances. Born in Chişinău, Moldova, he was raised in Moscow and plays with a percussive and aggressive style that is common in Russian guitarists. This pioneering member of the *New School* gained a global audience after his first-place finish in the 2002 GFA, in Miami, Florida. He had been invited to large festivals prior to 2002, but the GFA was his first major international competition success, the reward for which was a sponsored album recording and performance tour of over fifty countries in North and South America.

Illarionov discussed the work that was being done by him and other guitarists prior to the competition successes of the *New School* and expressed a reluctance to be identified by competitions, which was common among these musicians. Illarionov noted, however, that "if you are talking about influence, you have to talk about who is known, and competitions give exposure. So, really, I was the first one to have a career, thanks to the GFA win. After this, there was an explosion."<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Artyom Dervoed, another *New School* guitarist, stated, "when Dimitri won GFA, this was a big deal."<sup>4</sup>

Illarionov won two of the five major international guitar competitions (see Chapter Two), the other being the 2012 Francisco Tarrega Classical Guitar Competition (Tarrega), in Benicàssim, Spain. He also placed second in the 2007 Michele Pittaluga - Concorso Internazionale di Chitarra Classica (Michele Pittaluga International Classical

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<sup>3</sup> Dimitri Illarionov, Skype video call with author, January 27, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017.

Guitar Competition) (Pittaluga), in Alessandria, Italy. Like every member of the *New School*, Illarionov has won or done well in many other international competitions, so his sustained success over a long period makes him and Dylla the most appropriate figures be considered as the first members of the *New School*.

Marcin Dylla (b. 1976, Chorzów, Poland) is the transitional group guitarist who is famous for having won more international competitions between 1996 and 2007 (19) than any other guitarist in the world. These accomplishments include his 2000 first prizes at each of the following competitions: the Concurso Internacional de Guitarra Alhambra (Alhambra International Guitar Competition) (Alhambra), in València, Spain; the 2001 Pittaluga; 2004 JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition (Falletta), in Buffalo, New York; and first prize at the 2007 GFA, in Los Angeles.

Illarionov was educated entirely in Russia and now teaches at the prestigious Russian Academy of Music named after Gnesin (Gnesins). Dylla, however, was educated in Soviet and post-Soviet Poland until he was approximately twenty-four years old, then he went to the West for further training. He studied in Switzerland at the Musik-Akademie Basel (City of Basel Music Academy) with classical guitar icon and Segovia student Oscar Ghiglia, who called Dylla “a genius in his field. My teaching took place when his music culture was still being formed. We were both lucky that his drive toward improvement was as strong as my respect for tradition and quality in interpretation and performance.”<sup>5</sup> After Ghiglia, Dylla sought training at the Hochschule für Musik Freiburg (Freiburg Conservatory of Music), in Germany, and Conservatorium Maastricht

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<sup>5</sup> Oscar Ghiglia, Facebook messenger message to author, July 27, 2017.

(Maastricht Academy of Music), in the Netherlands, the latter with Carlo Marchione, one of Irina Kulikova's instructors.<sup>6</sup>

Roman Viazovskiy (b. 1974, Donetsk, Ukraine) was also educated in the Soviet system, which is used at the Sergey Prokofiev Conservatoire, in Donetsk, Ukraine. Upon graduating from conservatory, he left Eastern Europe to train in the West, studying at Hochschule für Musik Detmold (Music Academy in Detmold, Münster Campus), and later at Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln (Cologne Music Academy, Aachen Campus), for a total of eight years of study in Germany, where he now lives and teaches.<sup>7</sup> Viazovskiy won his first international competition at just seventeen years old, but his career did not begin to grow until after winning the 1999 Tokyo International Guitar Contest. Viazovskiy won or placed highly in many competitions, including second prizes at the 2004 GFA, in Montréal, as well as at the 1997 and 2001 Pittaluga competitions, but recognition of Soviet-system guitarists was slow until Dylla's and Illarionov's success.

Most guitarists consulted for this thesis agree that Illarionov is the logical starting point for the discussion of the *New School*, but, while Illarionov agrees that he likely brought the highest level of visibility to the group-to-be, he emphasizes that:

It was Marcin [Dylla] and Roman [Viazovskiy] who really were first because Roman won competitions before me. But, it's interesting, Roman never [wanted] to have a big [touring and competition] career, because, he [said] it was more important to be home than abroad, and maybe that's why he didn't push his [touring and competition] career like I did. So, it seems like I was the first, but I had heard of Roman before he had heard of me.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Equinox, "Biography," Marcin Dylla Classical Guitar, accessed March 04, 2018, <http://www.marcindylla.com/biography/>. NOTE: Official spellings from the organizations and institutions are used in this thesis, including the use of "conservatoire" or "conservatorium" rather than "conservatory," where applicable.

<sup>7</sup> "Vita." Roman Viazovskiy. Accessed March 04, 2018. [http://www.viazovskiy.de/vita\\_en.html](http://www.viazovskiy.de/vita_en.html).

<sup>8</sup> Dimitri Illarionov, Skype video call with author, January 27, 2018.

Whether Viazovskiy, Illarionov, or Dylla were the first, the first phase of the New School marked the beginning of a trend in competition success by guitarists from the former Soviet Union.

The next phase of guitarists in the *New School* is Artyom Dervoed (b. 1981) and Irina Kulikova (b. 1982). This second phase of three comprises, perhaps, the two most intriguing musicians in the *New School*, beginning with Artyom Dervoed, who *Universe Guitare* (France) “famously dubbed the ‘Tsar of the guitar’,” a title that has been repeated in multiple publications.<sup>9</sup> His career was defined in 2006, as he won the Pittaluga competition and co-founded and became the Artistic Director of the annual Guitar Virtuosi Moscow International Festival, in collaboration with the Moscow Philharmonic. His importance in the Russian and global guitar communities has grown steadily in the twenty-first century, including his 2010 first prize at the Falletta competition and a teaching position at Gnesins. All of these factors, coupled with widespread respect for his playing and work ethic, has made Dervoed a candidate for the most important *New School* guitarist.

Dervoed’s status in the principal group of the *New School* is based on his training in Russia, although he did receive training in the West, and his efforts to grow the next generation of guitarists from within Russia. After graduating from Gnesins, he studied at Koblenz International Guitar Academy for two years and then with Oscar Ghilia in Western Europe for a summer. While Dervoed incorporates Western ideas and techniques that he finds useful to advance his playing, his style is distinctly Russian. Ghilia stated

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<sup>9</sup> Primavera Consulting, “Artyom Dervoed: Classical Guitar,” Primavera Consulting LLC, Accessed March 04, 2018, <http://www.artsprimavera.com/artiom-dervoed-1/>.

that Dervoed’s “drive was already full of Russian influences and, of course, desire to excel. I tried to trim some excess but had to repeat my doing so every time we saw each other around the world. [Needless] to say, I’m extremely proud of [him and Dylla], albeit in a different way.”<sup>10</sup>

When listening to Dervoed’s playing, his Russianness is on full display, yet so is an expression that is uncommon in his peers (see Chapter Four). His aggressive and percussive playing style relates to Illarionov and the Russian traditions of Sergei Orekhov, Alexander Frauchi, and Alexey Zimakov. However, Dervoed plays with a combination of extreme dynamic contrast, and lyricism, with rare speed that follows in the lineage of Zimakov, whose teacher, Nikolay Komolyatov (b. 1942), also taught Dervoed at Gnesins. The “excess” to which Ghilia refers—a reference to the playing that made Dervoed the first Russian to win the Pittaluga competition—is an observation and assessment that is notably absent when describing the next *New School* guitarist.<sup>11</sup>

Irina Kulikova was, in every respect, a child prodigy. She began playing at age five, the youngest of any *New School* player, gave her first concert at age eight, and won her first notable guitar competition at age twelve—besting older and more experienced players at the 1994 Guitar in Russia Competition, in Voronezh.<sup>12</sup> Kulikova, born to a cellist mother in Chelyabinsk, Russia, garners substantial respect among her peers but is often overlooked in the conversation of important Russian guitarists. She, like the other

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<sup>10</sup> Oscar Ghilia, Facebook messenger message to author, July 27, 2017. NOTE: Ghilia’s quote was actually “useless to say,” but is assumed to have meant “needless to say.”

<sup>11</sup> Dmitry Vuilov, “Дервоед Артем Владимирович.” Дервоед Артем Владимирович, Российская академия музыки имени Гнесиных (“Dervoed Artem Vladimirovich. Russian Academy of Music named after Gnesins), last modified February 15, 2018, accessed March 07, 2018, <http://www.gnesin-academy.ru/node/6025>.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Fowles, “Guitar in Russia 1994,” *Classical Guitar*, 13 (September 1994), 34.

members of the transitional group, moved West to obtain significant training. However, unlike Dylla, who won the Alhambra competition prior to his studies in Germany, Kulikova's success at major international competitions began after she moved to Austria at age nineteen (ca. 2001) to study at University Mozarteum (Mozarteum University Salzburg) with Marco Tamayo.

All *New School* members are from or moved to major metropolitan areas, which was necessary for Russian and Eastern European guitarists to find success in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Dervoed, whose family moved to Moscow when he was twelve, stated: “when I was a kid, [moving to a major city] was obligatory because of teachers and activities.”<sup>13</sup> Kulikova furthered this by saying “when Dimitri won GFA, he became a king; when Rovshan won, many people were curious about him because he was not from Moscow or St. Petersburg. I was proud that a guitarist from somewhere new experienced success.”<sup>14</sup> Rovshan Mamedkuliev concurred with this sentiment, adding that “Gnesins is the biggest academy for guitarists in Russia—Moscow is the concentration of everything in Russia for guitarists.”<sup>15</sup> Moscow was the capital of all music training in the Soviet Union, not just guitar, as Russian concert pianist Rustem Hayroudinoff explained: “all the aspiring young musicians around the country knew that if they wanted to make something of their lives, they had to try to get into the Moscow Conservatory.”<sup>16</sup> Knowing this, Kulikova was accepted to Gnesins at seventeen and moved to Moscow.

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<sup>13</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Irina Kulikova, Facebook messenger video call with author, July 16, 2017; March 14, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Rovshan Mamedkuliev, Skype video call with author, June 12, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Hayroudinoff.

Guitarists that lived in the expensive capital city were supported financially by their families, which Irina's family could not do, causing her to get jobs that nearly ended her young career. Kulikova was aware of her family's financial difficulties from a young age, which unknowingly prepared her for her trials in Moscow and later in Austria. Her family struggled mightily in the post-Soviet 1990s, which resulted in the young prodigy requesting food as payment for some of her performances. Despite the uncertainty, she moved to Moscow because, she said, "it was my dream to study at Gnesins, . . . but I was always working."<sup>17</sup> The academy stipend was equivalent to two hundred euros, which was not enough to afford a room that was the equivalent to five hundred euros, so Kulikova was forced to have two or three jobs at a time.

When asked about the transition to Moscow, Vladimir Gorbach, who would be inspired to follow a path similar to Kulikova's, stated, "even she, a child prodigy, stopped performing actively after moving to Moscow because she wasn't able to find time to practice and concertize. In Moscow, if you are not a local, it may very likely eat away at you."<sup>18</sup> Dervoed affirms the need to have financial support: "You can't really work because if you work, your concentration is not that high. You have to be supported by family and foundations that give money to talented students."<sup>19</sup> The issue for Kulikova regarding the latter fundraising method is that she did not have time to prepare for foundation and scholarship auditions because she was working to make just enough money for food and housing. After two years, she realized that in order to continue

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<sup>17</sup> Irina Kulikova, Facebook messenger video call with author, July 16, 2017; March 14, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Vladimir Gorbach, Skype video call with author, June 18, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017.



pursuing guitar as a profession, “the only option for me was to move to [Western] Europe.”<sup>20</sup>

Kulikova moved to Austria at age nineteen to study with Marco Tamayo, traveling to Moscow every two months to finish her studies, but found herself in a similar financial position. She received scholarships for being a wunderkind, but it was not enough to support her. She went to work as a babysitter and cleaned offices from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am for five euros per hour:

I was very ashamed. My peers would go for a coffee that was 2.50 euros, but I couldn't afford it and didn't have the free time because I was working, so they thought I was arrogant because I still played well and showed promise. I wasn't arrogant, I just had to go to my job. I never had enough time to practice with university and job responsibilities. I was living in the basement of a synagogue—even though I'm not Jewish—but through some friends I was able to exchange cleaning services for a mattress on the floor. But this was a better life than in Russia.<sup>21</sup>

After years of struggling, Kulikova regained her footing and began winning competitions again. At age twenty-six, just one year after moving to The Hague, Netherlands, to live and teach, she won first prize at both the 2008 Pittaluga and 2008 Alhambra competitions, with accompanying tours and album recordings. Oscar Ghilia specifically referenced Koshkin, Dylla, and Dervoed when he said, “only very strong and highly talented people were able to thrive and break into today's guitar world,” but the teacher very well may have been speaking of the strength and perseverance of Kulikova.

The third and final phase of the *New School* comprises the four *New School* guitarists who began their classical guitar training either outside of Moscow or after the

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<sup>20</sup> Irina Kulikova, Facebook messenger video call with author, July 16, 2017; March 14, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

dissolution of the Soviet Union: principal figures Rovshan Mamedkuliev and Anton Baranov, and transitional figures Vladimir Gorbach and Marko Topchii. Between 2011 and 2017, these players won or placed in the top three in fifteen out of twenty-seven occurrences of the competitions considered for this thesis—winning one-third of them outright.<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that during these seven years, Gorbach’s first prize at the 2011 GFA, in Columbus, Georgia, was the only major competition—as considered in this thesis—in which he competed. He has won many international competitions, but seems to put less emphasis on these events than the other three guitarists in the third phase, leading him to be an outlier in the *New School*.

Vladimir Gorbach (b. 1981) began his studies in Novosibirsk, Siberia—Russia’s third-largest city—and trained under Yuri Kuzin, who also taught Anton Baranov’s teacher. Gorbach trained under Kuzin for ten years until age twenty-one when he was given a chance to study in Moscow, but he realized early that this was “not an option for me.”<sup>23</sup> He saw the success and resurgence Irina Kulikova was experiencing and decided to follow a similar path by moving to Cologne, Germany, to study with Roberto Aussel. Like his time with Kuzin, Gorbach studied with Aussel for an extended period, from 2002 to 2010, long enough for the *New Schooler* to earn his bachelor’s and master’s degrees.

By the time Gorbach won the GFA competition, his playing was a balanced combination of Russian (Soviet) and Western approaches. He maintains a elements of the percussive and direct style heard in the playing of other *New Schoolers*, but he does not

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<sup>22</sup> The GFA, Tarrega, and Pittaluga are held annually; the Alhambra and Falletta are held biennially.

<sup>23</sup> Vladimir Gorbach, Skype video call with author, June 18, 2017.

put this Russianness on constant display. As he explains it, “Alexei Zimkov’s 1991 GFA win had this raw, Russian kind of soul and incredible technique, but has nothing to do with European tradition and phrasing that should be there. The incorporation of Western ideas started with my generation.”<sup>24</sup> Gorbach teaches at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Australia, where he has been the head of the guitar department since 2015. His training and acceptance of a position in the West have made him an important member of the transitional group, as he can begin to teach Soviet and Western music principles beyond the borders of post-Soviet states.

Rovshan Mamedkuliev’s (b. 1986) route to the *New School* was unique to him. He is the only guitarist in the *New School* who did not pursue musical training in Moscow, St. Petersburg, a major post-Soviet city in Eastern Europe, or the West. He was born in Baku, Azerbaijan, and raised in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, which is where he completed his guitar studies at the Nizhny Novgorod State Conservatoire. Despite the advice that a guitarist could not become famous from Nizhny Novgorod, Rovshan stayed in the city to be near family and has still gone on to be respected globally. Although he was educated and trained away from Moscow, he maintains the aggressive and demonstrative Russian style of Illarionov and others, further supporting the idea that there is indeed a Russian performance attitude and manner.

Like Gorbach, Rovshan began his formal classical guitar training at eleven, which is an advanced age compared to most members of the *New School*. Nevertheless, Rovshan went on to win many international competitions at a young age, including the

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<sup>24</sup> Vladimir Gorbach, Skype video call with author, June 18, 2017.

2012 GFA, in Charleston, South Carolina. His success in South Carolina led him to be offered a position on the faculty of the Southern Guitar Festival and Competition (South Carolina), which was founded by Soviet-trained guitarist, Ukrainian Marina Alexander. Rovshan then won the 2014 Tarrega and 2015 Pittaluga competitions, and now teaches in Moscow, at the State Classical Academy named after Maimonides, while maintaining an active touring and recording career.

Other than Rovshan, only one other *New School* guitarist was born and trained in Russia and continues to live there. Anton Baranov (b. 1984, northwest region of Russia) is the only guitarist in the *New School* who is associated with St. Petersburg. He began playing at age ten and went on to study at the prestigious Saint Petersburg Conservatory named after N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov, and is young enough to have been judged in Russian guitar competitions by Illarionov, who called the young Anton “extremely talented from the beginning.”<sup>25</sup>

Baranov is the only *New School* guitarist to have placed in the top three of all five major international competitions that are considered in this thesis. He won the 2013 GFA, in Louisville, Kentucky, 2013 Tarrega, and 2016 Falletta, placed third and second in the 2013 Pittaluga and 2014 Alhambra competitions, respectively. He is prolific in his competition participation but is socially reserved in comparison with other principal group members, which is evident in his performances. Baranov’s speed and ability make him comparable to Dervoed, but his performances are less demonstrative than Dervoed, Illarionov, or Rovshan.

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<sup>25</sup> Dimitri Illarionov, Skype video call with author, January 27, 2018.

Marko Topchii (b. 1991, Kiev, Ukraine) is the final member of the *New School* of Russian and Eastern European Classical Guitar. He is five years younger than the next youngest *New Schooler*, and seventeen years younger than the oldest, but this matters only in the context of his current lack of a notable teaching career. He began playing guitar at age four after seeing a video of Marcin Dylla, leading to a prolific career in which he has earned many top competition prizes, including placing highly in four of the five major competitions: third (2011) and second prize (2013) at Tarrega; third (2016) and first (2017) at Pittaluga; second (2016) at Alhambra; and first (2014) at Falletta. These results display that Topchii was the most active *New School* guitarist at all of these competitions, which he said, “is primarily for financial reasons. This is the most efficient way for me to earn money as a Ukrainian.”<sup>26</sup> As of February 2018, he continues to enter as many competitions as possible to afford his pursuit of a doctorate in San Francisco.

There is some uncertainty about Topchii’s inclusion in the *New School*, as his approach to the guitar is quite different from all other members. Despite having studied in Ukraine’s Soviet-style system through conservatory, he is part of the transitional group because of his playing style and efforts to break from the traditions of the other *New Schoolers*. He stated that he wants to “go his own way,” using ideas from the other *New School* members and their predecessors, but that he also “had to reject some of the things from the older generation,” because they were not progressive enough.<sup>27</sup>

Topchii said he approaches the guitar like young players Stephanie Jones, from Australia, and Domenico Mottola, from Italy, whose styles are noticeably Western.

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<sup>26</sup> Marko Topchii, Facebook messenger video call with author, February 9, 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Topchii's playing is also informed largely by his piano background, as his mother, a pianist, encouraged him to think orchestrally and not to emulate other guitarists.<sup>28</sup> He prefers using *tirando* (free stroke) technique over *apoyando* (rest stroke), which he suggested is a tradition that is not as essential as older generations consider it, as he is able to achieve much of the desired tone and dynamics using *tirando*. These traits point to a musician who is preparing to break from the traditions of his predecessors, as well as his peers.

It is too early to determine what impact Topchii's studies in San Francisco will have on his approach to the guitar, but it is clear that, if he is a member of the *New School*, he is the most transitional figure of the group. Topchii satisfies all the criteria to be in the *New School* but is also influenced by contemporary guitarists who have not accomplished a fraction of his competition success, nor have they earned a reputation approaching his. He is a new breed of guitarists influenced by the Soviet system, one who may be in a class of his own. His technique is still being polished, and he seems to dismiss egotism and self-importance in an effort to become the best musical version of himself, which suggests that Topchii is becoming the type of musician that could attract Western guitarists to move to Eastern Europe to study.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE COMPETITIONS

Competitions should not be considered the primary method of measuring a classical guitarist's ability. In this thesis, I neither suggests that competitions are the best gauge of musicianship, nor that guitarists who have not won competitions are lesser musicians. For many classical guitarists, however, the necessity of seeking success in competitions is a reality in order to establish a performing and recording career and a prestigious reputation.

Denis Azabagic states in his book, *On Competitions*, "Competitions are not the only way to establish yourself as a performer, but they definitely help."<sup>1</sup> Illarionov gave his perspective on the importance of competitions by stating, "For Rovshan [Mamedkuliev] and [Vladimir] Gorbach, competitions were about being known, but it was about money for me, Marko [Topchii], and even Artyom [Dervoed]—to some extent."<sup>2</sup> Topchii agreed while espousing an opinion that was even further pragmatic. He exhibited his progression away from the other *New School* guitarists and the perceived expectations of extreme speed from Soviet-trained guitarists by saying, "I don't really like to play really fast pieces at competitions because it burns my concentration. I was able to figure out the types of pieces juries like, such as polyphony, and I like these. So, I try to play pieces that will please the audience [and the jury]."<sup>3</sup> Kulikova's view on competitions was similar to those of Topchii's, saying, "it was an important part of my

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<sup>1</sup> Denis Azabagic, *On Competitions: Dealing with Performance Stress* (Pacifico, MO: Mel Bay Publications, Inc., 2003), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Dimitri Illarionov, Skype video call with author, January 27, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Marko Topchii, Facebook messenger video call with author, February 9, 2018.

studies, but it is only part of development process. I think there is a formula for success at competitions, because every mistake counts against you, so it's easy to worry about accuracy over musicality.”<sup>4</sup>

As stated in Chapter One, the musicians comprising the *New School of Russian and Eastern European Guitar* were initially identified, in part, by their success at important international competitions. As such, five international guitar competitions were chosen as a sample to demonstrate the sudden achievements of the guitarists who became the *New School*. Four of these—GFA, Tarrega, Pittaluga, and Alhambra—are recognized by the global classical guitar community, including *New School* members, as being among the most prestigious competitions in the world. The biennial Falletta competition, although slightly below the top-tier due to having been in existence since just 2004, is included to demonstrate the ascendancy of *New School* guitarists.<sup>5</sup>

There are no objective or centralized rankings of guitar competitions, and there is no observable trend in guitarists choosing to enter specific contests simply because of large prizes. For example, competitions such as the triennial Parkening International Guitar Competition (Malibu, California), founded in 2006, awards “cash prizes in excess of US\$50,000, . . . the largest prize purse of any classical guitar competition worldwide.”<sup>6</sup> In 2012 and 2015, the Parkening first prize was \$30,000, in which Rovshan Mamedkuliev

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<sup>4</sup> Irina Kulikova, Facebook messenger video call with author, July 16, 2017; March 14, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> The Falletta competition is included to demonstrate how *New School* guitarists have experienced notable and repeated success across many levels and types of competition.

<sup>6</sup> Chelsea Sutton, “Parkening International Guitar Competition Names 2015 Winners,” *Business Wire*, June 04, 2015, accessed March 06, 2018, <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150604006516/en/Parkening-International-Guitar-Competition-Names-2015-Winners>.



earned \$12,500 for his 2015 second place finish.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the biennial Guitar Masters Competition (Wrocław, Poland), founded in 1998, awarded €20,000 for its 2016 first prize winner.<sup>8</sup> The GFA first prize is \$10,000, yet is considered by Dylla, Illarionov, Gorbach, Mamedkuliev, and others to be “the most prestigious guitar contest in the world,” in which all *New School* guitarists except Kulikova and Topchii have placed highly.<sup>9</sup> Dervoed’s summarizes the general thoughts on these competitions by saying “Parkening is a good money competition, but it’s young,” exhibiting that prize money alone is not always the primary draw for guitarists to competitions.<sup>10</sup>

Due to the lack of objective rankings, differing emphases of international guitarists over the previous fifty years, and the inconsistency of prize money, the process of determining the importance of each international competitions and which ones to include in this thesis is inexact. My aim for this thesis was to determine a list of competitions based on the tendencies of the global classical guitar leaders and the *New School*, and their views on reputation and historical significance, age of event, past winners, and prize money. The diversity of competition locations—Spain, Italy, and the United States—lends weight to the merit of this list (see Table 2).

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<sup>7</sup> “Parkening International Guitar Competition,” Parkening International Guitar Competition: Lisa Smith Wengler Center for the Arts, Pepperdine University, last modified 2018, accessed March 06, 2018, <https://arts.pepperdine.edu/events/parkening/>.

<sup>8</sup> “About Competition Guitar Masters 2016,” 2016 Guitar Masters, last modified 2018, accessed March 06, 2018, [http://competition.guitarmasters.pl/en/competition\\_guitar\\_masters\\_2016](http://competition.guitarmasters.pl/en/competition_guitar_masters_2016).[http://competition.guitarmasters.pl/en/competition\\_guitar\\_masters\\_2016](http://competition.guitarmasters.pl/en/competition_guitar_masters_2016).

<sup>9</sup> Connie Sheu, “International Concert Artist Competition Prize Increase,” Guitar Foundation of America. February 20, 2014, accessed March 06, 2018, <http://www.guitarfoundation.org/news/news.asp?id=161723&hhSearchTerms=%22prize%22>; Equinox.

<sup>10</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017.

Table 2 – Major International Guitar Competitions: *Tarrega*,<sup>11</sup> *Pittaluga*,<sup>12</sup> *GFA*,<sup>13</sup> *Alhambra*,<sup>14</sup> *Falletta*<sup>15</sup>

Competition	Year Founded	Frequency	Prize	Notable Winners (Year)	"New School" (Year/Results)
International Guitar Competition "Francisco Tárrega"	1967	Annual	(See footnote)		Dmitri Illarionov (2012/1) Rovshan Mamedkuliev (2014/1) Anton Baranov (2013/1) Marko Topchii (2013/2, 2011/3)
Michele Pittaluga - Concorso Internazionale di Chitarra Classica	1968	Annual	10,000 EUR	Kazuhito Yamashita (1977) Elena Papandreou (1985) Marco Tamayo (1999)	Roman Viazovskiy (1997/2, 2001/2, 2002/3) Marcin Dylla (2001/1) Artyom Dervoed (2006/1) Dmitri Illarionov (2007, 2) Irina Kulikova (2007/3, 2008/1) Anton Baranov (2013/3) Rovshan Mamedkuliev (2015/1) Marko Topchii (2016/3, 2017/1)
Guitar Foundation of America International Concert Artist Competition (GFA)	1982	Annual	10,000 USD	Adam Holzman (1982) Jason Vieaux (1992) Denis Azabagic (1998) Thomas Viloteau (2006)	Dmitri Illarionov (2002, 1) Marcin Dylla (2007/1) Vladimir Gorbach (2011/1) Rovshan Mamedkuliev (2012/1) Anton Baranov (2013/1) Artyom Dervoed (2013/2)
Concurso Internacional de Guitarra Alhambra	1990	Biennial	14,000 EUR	Denis Azabagic (1996) Goran Krivokapic (2004)	Marcin Dylla (1998/2, 2000/1) Irina Kulikova (2008/1) Vladimir Gorbach (2011/1) Anton Baranov (2014/2) Marko Topchii (2016/2)
JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition	2004	Biennial	10,000 USD	Celil Kaya (2012)	Marcin Dylla (2004/1**) Artyom Dervoed (2010/1*) Marko Topchii (2014/1**) Anton Baranov (2016/1**)

\* denotes "Audience Favorite Award; \*\* denotes Musicians Favorite Award and Audience Favorite Award. In the competition's history, winning all three prizes, including first prize, has been accomplished by only the three New School Guitarists listed.

<sup>11</sup> Irene Dominguez, "Libro de Oro 2015/2016," Golden Book of Music, last modified 2015, Accessed March 07, 2018, <http://fundacionorfeo.com/libro2015-2016/en/2016/02/26/concurso-internacional-de-guitarra-clasica-gsd-y-i-festival-de-la-guitarra-de-madrid/>. NOTE: Attempts to contact the Tarrega Competition were unsuccessful.

<sup>12</sup> "Concorso Internazionale di Chitarra Classica 'Michele Pittaluga'," last modified February 2, 2018, accessed March 06, 2018, <http://www.pittaluga.org/index-uk.asp>.

<sup>13</sup> "GFA Competitions," Guitar Foundation of America, last modified 2016, accessed March 07, 2018, <http://www.guitarfoundation.org/?page=CompetitionsMain>; "ICAC Past Winners," Guitar Foundation of America, accessed March 07, 2018, <http://www.guitarfoundation.org/?page=PastICACWinners>.

<sup>14</sup> Manufacturas Alhambra SL, "Concurso Internacional de Guitarra Alhambra," International Guitar Competition Alhambra, last modified 2018, accessed March 07, 2018, <http://www.concursoalhambra.com/>.

<sup>15</sup> "JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition," Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, last modified 2018, accessed March 06, 2018, <https://bpo.org/joann-falletta-international-guitar-concerto-competition/>.

### CHAPTER THREE: FROM FRAUCHI TO THE *NEW SCHOOL*

The emergence of the *New School* and its connection with the West can be traced to Nikita Koshkin's programmatic work, "The Prince's Toys." Czech guitarist Vladimir Mikulka premiered the seminal work in 1980 in the *Maison de la Radio* in Paris (Grand Auditorium of Radio France), for which the Russian composer garnered "international attention from audiences and critics almost instantly."<sup>1</sup> While Koshkin, an accomplished guitarist in his own right, performed around the world after the end of the Soviet Union, it was his instructor from Gnesins, Alexander Frauchi, who laid the groundwork for the *New School of Russian and Eastern European Guitar*.

Rovshan Mamedkuliev, who did not study with Alexander Frauchi, stated, "Frauchi was the most important teacher of Russian guitar. He was the first Russian guitarist to win a major international competition."<sup>2</sup> This enforces the idea of Frauchi as an essential figure for the eventual *New School*, while also supporting the consideration of competition results as important criteria. Frauchi's impact was so significant that just one year after his 2008 death, the biennial Alexander Frauchi International Guitar Competition was founded. The initial competition "aim[ed] to reunite the friends and associates of guitarist Alexander Frauchi" and attracted the likes of late French composer-guitarist Roland Dyens, as well as Artyom Dervoed.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Koonce, *Classic Koshkin* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications, Inc., 2003), 2. Note: some sources state that The Prince's Toys was dedicated to Mikulka, but this has not been verified by commonly available publications from the composer or those with whom he worked.

<sup>2</sup> Rovshan Mamedkuliev, Skype video call with author, June 12, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Fowles, "1st Alexander Frauchi International Guitar Competition," *Classical Guitar* 28, no. 7 (March 2010): 29.

Alexander Frauchi's father, violinist Kamill Arturovich Frauchi, taught him the violin and guitar—despite not being a guitarist himself—from a young age. Alexander Frauchi then went on to study with N. Ivanova-Kramskaya, daughter of Alexander Ivanov-Kramskoi, at the Moscow Conservatory High Music School, and V.M. Derum at the Urals Mussorgsky State Conservatoire, Sverdlovsk. Although Alexander Frauchi's competition success opened necessary doors for the building of a guitar legacy, his greatest impact, as it relates to the *New School*, was as a teacher.

Prior to teaching Dimitri Illarionov, Frauchi's list of students includes Koshkin, who was just two years younger than Koshkin, Vladimir Dozenko, who taught Roman Viazovski briefly in Kharkiv, Ukraine, and two Soviet players who served as a bridge to the *New School*: Ukrainian Alexander Rengatsch (among the first Soviet guitarists to win multiple competitions in Western Europe) and Yevgeny Finkelstein. While Rengatsch is no longer a part of the performing circuit, Finkelstein (b. 1972) experienced success in Russia and is still an active professional guitarist who achieved regional success. Although Finkelstein was unable to obtain international success, he remains important to the *New School*: "Finkelstein didn't influence the world like we have, and he didn't [directly influence the players of the *New School*], but he influenced the Russian school of guitar. And he is the next step after Frauchi," said Illarionov.<sup>4</sup>

Oleg Timofeyev, the world's leading authority on the Russian seven-string guitar, explained that the movement toward the *New School of Russian and Eastern European Guitar* began with Frauchi. Timofeyev said, "no one was playing the six-string

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<sup>4</sup> Dimitri Illarionov, Skype video call with author, January 27, 2018.

guitar in Russia [during the Soviet Union] at a truly professional, Western level. We only learned how towards the end of the century with the appearance of Alexander Frautschi and other masters.”<sup>5</sup>

Alexander Frauchi’s playing remained significant after *New School* guitarists were gaining international attention. When he gave performances in Zurich, Switzerland in the 2000s (exact date unknown), the “land of his ancestors,” he was toasted by his audience: “let’s drink to the best Swiss guitarist, whom it took 100 years of life in Russia to become the best.”<sup>6</sup> That Russia, a country with a historically insignificant six-string legacy, produced a guitarist who was considered relevant in a Western country surrounded by the best classical guitarists in the world, further proves that he and the *New School* had achieved their place in the global conversation.

Even before Mikhail Gorbachev’s perestroika and glasnost reforms in the 1980s, economic uncertainty in the USSR allowed the guitar culture, among many areas of Soviet life, to experience a shift that would lead to the timing and circumstances of the *New School*’s emergence. Frauchi’s 1986 first prize at the Havana International Guitar Competition, in Cuba, came amidst a changing political atmosphere between the Soviet Union and the West. This convergence of events began to open lines of artistic communication and information exchange, and as Illarionov said, “because of Reagan and Gorbachev, Frauchi became friends with many great guitarists, and he started to learn from them.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ovchinnikov, 44. NOTE: The spelling of Frautschi’s name is used from the quote. “Frauchi” and “Frautschi” are both accepted spellings, but the former is more common in English publications.

<sup>6</sup> *Frautschi*, directed by Sabine I. Gölz and Oleg Timofeyev (ArbatFilm, 2008), accessed December 20, 2017, <https://vimeo.com/42589057>.

<sup>7</sup> Dimitri Illarionov, Skype video call with author, January 27, 2018.

Beyond Alexey Zimakov's 1991 GFA win, the lack of internationally-known players from the region constructed perpetual hurdles for other guitarists to get recognition and to realize financial goals. Some of these challenges were related to the abrupt changes in the education system after the fall of the Soviet Union. Extreme economic hardship after the 1991 dissolution plagued Russia and much of Eastern Europe, the effects of which the education system was not immune (see Chapter Four). In the twenty-first century, however, education reforms have caused a resurgence in educational prioritization, including the support for classical music festivals.

Now that Artyom Dervoed has achieved noteworthy success, his responsibilities as the artistic director for the Guitar Virtuosi Moscow International Festival are his primary efforts toward growing the classical guitar community and audience within Russia. He was adamant, however, that the festival is not a competition, which is a narrative he has promoted since the event's beginning. He seems to have successfully rid the festival of competitive attitudes, as stated in a 2010 interview: "unlike in previous years, the [2010] festival was completely free of any atmosphere of competition."<sup>8</sup>

Dervoed is methodical in his approach to raising the profile of the Russian and Eastern European guitar community and growing the next generation, as he realizes the importance of building on the work he and other *New Schoolers* have done. He is not content to have his name attached to a festival that makes some money now, as he knows that in order to build a legacy and to become a destination for international students, Russia has to first become a top destination for performers. When explaining the

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<sup>8</sup> Ovchinnikov, 41.

difficulty in growing a guitar culture that historically lacks respect in the local classical music community, it becomes clear that Dervoed is doing the difficult and conflict-ridden work that only someone of international stature is in a position to confront. Speaking about the Virtuosi festival, he said:

Ninety percent of the festival's budget, if not more, comes from ticket sales. If people decide not to come to the festival, then next year there won't be a festival. This year we managed to attract several sponsors, but the money involved was peanuts. It's more profitable for the Philharmonic Society to invite those who have already performed at the festival. When the audience knows the artists, they are much keener to come to the concerts. For example, although the concert given by Antal Puztai and Pavel Steidl was one of the most interesting at the festival, it was not sold out like a gala concert would be. It was clear from ticket sales that people did not know these names. But we also have to invite new performers; the festival needs new blood.<sup>9</sup>

The emergence of the *New School* was not a product of mere recognition by the Western world; these guitarists were and remain different players than previous generations. Videos of Alexey Zimakov's performance in the 1991 GFA, as well as from his 2009 concert circuit in which he included pieces by Paganini and Bazzini, showed that the speed and musicality that impressed GFA judges was more reminiscent of flamenco players than the standards associated with the *New School*.<sup>10</sup> This observation of his approach to playing is consistent with inspiration that Zimakov took from Sergei Orekhov. Orekhov, as Oleg Timofeyev explained, "had originally been trained as an acrobat in the circus, so he achieved unbelievable levels of virtuosity and embellishment

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<sup>9</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> "Alexey Zimakov plays on GFA (1991)" (video of live performance), posted by Guitar Magazine, January 12, 2009, accessed March 07, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49bXKHBRdQ8>; "Alexey Zimakov plays Paganini" (video of live performance), posted by Guitar Magazine, May 28, 2009, accessed January 12, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvAUFJzmP6c>; "Alexey Zimakov plays 'The Dance of the Goblins' by A. Bazzini" (video of live performance), posted by Axelys3, November 03, 2009, accessed January 12, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrSY6VyIO8o>.

on the guitar.” Zimakov was in the generation that idolized Orekhov, which is evident in the former’s playing.

Although the musicality exhibited in the noted videos is unquestionable, there is a significant contrast between Zimakov’s tone and note clarity and that of *New Schoolers* such as Artyom Dervoed and Anton Baranov when playing passages at the extreme speeds for which all three are known. Illarionov admitted that, while he holds Zimakov in high regard personally and professionally, “even with [Zimakov's best] playing, from [when he won] GFA, he would not be a winner in the 2000s.”<sup>11</sup> The execution of speed and technique exhibited by Zimakov in his prime contrasts with the countless recordings by *New School* players in which they display broad consistency in the same areas. This speaks to the elevated playing steadily demonstrated by *New School* players. There is a strong connection, however, between Zimakov and the *New School*.

Alexey Zimakov learned elements of Sergei Orekhov’s approach to the guitar, some of which originate with flamenco guitarists, and incorporated them into his playing. Zimakov’s link to the *New School* is his teacher, Nikolay Komolyatov, who was also Artyom Dervoed’s instructor. Where Zimakov was able to approximate Orekhov’s flamenco-related speed and phrasing, Dervoed and Baranov (who was not taught by Komolyatov) have been able to surpass the speed of both older players while cultivating well-developed tone and using technique and phrasings that are in line with the polish of Western classical traditions.

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<sup>11</sup> Dimitri Illarionov, Skype video call with author, January 27, 2018.



Speed, like competitions, is not the measure of a guitarist's ability. As Topchii explained, however, "Zimakov played so fast that the pulse didn't matter. I think this is awesome because it is like a [weapon] in your arsenal—these rapid scales are like an instrument in itself."<sup>12</sup> When speaking about the training of Soviet-system guitarists and the emphasis on speed, Kulikova chortled, "everybody [at Gnesins] was playing complicated pieces and playing so fast. European musicians, they were going for the quality of music and interesting repertoire, but Russians, we were just trying to impress people with how fast we can do things."<sup>13</sup> Most members of the *New School*, especially those in the principal group, regularly exhibit professional-level velocity, but it is the usage of a specific technique that has enabled some of them to be among the fastest guitarists in the world.

American guitarist Matt Palmer (b. ca. 1981) is well-known for the speed and clarity he produces utilizing a three-finger, or "a-m-i," scale technique.<sup>14</sup> The term "a-m-i" represents the fingers on the plucking hand that are used, and the order in which they play the strings: "a" for "*anular*" (ring finger), "m" for "*medio*" (middle), and "i" for "*indice*" (index). While the large majority of classical guitarists utilize a two-finger technique—typically *i-m* or *i-a*—for most scalar passages, Palmer is among a group of modern players who are known for using the *a-m-i* technique. He also employs the neck/fret hand to play more than two notes per string, which, while a long-common

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<sup>12</sup> Marko Topchii, Facebook messenger video call with author, February 9, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Irina Kulikova, Facebook messenger video call with author, July 16, 2017; March 14, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> "Fluid Approach to Fast Scales I - Strings By Mail Lessonette | Matt Palmer" (video tutorial), posted by Strings By Mail, March 17, 2015, accessed March 08, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmL7RoWkfXg>.

technique for rock, pop, and flamenco guitarists, and not uncommon for classical guitarists, is taught less than other methods of classical guitar scale methods.

Palmer's 2011 book, *The Virtuoso Guitarist: Method for Guitar, Volume 1: A New Approach to Fast Scales*, aims to describe Palmer's "groundbreaking approach to playing fast scales on the guitar. This proven and effective *A-M-I* scale method is specifically designed for speed and efficiency."<sup>15</sup> While Palmer has "raised the bar" for his employment and instructional method of teaching this skill since at least 2005, the technique is neither new nor groundbreaking.<sup>16</sup> Alexey Zimakov used *a-m-i* scales in the 1991 GFA, and Artyom Dervoed and Anton Baranov have also used it for their entire careers, with Dervoed beginning at age twelve when he started studying with Komolyatov.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, famed Russian flamenco player Grigory "Grisha" Goryachev (b. 1977) has employed this technique in performances since his youth in St. Petersburg. While the *a-m-i* approach was passed to the *New School* prior to the beginning of Palmer's career and the method is most closely associated with the guitarists mentioned, the approach is neither American nor Soviet.

The dissemination of the *a-m-i* technique is unclear, with misinformation shared by well-known guitarists such as Orhan Anafarta, who, in his online lesson on the

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<sup>15</sup> Matt Palmer, *The Virtuoso Guitarist*, vol 1, *A New Approach to Fast Scales* (n.p.: Matt Palmer Music, 2011), abstract, accessed March 2, 2018, <http://www.mattpalmerguitar.com/book/>.

<sup>16</sup> Simon, "The Virtuoso Guitarist – By Matt Palmer," *Classical Guitar Review*, December 20, 2011, accessed March 08, 2018, <http://www.classicalguitarreview.com/the-virtuoso-guitarist-by-matt-palmer/>. NOTE: Per Matt Palmer, email message to author, March 13, 2018: "I must've been 20-21 when I began working on the [a-m-i] technique." This would be in the late 1990s.

<sup>17</sup> "Aniello Desiderio and Artyom Dervoed playing Piazzolla" (video of live performance), posted by *Guitar Magazine*, March 16, 2016, accessed March 08, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wvxpwv1Dv98&list=LLI0BA3kywmgY3NeTc8STgZw&index=159>; "Anton Baranov - A-M-I Scales - tonebase.co | Strings By Mail" (video tutorial), posted by *Strings By Mail*, December 26, 2017, accessed March 08, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDgSPcLZg2c>; Artyom Dervoed, Facebook messenger message to author, March 8, 2018.

method, stated, “As far as I know, [Victor Monge] Serranito is the only flamenco player to utilize this technique.”<sup>18</sup> While Serranito (b. 1942) almost certainly used the technique before Goryachev, there are myriad examples of the latter using *a-m-i* scales, the clearest being the video of N. Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Flight of the Bumblebee*, arranged for guitar duet with Jerome Mouffe, who also utilizes the technique.<sup>19</sup> As with Komolyatov’s teaching of Zimakov and Dervoed, Goryachev learned the technique from his teacher in 1980s Russia, which he continues to use. The method is accepted to have been popularized in the modern era with the assistance of guitarists from the former Soviet Union, but it began with Spaniard Narciso Yepes (1927-1997) in the middle of the twentieth-century.<sup>20</sup>

Like Alexander Frauchi, Yepes learned from a violinist. When Yepes played J. S. Bach’s Chaconne from Violin Partita in D minor for Romanian violinist George Enescu, the teacher told the young guitarist “that the scales should sound more connected and fluid, as if being bowed.” The *a-m-i* technique Yepes developed has been refined by modern guitarists Palmer, Dervoed, Baranov, and others, but the idea was passed down by Alexey Zimakov and other notable musicians from the previous generation. Interestingly, Dervoed and Baranov are the only *New Schoolers* to use this technique for fast scalar passages, with Viazovski employing a *p-m-i* (“*pulgar*” for thumb), three-finger technique.

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<sup>18</sup> Orhan Anafarta, “Flamenco Guitar Techniques: Three - Finger Picado,” AtrafanaSchool, accessed March 08, 2018. <https://www.atrafana.com/flamenco-guitar-techniques--three---finger-picado.html>.

<sup>19</sup> “Grisha & Jerome Play Flight of the Bumblebee” (video of live performance), posted by Austin Classical Guitar, April 07, 2014, accessed March 08, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvzOLpLeTk>.

<sup>20</sup> Douglas Niedt, “How to Play Super Fast Scales with ami,” Guitar Technique Tip of the Month, accessed March 8, 2018, [https://douglasniedt.com/Tech\\_Tip\\_Fast\\_Scales\\_With\\_ami.html](https://douglasniedt.com/Tech_Tip_Fast_Scales_With_ami.html).

The way *New School* guitarists play scales or arpeggios exhibits more than their ability to play faster or more notes, and their inclusion in this thesis extends beyond which modern international guitarists employed specific techniques earlier. The issue is relevant to show *New School* musicians have started to develop an approach to guitar that combines their Soviet-method backgrounds with Western ideas and developments. This approach incorporates the innovation and determination of the previous generation, whose most important figure (Frauchi) learned from a violinist, all of which resulted in the principal group's identifiably aggressive playing style. When asked about the disparity between his lack of advertisement and Palmer's promotion of the *a-m-i* scale technique, Dervoed said: "I don't advertise the technique itself, I advertise the guitar."<sup>21</sup> Dervoed did not compare himself to Palmer, nor did he comment on Palmer's promotion of the technique, but it was clear that he recognizes the disparity in their respective roles. Palmer is a Western guitarist who teaches in the United States, a country in which there is a developed legacy of the classical guitar. Dervoed, however, is attempting to build a national audience for the instrument, not just the techniques he employs.

Topchii, who is likely to be the last guitarist in the *New School* and a bridge to the next one, spoke about his own innovations when saying, "I don't use *a-m-i* scales for speed like Artyom [Dervoed] and Anton [Baranov], . . . I also don't use *apoyando* scales [as much as other guitarists], . . . but I have started to use my pinky ('c' for '*chico*,' or 'e' for '*mignolo*') for arpeggios and chords [more often than many guitarists], and I think [ideas like] this are the future."<sup>22</sup> A number of *New School* musicians are showing

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<sup>21</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Marko Topchii, Facebook messenger video call with author, February 9, 2018.

themselves to be different from every previous generation of Soviet and post-Soviet guitarists, in that they are actively working to become more than competition winners or a novelty. They are striving to be in the conversation with the Western Europeans (e.g., the French and German schools) as cultivators of the most-complete guitarist.

## CHAPTER FOUR: EDUCATION OF THE *NEW SCHOOL*

The question of why Russian [and Eastern European] classical guitar is so successful now is very easy [to answer]: we got all this information and the possibility to go to any country we want and to study abroad. Anything we can take, we do take; but at the same time, we have this tradition of general music education that is really deep and wide. In combination, this creates the [*New School of Russian and Eastern European Guitar*].<sup>1</sup> –Artyom Dervoed

In many regions of the former Soviet Union, the 1991 collapse left a void in educational oversight, leading to widespread inconsistency of the enforcement of education standards. Soviet-style education never completely disappeared from every district of the region, but the stumbling economy and abrupt removal of centralized supervision resulted in the absence of direction in large parts of Russia and Eastern Europe. Major centers of culture continued with the Soviet system, namely the metropolitan areas such as Moscow and Novosibirsk and major cities in Belarus, Poland, and Ukraine; non-metropolitan areas, however, found difficulty in financing these programs, therefore hindering the implementation and effectiveness of programs that were designed to be available for every citizen. All of the *New School* musicians were in cities that maintained the Soviet system during the pre-Vladimir Putin era (2000 to present), or they relocated to metropolises that did.

The advantages of the Soviet education system for Russians and Eastern Europeans became evident in the 1990s. Despite economic troubles in districts that could not afford to maintain the Soviet system, some of these very districts conveyed optimism

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<sup>1</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017.

regarding the possibilities presented by their newfound freedom. In 1993, Frances Larimer wrote the following account after twice visiting St. Petersburg:

Since the state no longer controls cultural study programs, each of the 15 republics that comprised the former Soviet Union now is free to change music educational systems to reflect differences in culture and in economics. The Russian ministries of culture and of education continue to provide some financial support and serve as advisory groups, but no longer do the ministries dictate curricula in the schools. Russian music students at all levels now have wide choices in selecting study programs. They no longer are locked into a single, rigid curriculum leading to one specialization. Prior to 1992, the state controlled the curricula of all schools, including institutions of higher education, and regulated traditional music study and pedagogy, requiring the study of philosophy, aesthetics, Soviet folk music, and Russian music history. Administrators and faculty of each school have the freedom and are motivated to make changes in entrance requirements, study programs, and graduation requirements.<sup>2</sup>

Larimer's observations suggest optimism and positivity regarding what would become an attempt to adopt a Westernized version of music education, but the article also reveals the problems that arose regarding a sudden change due to the disappearance of a decades-old system. The attempt to abruptly change education systems—in this case, towards a Western-style system—by local leaders and politicians without the necessary planning and accounting experience led to lower education standards for some disciplines. These effects were evident in classical guitar programs, as Gorbach said, “St. Petersburg was not an option [for me] because the guitar scene [in the 1990s] was not strong.”<sup>3</sup> This, perhaps, makes the success of Baranov that much more impressive, as he is the only modern guitarist from St. Petersburg who is relevant internationally.

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<sup>2</sup> Frances Larimer, “Music Education in Russia: A Recent Perspective,” *Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching & Learning* 4, no. 3 (1993): 64.

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Gorbach, Skype video call with author, June 18, 2017. NOTE: There was no information from Baranov regarding how he managed to attain success from St. Petersburg when others were unable.

In practice, the expressed optimism of deregulation was short-lived, as the inability to fund arts programs and schools in general persisted. Larimer detailed this by saying:

All cultural organizations, including music schools at all levels, have begun charging fees that have risen dramatically in the past year (1993), compromising the ability of individuals to pay tuition for music and other arts study and to purchase tickets to cultural events. Students and faculty have been severely affected by these changes.<sup>4</sup>

Russia did not achieve the Western European system of education some districts sought, but many of those districts were able to experience a major element of the United States' education system, where capitalism adds to the challenges faced by students: gifted musicians in the early post-Soviet 1990s were unable to afford the costs associated with education while their peers from financially-privileged backgrounds received degrees—talent notwithstanding.

Education reform in Russia became a continual platform on which politicians ran for office but were unable to achieve until the presidency of Vladimir Putin. The *New School*, however, was winning competitions during these turbulent years, as they remained in, or sought out, the old Soviet system. Five of the nine guitarists who would eventually comprise the *New School* began their studies before 1991, when Soviet-style education was mandatory for all Soviet-bloc states; the other four guitarists began playing during the economic difficulties of the 1990s. The paths of these guitarists differed upon reaching adulthood, but they are united by the concepts learned in their formative years.

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<sup>4</sup> Larimer, 65.



These concepts are what I refer to in this thesis as the Soviet “system,” “method,” or “style” of education and training.

Global scholars have researched and written about the Soviet system of education since its inception.<sup>5</sup> While the system has been criticized for limiting students’ ability to choose their own paths, it has a longstanding reputation for producing some of the world’s most methodical musicians. Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks implemented the method’s groundwork by nationalizing all schooling just one year after the 1917 Revolution, with the general outlines for the student’s ages of matriculation. However, the Soviet method as it is currently understood would not become a reality until Lenin’s successor came to power.

The modern foundation of the Soviet system was developed after Stalin’s 1939 report to Congress in which he announced a mandate that required the government to refocus efforts on education, as he believed cultivating a large, common intelligentsia was the key to a strong socialist nation. The Soviet Union’s philosophy of music education and official maxim, as quoted by Ukrainian educator Vasyl Sukhomlinsky, was that “music education does not mean educating a musician—it means, first of all, educating a human being.”<sup>6</sup> The Soviets had long-associated music education with the building of moral character, but it was Stalin’s mandate that required the Ministry of Education to reconfigure the construction of programs and curricula from preschool through conservatory.

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<sup>5</sup> Examples include: Nicholas Hans, “Comparative Education: A Study of Educational Factors and Traditions. Routledge Library Editions: Education,” (2011); Anthony Jones, “Education and Society in New Russia,” (1994); James Bowen, “Soviet Education; Anton Makarenko and the Years of Experiment,” (1962).

<sup>6</sup> Alena Holmes, “Music in the Russian Preschool Curriculum,” *Perspectives: Journal of The Early Childhood Music & Movement Association* 9, no. 3 (July 2014): 19, accessed September 9, 2017.

One of the major developments of Stalin's 1939 reforms was the division of compulsory education into three stages, followed by the opportunity to test for a place in an institute of higher education, from which the general structure of Soviet music education has been based ever since. Compulsory general education comprised ten total years of schooling: the Primary stage began at age seven; the Lower Secondary stage at age ten; the Secondary phase at age thirteen with the opportunity to also pursue vocational schooling.<sup>7</sup> After this general training, Soviet citizens were allowed to pursue higher education in specialty subjects (e.g., the arts) but must first pass entrance exams.

Entrance exams were initially only for admission to institutes of higher education, such as music conservatories, but administrators eventually realized that, with few exceptions, students who had not completed secondary school could not pass admission tests. As a result, in 1944 "a Secondary diploma became a requirement for admission" to higher education programs.<sup>8</sup> Until 1959, the similarities to Western education systems were apparent, but Nikita Khrushchev aimed to push the Soviet Union closer to his communist ideals by giving all citizens access to the same education through free tuition, including "students from lower social origins."<sup>9</sup>

In 1959, when Nikita Khrushchev moved to consolidate his power as General Secretary, he initiated a new five-year-plan—amidst a larger, seven-year economic plan—to once again reform education. The aim of the plan was to "lay more emphasis on

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<sup>7</sup> Theodore P. Gerber and Michael Hout, "Educational Stratification in Russia During the Soviet Period," *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 3 (November 1995): 616, accessed March 9, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/stable/pdf/2781996.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A4fc75109f120228f21696f63015bb3ee>.

<sup>8</sup> Gerber, 617.

<sup>9</sup> Gerber, 625.

practical training.”<sup>10</sup> Khrushchev’s seven-year-plan for the economy was implemented with varying degrees of success, as some aspects of the strategy did not present drastic enough changes from Stalin’s era. Conversely, in the years following the 1959 education reforms, many considered Khrushchev’s plan to have been ineffective because the changes were too extreme and expensive to sustain support, including free tuition, resulting in “higher dropout rates and declining standards.”<sup>11</sup>

A central tenet of Khrushchev’s reforms was to deliberately clarify the difference between Soviet and American education goals, despite the fact that the inspiration of these reforms was to mirror America’s “dedication to education.”<sup>12</sup> In 1960, one year into the new reform period, Leslie W. Ross detailed how the Soviet and American education systems differed on three fundamental levels:

First, in the Soviet Union there is a quite different concept of the knowledge essential to every human being and the kind of individual the educational system is trying to produce; secondly, there is a marked difference in the degree of individual freedom permitted in the choice of subject matter; and thirdly, there is a vast difference in the ideology which underlies each structure. . . . The purpose of Soviet education is ‘the training of educated, thoroughly developed, active builders of a communist society.’<sup>13</sup>

An unnamed contributor to Ross’ journal article rebutted this last contention, stating:

It is not the individual around whom the educational system is built, but the state, which, by identifying itself with the pursuits of the common good, attempts the ruthless subordination of the individual—his rights, tastes, choices, privileges, and his training—to its own needs.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Leslie W. Ross “Some Aspects of Soviet Education,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 11 (December 1960): 539, accessed August 26, 2017, <http://journals.sagepub.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/002248716001100420>.

<sup>11</sup> Gerber, 625.

<sup>12</sup> Ross, 539.

<sup>13</sup> Ross, 540.

<sup>14</sup> Ross, 541.

Ross's work exhibited how the character and philosophy of a people, whether that philosophy is supported by the government or oppressively mandated by it, steers the education system through which government ideologies are perpetuated.

While aspects of Stalin's and Khrushchev's plans were disliked and unsustainable for their stated purposes, the broad spectrum of ideas found favor with music educators. The system of general education in twenty-first century Russia and other former-Soviet countries is largely based on the Soviet system devised by Lenin, Stalin, and Khrushchev. The development of the *New School of Russian and Eastern European Guitar* corresponds directly to major cities maintaining this system throughout the 1990s for music students, despite inconsistent implementation of the system for other fields during the same period. After reforms by Vladimir Putin's government in the 2000s, the education system that descends from the Soviet method now allows music teachers to "choose any of the approved curricula or develop their own programs with examination and approval of the State Department of Education [from standards that] are determined at the federal level by the Ministry of Education and Science."<sup>15</sup>

Students in the Soviet system of music education advance through the different levels of education similar to the way detailed in Stalin's reforms. The ages for the advancement of guitarists purportedly differ slightly from pianists, but the process is the same. Entrance exams are required at each level of education, including screening for initial entrance as a child and for admittance into conservatory or university. Guitarists first attend *skola* ("school," "школа"), which may be entered as early as age six and lasts

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<sup>15</sup> Holmes, 21.

for five years or until the student is approximately thirteen-to-fourteen years old—pianists attend *skola* for six years. At this level, students begin their rigorous training from the beginning, including lessons on primary instruments, secondary piano, theory, and history. Most *New School* members entered later than age six—Rovshan entered at age eleven; Viazovskiy at age twelve—but were still able to pass the entrance exams to gain entry into *uchilishе* (“college,” “училище”). *Uchilishе* is a four-year program, after which students obtain a degree and are permitted to teach in *skola* or *uchilishе*.

A music *skola* student’s week was organized as follows: all non-piano students have two forty-five-minute primary-instrument lessons, one forty-five-minute lesson for theory, history, polyphony, solfege, rhythm, and piano—pianists are required to join choir. Guitarists were also required to join the folk orchestra in which they typically play balalaika, domra, or another folk instrument (see Chapter Four). During the *skola* year (September to May/June), students have to play four juries, each of which must comprise three new pieces. Once in *uchilishе*, non-piano students have once-per-week ninety-minute lessons on all subjects and up to two primary-instrument lessons.<sup>16</sup>

Rustem Hayroudinoff recalled “a rhythm class when [he] was eight years old. One of the exercises was to listen to a tune in 3/4 time played by the accompanist, sing the melodic line in unison while tapping the rhythm with your feet and conducting in 3/4 time with one hand and in 4/4 time twice as slowly with the other.”<sup>17</sup> The rigors of this method created a high rate of attrition, which Baranov detailed: “the statistics say that

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<sup>16</sup> This information was gathered in conversations with multiple New School non-New School guitarists who were trained in the Soviet system.

<sup>17</sup> Hayroudinoff.

only ten-to-fifteen percent of [conservatory] graduates go on to careers in music; that's in general, not only guitarists."<sup>18</sup> This is purportedly the advancement rate of each graduating class: ten percent of students from *skola* move on to *uchilishe*, from which ten percent move on to conservatory.

Following *uchilishe*, *New Schoolers* attended conservatory for five years, which many universities in Russia recently changed to a six-year program after the adoption of the Bologna System: 4 years for a bachelor's degree, plus 2 years for a master's degree.<sup>19</sup> Russia implemented the Italian conservatory system in order to have the former's diplomas accepted more widely around the globe, increasing Russian guitarists' ability to seek additional education abroad. This was another step toward becoming a member of the global community by decreasing the gaps between the West and the former Soviet country's music training.

Viazovskiy said the *New School*'s success "comes from our complete education. The West has great guitarists, but the Soviet-system promotes the complete musician, from conducting to ear training, and so on."<sup>20</sup> While deferential to previous generations, the consensus from *New School* members is that modern Russian and Eastern European classical guitar was not relevant before their generation. As Dervoed stated, the Soviet Union was "too isolated" to get information from the West, and "since [we are still a young school], I still believe the best classical guitar school is in Europe, [but] I think the potential is greater here than in the West."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Anton Baranov, email message to author, June 21, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Roman Viazovskiy, Skype video call with author, July 28, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017.

The Soviet music education method created an approach to guitar that some musicians view as dramatic or overplaying. Oscar Ghilia's references to Dervoed's "excess" were viewed differently by Kulikova, but with striking similarities, as she recounted her time at Gnesins by saying:

Russians were just trying to impress people with how fast we can do things. I was playing Hungarian Fantasy very fast because I felt that if I wasn't playing fast, I was not giving good impressions. My mother came to see me play after [I had been in Europe] a few years, and said, 'you sit so still (static) while you perform, and I would like to see how you are moving. I said, 'you have to hear my playing, not watch it!' Some Russians who had not heard me play in a long time said they prefer the way I used to play, which was more visually demonstrating my emotions than after I went to the West. Russian guitarists display their full hearts in performances. I'm not hiding, I'm just not displaying it like some others.<sup>22</sup>

Kulikova is proud of her Russian training and heritage and visits her family annually, but her attitude towards music has gravitated to her Western European surroundings: "I used to play Baroque music in a Romantic style, with too much tempo fluctuation [and rubato]. My playing is not Russian anymore, but it is not totally European either. I guess I am trying to be the most complete guitarist I can be." Kulikova's and Vladimir Gorbach's playing are alike in this respect, which can be attributed to their similar ages and stage of development when leaving Russia, as well as their comparable paths.<sup>23</sup>

An in-depth comparison of *New School* guitarists' playing styles is beyond the scope of this thesis, but a succinct explanation is in order. When asked about pieces that represent the spirit of Russian and Eastern European classical guitar, some *New Schoolers* included older pieces, and some mentioned Koshkin's "The Prince's Toys

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<sup>22</sup> Irina Kulikova, Facebook messenger video call with author, July 16, 2017; March 14, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Suite,” but a unanimous response was Sergei Rudnev’s “Lipa Vekovaia” (“The Old Lime Tree,” “Липа вековая”), an old Russian folk song arranged for classical guitar. The piece gained an international audience when Matanya Ophee published it in 1994’s *Sergei Rudnev: The Russian Collection, Vol. III. Russian Folk Songs*, and introduced it as follows:

Russian folk songs have existed, and still exist, in two distinctly different traditions: rural and urban. . . . Songs of the urban tradition . . . were mostly sung with guitar or piano accompaniment and were an integral part of daily [city] life. In time, the songs migrated to the countryside where they have undergone both melodic and textual transformations.<sup>24</sup>

“Lipa Vekovaia” is of urban origins, whereas those of rural origins are traditionally “a capella [and] mostly sung to dances.”<sup>25</sup> A question to consider is whether or not “Lipa Vekovaia” was chosen by the New School because of a subconscious bias toward urban mentalities, as their careers were formed in cities, or if the piece became representative of Russian and Eastern European culture because of the wider spread of urban influence.

Three *New School* guitarists have recorded “Lipa Vekovaia”: Artyom Dervoed (2006); Irina Kulikova (2014); and Rovshan Mamedkuliev (2015).<sup>26</sup> These guitarists’ use of rubato is quite different, as Kulikova connects phrases in a way that closely resembles a song with lyrics, whereas versions recorded by Dervoed and Mamedkuliev implement a larger dynamic range with a percussive right-hand approach and sharp shifts in mood. All

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<sup>24</sup> Matanya Ophee, *Sergei Rudnev: The Russian Collection*, vol. 3. *Russian Folk Songs*. Compiled and edited by M. Ophee (Columbus: Editions Orphée, 1994), iii.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. iii.

<sup>26</sup> Artyom Dervoed, “Lipa vekovaia (The Old Lime Tree),” by Sergei Rudnev, recorded October 18-21, 2007, in Ontario, Canada, Naxos Rights International Ltd, CD; Irina Kulikova, “Lipa vekovaia (The Old Lime Tree),” by Sergei Rudnev, recorded December 3-6 2013, in Ontario, Canada, Naxos Rights US, Inc, CD; Rovshan Mamedkuliev, “Lipa vekovaia,” by Sergei Rudnev, released July 3, 2015, London, Contrastes Music Records, CD.



three guitarists tell a story through the same piece, but as part of the transitional group, Kulikova's Western influence is evident compared to the two principal group players' more direct interpretations in how they shape the phrasing, melodic delivery, and dynamics.

The differences in the playing of these three guitarists exhibits more than how they approach the guitar, it displays their perspective of Russia itself. Kulikova suggested that she does not play Koshkin pieces very much anymore because his music is aggressive for her tastes. Dervoed and Mamedkuliev, however, have both recorded Koshkin works, which fits comfortably under their fingers and in their playing approach. It also reveals that Kulikova will not be a part of teaching the next generation of Russian and Eastern European guitarists, not because of her physical location, but because her playing style, which she acknowledges with the earlier quote: "my playing is not Russian anymore."<sup>27</sup> Kulikova and other transitional group members may face questions or sentiments similar to those experienced by Tchaikovsky in the twentieth-century: although celebrated when they perform or represent their countries of origin, will nationalists eventually cease referring to *New School* transitional members as Russian or Eastern European?

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<sup>27</sup> Irina Kulikova, Facebook messenger video call with author, July 16, 2017; March 14, 2018.

## The Classical Guitar as a Folk Instrument

In former Soviet countries, the classical guitar is still considered to be a folk instrument by the government and senior academics, requiring the instrument to be part of folk departments at institutes of education. Guitarists do not study in their own department or in the strings area, rather with instruments such as the gusli, balalaika, domra, accordion, and bayan, which is understood to have been implemented by Stalin after his 1939 reforms. Dervoed explained that the Soviet dictator “started to push out foreign, non-Russian things [including] the Spanish, bourgeois guitar, . . . so, the government said to forget about the Spanish six-string guitar and let people use the Russian (seven-string) guitar.”<sup>28</sup> It was then that the guitar was moved into the folk department, Dervoed and others said, but instructors also started “silently teaching the six-string guitar as well, because nobody watching really knew the difference. The problem is that it is still [in the folk department], even though the country and mentality [are] new and different, but we are still with the balalaikas. . . . It’s bullshit.”<sup>29</sup>

In order to gain entrance into Saint Petersburg Conservatory named after N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov (St. Petersburg Conservatory), guitarists are required to play arrangements of folk melodies in their auditions.<sup>30</sup> This can also be heard in Moscow product Alexey Zimakov, as he played Russian folk songs in his 1991 GFA win, along

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<sup>28</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017. NOTE: The “Russian guitar” is a seven-string instrument that is tuned D-G-B-D-G-B-D (re-sol-ti-re-sol-ti-re), from bottom to top.

<sup>29</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017.

<sup>30</sup> “Saint Petersburg Conservatory named after N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov,” Bachelor Degree: 53.03.02 «The Art of Instrumental Music Performance» Folk instruments: accordion, bayan, guitar, domra, balalai | The St. Petersburg State Conservatory, last modified 2013, accessed December 21, 2018, <http://istud.conservatory.ru/node/928>.

with Joaquin Rodrigo's "Invocacion y Danza."<sup>31</sup> It is worth considering that internationally popular songs that included folk melodies, such as "Moscow Nights," may have created an external expectation to hear exotic sounds from Russian and Eastern European musicians. Kulikova, who has presented extensive research on the topic, said, "much of the repertoire descended from the seven-string guitar, which made it easy for people to consider it a folk instrument."<sup>32</sup> New School guitarists said they do not plan their concert repertoire or programs to display their heritage through specific pieces, but with their recordings of compositions from Rudnev, Konstantin Vassiliev, and Orekhov—music that contains folk sounds—the incorporation of such sounds may be organic.

Every member of the *New School* conveyed their disagreement with the government and administration because, while the seven-string Russian guitar is a folk instrument, the six-string classical guitar has a classical repertoire that uses classical forms. Ironically, the person responsible for distinguishing the six-string guitar as a folk instrument may have gotten the idea from Andres Segovia, said Gorbach: "It comes from Segovia's influence that classical and flamenco guitar must be separated, . . . an attitude Russians adopted."<sup>33</sup> *New School* members hold out hope that the Ministry of Education will change the guitar's classification, much like jazz has become art music, but even the most optimistic timeline is that this could take ten years or more. Characterizing the six-

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<sup>31</sup> Igor Varfolomeev, "Alexey Zimakov," Russian Guitarists, accessed March 19, 2018, [http://www.lute.ru/guitar/zimakov\\_eng.htm](http://www.lute.ru/guitar/zimakov_eng.htm).

<sup>32</sup> Irina Kulikova, Facebook messenger video call with author, July 16, 2017; March 14, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Vladimir Gorbach, Skype video call with author, June 18, 2017.

string guitar as a folk instrument is more than an attitude and mentality, however, there is a practical matter that creates hurdles for the guitarists to overcome.

Viazovskiy and Illarionov, both of whom have taught in the post-Soviet music education system, said this issue is about having enough students to compile a folk orchestra. With the incorporation into the folk department comes the requirement to participate in the folk orchestra at an institution. Enrollment of academic folk musicians has declined in recent decades, and although Viazovskiy and Illarionov said the issue is not about money, they conceded that the disappearance of the folk orchestra could result in the loss of livelihoods for folk instrument faculty. Koshkin has been more direct on the matter:

The ‘folkies’ don’t want to give up the guitar because they’d be stuck without it. Folk music classes are dwindling, and there aren’t many young people coming in to fill the gaps. Meanwhile, the popularity of the guitar is increasing, so the folk musicians want to hold on to it like a drowning man clutching at straws.<sup>34</sup>

It is evident that *New Schoolers* think government officials are unable or unwilling to view the issue from the perspective of these guitarists. Illarionov, through the prestige and influence of instructor Alexander Frauchi, was able to avoid folk orchestra participation, but still said, “I am completely against guitarists playing in the folk instrument ensembles, and I didn't even play in them. Why don't pianists have to play with the symphony orchestra and play another instrument?”<sup>35</sup>

None of the guitarists consulted were keen on their time in the folk department, and only Viazovskiy expressed a general positivity toward his time in the folk orchestra.

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<sup>34</sup> Ovchinnikov, 45.

<sup>35</sup> Dimitri Illarionov, Skype video call with author, January 27, 2018.

Part of the exposure to the folk orchestra is to teach conducting, arranging, and collaboration. For him, “it was not shit, it was a gift. . . . Orchestra playing [teaches one to] learn to listen.”<sup>36</sup> Kulikova admitted, “being in the folk department was new for me because I come from a classical background, and I wasn’t as familiar with the songs as my peers, but [we also learned] about Russian mentality and harmonies, as well as conducting.”<sup>37</sup>

Dervoed is trying to change the attitude through his work at the Guitar Virtuosi Moscow International Festival, in part by incorporating chamber works pairing guitarists and major non-guitarists. He said,

The opinion from other musicians is still [that] guitar is not very serious, [and guitarists] are not high-level musicians, but it's changing very slowly, . . . on a basic level. We need to be [playing with] other musicians, like pianists, violinists, and singers [to learn how to communicate with them]. This a very important educational premise, to be able to learn different ways to look at the score. If you're not stupid, you can change your attitude to be wider. This does not happen in guitar orchestras because [it comprises] all amateurs [playing with other guitarists]. It's a waste of time like the folk orchestra, but they need us because, unfortunately, the interest in folk instruments is going down. For teachers to keep their salaries, they need guitarists to keep the numbers high enough.<sup>38</sup>

Dervoed’s comment, “if you’re not stupid, you can change your attitude to be wider,” was directed toward the instruction and education of guitarists, but subconsciously serves a second purpose. The hope of Dervoed and the entire *New School* is that the government will change their attitudes in order to help the next generation of

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<sup>36</sup> Roman Viazovskiy, Skype video call with author, July 28, 2017. NOTE: Viazovskiy was not apprised of Dervoed’s comments. It is a reasonable assumption that this is, or has been, a topic of conversation between New School members, as many are close friends with each other.

<sup>37</sup> Irina Kulikova, Facebook messenger video call with author, July 16, 2017; March 14, 2018.

<sup>38</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017.

Russian and Eastern European guitarists to continue the work of their predecessors. The guitar is one of the few instruments that has a large repertoire in classical, popular, and folk/traditional musics, creating classification challenges for cultures around the world. The *New School's* struggle to distance the classical guitar from folk and popular genres is just one example of the challenges faced by the next generation's instructors.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Before the early 2000s, there were hardly any Russian guitarists known abroad. It was also not imaginable for a Russian to get a position outside of Russia in academia before now. [This generation] is doing something different.<sup>1</sup> –Vladimir Gorbach

The *New School of Russian and Eastern European Guitar* is an exclusive group. Viazovski, Dylla, Illarionov, Kulikova, Dervoed, Mamedkuliev, Gorbach, and Baranov have established the sound, style, and approach to modern Russian and Eastern European classical guitar, with Topchii serving as a link to what may lie ahead. There is little doubt that former Soviet states will continue to produce high-level guitar players, but technology, modernization, and globalization have already begun to change current guitar students, as well as guitarists trying to establish an international performing career. Some members of the *New School* have returned to the region with resources from abroad, including training and ideas, and established relationships that can help future generations, but they have also created a difficult legacy to maintain.

The *New School's* achievements have been predicated on its rapid emergence and substantial presence in the global classical guitar community. Beyond Topchii, however, participation in major international competitions by players from this region has been limited since Baranov's 2013 accomplishments at GFA, Tarrega, and Pittaluga, and the 2014 Alhambra. The lack of recent competition success alone is not a cause for concern, but coupled with the potential for a shift away from the clearly Soviet sound and style—

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Gorbach, Skype video call with author, June 18, 2017.

evident in the transitional group—there is some uncertainty regarding the *New School*'s next step.

It needs to be reiterated that competitions are just one aspect of a classical guitarist's success and that every member does not wish to be defined by competitions. The importance of these events, however, is elevated for young or growing local communities, such as the Russian and Eastern European guitar population, due to the region's need to become a destination for young international guitarists. At some point in the future, in order to cement its musical legacy, the region needs to attract young talent willing to relocate from abroad, just as Gorbach moved to Germany to study at the Music Academy of Cologne, or, more recently, how American Xavier Jara moved to France at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris (Paris Conservatory). Such necessary exposure is aided by doing well in international competitions.

One source of my initial curiosity for this thesis was whether *New School* guitarists were able to make a sudden impact in the global guitar community because of their folk instrument training. *New School* guitarists disagreed with the idea that playing a folk instrument helped their guitar playing, as Dervoed said, “our ways are very different. The technique is different, and you can't use your nails, and the bass domra is so hard to play that I've heard stories of people not being able to play [guitar] for days because [their] left hand is falling apart. We don't need this, . . . I don't think there is any [benefit].” However, when asked if the listening, conducting, and arranging skills learned while in the folk orchestra aided or informed their approach to guitar, Mamedkuliev said: “yes, for some, it is fine, but I had to play balalaika for nine years, which was too



much.”<sup>2</sup> Dervoed, however, paused and said, “Maybe. I’m not sure. It’s a good question,” a sentiment that Gorbach echoed.<sup>3</sup>

The *New School of Russian and Eastern European Guitar*, as with any group of professional classical musicians, comprises gifted musicians. Viazovski completed *skola* in just two years; Kulikova finished *uchilishe* in just three years; Topchii entered conservatory at age sixteen, but there are many musicians around the world who have impressive academic careers. The *New School* began to establish themselves internationally nine years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and took less than two decades to establish themselves as global community contributors. Their success is not due to how quickly or at what ages they completed their training, but the training itself.

*New School* guitarists are unanimous in expressing that they do not have the world’s leading guitar school or program. While they all agree that Western Europe still produces the best guitarists, and China is a growing powerhouse of guitarists, the *New Schoolers* believe that the Soviet system still in place in Russia and Eastern Europe creates the best overall musicians. Their argument is supported by the historical reputation of Soviet education and the fact that information exchange with the West established a trend of elite guitar players in less than a generation.

It is too early to determine if a lasting tradition of guitar virtuosi from the region has been created. Contributing factors include whether the next generation continues playing in the manner of the principal group, take inspiration from the entire *New School*, or if technology and the spread of information digitally will move younger guitarists in an

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<sup>2</sup> Rovshan Mamedkuliev, Skype video call with author, June 12, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Artyom Dervoed, Skype video call with author, July 2, 2017.

unexpected direction. It is clear, however, that a distinct group of classical guitarists has established themselves by their success and approach to the instrument, which directly correlates to their Soviet-style music training.

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