

Valery Vladimirovich Polekh

Biography

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Valery Vladimirovich Polekh is recognized as one of the leading Soviet horn players and teachers of his generation—an honored artist of the Russian Soviet Republic, soloist of the orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre, virtuoso concert artist, laureate of All-Soviet and international competitions, performer on numerous recordings, and author of pedagogical methods. His playing is described as having its own characteristic signature: he sang on his instrument in a vocal manner, without any hint of strain or false sound spoiling the tone, and he played with a lightness and mastery of technical complexity. The author of many magnificent pieces and exercises for the horn, Polekh earned recognition as the best interpreter of the horn miniature. His collections of virtuosic songs in original settings for the horn became classic, and his performance of them showed his expressive talent. A musician of sophisticated culture and artist of high renown, he devoted himself to the service of Soviet art. His life's work is interconnected with the establishment and development of Soviet musical culture, from his supervision of instruction in the wind instruments, to participation in All-Soviet and international competitions, to his leading role in the development of Soviet orchestral and solo wind playing.

Valery Polekh was born on July 5, 1918, in Moscow into the family of a civil servant. His father, Vladimir Vasilievich and mother, Vera Alekseevna were well educated, intelligent people, familiar with classical and contemporary music and worked with all their strength to ensure that it would be an important part of the world of their children. After gaining some experience on a factory band ("Krazny Proletari"), he was encouraged to go to music school and, in 1933, Valery passed the entrance examinations of the October Revolution Music School. There he studied with the great hornist and soloist of the Bolshoi, professor Vasily Nickolaevich Solodiev. In 1935 Solodiev left the music school, and was eventually replaced by Anton Aleksan-drovich

Shetnikov, also a member of the Bolshoi and who proved to be a great help to Valery.

Valery's first professional engagement began in 1936 in the chamber theatre. Twice a year the chamber theatre held special concert events, and in one of these concerts that year, Valery gave his solo debut, performing Glazunov's Reveries. In 1937, he was accepted to study at the Moscow Conservatory with Ferdinand Eckert. A Czech by nationality, Eckert had studied at the Paris Conservatory and had been teaching in Moscow since 1905. In 1938, Eckert advised him to audition for the first horn position with the radio orchestra. Polekh played Eckert's horn concerto, and was chosen as an assistant to soloist A. I. Yusov.

Work in the symphony orchestra was interesting, yet Polekh was drawn to the opera. At the end of 1938, Valery successfully auditioned for the orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre, joining a section of such famous hornists as Solodyev, Zuckermann, Shetnikov, and Aenov. In 1939, Valery Vladimirovich began his compulsory service in the Red Army and played in the Moscow army headquarters symphony orchestra.

In March of 1941 Moscow hosted the All-Soviet Union wind instrument solo competition. Valery entered and played Haydn's second concerto, a fantasy by Eckert, and the Introduction, Theme, and Variations on a theme by Weber by G. Gotvalda. The result was first prize, and the beginning of his outstanding reputation as a soloist. In 1949, Polekh won first prize at another international solo competition in Budapest. In 1951, he was the inspiration for Gliere to write his Concerto, op. 91, and gave the first performance in Leningrad in 1952, conducted by Gliere himself. In 1963, he recorded two Mozart concertos (K.417 and K.495) and in 1965 gave the first performance of the Britten Serenade in Russia at the Moscow Conservatory. A supporter of the International Horn Society, he attended and performed at the 1979 IHS workshop in Los Angeles. Valery Polekh played principal horn at Bolshoi Theatre Moscow for 34 years, and taught at the Moscow Conservatory beginning in 1981 where he shaped a whole generation of Soviet horn players. He is also an editor of an edition of the Mozart concertos and in 1986 completed a horn method. The Advisory Council of the International Horn Society is pleased to recognize Valery Polekh's contributions to the horn world as a performer and teacher. (compiled from information provided by Valery Polekh and from "Valery Polekh" by Yriy Usov, translated by Chris Stratton.)

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