

## Article

*2024 International Conference on Art and Design, Education, Media and Social Sciences (DEMSS 2024)***Fusion of Tradition and Modernism: An Analytical Study of Anatoly Kushakov's Winter Sketch for Bayan Accordion**Liyun Wan <sup>1,\*</sup><sup>1</sup> Tianjin Conservatory of Music, Tianjin, China

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**Abstract:** This paper examines *Winter Sketch* by Anatoly Kushakov, a composition that integrates Russian folk tradition with modernist musical innovations, showcasing the bayan accordion's expressive and technical capacities. As part of Kushakov's *Seasons of Life* series, *Winter Sketch* includes six movements that vividly evoke Russian winter scenes through advanced techniques such as legato, staccato, layered textures, and dynamic tonal shifts. Kushakov's compositional evolution, from traditional Russian forms to a nuanced modernist approach, significantly broadens the bayan's range and emotional depth. His contributions to bayan repertoire and pedagogy establish a lasting framework for innovation, inspiring contemporary musicians to explore the instrument's narrative and cultural potential within a modernist context.

**Keywords:** Kushakov; *Winter Sketch*; bayan accordion; modernism; Russian folk music

**1. Introduction**

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, modernist music—a musical language characterized by new understandings of melody, harmony, rhythm, and tonal effects—began to flourish [1]. Unlike traditional and popular music, modernist compositions often feature complex harmonic structures, ambiguous tonality, polytonality, and even atonality. Over recent decades, these modernist techniques have significantly influenced various types of music, including the bayan accordion compositions of composers such as Takahashi Yuji (*Like a Buffalo*), Bengt Lundquist (*Transformation*), and Sofiya Gubaidulina (*Expectation Sonata*) [2].

As one of Kushakov's representative works, *Winter Sketch* premiered in 1999 by Yuri Shishkin, a world-renowned bayan accordionist [3]. This paper leverages *Winter Sketch* as a case study to objectively analyze the compositional techniques and performance demands of Kushakov's music, emphasizing its significance for modern bayan accordion performance.

**2. Anatoly Ivanovich Kushakov: Biography and Compositional Style****2.1. Biography and Artistic Career**

Anatoly Ivanovich Kushakov was born on June 7, 1945, in Shuya, Ivanovo Oblast, Russia, and moved to Voronezh the following year. Showing a strong talent for music, he joined a wind ensemble at age 12 and began composing at 18. In 1966, he enrolled in the correspondence program at the Saratov State Conservatory and soon after entered the Rostov State Rachmaninoff Conservatory, where he studied under Professor Klinichev [4].

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Following his graduation, he pursued a Master's degree in composition at the Moscow State Conservatory, studying with Professor Balassan, and graduated in 1974. His talents earned him an invitation to join the Union of Soviet Composers. In 1981, Kushakov returned to the Rostov Conservatory, where he served as dean and head of the music theory and composition department, becoming a full professor in 1989 [5]. During this time, he was honored with the title of "Distinguished Artist" by the Russian Federation.

Kushakov's life work includes over 80 compositions, spanning operas, symphonies, chamber music, piano pieces, accordion compositions, and large choral works. While at the Conservatory, he introduced the accordion as an elective for composition students, creating many pieces to support its study and growth as an instrument. His early compositions reflect Russian traditional musical modes, while his later works show a modernist style that retains connections to Russian folk music. His dedication to promoting Russian folk instruments, especially the accordion and balalaika, has made him an influential figure in Russian music. Kushakov passed away from lung cancer on July 11, 2007, in Rostov Oblast [6].

## 2.2. Compositional Style

Kushakov's style evolved from traditional Russian frameworks to a more modernist approach. His *Seasons of Life* series—*Winter Sketch*, *Autumn Portrait*, and *Spring Scene*—reflects this transition. In *Winter Sketch*, he uses traditional Russian melodic patterns to evoke winter landscapes [7]. In *Autumn Portrait*, he incorporates more experimental techniques, exploring modern harmonies and textures. *Spring Scene* shows the accordion's full range through advanced techniques in bellows, timbre, and register shifts, blending modernist elements with Russian folk themes. Together, these works showcase Kushakov's dedication to musical exploration and his deep connection to Russian culture.

Though Kushakov's works often contain themes of sorrow and struggle, they also express resilience and hope. His music features sophisticated techniques and a unique style that creates a distinct atmosphere. In an interview, Kushakov stated, "The essence of music lies in the emotions formed from the blend of enduring values, the beauty of nature, and human experiences of adversity and sorrow."

Kushakov's accordion compositions can be divided into two main periods: 1) **First Period**: Early 1980s, marked by traditional influences and Russian folk music. 2) **Second Period**: Late 1980s to early 21st century, reflecting a greater integration of modernist techniques and personal expression. This timeline helps to understand the progression of Kushakov's style and his impact on modern accordion music.

## 3. Analysis of the Creative Background and Overview of *Winter Sketch*

### 3.1. Background Analysis

A review of Kushakov's compositions reveals a hiatus in accordion works from 1982 to 1986. When he resumed composing for the instrument, his style, technique, and musical philosophy had undergone significant transformation, resulting in compositions distinctly different from his earlier works. After five years of reflection, Kushakov had developed a more refined sensitivity to tone and sound color and had become highly skilled in modernist techniques. Collaborating with various accordionists, he explored new realms of expression and technique, broadening the instrument's possibilities. *Spring Scene*, for example, exemplifies his flexible use of timbre, pitch, dynamics, bellows, and register shifts, showcasing his evolved style.

*Winter Sketch* draws inspiration from Russia's unique northern geography, where long, harsh winters dominate much of the year. This environment, emblematic of Russia, provided Kushakov with a rich source of material. *Winter Sketch* was followed in 1988 by *Autumn Portrait*, which focused on Russian autumn landscapes, and then in 1998 by

*Spring Scene*, completing his seasonal series. These pieces reflect Kushakov's deep connection to the Russian landscape.

### 3.2. Work Overview

*Winter Sketch* is a programmatic suite blending traditional and modern elements to depict Russian winter landscapes through vivid musical imagery. The suite consists of six movements—"Ice Flowers on the Window", "The Three-Horse Sleigh", "Singing by the Fireside", "The North Wind", "The Epic Poem" and "Festive Song." Each movement resembles a moving scene, enhanced by dynamic, tempo, and tonal choices to evoke the beauty and energy of Russian winters.

The suite captures both the harshness of winter and the warmth of communal joy. Kushakov's use of the accordion's sustained tones conjures the whistling cold wind, immersing listeners in a vivid winter atmosphere. The piece achieves a profound portrayal of landscapes and characters, akin to a fusion of ice and fire, where the extremes of Russian winter are brought to life in sound.

## 4. Performing Techniques in Kushakov's *Winter Sketch* for Bayan

### 4.1. *Ice Flowers on the Window*

**Figure 1.** Ice Flowers on the Window Musical Example.

Legato in accordion performance refers to a technique where the fingers press the keys in a continuous, uninterrupted manner, creating a seamless, flowing melodic line. In the first movement, "Ice Flowers on the Window" (see Figure 1), legato is used prominently at the beginning to produce a smooth and cohesive sound. To perform this effectively, mastery of the legato technique is essential; only with this can the player convey the sorrowful, lingering winter wind, the stillness of a winter's night, and the ethereal atmosphere that transports listeners to a frozen landscape. The opening of this movement establishes the emotional tone for the piece.

Additionally, a canon technique is applied, creating layered progression that gradually intensifies the accordion's timbre and tone. This layered effect fosters a strong resonance with listeners, vividly depicting the winter scene and setting the stage for the portrayals of characters that follow.

### 4.2. *The Three-Horse Sleigh*

"The Three-Horse Sleigh" follows a traditional binary form, giving the music a lively and delicate character. The rhythm of the notes vividly evokes the image of galloping horses, requiring a strong sense of articulation in performance. This part calls for careful, repeated practice to achieve a crisp, precise touch that mimics the sound of horse hooves. Additionally, the accordion's layered notes are used to depict falling snow and the whistling of the northern wind. As the sleigh moves farther into the distance, the melody gradually descends, with noticeable dynamic shifts. The effective use of staccato accents enhances the cheerful and playful spirit of the music.

#### 4.3. *Singing by the Fireside*



**Figure 2. *Singing by the Fireside* Musical Example.**

As shown in Figure 2, this movement captures the scene of a snowy evening where a group of people gather around a fire, singing and dancing in celebration. The accordion, with its unique tonal qualities, uses accented notes to convey a dreamlike and festive atmosphere.

The third movement is structured in a rounded binary form, consisting of sections A and B, creating an elegant and flowing style with a clear rhythm that conveys a warm sense of daily life. It evokes an image of people returning home after a day's work to gather, dine, converse, and sing together.

In Section A, Kushakov employs pauses and accented notes to create a layered effect. As the voices join, the volume gradually builds, mimicking the gathering of voices into a communal chorus. Section B includes improvisatory cadenzas, utilizing the accordion's registers to create a hazy, otherworldly soundscape. Through careful manipulation of tempo, dynamics, and timbre, the music creates a fairytale-like atmosphere that feels both ethereal and whimsical.

#### 4.4. *The North Wind*

This movement emphasizes the portrayal of winter landscapes, using wave-like musical phrasing to depict the sound of the fierce north wind. The powerful, intense music effectively conveys the chill of winter. Structurally, the piece follows a simple binary form, with sections A and A1. While A1 develops upon the musical material of A, it also introduces a higher register. The upper voice features sixteenth notes that create a steady, rapid melody, mimicking the undulating waves of the wind. Meanwhile, the lower voice maintains a stable line with stepwise single notes, providing a grounding counterpoint. Frequent changes in tonality add a dreamlike, atmospheric quality.

The overall impression is one of an unstoppable storm, full of destructive energy. The performer must balance forcefulness with control, adhering closely to the score to distinguish between the contrasting dynamics, capturing the movement's evocative intensity.

#### 4.5. *The Epic Poem*

Also known as "Ancient Russian Narrative Poem," this movement follows a repetitive structure with a coda and is marked by a somber, heavy tone. The selected register and tonal colors create a melancholic, restrained atmosphere throughout. It consists of four similar thematic sections: A, A1, A2, and A3, each gradually exploring themes of loneliness and suffering, reminiscent of the reflections that follow social upheaval. Each section develops the same thematic material, with the coda reinforcing the movement's structural unity.

Rich in Russian cultural elements, this movement reflects the long history of Russian winter festivities, using slow and expressive melodies to merge Russian folk traditions with modernist musical language. The unexpected transition from a subdued tone to sudden bursts of passion enhances the listener's experience, preparing for the climactic final movement.

#### 4.6. Festive Song

The final movement serves as the suite's climax, vividly evoking the joyful atmosphere of a traditional Russian winter celebration. Through a combination of accordion passages and broken chord techniques, the frigid atmosphere gradually warms, as people gather around a bonfire, singing and dancing in festive unity.

"Festive Song" employs a single-movement free form, marked by a straightforward and natural style, devoid of elaborate ornamentation. The piece opens energetically, with bold, spaced-out chords and intensifying dynamics that build excitement. To avoid monotony, a syncopated 3:3:2 rhythm pattern is introduced, emphasizing accents and giving the movement a fresh, modern energy. Beginning with an enthusiastic melody, the piece concludes in an equally spirited manner, leaving a lasting impression of exuberant communal celebration.

### 5. Conclusion

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of Anatoly Kushakov's *Winter Sketch*, an emblematic work that showcases his unique blend of Russian folk tradition and modernist musical language. Kushakov's background as a composer and educator deeply influenced his compositional approach, making significant contributions to the field of bayan accordion music. His work not only reflects the emotional landscapes of Russian culture but also embodies the technical innovations that modernist music introduced in the 20th century. By analyzing *Winter Sketch* in the context of his other works and life experiences, this paper highlights Kushakov's commitment to exploring the bayan accordion's potential as a primary expressive instrument, broadening its technical and tonal range.

*Winter Sketch* serves as a microcosm of Kushakov's artistic philosophy, rooted in the integration of natural imagery and cultural identity. Each movement of the suite captures distinct elements of Russian winter, from the somber beauty of "Ice Flowers on the Window" to the powerful, turbulent sounds of "The North Wind." The suite's progression reflects Kushakov's ability to evoke emotions through vivid imagery and advanced techniques, employing legato and staccato in ways that shape each movement's narrative and emotional impact. Furthermore, the structure of *Winter Sketch*, utilizing forms like canon and binary structures, demonstrates Kushakov's attention to compositional clarity while allowing each section to convey its unique tonal atmosphere.

Kushakov's work on the bayan accordion has left a lasting legacy. His exploration of tone, pitch, and dynamics not only advanced the instrument's repertoire but also set a precedent for future composers. In *Winter Sketch*, his use of innovative techniques such as the manipulation of bellows, dynamic layering, and register changes serves as a testament to his dedication to maximizing the accordion's expressive capabilities. This approach has inspired contemporary composers and musicians to see the bayan as a versatile instrument capable of both technical complexity and emotional depth.

In analyzing *Winter Sketch* alongside his other major works, it becomes evident that Kushakov sought to preserve Russian cultural elements within a modernist framework. This balance between tradition and innovation is a defining feature of his compositional style, particularly within his *Seasons of Life* series. His ability to weave together the melodic patterns of Russian folk music with the harmonic and tonal explorations of modernism allowed him to create compositions that resonate with both cultural authenticity and forward-looking artistic vision. As he himself articulated, Kushakov believed music

should capture the enduring beauty of nature and the human experience, combining them with the complexities of modern life.

Kushakov's contributions extend beyond his compositions; his role in shaping the bayan accordion repertoire and developing its pedagogy has had a lasting impact on the music community. By introducing the accordion as a central instrument in composition courses and producing a wealth of compositions specifically for it, Kushakov elevated its status in Russian and international music. Today, his works continue to be featured in concerts and competitions worldwide, ensuring that his innovative techniques and artistic values remain influential.

In conclusion, *Winter Sketch* exemplifies the themes and techniques that define Kushakov's music: a deep respect for Russian heritage, a fascination with the expressive potential of the bayan accordion, and a commitment to blending traditional and modernist techniques. This work not only reflects Kushakov's personal artistry but also contributes to the broader landscape of contemporary accordion music. His compositions encourage performers and listeners alike to appreciate the bayan accordion as a powerful medium for storytelling, capable of capturing the nuanced interplay between nature, culture, and human emotion.

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