

Elena Firsova

- Biography -

Elena Firsova was born on 21 March 1950 in Leningrad and grew up in Moscow. Her parents were both physicists, her father Oleg Firsov, moreover, an important atomic physicist.

She received her first instruction in composition at the age of 16. She studied at the Moscow Conservatory from 1970 until 1975. Starting in 1975 she received private instruction from Edison Denissov, who had published the first Russian article about the twelve-tone technique and made her familiar with contemporary music. In addition, she had lessons with Philip Hershkovitz, a pupil of Anton Webern and Alban Berg.

Her works were performed with great success in the western world beginning in 1979. During the same year, she and her husband, the composer Dmitri Smirnov, were attacked by the Composers' Union as "not worthy of the Soviet Union." During the course of perestroika, Elena Firsova first received permission to travel abroad. There was no lasting change in Russian musical life, however, since the influence of the functionaries of the Composers' Union remained strong. She founded the association ASM together with Edison Denissov and Dmitri Smirnov, which performed contemporary music with its own ensemble at home and abroad. In 1990 Elena Firsova moved to England with her family.

Elena Firsova has so far composed well over 100 works, including operas, cantatas, concertos, orchestral works but also much chamber music. She received a commission for a composition for Expo 2000. Her "Achmatova Requiem" received its world premiere at the Berlin Konzerthaus am Gendarmenmarkt in September 2003.