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**PIANO INSIDE OUT: THE EXPANSION OF THE EXPRESSIVE,
TECHNICAL, AND SONOROUS SPECTRUM IN SELECTED
TWENTIETH-CENTURY ART-MUSIC REPERTOIRE FOR THE
MODERN ACOUSTIC PIANO**

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ABSTRACT OF DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS DISSERTATION

Mira Kruja

The Graduate School
University of Kentucky
2004

PIANO INSIDE OUT: THE EXPANSION OF THE EXPRESSIVE,
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ABSTRACT OF DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the
College of Fine Arts at the
University of Kentucky

By

Mira Kruja
Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Alan Hersh, Professor of Music
Lexington, Kentucky

2004

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Art Music for the acoustic piano has changed tremendously during the twentieth century. Some of the techniques and skills pianists need to master in order to be able to perform successfully twentieth-century art piano music include: a refined ability to discriminate varied layers of sonorities; sophisticated pedal combinations; a sometimes percussive technique; and superior control of complex metric and rhythmic passages. New combinations of patterns that require specific technical preparation pose substantial pianistic challenges. Today's pianist needs to master a variety of glissandi, chords, or single melody textures played directly on the strings inside the piano and to combine such techniques with sounds beyond the traditional piano sonorities. Besides technical preparation, pianists must also acquire sufficient knowledge of twentieth-century compositional techniques and analytical methods, as well as composers' individual styles and their contributions to new ways of using the acoustic piano.

This document focuses on selected twentieth-century piano compositions by Ravel, Debussy, Prokofiev, Bartók, Cowell, Cage, Holliger, Crumb, Corigliano, and Louie. These composers and their works are discussed with an emphasis on the new expressive, technical, artistic, pedagogical, and performance elements they introduce.

The original technical exercises in Appendix A employ twentieth-century scales, harmonies, and progressions. These exercises will facilitate the development of technical skills related to the pieces considered here and to other twentieth-century piano repertoire. The interviews with John Corigliano and Alexina Louie provide uniquely insightful and provocative glimpses of the creative and technical issues involved with two remarkably original artistic conceptions in this repertoire.

It is almost a truism to observe that much of the piano music of the twentieth century eschews convention and invents its own vocabulary and syntax. At the beginning of a new century, we are able to gain an historic perspective upon this body of repertoire. This document will lead to an increased awareness and understanding of selected twentieth-century piano repertoire. It suggests that twentieth-century piano compositions should assume an important and equal place with the more traditional music in the pianist's repertoire and in the university and conservatoire curricula.

KEYWORDS: Twentieth-Century Piano Music, Art Music for the Piano, Piano Pedagogy, Piano Technique, Piano Performance.
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Mira Kruja
December 17, 2004

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December 17, 2004

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DEDICATED TO INGRID AND FERDINAND

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FOREWORD

A Brief History of the Acoustic Piano

The acoustic piano is a marvel of mechanical, physical, and acoustical engineering and an exemplar of centuries of craftsmanship. It is the successor to the large keyboard family of seventeenth-century stringed musical instruments. The keyboard group classification is based on the way these musical instruments create sounds. Traditionally, the musical tone on the keyboard instruments was produced in two ways: by air, as in the case of organs, and by vibrations of strings, as in the case of stringed keyboard instruments such as the clavichord, harpsichord, and piano. Today, many newer types of electronic instruments have been added to the keyboard family.

String instruments, derived from the monochord Pythagoras used for mathematical experiments in 582 B.C., spread throughout Greece and Rome as musical instruments. According to Alfred Dolge, "The clavis (keys), which came in use on church organs shortly after the year 1000 A.D., were applied to the monochord, which then was built with more than one string."¹ The first use of keys as a device for controlling the musical pitch on a string is attributed to Guido d'Arezzo, who applied the movable bridge and used mechanical keys on a monochord instrument as early as the eleventh century. The keys, "...on being pressed down, lifted a bridge against the string from below, simultaneously making it sound and dividing off the portion whose tone it was desired to hear."²

One of the earliest predecessors of the piano was the dulcimer of Medieval Europe. This instrument was a wooden box with parallel strings, struck by two hand-held hammers. At the turn of the fifteenth century the clavichord and harpsichord were devised and by the end of the seventeenth century these predecessors of the modern piano had become popular.

¹ Dolge, Alfred. *Pianos and Their Makers: A Comprehensive History of the Development of the Piano from the Monochord to the Concert Grand Player Piano*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972: 28.

² Krehbiel, Henry Edward. *The Pianoforte and Its Music*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1911: 16.

While the clavichord was a subtle instrument, able to create different dynamics within a small range, the harpsichord could produce louder sounds by virtue of more strings used for each note, and a much larger soundboard. But the harpsichord was not able to produce differentiated dynamic levels by means of controlling the string vibrations through the keys, since it employed a plucking action.

The development of the piano started in 1707 in Italy with Bartolomeo Cristofori's ingenious invention of hammers with an escapement action. The instrument he built was described as a "...'gravicembalo col piano e forte' ('harpsichord with soft and loud')." ³ The difference between the piano and other stringed keyboard instruments was that it produced musical tones by striking the strings as opposed to plucking them (harpsichord) or tangentially touching them (clavichord). The striking of the strings on the piano was done through a hammer linked to the keys, which enabled the control of the tone by enabling two critical mechanical actions: the striking of the string by responding to the action of the performer's finger on the key; and the avoiding of unintentional back strikes of the hammer to the string. The hammer action gave the piano the capability to produce a large dynamic range of musical sound depending on the level of force, speed of attack, and weight applied upon the keys. This had been impossible with the harpsichord.

The terms *fortepiano* and *pianoforte*, used to identify the piano among the other stringed keyboards, refer to the capability of the instrument to produce a significant range of dynamic levels. In his article "Nuova invencione d'un gravecembalo col piano e forte" in the intellectual Italian journal *Giornale de' letterati d'Italia* 5 (Venice, 1711), Scipione Maffei describes in detail the hammer action invented by Cristofori. He describes the performer's ability to control "not only the volume, but also the diminution and variety of the sound, as if on a cello."⁴ Following Cristofori, French and

³ Ripin, Edwin M. (et al.) *The New Grove Piano*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988: 1.

⁴ Parakilas, James. *Piano Roles: A New History of the Piano*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002: 11.

German harpsichord builders, “Marius in 1716 and Schröter in 1717,”⁵ worked on the development of the hammer mechanism.

Destined for the rich, the production of the piano continued for many years as a craft in small shops. The shape of the instrument developed through time in search of ways to improve string adjustment and sound. With Cristofori the piano maintained the harpsichord triangle shape with a slightly tilted inside arch, artfully decorated on the outside. The upright structure was largely used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and during the nineteenth century the square shape became very popular. In 1866, 97 per cent of the pianos produced by Steinway were square in shape, but by 1896, only 1 per cent were squares and 95 per cent were uprights.⁶ The most popular structures today are the horizontal grand and the vertical upright pianos.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, piano builders took different approaches to developing the piano frame and mechanism. The German builders used larger frames and an improved action. In the 1790s Stein developed a characteristically light and delicate action for his piano, suitable for the elegant piano compositions of Mozart and Haydn. Stein produced pianos with devices that would create unusual effects, thus anticipating John Cage’s prepared piano by approximately 150 years. In the words of Kirby:

Following the practice in harpsichords, these pianos were provided with a few characteristic coloristic stops: a harp stop (like the buff stop on harpsichords), a swell, a stop to lift the dampers (the so-called “forte” or “loud” stop), a bassoon stop (heavy paper laid over the string to produce a rustling sound), and Turkish music (tambourine and cymbals that beat against the sound board).⁷

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Broadwood piano building company in England employed the “...double-action *Stossmechanik* (with escapement) the so-called

⁵ Dolge: 42.

⁶ Rowland, David. *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998: 50.

⁷ Kirby, F. E. *A Short History of Keyboard Music*. New York: The Free Press, 1966: 23.

‘English action’...’’⁸ This key action was heavier, and capable of producing more powerful sounds, suitable for the piano music of Beethoven. In 1821 Broadwood introduced the foot pedal as a substitute for the existing knee pedal and enhanced the frame by adding iron components to support thicker and heavier strings.

Most of the changes made to the piano in the nineteenth century aimed toward making this instrument capable of producing more powerful sounds. A very important improvement on the structure of the piano frame was the complete cast-iron frame introduced in 1825 by the American builder, Alpheus Babcock.⁹

At almost the same time, the French piano builder, Pape introduced crossed stringing, a diagonal layering of the strings, which increased the volume of sound by virtue of enhancing interaction of the harmonics. The French firm Sébastien Erard made an essential improvement to the hammer action by developing in “...1822 the most famous of all piano actions... *the double-escapement action*”¹⁰ which allowed for the re-articulation of the hammer even before the full release of the key. This improvement in the hammer action allowed more agile finger technique applications on the keyboard.

In the 1850s Steinway combined the metal frame with the *cross stringing*, and also developed the *sostenuto* pedal, thus creating the standard for the modern acoustic piano. This instrument became invaluable to virtuoso pianists of the high Romantic Era. Virtuoso bravura and brilliant techniques, which demand meticulous accuracy as well as rich and complex vertical and horizontal sonorities, were made possible with the new, enhanced instrument.

The three pedals: the *damper* (right), *una corda* (left), and the *sostenuto* (middle) pedals are important features of the modern grand piano. The damper pedal, used as a knee pedal in the eighteenth-century fortepianos, did not become popular until Steinway developed it as a foot pedal. Its function is to allow the struck strings to

⁸ Ibid: 24.

⁹ Sumner, William Leslie. *The Pianoforte*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1971: 72.

¹⁰ Gill, Dominic. *The Book of the Piano*. Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1981: 25.

vibrate, by removing the dampers and keeping them away from the strings, even after the keys are released. While in the eighteenth century the *dampner* pedal was considered a coloristic feature of the piano, in the nineteenth century, it became one of the most important expressive tools, and its use was increased tremendously.

The *una corda* pedal shifts the keyboard and the hammer mechanism to the right, so that fewer strings are struck, producing a different timbre. The Italian indications *una corda* (one string) and *tre corde* (three strings) mean respectively to press and release the soft pedal. Cristofori was the first piano builder to develop “the *una corda* mechanism that corresponds to the left-hand pedal on modern pianos. He used a hand stop to direct the hammer at just one of the two strings used for each note.”¹¹

The *sostenuto* pedal, “patented by Albert Steinway in 1874 and 1875”¹² enables the performer to sustain selected low pitches, while using any desired articulation, or damper pedaling for the rest of the texture. According to Stevenson the *sostenuto* pedal:

...was exploited mostly by Claude Debussy. In fact it is sometimes referred to as the Debussy pedal. It is by far the most complicated to operate. It... will hold only selected dampers away from their strings. After playing a given set of notes the pedal is depressed usually by the left foot... and only those notes depressed will sustain.¹³

The range of the keyboard was extended from twenty-six keys in the sixteenth-century clavichord to over seven octaves with eighty-eight keys in the modern piano. “The five-octave range was retained for the late eighteenth-century European fortepiano, but the English makers expanded it to six octaves in the early nineteenth century, and continued to expand it to six and one-half, seven, and finally seven and one-third.”¹⁴

¹¹ Humphries, Carl. *The Piano Handbook: A Complete Guide for Mastering Piano*. London: Outline Press Ltd., 2002: 6.

¹² Good, Edwin M. *Giraffes, Black Dragons, and Other Pianos: A Technological History from Cristofori to the Modern Concert Grand*. 2nd Ed. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001: 24.

¹³ Stevenson, John R. *Using the Pedals*. http://www.bethms.com/pedart_using_the_pedals.htm, 29 March, 2004.

¹⁴ Ratcliffe, Ronald V. *Steinway*. Los Angeles: Perpetua Press, 2002: 79.

The modern standard nine-foot concert grand piano has "...88 keys operating a total of about 240 strings in the pitch range AAA to c5... The fundamental frequencies of the string vibrations range from 27.5 Hz to just over 4000 Hz, a range which spans all but the top two octaves of the limits of human hearing... with the frame supporting an astonishing total of 20 tonnes [sic]"¹⁵ of tension weight. Tuning of the pitch is based on the concert A of 440 Hz.

The acoustic piano, this powerful instrument, has reflected the evolution of musical styles, and, on the other hand, impacted musical styles for almost three centuries. There have been no significant changes in the structure and mechanism of the modern acoustic piano since the mid-nineteenth century, but there has been tremendous evolution in the philosophy pertinent to the uses of this instrument during the twentieth century. The piano is no longer used only in the traditional sense of playing with fingers on the keyboard. The keyboard is played with fists, palms, forearms, and other objects to create powerful and dissonant cluster sounds. The strings of the piano are whistled, sung, and screamed at by pianists. Inside-the-piano techniques such as glissandi lengthwise and across the strings, strumming, plucking with fingers and fingernails, and preparation with extra objects to change timbre and pitch level, have extended the sonorous and expressive capabilities of the instrument. Various wooden components of the piano are used as percussion instruments to create extra rhythmic dimensions. The philosophical perception of what constitutes a piano piece has evolved to such extremes as Cage's *4'33''*, where the pianist sits at the piano turning pages at the end of each movement, while the casual auditorium and outside noises create the "music."

This document reviews some of the expansions of these sonorous and expressive capabilities of the acoustic piano during the twentieth century, expansions that have literally turned the concept of piano music "inside out."

¹⁵ Rowland: 97.

INTRODUCTION

Art Music¹⁶ for the traditional acoustic piano has changed tremendously during the twentieth century. Some of the new performance techniques and skills pianists need to master in order to be able to perform twentieth-century art piano music include: a refined ability to discriminate varied layers of sonorities; a sometimes percussive technique; superior control of complex metric and rhythmic passages; and sophisticated pedal combinations that emphasize the overtone series. Pianists need to cultivate the ability to perform new combinations of patterns that require specific technical preparation. Parallel chords, combinations of single and group notes in fast passages, new chordal structures, and forearm clusters: all pose substantial pianistic challenges. Today's pianist needs to master a variety of glissandi, intervals, chords, or single melody textures played directly on the strings inside the piano and to combine such techniques with sounds beyond the traditional piano sonorities, such as knocking, screaming, whistling, and use of prepared and/or amplified piano. Occasionally even ballet movement is called for.

Besides technical preparation, pianists must also acquire sufficient knowledge of twentieth-century compositional techniques and analytical methods, as well as of composers' individual styles and their contributions to the new ways in which the acoustic piano is used. Now, at the beginning of a new century we are able to gain an historic perspective upon this body of repertoire. This document suggests from this perspective that these and similar works assume an equal and important place with that of the more traditional music in pianists' repertoire and in the university and conservatoire curricula. David Burge, who is a leading performer of twentieth-century art music for the piano offers his opinion on today's educational perspectives and pianists' acquaintance with the twentieth-century repertoire:

¹⁶ Art Music: "classical music: music composed in the classical tradition rather than in a folk or pop style," Encarta® World English Dictionary [North American Edition] © & (P) 2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Developed for Microsoft by Bloomsbury Publishing <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/features/dictionary/DictionaryResults.aspx?refid=1861685572>, September 6, 2003.

I am aware that many pianists today have not had the opportunity to become acquainted with more than a small fraction of this repertoire. This is due, to a considerable extent, to the unfortunate limitations of our present educational perspectives, which tend to enshrine that which is already established and to regard all else as peripheral.¹⁷

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to discuss selected composers and piano repertoire written after 1900 with a focus on the contribution to extended piano techniques. This cross section of a vast repertoire includes piano compositions by Ravel, Debussy, Prokofiev, Bartók, Cowell, Cage, Holliger, Crumb, Corigliano, and Louie. These composers and their works are discussed with an emphasis on the new expressive, technical, artistic, pedagogical, and performance elements they introduce. Following is a list of the works discussed in this document, with the dates of composition. These works span eighty years (1908-1988), and encompass a wide range of piano techniques:

Maurice Ravel:	<i>Gaspard de la Nuit: I. Ondine</i>	1908
Claude Debussy:	<i>Douze Études: IX. Pour Les notes Répétées</i>	1915
Sergei Prokofiev:	<i>Sonata No. 3, Op. 28 in A major</i>	1917
Béla Bartók:	<i>Improvisations Op. 20: VIII. Allegro</i>	1920
Henry Cowell:	<i>Aeolian Harp</i>	1923
	<i>The Banshee</i>	1925
John Cage:	<i>Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano: Sonata No. 5</i>	1946-48
Heinz Holliger:	<i>Elis: Drei Nachtstücke für Klavier: II. Leicht bewegt</i>	1961
George Crumb:	<i>Makrokosmos Volume I, Twelve Fantasy Pieces after the Zodiac for Amplified Piano</i>	1972
	X. Spring Fire Aries	
	XI. Dream Images (Love-Death Music) Gemini	
John Corigliano:	<i>Fantasia on an Ostinato</i>	1985
Alexina Louie:	<i>Scenes from a Jade Terrace</i>	1988
	II. Memories in an Ancient Garden	

¹⁷ Burge, David. *Twentieth-Century Piano Music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1990: ix.

Organization and Methodology

The selected piano compositions and their composers are viewed chronologically in separate chapters in order to help illustrate some of the changes that have taken place in piano technique and expressive tools over the span of eighty years. These works are examined according to new twentieth-century performance and pedagogical paradigms.

The Foreword is a brief history of the development of the acoustic piano and its expressive and technical possibilities. The Introduction offers an overview of some of the changes that took place in the piano technique during the twentieth century. It is not the purpose of this document to include all twentieth-century piano techniques and expressive tools, but rather only the most significant ones that are present in the selected repertoire.

The selected compositions represent some of the most important milestones of twentieth-century pianism. Each chapter includes background material on one composer and his or her composition(s); discussion of new techniques and the expansion of expressive tools represented in the specific work(s).

Included are discussions pertaining to twentieth-century piano music techniques and concepts in specific compositions such as playing on the open strings (*Aeolian Harp* by Henry Cowell); preparing the piano for special sound effects (John Cage's *Sonata*); playing with forearms and hand palms on the keyboard (*Makrokosmos* by George Crumb); accomplishing a crescendo by virtue of using only the pedals (Heinz Holliger's *Ellis*); leaving to the performer decisions as to the number of appearances of particular elements within a piece and the final shape of the composition (*Fantasia on an Ostinato* by John Corigliano); and creating varied overtone series by touching the strings on different resonating points (Alexina Louie's *Memories in an Ancient Garden*).

While theoretic and formal analyses are not the focus of this dissertation, limited discussions on such issues are presented as they relate to facilitation of practicing and performing techniques for specific works.

Appendix A includes original twentieth-century technical exercises that will help facilitate the performance of the repertoire discussed in this document and other similar works. Appendices B and C consist of interviews with the world-renowned composers John Corigliano and Alexina Louie.

Review of Literature

There is no comprehensive publication devoted to twentieth-century piano techniques. Some of these techniques are discussed in David Burge's *Twentieth-Century Piano Music*; however the main focus of Burge's work is not techniques, but selected composers and their works. Burge's book includes technical discussion, but most of his work focuses on description and compositional issues.

There are dissertations that discuss one specific piano technique, such as *The Piano as Percussion Instrument*, by Margaret Brink (1990), and *The Use of the Glissando in Piano Solo and Concerto Compositions from Domenico Scarlatti to George Crumb* by Shuennchin Lin (1997). A document that addresses several novel piano techniques, *New Techniques in Twentieth-Century Solo Piano Music – an Expansion of Pianistic Resources from Cowell to the Present* by Doris Harrel (1976), limits the subject to works that were written between 1920 and 1975.

There are other dissertations that focus on several specific twentieth-century composers and works, such as *The Study of Representative Twentieth-Century Piano Compositions Appropriate for use in Contemporary College Piano Literature Classes* by Keumju Bang (1987), which is limited to discussions on single works by Bartók, Gershwin, Schoenberg, and Barber. *Coming to Terms with the Twentieth Century using a Nineteenth-Century Instrument: Virtuosity, Gesture, and Visual Rhetoric in Contemporary Piano Composition and Performance* by Margaret Ellen (1987) discusses single works by Cage, Crumb, Ligeti, and Webern.

Also there are dissertations that discuss from different perspectives single compositions among those selected for my document, such as: *Debussy's "Douze Études": A Critical Analysis* by William Patterson (1981), *Tempo Indication in the Piano*

Music of Bartók: Notation and Performance by Steven Gray (1990), and *The Nine Piano Sonatas of Sergey Prokofiev* by Rebecca Martin (1982).

It is hoped that this document will provide a useful addition to a relatively sparse corpus of research.

Outline of Thesis

This document consists of two parts. Part One includes a foreword, an introduction, ten chapters, a conclusion, and four appendices.

Chapter One focuses on Maurice Ravel's *Ondine* from *Gaspard de la Nuit*, which merges impressionism with a Lisztean and Chopinian bravura. *Gaspard de la Nuit* is an icon of Ravel's brilliant keyboard technique, which helps define the status of pianism at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is one of the most technically challenging piano pieces ever written.

Douze Études by Claude Debussy are also a summary of the piano technique at the onset of the twentieth century and foreshadow the ways in which those techniques would develop in the following years. Chapter Two focuses on Etude No. 9: *Pour Les Notes Répétées*, which reflects the increased use of repeated-note technique in twentieth-century pianism. Compared to his predecessors Debussy seems to have used extended combinations of repeated-note passages more frequently and for prominent musical effects.

Sonata No. 3 by Sergei Prokofiev is an excellent example of the deliberate use of percussive keyboard technique in piano literature. In addition, the condensed form of this Sonata calls for different organizational skills in the preparation and performance of the work. These issues are discussed in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four focuses on the eighth of the *Improvisations*, Op. 20, by Béla Bartók. Discussion includes issues of complex rhythmic and metric combinations, the relation of the work to folk music, its characteristic chordal structure, and the use of percussive piano technique.

Aeolian Harp and *The Banshee* by Henry Cowell are addressed in Chapter Five with an emphasis on the use of the interior components of the piano in their performance. Innovative piano techniques in these works include string plucking, a variety of glissandi along single strings, and strumming over the strings.

Chapter Six discusses John Cage's use of the prepared piano in *Sonata No. 5* from *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano*. The performer creates different timbres and pitch levels by virtue of inserting extra materials between the strings of the piano.

The second movement of *Elis: Drei Nachtstücke für Klavier*, by Heinz Holliger is the topic of Chapter Seven. This work is written in the tradition of Schoenberg, Stockhausen, and Boulez and is characterized by careful attention to fine dynamic differentiation, serial and atonal chordal structure, and complex rhythmic combinations, as well as the use of the *sostenuto* pedal and a crescendo created by virtue of using only the pedals.

"Spring Fire - *Aries*" and "Dream Images (Love-Death Music) - *Gemini*" from *Makrokosmos*, Vol. I, by George Crumb were selected because of their use of amplified piano, forearm clusters, inside-the-piano techniques, and sophisticated sounds produced by an original use of the damper pedal. These issues are discussed in Chapter Eight.

Fantasia on an Ostinato by John Corigliano, discussed in Chapter Nine, uses the minimalist technique in a strikingly original way. Given that this work contains unmeasured sections, the performer must decide the number and the character of interlocking repeated patterns and is an active creator of the final shape of the composition.

Chapter Ten examines *Memories in an Ancient Garden* from *Scenes From a Jade Terrace* by Alexina Louie and its use of the interior components of the piano, especially the production of varied overtones, as different resonating points of the strings are touched.

Appendix A contains original technical exercises that will facilitate the performance of the selected and other twentieth-century repertoire. Appendices B and

C consist of interviews with American composer John Corigliano and Canadian composer Alexina Louie. Appendix D includes selected discography and bibliography of recordings and scores of the selected repertoire.

Part Two of this document contains program notes for recitals given in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Musical Arts Degree, a Selected Bibliography, and Vita.

Anticipated Results

This document will lead to an increased accessibility and understanding of selected twentieth-century piano music and an increased awareness and dissemination of some of the more unfamiliar repertoire included. It will also help define what students and performers need to know in order to perform this and similar repertoire, notwithstanding that much of the piano music of the twentieth-century eschews convention and invents its own vocabulary and syntax.

Each of the works studied in this document includes new performance and expressive technique(s). Therefore the document focuses on explaining how to understand the expressive tools required, and how to overcome the standard mechanical limits of the instrument.

From my perspective as a performer and educator, I would expect this document to be useful to teachers, students, and performers who are involved with this and similar repertoire. The background material relevant to the selected composers and their compositions is expected to shed light on understanding new approaches to the acoustic piano and to the extended expressive, technical, and sonorous spectrum found in the repertoire selected for this study.

The Appendix of the original twentieth-century technical exercises will facilitate the development of technical elements of piano playing related to the specific piano compositions studied in this document and to other twentieth-century piano repertoire.

The interviews with John Corigliano and Alexina Louie provide uniquely insightful and provocative glimpses of the creative and technical issues involved with two remarkably original artistic conceptions in this repertoire.

CHAPTER ONE

Maurice Ravel

1875-1937

Gaspard de la Nuit (Gaspard of the Night) (1908)
I. *Ondine*

...conscience compels us to turn ourselves into good craftsmen. My objective, therefore, is technical perfection. I can strive unceasingly to this end, since I am certain of never being able to attain it. . . .¹⁸

- Maurice Ravel -

...He (Ravel) dominated from afar all the musicians of his time.¹⁹

- Emile Vuillermoz -

Maurice Ravel was born in Ciboure, France, on March 7, 1875. His father, a very successful engineer, was from Switzerland and his mother from Spain. Three months after Ravel was born, his family moved to Paris. Ravel inherited from his father a curiosity and admiration for mechanical inventions, and from his mother, a love for Spanish music.

Ravel began music training at the age of seven. His first piano teacher was Henry Ghys. In 1887, Ravel studied harmony with Charles Rene and in 1889 was accepted at the Paris Conservatoire piano preparatory class. It was the year of the opening of the Universal Exposition in Paris and the construction of the Eiffel tower, the technological and artistic pride of France at the Exposition. Because of the Exposition, Ravel had the opportunity to hear performances of *exotic* music played by ensembles from several Asian countries participating in the Exposition.

¹⁸ Kelly, Barbara L. "Ravel, (Joseph) Maurice," *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy. (Quoted from Orenstein, 1990: 38). <http://www.grovemusic.com> June 29, 2004.

¹⁹ Myers, Rollo H. *Ravel: Life & Works*. Quoted from the French music critic Emile Vuillermoz on the occasion of Ravel's death (28 Dec 1937). New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960: 91.

One of the great creative minds in the Western musical tradition, Ravel had a difficult time as a student in France's musical Academy. A composer of impeccable taste, clarity, and finesse, his biography is filled with astonishing public trials, professional rejection by the conservative French music establishment, and hard-won success, often blemished by public controversy.

In 1891 Ravel won first prize in his piano examinations at the Conservatoire and was advanced to the piano studio of Charles de Bériot. Bériot was not pleased with his student: he called Ravel "a criminal; instead of being at the top of his class, he [Ravel] was at the bottom."²⁰ Ravel would find any reason to avoid practicing piano and would find more interest in his experiments of

...all those hitherto unthought of resolutions, those voluptuous dissonances, those polyphonic games which were able to give so much more relish than tiring five-finger exercises, and all those problems, fascinating and hazardous, which occupied Ravel's imagination so much more than the sporting interest of working the fourth finger.²¹

The artistic atmosphere of Paris at this time was filled with new ideas about literature, painting and music, many of which were conceived as reactions to nineteenth-century rules and practices. Ravel was drawn to these new developments in the arts, which also influenced his music. In 1893 Ravel and his classmate, Ricardo Viñes, (a talented pianist, who would later premiere many of Ravel's piano compositions including *Gaspard de la Nuit*) played for the composer Emmanuel Chabrier, for whom Ravel had special admiration. They performed Chabrier's piano duet *Trois Valses Romantiques*, which had impressed Ravel. He would later declare to have been "influenced above all by a musician: Chabrier."²²

²⁰ Demuth, Norman. *Ravel*. (Quoted from *La Revue Musicale*, December 1938). New York: Collier Books, 1962: 14.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Kelly, Barbara L. "History and Homage," *The Cambridge Companion to Ravel*. Edited by Deborah Mawer. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000: 12.

Ravel's father had introduced him to Erik Satie, one of the most influential French musicians of the time. Satie would be a profound influence on Ravel's music. They developed what became a life-long friendship, and Ravel would always refer to him with great admiration. "He (Satie)... became the inspiration of countless progressive tendencies; and while he himself may, perhaps, never have wrought out of his own discoveries a single complete work of art, nevertheless we have today many such works which might not have come into existence if Satie had never lived."²³

When Ravel entered Beriot's piano studio in 1891, he also entered the harmony class of Emile Passard. After failing to earn the harmony prize for three years in a row, Ravel was dismissed from the course, and in 1895 for the same reason was also dismissed from Beriot's studio. Ravel left the Conservatoire but continued private piano lessons with Santiago Riéra. In November of that same year Ravel completed his first major composition, the *Sites Auriculaires* for two pianos.

In 1898 Ravel returned to Paris Conservatoire to study composition with Gabriel Fauré. He was also studying counterpoint and orchestration privately with André Gédalge, to whom Ravel owes "the most valuable elements"²⁴ of his technique.

In 1899, while still a conservatoire student, Ravel conducted the premiere of his first orchestral work, the overture *Shéhérazade*, in the 278th concert of the Société Nationale. The program also included works by Albéniz, Chausson, Franck, and Fauré. Ravel's music was received with wildly differing reactions. He wrote that "...*Shéhérazade* was strongly booed. They applauded also, and in all honesty I must admit that the applauders were more numerous than the protesters, because I was called back twice."²⁵

²³ Ravel, Maurice. "Contemporary Music," *Rice Institute Pamphlet*, 15 (April, 1928): 131-145. Quoted by Orenstein. *Ravel: Man and Musician*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975: 17.

²⁴ Roland-Manuel. "Une Esquisse Autobiographique de Maurice Ravel," *La Revue Musicale* (Dec., 1938): 20. Quoted by Orenstein. *Ravel: Man and Musician*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975: 19.

²⁵ Ravel, Maurice. Letter to Florent Schmitt on June 9, 1899. Chalupt and Gerar. *Ravel au miroir de ses lettres*: 19. Quoted by Orenstein. *Ravel: Man and Musician*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975: 23.

In 1901 Ravel again failed to earn another of the examination prizes at the Conservatoire, this time in composition, in which category he presented a *Prelude and Fugue*. However, in the same year he composed the virtuoso piano piece *Jeux d'Eau*, and one year later the exceptional *String Quartet*.

Composition study with Fauré was very successful for Ravel. He was artistically inspired by Fauré, and felt spiritually connected to him. For his part, Fauré admired his talented student and supported him intensely. Ravel dedicated *Jeux d'eau* and the *String Quartet* to his "dear teacher Gabriel Fauré."²⁶ In 1903 Ravel yet again failed to earn the composition prize, even though he had submitted the first movement of his *String Quartet*, a work which "is a landmark in the history of chamber music and a beacon in the history of French music,"²⁷ but which, for the director of the Conservatoire, Théodore Dubois, "lacked simplicity."²⁸ After this episode Ravel was finally expelled from the Conservatoire for good.

From 1901 to 1905 Ravel competed unsuccessfully four times for the *Grand Prix de Rome*.²⁹ The last time his composition was removed after the preliminary audition. Conservative members who were the majority on the Prize Committee made this decision. "M. Ravel may consider us *pompriers* (firemen): he shall not take us for imbeciles with impunity."³⁰ This event became *L'affaire Ravel*, a public scandal for the press that secured Ravel's public reputation and led to the resignation of Théodore Dubois, the conservative director of the Conservatoire, who was succeeded by Fauré.

²⁶ Orenstein: 20.

²⁷ Demuth: 144.

²⁸ Orenstein: 38.

²⁹ Myers: 24-25. "*Grand Prix de Rome* for composition... ensured for the winner of the coveted prize three carefree years of study at the Villa Medici which the French Institut (Academy of Fine Arts) maintained in Rome as a cultural centre and nursery for prize-winning sculptors, painters, engravers and musicians."

³⁰ Demuth: 24.

During these very public and controversial events Ravel was traveling with friends through Belgium, Holland, and Germany. He was most impressed during this voyage by the technological structures and factories he saw along the way.

How can I convey to you the impression of these castles of iron, these incandescent cathedrals, the marvellous [sic] symphony of conveyor belts, whistles and mighty hammer-blows by which one is surrounded. Every-where the sky is red, dark and threatening... How full of music all this is ("ce que tout cela est musical") and I have every intention of making use of it [Ravel certainly made use of this inspiration in his *Boléro*].³¹

The ten years that followed, 1905-1915, were Ravel's most productive. He wrote *Miroirs* (1905), the *Sonatine* (1905), *Rapsodie Espagnole* (1907), *Gaspard de la Nuit* (1908), *Ma Mère l'Oye*, (1908), *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* (1911), *Daphnis and Chloë* (1912), and the *Piano Trio* (1914). In 1913 Ravel and Stravinsky were commissioned by the Russian impresario Diaghilev to work together on the re-orchestration of Mussorgsky's opera *Khovanchina*. During the amicable time they shared together Stravinsky had shown to Ravel the piano score of the *Rite of Spring*, and they played it together on two pianos. Ravel predicted it would be a major musical event in the course of the history of music, which of course came to pass. For a while, during the World War I years (1915-1916), Ravel served in the army as an ambulance driver, became ill and returned home, full of musical inspirations and projects. *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, a suite of six movements, was completed in 1917. Each of the movements is dedicated to the memory of one of his friends killed in the war.

In 1920 another public scandal erupted around Ravel when he refused to accept the *Medal of the Legion of Honor*. During the following seven years he toured Europe while working on the orchestration of Debussy's *Sarabande* (1920), Mussorgky's *Tableaux d'une Exposition* (1922), and Debussy's *Danse* (1923). He also composed *La Valse* (1920), *Sonata for Violin and Cello* (1922), the *Tzigane for violin and orchestra* (1924), the opera *L'Enfante et les Sortilèges* (1925), and *Sonate for Violin and Piano* (1927).

³¹ Ravel, Maurice. Letter to Maurice Delage. Quoted by Myers: 28.

In 1927-1928 Ravel toured in the United States and Canada with great success. When he returned from this tour, Ravel wrote the music for a ballet, which became an instant success. This ballet was first called *Fandango*, but Ravel later changed its title to *Bolero*, although the music is unrelated to the Spanish dance of the same name. Controversy surrounds this composition. Often considered only a technical etude of orchestration, *Bolero* is in fact a unique work of music. In Ravel's imagination, it was envisioned as "...an open-air setting with a factory in the background and a crowd of workmen and women emerging to take part in the general dance."³² Nevertheless, it was originally choreographed as a café scene beginning with one-woman dancer, and later a man joining in. Gradually pairs of dancers appear "until the whole stage is a swirling mass of bodies. Hence the orchestral *crescendo*: its logic is so sure that it is difficult to think of the work in any other way."³³

In October 1928 Ravel was honored with the Doctor of Music degree, *honoris causa*, by the University of Oxford. In 1931 he wrote two of his most distinguished large scale works in which the piano is the focus: the *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D*, and *The Piano Concerto in G*. The *Left Hand Concerto* was written for Paul Wittgenstein, the Austrian pianist who had lost his right hand in the First World War, but Wittgenstein did not like the Concerto at first: "...I wasn't overwhelmed by the composition. It always takes me a while to grow into a difficult work. I suppose Ravel was disappointed, and I was sorry, but I had never learned to pretend. Only much later, after I'd studied the concerto for months, did I become fascinated by it and realize what a great work it was."³⁴

Ravel was scheduled to play his *Piano Concerto in G* on a second tour in the United States but the tour was cancelled. The *Piano Concerto in G* is quite different

³² Myers: 82.

³³ Demuth: 140.

³⁴ Wittgenstein, Paul. Quoted by Stelio Dubbiosi. *The Piano Music of Maurice Ravel*. Dissertation, New York University School of Education, 1967: 132. Quoted by Orenstein: 101.

from the dramatic *Concerto for the left hand in D*, and "...is written very much in the same spirit as those of Mozart and Saint-Saëns."³⁵ After a severe taxi accident in 1932, Ravel's health declined rapidly. A brain malfunction developed, and by late 1933 he was not able to speak or write including saying or signing his name. His health improved sufficiently so that Ravel undertook several trips and assisted on performances of his works. But in 1937 Ravel had to undergo brain surgery, which was not successful. He fell in coma and died on December 28, 1937. The Minister of Education of France, Jean Zay highlighted Ravel's achievements on his speech at the funeral:

If I call to mind the greatest names in our moral and artistic tradition and ask myself what was characteristic of all those men of genius, and especially of the genius of Ravel, I believe I should be right in saying that it was in every case a supremely intelligent way of looking at things, whether the most passionate or the most pathetic, and subjecting them to the discipline of style.³⁶

Such a change in recognition indicating official and enthusiastic acceptance of Ravel's contributions as compared to earlier disapproval by the Conservatoire officials is astonishing!

Ravel developed his mature individual artistic style early in his life. The composers Ravel admired most were Mozart, Schumann, Webern, Chopin, and Liszt. He would often refer to Massenet's words from the time he was a student at the Paris Conservatoire: "...in order to know your own technique you must learn the technique of the other people."³⁷ He "...grew up in the post-Wagnerian epoch in France, which produced a fascinating juxtaposition of widely differing aesthetics, encompassing the subtle lyricism of Fauré, the neoclassical art of Saint-Saëns, and the pioneering work of Erik Satie, who was to influence Debussy and Ravel as well as Poulenc and Milhaud."³⁸

³⁵ Orenstein: 101-102.

³⁶ Myers: 90-91.

³⁷ Ibid: 20.

³⁸ Orenstein: 3.

Ravel states that "...another significant influence, somewhat unique, and deriving at least partially from Chabrier, is that of Erik Satie, which has had appreciable effect upon Debussy, myself and indeed most of the modern French composers."³⁹ Ravel was an avant-garde musician for his time, reflecting influences of the new artistic, literary, and philosophic ideas. His music was characterized by new and individual expression.

Ravel's first published work, *Menuet Antique* (1895), was written while he had already evolved his artistic persona. The *Menuet Antique* "...is remarkable for its prophecies of the future. Its free use of sevenths and ninths regardless of their resolutions gives us the foundations of that elegance and polish which became his greatest characteristic."⁴⁰

Ravel was often accused of being influenced by Debussy in his early career and it would be wrong to ignore the influences of Debussy's music on Ravel. Ravel was profoundly touched by Debussy's *Prelude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune*, premiered in 1894, one year before Ravel himself had published his own first composition. "Ravel... thought there was nothing in music more beautiful than the *Prelude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune*, which he said he would like to have played to him on his deathbed."⁴¹

While one can find similarities between the music of Debussy and Ravel, nevertheless their styles stand quite apart. Debussy's music is built on free structural principles and free tonal relations. Ravel's music is characterized by traditional musical structures and tonality. Jim Samson states that "...the more astringent harmonies in his [Ravel's] music are an extension and enrichment of a traditional type of tonal thinking rather than a reshaping of tonality along new, radical lines."⁴²

³⁹ Ravel, Maurice. "Contemporary Music," *Rice Institute Pamphlet*, 15 (April, 1928): 131-145. Quoted by Orenstein. *Ravel: Man and Musician*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975: 16-17.

⁴⁰ Demuth: 16.

⁴¹ Myers: 19.

⁴² Samson, Jim. *Music in Transition*. Quoted by Nichols, Roger. "Ravel and the Twentieth Century," *The Cambridge Companion to Ravel*. Edited by Deborah Mawer. Cambridge University Press, 2000: 240.

Comparing the style of Debussy with that of Ravel, Myers points out that:

Even their harmonic language [Debussy's and Ravel's] showed fundamental points of difference, Debussy's being characterized by a preference for chords of the ninth and the hexaphonic or whole-tone scale, while Ravel cultivated the eleventh harmonic and never employed the whole-tone scale [except in *Shéhérazade*]. His melodies are almost invariably modal, and the modes he used most frequently were the (medieval) Dorian (d-d') and Phrygian (e-e'), the latter being characteristic of Andalucian folk-music and the former of Basque music, although it is also found frequently in old French songs. Ravel rarely uses the ordinary classical major scale and, if he does, avoids the leading note; there are no instances at all in his music, I think, of the classical minor scale. Chords of the seventh, ninth and eleventh based on the two modes mentioned above are the foundation of Ravel's harmony...⁴³

According to Martin and Drossin, Ravel's "unique and lasting significance lies... in the fact that he perfectly represents the sophistication, logic, and sensibilité of the Gallic temperament in twentieth-century music."⁴⁴

In 1895 Ravel had written *Habanera* "which..." Myers remarks, "...not only contains the essence of his whole musical personality, but is a striking example of his extraordinary technical accomplishment at an age when most students are only feeling their way."⁴⁵ On this particular occasion it was Debussy who might have been influenced by Ravel. In the words of Myers:

There is, on the contrary, some evidence that if any plagiarism had been committed, it was by Debussy himself, whose *Soirées dans Grenade (Estampes)* published in 1903 bore a certain resemblance to Ravel's early *Habanera*, composed in 1895, the manuscript score of which had been lent to Debussy at the time by the composer.⁴⁶

Whole-tone scales, so significant in Debussy's music, were used by Ravel only

⁴³ Myers: 102.

⁴⁴ Martin, William R. & Drossin, Julius. *Music of the Twentieth Century*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1980: 42.

⁴⁵ Myers: 21-22.

⁴⁶ Ibid: 98.

in his *Shéhérazade* (1898), where, as the composer had pointed himself there were “enough of them for a lifetime.”⁴⁷

What is most significant to Ravel’s style is the perfect balance between the expressive and the technical, enhanced by meticulously refined details. These qualities are particularly obvious in Ravel’s mature works. Andrès Suaré gives an interesting description of Ravel’s unique craftsmanship in music composition:

His music often gives the impression of being a marvellous machine – a watch regulated to the tenth of a second, its mechanism adjusted to a hundredth of a millimetre. A celebrated musician [Stravinsky, according to program notes in the Urtext edition] is credited with having said that ‘Ravel is the most perfect of Swiss watchmakers’...And yet the intuition of this musical engineer remains intact. Nothing can alter his taste, his powers of invention in sound, the exquisite refinement of his ear.⁴⁸

Ravel defined a new era for piano technique, and his contribution to the piano repertoire is significant. In 1901 he wrote *Jeux d’Eau*. “Even Debussy at that date had written nothing comparable for the piano, and *Jeux d’Eau* is generally considered to have inaugurated a new era in the evolution of the technical resources of the instrument.”⁴⁹ Ravel’s most important piano works, besides *Jeux d’Eau*, are *Sites Auriculaires* (1895), *Sonatine* and *Miroirs*, 1905, *Gaspard de la Nuit* and *Ma Mère l’Oye* (1908), *Minuet sur le nome de Haydn* (1909), *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* (1911), *Prelude, A la manière de... Borodin* and *A la manière de... Chabrier* (1913), *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1917), *Frontispice* for two pianos, five hands (1919), *Piano Concerto for the left hand in D*, and *Piano Concerto in G* (1931).

Striking technical virtuosity and drama characterize *Gaspard de la Nuit* and the *Left Hand Concerto in D*, while child-like simplicity characterizes *Ma Mère l’Oye*. The ingenious blending of traditional and contemporary elements can be observed in *Le*

⁴⁷ Ibid: 23.

⁴⁸ Suaré, Andrès. *La Revue Musicale*. April, 1925. Quoted by Myers: 110-111.

⁴⁹ Myers: 24.

Tombeau de Couperin, Minuet sur le nome de Haydn, Concert in G, A la manière de... Borodin and *A la manière de... Chabrier*.

Ravel often performed his own works despite his “technical limitations as a pianist...,”⁵⁰ Woodley points out. He continues that:

In terms of straightforward facility in the faster passage-work Ravel’s fingers do seem to have found their natural limits at what one might charitably call a sub-professional level, despite an apparently exceptional mobility in his thumbs (cf. the writing in ‘Scarbo’ from *Gaspard*). But in the slower, more lyrical music, Ravel’s earliest recordings display some very interesting performing traits, and even if we would not wish to duplicate all of these today, they nevertheless provide valuable insights into the composer’s address of the instrument, and can sometimes be read as possessing relational or structural significance within the music itself.⁵¹

One of Ravel’s most astonishing piano works is *Gaspard de la Nuit*. In this composition he had set the goal for himself to write a transcendental work of the technical difficulty of Balakirev’s *Islamey*. Not only did Ravel accomplish this goal, but he actually surpassed in difficulty the pianistic challenges of *Islamey*. *Gaspard de la Nuit* is one of the most technically challenging piano creations ever written; “...it uses the resources of the piano to their fullest and carries on the Liszt tradition to its zenith.”⁵²

As Myers states in his book *Ravel, Life and Works* “...*Gaspard* is a monument in the literature of the piano and, to quote Alfred Cortot, ‘one of the most astonishing examples of instrumental ingenuity to be found in the work of any composer.’”⁵³ Myers claims that, “Modern pianistic technique can hardly be carried further than it has been in *Gaspard de la Nuit*, in which Ravel has certainly fulfilled his declared intention of writing ‘pieces of transcendental virtuosity. . .’”⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Woodley, Ronald. *Style and Practice in the Early Recordings*. Mawer: 214.

⁵¹ Ibid: 215.

⁵² Demuth: 88.

⁵³ Myers: 163.

⁵⁴ Ibid: 167.

As suggested by the title, *Gaspard de la Nuit: 3 Poems for Piano after Aloysius Bertrand* was inspired by the prose poems with the same title written by the nineteenth-century French poet Louis Bertrand (with the pen name Aloysius Bertrand). There is a sense of mystery, strangeness, and haunting power in Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit* that matches the same qualities in Bertrand's poems. Ravel's poems are *fantasies* that start with simple themes and develop into highly complex and inventive variations.

Ondine was dedicated to pianist Harold Bauer, and portrays the water sprite, who tries to lure the poet into marrying her and becoming "king of the lakes" in her underwater palace. Ravel's virtuosity in *Ondine* merges impressionism with a Lisztein bravura. The keyboard technique in *Ondine* is brilliant, and it helps understand the status of pianism at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The opening right hand passage is one of the most difficult in the piano repertoire to perform accurately. Alternating a C sharp major triad with the lowered sixth degree (A natural) requires perfect control of fingers for the balance, and extraordinary dexterity. It is difficult to find exercises in any piano technique books that would prepare fingers for such a passage. The right-hand part in Exercise No. 1 in Appendix A is expected to facilitate the performance of this passage. The left hand part will contribute in building coordination skills between the two parts, where the left-hand part is playing a melody and the right-hand part the accompaniment. After having played this passage in all twelve possible major keys it is advised to return to its recurrences in C-sharp major.

Other challenging techniques in this movement include simultaneous arpeggios in various cross rhythms, such as irregular groups of seven notes occurring simultaneously with groups of six notes in the other hand and vice-versa. Combinations of seven against six, seven against five, six against five are found. The movement eventually slows to smaller rhythmic groupings to conclude with the regular two against one. This passage is the climax of the movement, the musical expression of

“she wept a teardrop or two; but then burst out into laughter, to disappear among the gleaming raindrops streaming down my blue-black window”⁵⁵ in Bertrand’s poem.

Preparation for this passage of simultaneous irregularly-grouped notes could start with the *Fifty-one Finger Exercises* by Brahms,⁵⁶ where four-against-five and five-against-six note-group exercises will prepare the pianist gradually for the rhythmic challenge of Ravel. The wide-range arpeggios, which cover the whole keyboard within the left and right hand parts, pose major difficulties in note accuracy. After having mastered these arpeggios in each hand alone, it is suggested that one play the passage thinking only of the notes that mark the beats which occur simultaneously in both hand parts, and let the rest of the irregularly-grouped notes within the beats flow independently of the other hand part. This way, the irregularly-grouped notes will align automatically, while matching the right-hand and left-hand notes which share mutual beats and dividing the time equally among the irregularly-grouped notes within the beats for each hand.

With *Gaspard de la Nuit*, Ravel extended the concept of piano “timbres” into “orchestral” sounds. He extended the piano technique to the limits of its execution in the traditional manner, i.e. playing with fingers on the keyboard. His unusual rhythmic note-group combinations, black-key ascending and descending glissandi, and alternating chord and single-note passages (such as the opening passage of *Ondine* with the alternating C sharp major triad and A natural note on the right-hand part described earlier) expanded the concept of piano technique and its expressive means to the limit of the traditional *on-the-keyboard* use of the instrument. This expansion pushed the boundaries for future composers like Cowell, Cage, and Crumb toward expansion of the use of the piano to include producing sound by means beyond the mere use of fingers striking the keys, as will be discussed in the following chapters.

⁵⁵ Benedict, Michael, editor. *The Prose Poem: An International Anthology*. New York: Dell, c1976: 61.

⁵⁶ Brahms, Johannes. *5 Studien, 51 Übungen für Klavier*. Budapest: Köncmann Music, 1997.

CHAPTER TWO

Claude Debussy 1862-1918

Douze Études: (Twelve Etudes) (1915)
IX. Pour Les Notes Répétées (For the Repeated Notes)

I wanted from music a freedom which it possesses perhaps to a greater degree than any other art, not being tied to a more or less exact reproduction of Nature but to the mysterious correspondences between Nature and Imagination.⁵⁷

- Claude Debussy -

Claude Achille Debussy is considered by many to be one of the most original composers of the twentieth century. His innovations in music began as a reaction to and even a rebellion against the traditional practices of composition. Debussy's advances went on to question the hegemony of compositional forms and thematic development in the western tradition, and elevated the roles of sound and color to an importance equal to that of thematic development and formal structure.

Debussy was initially introduced to music through piano lessons with one of Chopin's students, Madame Mauté. He entered the Paris Conservatory in 1872, where he received awards in solfege, piano, and accompaniment. Debussy never received an award from his harmony professor, Durand, "because of his persistent unwillingness to accept the established rules!"⁵⁸

In 1880 Debussy was hired as pianist by Mme. Nadezhda von Meck (Tchaikowsky's patron). During his travels to Russia, Italy, Austria, and Switzerland

⁵⁷ Krantz, Allen. *Claude Debussy: Biography*. http://classicalarchives.com/bios/debussy_bio.html, 16 September, 2003.

⁵⁸ Schmitz, E. Robert. *The piano works of Claude Debussy*. New York: Dover Publications, 1966: 3.

with Mme. von Meck, Debussy encountered the music of Wagner, Mussorgsky, Borodin, and Korsakov. After returning to Paris, Debussy enrolled in Ernest Guiraud's composition class and in 1884 won the *Grand Prix de Rome* for his cantata *L'Enfant Prodigue*.⁵⁹

The prize naturally afforded Debussy the opportunity to study in Rome. While there he took advantage of many opportunities to broaden his musical background, including meeting with Verdi and hearing Liszt play the piano. Debussy also wrote a series of *envois* while in Rome. Upon the completion of the two-year residency in *Villa de Medici* associated with the *Grand Prix de Rome*, Debussy returned to Paris in 1887. Shortly after this return, Debussy completed the symphonic suites *Printemps* and *La Damoiselle Éluë*.⁶⁰ Debussy joined the circle of avant-garde symbolist and impressionist artists and poets who gathered weekly at the home of the French Poet Mallarmé.

Most critics consider Debussy to be the most significant representative of musical impressionism. Impressionist visual artists avoided clear lines and shapes in the reproduction of Nature in their works, and Debussy's music invokes analogous characteristics by virtue of its harmonic progressions without tonal gravity, whole-tone and pentatonic scale coloristic dimensions, and its exotic titles, which reflect natural phenomena and objects. Nevertheless, Debussy disliked the term *impressionism*, a label first used in a rather "insulting connotation. . ." "I am trying to do 'something different' - in a way, realities - what the imbeciles call 'impressionism,' a term which is as poorly used as possible, particularly by art critics."⁶¹ Debussy was drawn more to symbolist poets and artists, such as Mallarmé, Poe, and Turner, than to the impressionist artist Monet and his circle. Despite this controversy of labels, Debussy's music helped

⁵⁹ The *Grand Prix de Rome* was awarded by the Paris Conservatoire to the best students of art and music. The award assumed three years of study in Rome, while residing at the *Villa de Medicis*. In the composition category the award was given for the best original composition of a cantata. Also see footnote 29.

⁶⁰ Lesure, François: "Debussy (Achille-) Claude," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*. Ed. L. Macy <http://www.grovemusic.com>, 16 September, 2003.

⁶¹ Debussy, Claude. Letter to his publishers, 1908. Quoted by Schmitz: 13.

inaugurate a new era, as it suggested significantly new possibilities for musical experimentation to his own and to future generations of composers. Debussy's profound influence on Bartók, Webern, Varese, and Stravinsky is reflected in Stravinsky's statement: "The musicians of my generation and I myself, owe the most to Debussy."⁶²

Debussy's major works such as *La Mer* (1890), *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1892), *La damoiselle élue* (1893), and *Pelléas et Melisande* (1904) are musical milestones owing to their original and uniquely imaginative use of tone color, melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, and formal structure.

Debussy reexamined the concept of traditional tonal hierarchy and was an innovator in the treatment of dissonance and consonance. According to Martin and Drossin: "To him [Debussy], dissonance was an end in itself requiring no resolution, and the chord was no longer part of a harmonic progression but a unity that existed for its sonorous quality. . ."⁶³ In blending traditional harmony with modal sonorities, Debussy expanded harmonic vocabulary and often used chords with added tones, such as seconds and sixths. He also used extended dominant harmonies (ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths) and quartal chords to stand as harmonic entities in themselves, without a particular position in tonal hierarchy. In Debussy's music tonality is often established by repetition of certain harmonies rather than by dominant-to-tonic or dissonance-to-consonance resolutions.

Debussy was one of the first composers to use the whole-tone scale "as a means of suspending tonality."⁶⁴ Different from the major and minor scales, the whole-tone scale lacks a key center, leading tone, and half-step resolutions. Given its tonal

⁶² Krantz.

⁶³ Martin, William R. & Drossin, Julius. *Music of the Twentieth Century*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980: 30.

⁶⁴ Andrews, H.K. "Whole-tone Scale," *Grove Music Online*. Ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com>, July 3, 2004.

neutrality, the whole-tone scale allows harmonic implications quite different from those of tonal scales.

In 1889 Debussy was introduced to *Javanese Gamelan* at the Universal Exposition of Paris. Influenced by this Eastern musical tradition, Debussy began to incorporate the pentatonic scale in his compositions. This scale consists of five tones built in a pattern similar to that of the black keys of the piano. Debussy used the pentatonic scale for its exotic coloring capabilities in such works as *Pagodas* and the tone poem *Clouds*. "The basic assumption of a five-note scale seems to have held a fascination for Debussy, but it is not limited in his music to melodic writing, nor to the five black keys of the piano. It is used as harmonic clusters ('Poissons d'or') as well as in the horizontal flow of themes with diatonic harmonies."⁶⁵

In matters of temporal organization, Debussy's music is characterized by frequent use of syncopated rhythms, by meter and tempo changes, and by irregular accentuation of beats. Careful directions for tempo manipulations such as slowing, resuming tempo, or stopping govern the characteristic rhythmic flow.

Debussy developed original criteria for building nontraditional formal structures in his compositions. In his large-scale works and miniatures the "formal outlines were deliberately blurred and phrase outlines distorted."⁶⁶ Despite the lack of clear structural outlines, there is a significant proportional relationship among sections surrounding the climax of arch-form pieces in Debussy's works. In his book, *Debussy in Proportion, a Musical Analysis*, Roy Howat finds perfect or close to perfect matches to Golden Section⁶⁷ and Fibonacci Series⁶⁸ in the placement of the climax in three out of the six *Images* for piano by Debussy. Howat points out that whether this is a "...result of

⁶⁵ Schmitz: 27.

⁶⁶ Martin & Drossin: 32.

⁶⁷ Golden Section is a particular division of a given length in which the ratio of the shorter portion to the longer portion equals the ratio of the longer portion to the entire length.

⁶⁸ A series of numbers discovered by the Italian mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci, where each successive number equals the sum of the two preceding numbers.

conscious design or purely of a highly refined subconscious instinct. . ."⁶⁹ " ...the techniques involved will be seen to be crucial to Debussy's style – whether he was consciously aware of them or not."⁷⁰ Debussy expressed his opinion concerning musical analyses in *Gil Blas* (1913):

Let us maintain that the beauty of a work of art must always remain mysterious; that is to say, it is impossible to explain exactly how it is created. Let us at all costs preserve this magic peculiar to music, for of all the arts it is the most susceptible to magic... In the name of all the gods, let us not attempt to destroy or explain it.⁷¹

Debussy's titles are descriptive: *Garden in the Rain*, *Reflections in Water*, *Sounds and Perfumes Turning in the Evening Air*. Comparing Debussy's music to impressionistic art Krantz claims that "In the same way the impressionist painters tried to capture the essence of a fleeting moment or mood, so did Debussy in music that is most often suggestively titled, but in no way interested in programmatic story telling."⁷²

Building upon the pianistic legacy of Chopin and Liszt, Debussy brought a wealth of innovative approaches to harmony, melody, and rhythm in piano music, as well as innovation in technique that included novel fingering and pedal applications. His piano works fully exploit the subtle coloristic possibilities of the instrument. One of Debussy's first piano compositions was *Dance Bohémienne* (1880). Dawes describes the piece as follows: "In texture the piece has something of the salon style of Tchaikovsky, though very much simplified. Mme. von Meck sent the manuscript to Tchaikovsky..."⁷³ and he responded to her: "It's a very nice thing but really too short;

⁶⁹ Howat, Roy. *Debussy in Proportion: A Musical Analysis*. Cambridge: University Press, 1983: 5.

⁷⁰ Ibid: 6.

⁷¹ Dawes, Frank. *Debussy Piano Music*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971: 10.

⁷² Krantz.

⁷³ Dawes: 14.

not one thought is expressed to the end and the form is extremely messy and devoid of wholeness."⁷⁴ *Dance Bohémienne* was published in 1932.

Debussy's first published piano works were the well-known *Deux Arabesques* (1888) followed by the *Petite Suite* and the *Fantasia for Piano and Orchestra* (1889).

His most significant impressionistic piano works, including the *Estampes*, ... *Images*, and ... *Preludes*, were written between 1903 and 1913. In these works he explored new sonorities, new pedal effects, colorful nuances, and a wealth of imaginative musical refinements which brought the expressive capabilities of the keyboard to undreamed-of heights.⁷⁵

Debussy's inspiration to write *Douze Études* came from a commission to work on an edition of Chopin's complete piano works. In these etudes Debussy aimed to solve technical problems he had "set for himself."⁷⁶ Written in 1915 and published in 1916, Debussy's *Douze Études* represent his last solo piano works. Since Chopin, Debussy's piano music was the first to "truly explore new sounds and approaches to the instrument. Taking Chopin's style a step further, he insisted that the piano should sound as though it were 'an instrument without hammers.' "⁷⁷ In combining extraordinary technical demand with high artistic expression, *Douze Études* are written in the concert-étude style of Chopin and Liszt. Commenting on the technical demands of *Douze Études*, Debussy said:

I must confess that I am glad to have successfully completed a work which, I may say without vanity, will occupy a special place of its own. Apart from the question of technique, these 'Etudes' will be a useful warning to pianists not to take up the musical profession unless they have remarkable hands.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Martin & Drossin: 33-34.

⁷⁶ Schmitz: 192.

⁷⁷ Krantz.

⁷⁸ Vallas, Léon. *Claude Debussy: His Life and Works*. Translated by O'Brien, Grace and Maire. London: Oxford University Press, 1933: 259. Taken from Hinson, Maurice. *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987: 243.

In addition to high technical demands *Douze Études* are characterized by warmth and expressivity. Each etude explores one aspect of the piano technique in detail. In the first book of *Etudes* Debussy (like his predecessors) deals with finger dexterity issues, such as five-finger technique in *Pour Les Cinq Doigts d'après Monsieur Czerny*. In this etude the music is written after Czerny, but the five-finger patterns are treated in an individual manner, reflecting Debussy's new harmonic language of added scale degrees (such as sixths) and bitonality (white key passages opposed to black-key passages). Etudes on thirds, sixths, and octaves have traditionally been part of finger-exercise methods, but Debussy's etude on fourths (*Pour Les Quartes*) is an individual addition which reflects his use of quartal harmonies. The *Etude for Eight Fingers (Pour Les Huit Doigts)* is a retrospective of piano technique before Carl Philip Emanuel Bach, where the thumbs were scarcely used. *Pour Les Huit Doigts* is written in a highly chromatic manner. Its technical demands are enormous given that it is to be performed with only eight fingers (excluding the thumbs), and at times there are larger intervals than half or whole steps, which should be performed quickly and without the help of the thumbs. Also the black-key glissandi (given the minor third intervals between the two- and three-black-key groups) are difficult to perform smoothly.

The second book of *Douze Études* focuses on issues of sonority, harmony, artistry, and timbre as suggested by some of the titles: *Pour Les Sonorités Opposées*, *Pour Les Arpèges Composés*, *Pour Les Agréments*, and *Pour Les Degrés Chromatiques*.

The ninth etude, *Pour Les Notes Répétées*, is an exhaustive "treatise" on repeated notes. The repeated-note technique has been dealt with from Scarlatti *Sonatas* to the Brahms' finger exercises. Nevertheless, Debussy explores the possibilities of the repeated-note passages to their fullest in this etude. His interest in such technical issue reflects the increased use of the repeated-note technique in twentieth century piano music. This toccata-like etude explores single-pitch repeated-note groups in one hand, octave-to-single-note and chord-to-single-note passages in alternating hands, repeated interlocking leaping intervals, and blocked-intervals-to-single-note repetition to mention only a few. The repeated-note techniques are combined with a variety of

interesting chromatic harmonies, which make use of the whole-tone scale properties and its two recurrences in “bi-tonal” juxtaposition. The etude is characterized by an individual rhythmic treatment, which is rich in irregular accentuation of the beats.

Successful performance of *Pour Les Notes Répétées* demands high “digital” ability to precisely manage all the variations of articulation that effect the quickness of release, such as regular *staccato*, extra-quick *staccato*, accented *staccato*, and *arpeggiated* accented *staccato* chords. The switching of hand placement on alternating-note passages is especially demanding, because the pianist should avoid any association of either hand with down beats.

Directions on accents, legato, portamento, staccato, and tenuto articulation, as well as highly differentiated dynamic levels, should be meticulously observed. Unlike other works by Debussy, pedals do not play a significant role in this etude. The pianist should be careful in the use of the damper pedal, as not to obscure the clarity and virtuosity of the texture. Debussy does not indicate finger numbers:

...the absence of fingering is an excellent exercise, suppresses the spirit of contradiction that tempts us rather to avoid the fingering of the composer, and confirms the immortal words, “One is never better served than by oneself”. Let us find our own fingerings!⁷⁹

Nevertheless, as with any repeated-note passage, use of a different finger on each repeated note works best. One of the unique repeated-note passages in this *Etude* combines such repeated notes with melodic-octave intervals in the same hand. Exercise No. 2 in Appendix A will facilitate the performance of this passage. Fingers 4-3-2-1-5-1 in the right hand part would work best. This author suggests practicing this particular passage in the manner of whole-tone scale progressions, to reflect Debussy’s use of whole-tone scales, and to help performers acquire technical skills related to such scales and progressions. Exercises No. 4, 5, 6, and 7 in Appendix A will also facilitate the performance of whole-tone scales and related passages in twentieth-century works.

⁷⁹ Debussy, Claude. *A Few Words... Klavierwerke Band V, 12 Etudes*. http://www.urtext.com/debussy/klav_bandV/vorwort.html#english, 5 July 2004.

CHAPTER THREE

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Piano Sonata No. 3 Op. 28 (From Old Notebooks) (1917)

We want a simpler and a more melodic style for music, a simple, less complicated emotional state, and dissonance again relegated to its proper place as one element of music... I think we have gone as far as we are likely to go in the direction of size, or dissonance, or complexity of music. Music, in other words, has definitely reached and passed the greatest degree of discord and complexity that can be attained in practice. I want nothing better, more flexible or more complete than the sonata form, which contains everything necessary for my structural purposes.⁸⁰

- Sergei Prokofiev -

Prokofiev was among the most important personalities in twentieth-century music. A prolific composer, he wrote in most orchestral and instrumental genres. Prokofiev's music is characterized by a blend of tradition with the avant-garde influences of the beginning of the twentieth century. His musical style reflects Neo-Classical and Neo-Romanticist influences, but also incorporates other twentieth-century developments, such as expressionism, folklorism, mechanicism, abstractionism, and socialist realism.

Prokofiev took his introductory piano and music education from his mother from age four. She encouraged him to write his first piano piece at age five. Many other solo piano and duet pieces followed. After having been introduced to opera in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Prokofiev was inspired to write his first opera, *Velikan* (the

⁸⁰ Prokofiev, Sergey. *The Prokofiev Page* Online. (Taken from an interview with critic Olin Downes in the *New York Times* from "Sergey Prokofiev," p. 119. *New York Times*). <http://www.prokofiev.org/articles/quotes.cfm>, July 6, 2004.

Giant) in 1900.⁸¹ During the years 1902-1903 Prokofiev studied piano, composition, theory, and orchestration with Reinhold Glière, and under his direction wrote piano miniatures, a symphony, duos for strings and piano, and operatic works.

Following Alexander Glazunov's advice, Prokofiev entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1904. Unhappy with the theory, form, harmony and orchestration classes at the Conservatory, Prokofiev pleaded with his harmony professor, Lyadov to enter his free-composition class: "...you say I have gone astray but when I ask you to lead me on to the path of righteousness you refuse."⁸² The free composition class with Lyadov lasted only two lessons, but Prokofiev graduated in composition in 1909.

The piano chair of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Anna Esipova, had shown interest in Prokofiev's piano performance and he began studying piano with her. The professor of conducting, Nikolai Tcherepnin, became, at this time, Prokofiev's mentor, as well as his spiritual leader. In 1914 Prokofiev graduated with degrees in piano and conducting. He won the Rubinstein Prize for his *First Piano Concerto* as well as the prize for the best piano performance, playing the same composition. Prokofiev took care to supply published copies of his music for the jury members. "When I came out on stage, I saw my scores spread out on twenty knees – an unforgettable spectacle for a composer who was just beginning to be published."⁸³ The Conservatory director, Glazunov, who was Prokofiev's mentor in the earlier years, voted against Prokofiev, as did the other conservative jury members.

From the time of his conservatory years, Prokofiev had been interested in the new twentieth-century musical developments. Max Reger's visit in St. Petersburg in 1906, the premiere of Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy* in 1907, and the *Evenings of Contemporary Music* series in St. Petersburg at the time, all stimulated Prokofiev's

⁸¹ Redepenning, Dorothea. "Prokofiev, Sergey (Sergeyevich)," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online* ed. L. Macy. <http://www.grovemusic.com>, 22 September 2003.

⁸² Prokofiev, Sergei. *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*. Translator Oleg Prokofiev. Assoc. Ed. Christopher Palmer. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991: 240.

⁸³ Robinson, Harlow. *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography*. New York, NY: Viking, 1987: 99.

interest in contemporary music. In 1908 he made his debut as a composer in the *Evenings of Contemporary Music* series.

Prokofiev's music could be viewed in three phases: Russian years (1904-1918), characterized by an intense interest in the new contemporary music; years in the West (1918-1936), which gave him worldwide fame and recognition; and the Soviet Union years, (1936-1954), when he became a Soviet composer.

Among the most important works of the Russian period are: the *First Piano Concerto*, 1911; the *Second Piano Concerto* and the *Tocatta*, 1913; the ballet *Skazka pro Shuta* (The Tale of the Buffoon), 1915; the *First Violin Concerto*, opera *Igrok* (The Gambler), the *Piano Sonatas No. 3 and No. 4*, *Mimoletnosti* (Visions Fugitive), 1917, and the *Classical Symphony* based on Haydn's models, 1918.

Some of the most important works of Prokofiev's émigré years are: the opera, *L'amour des Trois Oranges* (Love of Three Oranges), 1919; *Piano Concerto No. 3*, 1921; *Piano Sonata No. 5*, 1925; *Symphony No. 2*, 1925; *Symphony No. 3*, 1928; ballet *L'enfant prodigue* (Prodigal Son), 1929; *Symphony No. 4*, 1930; *Piano Concerto No. 4*, 1932, *Violin Concerto No. 2*, 1935; and the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, 1935.

Prokofiev's most important works from the Soviet years are: *Symphonic Poem Petya i Volk* (Peter and the Wolf), 1936; *Violoncello Concerto*, 1938; *Piano Sonata No. 6*, 1940; *Piano Sonata No. 7*, 1942; *Piano Sonata No. 8*, 1944; *Symphony No. 5*, 1944, *Symphony No. 6*, 1945; *Piano Sonata No. 9*, 1947; *Symphony No. 7*, 1952; opera *Voyna i Mir* (War and Peace), 1952; and the ballet *Skaz o Kammenom Tsvetke* (The Tale of the Stone Flower), 1953. His compositional style grew more conservative during the Soviet Union years.⁸⁴

Throughout his life Prokofiev was influenced, in his music, by the traditional issues of form and structure. His mature and distinctive musical style is characterized by melodic lyricism, dynamic-motoric rhythm, and new dissonant harmonic combinations.

⁸⁴ Minturn, Neil. *The music of Sergei Prokofiev*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997: 122.

Prokofiev admired the compositional structures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly the sonata form. He was influenced not only by Beethoven's thematic developmental transformation, but also the lyricism of the nineteenth-century Romantic Movement. His music reflects these characteristics as well as more contemporary musical practices. His piano works are often characterized by a multi-layered texture, percussive technique, and dissonant harmonies.

The most distinguished dissonant application used by Prokofiev is referred to as the "wrong-note" principle: the superposition of extra notes that do not belong to the particular harmony according to the traditional tonal practice. "The wrong notes are not, in fact, wrong. Usually they insinuate themselves into many different musical levels, and we discover that the sounds and the relations they create actually form both the piece's structural underpinning and its characteristic surface sonorities."⁸⁵ Nevertheless, not all Prokofiev's music is based upon the "wrong-note" harmonic approach.

In his earlier years as concert pianist and composer Prokofiev pushed his goals toward creating ". . .an entirely new music."⁸⁶ But his new music was not always well received. Large Russian audiences in particular were not prepared for his innovative style of composition. The premiere of the *Piano Concerto* No. 2 in 1913 is another example of the contradiction between his attempts toward new music and the reverence for tradition in Russian music audience at the beginning of the twentieth century:

A youth with the face of a high school student appears on stage. This is Prokofiev. He sits down at the piano and starts either wiping off the keys or trying them out to see which ones produce a high or low sound. All this is done with a sharp, dry touch. The audience is uncertain. A few get upset. One couple rises and turns to the exit - "Music like that can drive you crazy!" Others leave their seats. The young artist concludes his concerto with a mercilessly dissonant combination of sounds from the brass. The scandal in the audience is now full-blown. The majority of them are hissing. Prokofiev bows impudently, and plays an encore. Exclamations resound all around: 'The devil take all this Futurist

⁸⁵ Ibid: 58-59.

⁸⁶ Chasins, Abram. *Speaking of Pianists*. New York: Knopf, 1961: 268.

music! We want to hear something pleasant! We can hear music like this from our cats at home.” Another group – the progressive critics – are in ecstasy: “It’s a work of genius!” “How innovative!” “What spirit and originality!”⁸⁷

In 1927, after almost ten years of self-imposed exile in the west, Prokofiev returned home and gave concert tours in Russia playing mostly his works. This time, his music was received with extended ovations from the public wherever he performed. Despite the fact that he was loyally serving the Soviet political system and was awarded the highest official honors for his music, including the Stalin Medallion, Prokofiev and his compositional innovations were subject to aggressive criticism by the Soviet government during his last years.

Naturally equipped with extraordinary performance abilities and compositional talents, Prokofiev contributed works of unique value to the concert-piano repertoire.

Francis Poulenc called him the “Russian Liszt,” and certainly no other composer of the twentieth-century has demonstrated such natural pianism and keyboard virtuosity, nor produced such a substantial piano repertoire. Serge Prokofiev can indeed be considered the heir apparent to Franz Liszt, for he carried the Romantic tradition of pianism into the twentieth century and exploited it beyond its known limits.⁸⁸

Prokofiev’s career as a composer started and ended with solo piano works. His last published composition was the *Piano Sonata No. 5*, 1952-3 (revised version of Op. 38). Prokofiev wrote a *Tenth Sonata* Op. 137 (unpublished). The *Eleventh Sonata* Op. 138 remained unrealized and the last work, *Dumka*, was not published. He composed more than one hundred solo piano works, including from the shortest and simplest pieces (*Music for Children* Op. 65) to the largest and most technically demanding ones like the *Sonatas* Op. 82, Op. 83, and Op. 84. He also transcribed for piano a number of his dramatic and orchestral works, such as *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* Op. 75. “Indeed, this century has not produced any composer whose contribution to the solo piano

⁸⁷ Robinson, Harlow: 96.

⁸⁸ Nissman, Barbara. Foreword to *The Piano Works of Serge Prokofiev* by Stephen C. E. Fiess. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1994: vii.

literature can approach that of Prokofiev.”⁸⁹ “Prokofiev’s reputation as one of the great masters of twentieth-century piano literature rests less upon his productivity than upon the originality, individuality, and craftsmanship of his piano compositions.”⁹⁰

Prokofiev’s nine published piano sonatas were composed in a span of forty-five years starting in 1907 with conservatory sketches for the *First, Third, and Fourth Sonatas*, and concluding with the revised version of the *Fifth Sonata* in 1953. An overview of Prokofiev’s changing style during these forty-five years can be observed in the nine piano sonatas. The first four sonatas represent his early Russian style. The first version of the *Fifth Sonata* was written in Europe (1923), after his four-year stay in the United States, and reflects the changing style of the composer while in the Western world. The *Sixth* and *Seventh Sonatas* were written during the Second World War years and reflect the drama, power, and restlessness of the war. The *Eighth* and *Ninth Sonatas* are philosophical and reflective in character.

Because Prokofiev was such an exceptional pianist his music is, first of all, highly pianistic and enjoyable to play, no matter how technically difficult it could be. As Maurice Hinson describes the characteristics of Prokofiev’s pianistic style, he states: “His percussive manner of treating the piano is uniquely blended with a lyric element frequently accompanied by strong dissonance, yet his basic arsenal of figuration stems directly from the nineteenth century.”⁹¹ “Biting percussive effects, physical endurance and a fine octave technique are requirements for many of Prokofieff’s works.”⁹²

These statements are true for the *Sonata* No. 3, Op. 28, characterized by a “storm-like” rhythmic virtuosity indicated by the tempo marking: *Allegro tempestoso* (stormy fast). The *Third Sonata* is dedicated to B. Verrin and holds the subtitle *From Old*

⁸⁹ Ibid: viii.

⁹⁰ Fiess, Stephen C. E. *The Piano Works of Serge Prokofiev*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1994: ix.

⁹¹ Hinson, Maurice. *Guide to the Pianist’s Repertoire*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987: 569.

⁹² Ibid.

Notebooks, which refers to the unpublished first version written during the conservatory year of 1907. According to Prokofiev's remarks, he revised Sonata No. 3 "...making the technique more suitable for the piano, more elaborate, modifying the development and recapitulation somewhat, but leaving the general design unchanged."⁹³

The second version was written in 1917. Prokofiev was living in the quiet city of Kislovodsk and trying to avoid going back to Moscow at the time of the revolution. Several other works were also composed during this period, including *Mimoletnosti* (Visions fugitives), *Sonata No. 4*, the cantata *Semero Ikh* (They are Seven), and the *Classical Symphony*. "None of these works - with the possible exception of *Seven, They Are Seven* and a few of the 'Visions Fugitives' - reflects the political and social turmoil through which Russia was passing at the time. In fact, the symphony, the concerto and the sonatas are 'pure' music in the strongest sense."⁹⁴

Prokofiev premiered the *Third Sonata* on April 15, 1918, in Petrograd. Thereafter he used the *Third Sonata* as the opening piece for his solo piano recitals. Describing one of his concerts Prokofiev observes in his diary: "I start with the Third Sonata. It was Souvchinsky who long ago advised me to begin all my solo concerts with the Third Sonata."⁹⁵

Despite the brilliance, the bravura, the percussive technique, and the power and energy called for, warm lyricism is one of the qualities this sonata possesses. Dmitry Kabalevsky commented on Prokofiev's performance of this work in his Moscow debut in January 1927:

It is hard to describe the impression Prokofiev made on us that evening. I think I shall not be mistaken if I say that that first performance of his gave many of us an entirely new understanding of his music, very different from that gained from the performance of other musicians, who tended to emphasize the elemental quality of the music, the dynamic contrasts and the mechanical elements. The music sounded far richer, far more subtle when Prokofiev played it. Everything

⁹³ Prokofiev. *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*: 260.

⁹⁴ Robinson: 128.

⁹⁵ Prokofiev. *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*: 39.

sounded full-blooded and healthy, both spiritually and physically, everything was colorful, dynamic but without the slightest exaggeration, the slightest crudity, let alone coarseness. In short, nothing 'Scythian'. And what was most important, everything was illuminated by the light of sincerity, poetry and human warmth. Moreover the whole performance was distinguished by a quiet reserve, a total absence of any external pianistic effects, conveying an impression of great spiritual calm. With his extraordinary pianistic talents Prokofiev revealed that rich lyrical feeling in his music which we had failed to notice until then. This was a joyful and unexpected discovery for us.⁹⁶

Following the nineteenth-century Lisztean tradition, Prokofiev concentrates the contrasts of an entire sonata cycle into a one-movement sonata form in Op. 28. Irwin Freundlich considers this sonata to be an "essay in classic motivic development."⁹⁷ The first theme is of a brilliant, toccata-like character. The lyrical thematic area marked *Moderato* plays a dual role: that of a second theme in the sonata form, and that of a contrasting slow movement in a sonata cycle. The development section elaborates the exposition materials and employs an exhaustive amount of possible development techniques combined with quasi-orchestral effects.

As Maurice Hinson observed, Prokofiev's percussive style "...was probably the most significant innovation in piano technique since Chopin."⁹⁸ A successful performance of Op. 28 requires extended technical preparation, including the development of the percussive piano sound obliged by the toccata style. The first theme of the sonata, which is one of the important materials of the motivic development in this composition, embodies a toccata-like character, created by the alternations of single notes and triadic sonorities between hands. The notes should be short and not connected in a *legato* manner. Also *staccato* is not the exact articulation. The figures should be played more in the *portato* style (detached but longer than *staccato*), with an emphasis on the attack. This technique requires the support of the wrist in order to

⁹⁶ Ibid: 159-160.

⁹⁷ Freundlich, Irwin. "The Piano Sonatas of Serge Prokofieff," *Complete Piano Sonatas of Serge Prokofieff*. New York: Leeds Music Corporation, Melliot Press, 1956: 4.

⁹⁸ Hinson: 569.

create the emphasis on the attack and to help with the quick release. Exercise No. 3 in Appendix A will help develop the required touch for this passage.

The second theme demands legato touch and *polyphonic* performance technique. The polyphonic texture demands fine differentiation of the horizontal layers. The use of the damper pedal in polyphonic textures is particularly challenging. It is needed to emphasize the legato articulation, but should not interfere with the different articulation of the individual layers. "Orchestral effects" also demand sophisticated use of pedals, so as not to interfere with the general percussive sound.

In the development section, different articulations are used in the different layers of the texture. For example starting in m. 103, there are four layers. The two lowest layers are parallel lines a third apart, played with a detached, percussive articulation. The middle layer contains the pitches of F (103-105) and F-C blocked fifth (107-109), which are either held or occur as accentuated repeated eighth notes. The top layer varies from a percussive and detached statement of the lyrical second theme motive to arpeggios that cover a large range of the keyboard. The only way to sustain the middle layer (F in mm. 103-105 and F-C in mm. 107-109) would be to use the *sostenuto* (middle) pedal right after releasing the first eighth note on the left hand, but before playing the second eighth note, and while still holding the note or blocked interval of the first beat in the right hand part. The *sostenuto* pedal should be used with the left foot so that the right foot could still operate the damper pedal in order to add color and support the articulation of the rest of the texture. The *sostenuto* pedal should be held for the duration of three measures in each case (starting from m. 103 and m. 107). Measures 140-147 stretch the difficulty of polyphonic playing to its limits by requiring the continuation of melodic lines that leap from the tenor to the highest registers. The leaping melodic layers derive from the second theme, while the rest of the texture is chordal. This intense moment prepares the climax that starts on m. 148, which creates a *tutti* orchestral effect. Pedal should be used "generously" at this moment, but should also be changed frequently as not to blur any harmonies. The *grace arpeggios* preceding the first beat on the right-hand part should not add extra beats to the measures, but

rather should be incorporated in the general *rubato*, which this climactic moment demands. The left hand can be used to play part of these *grace arpeggios*, especially the notes in the lower register.

The Recapitulation is shortened and does not fully state the themes from the exposition, but rather motivic bits of themes, as they have been transformed in the development section. Even the lyrical second theme is transformed to the point that it is difficult to recognize. This theme is in the “tenor” register and is no longer legato. The rest of the texture should be played *pianissimo* here, so that the second theme can be heard. The *poco più mosso* Coda is a continuous *crescendo* of sound which ends the Sonata with a virtuosic flourish!

For its wealth of motivic material and technical innovations, its interwoven and concise form, and for its brilliant thematic development, the *Sonata* No. 3, Op. 28, represents one of the important works of the beginning of the twentieth century and has found a permanent place in the concert pianist’s repertoire. With this Sonata and with other works, Prokofiev influenced the generations of composers to come and contributed a great deal to the development of piano technique during the beginning of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER FOUR

Béla Bartók

1881-1945

Eight Improvisations Op. 20 (1920)
VIII. *Allegro*

Let me say in advance that revolution in art (for instance, in music) in its strict sense would signify the destruction of every previously used means and a new start from almost nothing – a setback of several thousand years. Complete revolution in art, therefore, is impossible or, at least, is not a desirable means to an end. Evolution, on the other hand, means development by natural process from something that existed before; that is, a change by degrees. In art there is only slow or rapid progress implying in essence evolution and not revolution.⁹⁹

- Béla Bartók -

Bartók was born on March 21, 1881, in Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary, which at the time was part of the Hapsburg Empire. He studied music with Kersch at Nagyvárad College, where he gave his first public piano performance on March 15, 1891. Ten years old at the time, Bartók played some of his piano compositions, which were enthusiastically applauded. This "...in fact was the first declaration of his musical power."¹⁰⁰

In 1893 Bartók's family moved to Pozsony, now Bratislava in Czechoslovakia, which "among all the Hungarian provincial towns... enjoyed the most flourishing

⁹⁹ Bartók, Béla. "Harvard Lectures (1943)," *Béla Bartók Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976: 354-55. As quoted by Barbara Nissman, *Bartok and the Piano*. Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002: 145.

¹⁰⁰ Moreux, Serge. *Béla Bartók*. Translated from the French by G. S. Fraser and Erik de Mauny. New York: Vienna House, 1974: 15.

musical life.”¹⁰¹ He studied harmony with the composer László Erkel. At this time Bartók was strongly influenced by the music of Brahms and Dohnányi.

In 1899, Bartók entered the Budapest Conservatoire where he studied piano with one of Liszt’s students, István Thomán. Bartók studied composition with Janos Koessler, who was also Paul Hindemith’s teacher. During the time at the conservatoire, Bartók was strongly impressed by the music of Wagner and Liszt:

Freed from the style of Brahms, I was unable to find the fresh path I wanted to climb through Wagner and Liszt. Not yet had I grasped Liszt’s true importance for the further development of music; I appreciated only his outward show. So, for about two years, I composed nothing, and was known at the Conservatoire just as a brilliant pianist.¹⁰²

After several successful piano concerts in Budapest, Bartók began studying the music of Richard Strauss with great interest. According to the description of public opinion by contemporary critic Aurél Kern, Bartók played his own transcription of Strauss’ *Ein Heldenleben* for piano “...like a young god.”¹⁰³

In 1904 Bartók reached a turning point in his musical career. The Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra performed his *Kossuth Symphony*, a work inspired by Hungarian nationalistic ideas, and written in the style of Strauss’ tone poems. But at the same time, Bartók began to collect folk music of Eastern Europe. His interest and familiarity with this repertoire would have a tremendous impact on the development of his musical voice, a voice almost unique in the music world.

In 1907 Bartók succeeded his piano professor, István Thomán, in the post of teaching the advanced piano class at the Budapest Conservatoire. This position gave Bartók the opportunity to dedicate his energy to piano performance and composition. In 1908 he composed the *Fourteen Bagatelles* for piano, a milestone in his musical development. The individual movements of the *Bagatelles* concentrate on particular

¹⁰¹ Ibid: 17. (As quoted from Bartók’s *Autobiography*).

¹⁰² Ibid: 24. (As quoted from Bartók’s *Autobiography*).

¹⁰³ Ibid: 25.

musical elements discussed by Moreux as follows: “Number 1 is a study in polymelodism; 8 is a study in the harmony of the major seventh; 9, a quest for pure melodic design (left and right hands play a strongly defined melody in unison); 11, an exercise on the chord of the thirteenth on the dominant; 13, an exercise in the harmonic integration of pedal notes.”¹⁰⁴

In 1909 Bartók composed the didactic piano works *Ten Easy Pieces* and *For Children*. The *Two Romanian Dances* (1910) are based on folk-tunes and *Four Funeral Chants for Piano* (1910) show an individual impressionistic approach. By comparison Debussy was working on his piano preludes at the same time. Debussy’s preludes were not published until late that year.

In the short period between the end of 1910 and the beginning of 1911 Bartók composed another significant piano work, the *Allegro Barbaro*. “This is a work packed with explosive elements which are detonated by contact with an elemental rhythm – Bartók’s own fundamental rhythm. ... *Allegro Barbaro* goaded the conservatives to full fury. . .”¹⁰⁵

The opera *Bluebeard’s Castle* represents a synthesis of Bartók’s compositional experience until 1911. It was first rejected as “Unplayable!”¹⁰⁶ But in 1918, when staged on the National Opera in Budapest, this work “...aroused great enthusiasm...”¹⁰⁷ Kodály considers *Bluebeard’s Castle* for Hungarians “...what *Pelléas* is for France.”¹⁰⁸

In 1913 Bartók published the piano cycle, *For Beginners at the Piano*, a pedagogical cycle intended to further teaching modern music at the piano. In contrast to some earlier approaches which illustrate the continuity of consecutive patterns, for example Hanon, Czerny, etc., Bartók brought up the need for a new technical education in piano,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid: 95.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid: 101.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid: 102.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 103.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. [With reference to Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*].

which had to deal with unexpected changes, because “In modern writing for the piano, on the contrary, discontinuity is nearly always the rule.”¹⁰⁹

During the First World War years of 1915 and 1916, Bartók composed the *Piano Suite*; the cycle of Rumanian Christmas songs for piano, *Colindas*; and the *Sonatina for Piano*, which uses Romanian folk tunes as thematic materials. In 1917 Bartók finished his ballet, *The Wooden Prince*, an elaborate composition, which incorporates mostly folk-music materials. In *Studies for piano* “...the allurements of rhythm for its own sake begin to make themselves clearly felt.”¹¹⁰

The 1920s mark yet another significant change in Bartók’s music, with the evolution of an original musical language, characterized by “...further abstractions or fusions of the modal elements of folk music... toward extreme systematization...”¹¹¹ At this time Bartók composed one of his major keyboard works, the *Eight Improvisations for Piano Op. 20*. The *Dance Suite for Orchestra* composed in 1923 and arranged for piano in 1925, represents a climactic achievement in Bartók’s innovative method of composing with folk music materials.

Much more piano music was to come from Bartók in the two following decades, 1926-1945: the *Piano Sonata*, *Nine Little Pieces*, *Inventions*, *Out of Doors Suite*, the *First Piano Concerto*, (all composed in 1926); the *Second Piano Concerto* (1931); *Little Suite* for piano (1936); *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* and the *Mikrokosmos* (1937).

During the 1920s and 1930s, Bartók had a series of successful international tours as a concert pianist in many countries, including England, France, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Russia, and the United States. His repertoire included selected music from Scarlatti to Hindemith, and also his own works. “In his concert tours, Bartók usually arranged it so that Paris should hear the first performance

¹⁰⁹ Ibid: 112.

¹¹⁰ Ibid: 122.

¹¹¹ Antokoletz, Elliott: *Twentieth-Century Music*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, c1992: 123.

of his new works.”¹¹² Despite this intensive touring schedule, Bartók continued with his research in folk music.

He attended the International Congress of the Arab Folk Music in Cairo in 1932, studied Rumanian folk music at the Bucharest Phonogramme Archives in 1934, began work on the publication of his Hungarian folk-music collection in the same year, became a member of the Hungarian Academy of the Sciences in 1936, and visited Turkey for his last folk-music collecting tour that same year.¹¹³

In 1940 Bartók decided to reside permanently in the United States, where he composed several of his masterpieces: the *Concerto for Orchestra* (1943), which “...is based on the most extensive ‘synthesis of Eastern folk-music materials and Western art-music techniques’ ”¹¹⁴; the *Sonata for Solo Violin* (1943); and the *Third Piano Concerto* (1945), a work inspired by the beauty of nature and dedicated to his wife. “The man who composed the *Piano Concerto No. 3* was envisaging his own Garden of Eden.”¹¹⁵

Bartók’s musical journey began with an early classical-romantic background – Beethoven and Brahms – and continued with late nineteenth and early twentieth-century influences by Wagner, Debussy, Schönberg, Stravinsky, Strauss and Cowell. “Impressionism, polytonalism, atonalism, motorism: Bartók has passionately lived through all these revolutions and reshaped, as it were, for his own use, with his own rich resources, *all* systems.”¹¹⁶ But Bartók became “the Bartók” when he began to use folk music as a thematic resource for his music and went on to “clone”¹¹⁷ folk materials.

¹¹² Moreux: 144.

¹¹³ Antokoletz: 135.

¹¹⁴ Ibid: 137. (As quoted from Suchoff, Benjamin. “Program Notes for the *Concerto for Orchestra*,” *Béla Bartók: A Celebration*. New York: Book-of-the-Month Records, 1981: 6ff).

¹¹⁵ Kroó, György. *A Guide to Bartók*. Translated by Ruth Pataki and Mária Steiner. Budapest, Hungary: Athenaeum Printing House, Corvina Press, 1974: 243.

¹¹⁶ Moreux: 138. (Words of Constantin Brailoiu, Technical Director of the International Archives of Folk Music in Geneva).

¹¹⁷ Original term used by this author to describe Bartok’s folk-like contrived music.

In his mature style, the assimilated folk materials "...become an integral and essential part of the composer's vocabulary."¹¹⁸

Bartók began collecting folk music, inspired by Kodály: "In 1905 I began to explore the peasant music of Hungary, which until then might be called unknown. Here I had the good fortune to find a first-rate collaborator in Zoltán Kodály."¹¹⁹ First, Bartók traveled to Hungarian speaking regions, and later to Rumania and Slovakia. During his studies of this repertoire Bartók also analyzed the relationship between lyrics and music in folk songs. Maintaining throughout his life an interest in linguistics and its relationship to folk music, Bartók learned ten foreign languages, some only for the purpose of research in folk music.

While Liszt, and other nineteenth-century composers had mistaken gypsy music for Magyar (the largest Hungarian ethnic group) folk music, Bartók distinguished between the two. He collected Hungarian folk music live from the Magyar peasants in rural regions. Bartók was fascinated by the old modes, tunes, rhythms, and by the very existence of this living tradition. "This whole study of folk-music was of capital importance in enabling me to free myself from the tyranny, which I had up to then accepted, of the major and minor modal systems."¹²⁰

Bartók incorporated these Hungarian folk-music materials in his compositions in the same manner as Debussy used modal scales. "Bartók's use of parallel fifths, of major sevenths, and of elevenths resembles that of Debussy. In his maturity, Bartók created an equivalent to Debussy's impressionism in the *Night Music* from *Out of Doors*, in *Melody in the Mist* from *Mikrokosmos*, and in meditative adagios of his concertos."¹²¹ Given the geographic position of Hungary as the point of connection between Eastern

¹¹⁸ Stevens, Halsey. *The Life and Music of Béla Bartók*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964: 129.

¹¹⁹ Bartók. *Autobiography*. Quoted by Moreux: 16.

¹²⁰ Bartók. *Autobiography*. Quoted by Moreux: 60.

¹²¹ Hsu, Madeleine. *Oliver Messiaen, the Musical Mediator: A Study of the Influence of Liszt, Debussy, and Bartók*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996: 137.

and Western cultures, Kodály and Bartók were working to reach a musical synthesis between the two. “But it was... Debussy, ... [Bartók stated] who showed us the path we must follow.”¹²²

Bartók’s contribution to twentieth-century musical vocabulary can be found in the musical components of melody, harmony, and rhythm. The quest for a new harmonic language in western music began with the late nineteenth century ultrachromaticism (Wagner, Strauss, Mahler) and culminated, in the music of many composers, with the elimination of the tonal system at the beginning of the twentieth century (Schoenberg, Webern, Berg). Bartók belonged to the group of composers who took a more moderate approach toward the twentieth-century new musical developments. He used folk-music properties to create new combinations of modes, scales, and harmonies.

...the pentatonic-diatonic modalities that were basic to the folk music of many nations were transformed into new kinds of scale constructions, primarily modal, whole-tone, and octatonic, the interactions of two or more of these commonly found in the music of Debussy, Scriabin, Stravinsky, Bartók, Kodály, Ives, and other composers of diverse national backgrounds.¹²³

This ideal was embraced by Debussy, Stravinsky, and other contemporary composers, “...but it was Bartók who most thoroughly and extensively transformed these modes into the materials of a new musical language.”¹²⁴ Bartók used pentatonic modes from folk tunes, as well as built harmonic structures based on these modes. For instance, “From the pentatonic scale, G-Bb-C-D-F, the basis of the oldest of the Hungarian peasant tunes, Bartók derived special limited possibilities for harmonization. These included two triads, G-Bb-D and Bb-D-F (one major, the other minor), the minor-seventh chord, G-Bb-D-F, and the inversions of these chordal

¹²² Bartók. Quoted by Moreux: 92.

¹²³ Antokoletz: 78.

¹²⁴ Ibid: 109.

structures."¹²⁵ Further, "The linear pentatonic properties of the folk tune are projected into the harmonic structure, where they serve as the framework for chromatic unfolding of triads and seventh chords that produce expanded modal pitch collections."¹²⁶ In the view of the Hungarian theorist Ernő Lendvai,¹²⁷ Bartók developed a significantly original harmonic system, exploring the chord relations of the traditional tonal system. "Most writers have agreed to hold Schönberg and Stravinsky responsible for the reaction which set in after Debussy... I personally would nominate Bartók instead... He had a decided bent towards works of what are called pure music."¹²⁸

The changes that took place in the harmonic properties of music had an impact on other fundamental elements of music such as rhythm and meter. Antokoletz argues that: "With the dissolution of traditional tonal functions, where the basic concepts of consonance and dissonance had been tied inextricably to the regular barline, greater freedom in metric/rhythmic organization was permitted."¹²⁹ The types of rhythmic structures Bartók often used in his music reveal folk-music influences. Characteristic are the application of *tempo-giusto* (strict rhythm of old Magyar music – *parlando style*), and the *variable tempo giusto* (complex strict rhythms of the new Magyar music) which incorporate meters such as: 3/8; 5/8; 7/8. These meters are often applied as abrupt changes from one to another, or as consecutive changing-meter combinations like: 3/8+2/8, 4/8 +3/8 etc.

Bartók's most mature style preserves the concepts of structure from traditional Western music and is based upon traditional developmental principles. But he found a wealth of "fresh" musical intonations in the modality of the folk materials he used as

¹²⁵ Ibid: 111.

¹²⁶ Ibid: 113.

¹²⁷ Lendvai, Ernő. *Béla Bartók: an Analysis of His Music*; with an introduction by Alan Bush. London: Kahn and Averill, 1971.

¹²⁸ Honegger, Arthur. Preface to *Béla Bartók* by Moreux. New York: Vienna House, 1974: 10.

¹²⁹ Antokoletz: 78.

basis of his compositions. The original melodic and harmonic coloring and the rhythmic richness of his music are combined with the already consolidated traditional musical structures. For instance in the *Sonata for piano* (1926):

...one feels in the first movement the almost conscious presence of a Beethoven schema. (Let us always, for that matter, bear in mind when we are examining one of Bartók's works from the point of view of form that his conception of volume in movement had its origins in the last works of Beethoven, and that he drew ultimate conclusions from the quartets and sonatas with variations of the Master of Bonn.)"¹³⁰

Also, traditional contrapuntal techniques are used often by Bartók, particularly in the *Inventions* for piano, and also in one of his masterpieces, the *First Concerto* for piano (1926). Mareux says: "In the last few years, I have been much occupied with music written before Bach, and I believe there are traces of this to be perceived in the *Concerto* for piano [by Bartók]."¹³¹

The *Second Piano Concerto* (1931) is "...an example of the evolution of Bartók's style..."¹³² This work is distinguished for the intensified use of percussion and anticipates the well-known *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* (1937). The *Third Piano Concerto* (1945), one of Bartók's last works, "...shows his genius in its most perfect flowering... It is both 'in the tradition' and extremely personal – a synthesis at once of classicism and modernism, of pure music and folk-music."¹³³

Bartók's creative use of folk music evolved to a point that he not only quoted or developed given sources, but also created original tunes of his own, described by his biographers as "imaginary folklore . . ." ¹³⁴ in other words, a "cloning"¹³⁵ of a style which

¹³⁰ Moreux: 153.

¹³¹ Ibid: 154-55.

¹³² Ibid: 163-64.

¹³³ Ibid: 203.

¹³⁴ Hsu: 127.

¹³⁵ See Footnote 117: Original term used by this author to describe Bartók's folk-like contrived music.

is almost indistinguishable from the original. Bartók reached this level of creativity through an assimilation of the authentic resources he had processed, a collection of thirteen thousand folk tunes he recorded.

Himself a gifted pianist, Bartók was able to extend his quest for original musical expression through the use of this *quasi-folk-style* piano music, to the composition of a distinguished repertoire, which is significant to both: twentieth-century music in general and the piano repertoire in particular.

The *Eight Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs Op. 20* “. . . must be considered as the extreme point in the evolution of the piano works. In them, Bartók gave his inspiration full reign.”¹³⁶ He collected the folk-tunes, which serve as the basic material for this piano cycle, from different Hungarian regions. In this work one recognizes the compositional “. . . approach now best described as *composing with folk song* rather than *folk-song arranging*.”¹³⁷ The *Improvisations* are “. . . the first work in which the composer, taking authentic folksongs as a basis, nevertheless treated them as if they were original themes, not merely providing accompaniments but varying, developing, modifying, turning them this way and that to catch the light and shadow of his creative will.”¹³⁸ Bartók uses the source material in such creative way that its appearance becomes “. . . secondary to the added materials: the elements of the tunes are systematically developed, modified, and transformed into highly abstract pitch-sets and interactions.”¹³⁹

Bartók wrote: “In my *Eight Improvisations for Piano* I reached, I believe the extreme limit in adding most daring accompaniments to simple folk tunes.”¹⁴⁰ While

¹³⁶ Moreux: 134.

¹³⁷ Antokoletz: 119.

¹³⁸ Stevens: 128-129.

¹³⁹ Antokoletz: 120.

¹⁴⁰ Bartók, Béla. *Essays*. Edited by Benjamin Suchoff. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976: 375. Quoted by Yeomans, David. *Bartok for Piano*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988: 96.

the folk tunes that inspired the *Improvisations* are mostly based on modes and pentatonic scales, Bartók's music, with its abstract pitch sets, is very dissonant and modern. According to Yeomans, in the eighth movement of the *Improvisations* "difficulties are many and severe: awkward chordal configurations for both hands, octave leaps, extremes of dynamic change, and the need for precision and suppleness of movement."¹⁴¹ Some of what Yeomans calls "awkward chordal configurations," is harmonies, which include intervals of the tritone, perfect fourth, and minor second in the following arrangement: G sharp-C sharp-D-G. These are actually two tritones, which overlap by one half step: G sharp-D and C sharp-G. This chord, with its transpositions in other pitch levels forms the accompaniment harmony of the coda in the eighth improvisation. Antokoletz refers to such harmonies as Z-cells and Lendvai finds their source in Bartók's "tonic-axes" system.

While pianists practice triads, seventh chords and arpeggios in their daily-technique routine, they are not used to Bartók's chordal figurations. It is difficult to percept such chords harmonically and kinesthetically. This is why there is need for the addition of such harmonies and interval combinations in our daily-technique routine. Exercises No. 10, 11, and 12 in Appendix A will help acquire the needed skills of precision in the performance of such chordal configurations. These exercises are graduated in difficulty: No. 10 includes melodic intervals that outline these chords in the arrangement of the two overlapping tritones. The *arpeggio* figuration transposes in a whole-tone scale progression. Exercise No. 11 uses blocked tritones in a similar progression to No. 10 and No. 12 uses four-note chords similarly. One can also practice these exercises starting from C sharp, to include transpositions that are associates with the other recurrence of the whole-tone scale (with basis on C sharp).

¹⁴¹ Yeomans: 99.

CHAPTER FIVE

Henry Cowell

1897-1965

Aeolian Harp (1923)

The Banshee (1925)

I believe in music, in the force of its spirit, in its exaltation, its nobility, its humor, and in its power to penetrate to the basic fineness of every human being.¹⁴²

- Henry Cowell -

A dominant figure in American avant-garde music of the early twentieth century, Henry Cowell is distinguished for his stimulating influence on experimental music and his contribution to the exploration of unconventional sound possibilities and their extension to performance applications. A child with extraordinary intellectual capabilities, Cowell grew to develop a multifaceted career as a prolific composer, author, performer, lecturer, teacher, critic, entrepreneur, editor, and publisher.

Henry Cowell began his career as a daring experimentalist, and by the time he was twenty, according to his own records, he had written nearly two hundred works of all descriptions, including a symphony and an opera. His extraordinarily large output – about a thousand compositions – includes twenty symphonies, fifteen concertos, many choral and chamber works, and hundreds of piano pieces and songs.¹⁴³

Cowell began the study of violin at age five. Because of an attack of muscular paralysis at age six, from which he recovered only after age fourteen, Cowell was home schooled by his mother. From a young age Cowell earned money to support himself

¹⁴² Cowell, Henry. *Henry Cowell's Musical Worlds: A Centennial Festival*. Program book. Brooklyn, NY: Institute for Studies in American Music at Brooklyn College, CUNY, 1997: 2.

¹⁴³ Martin, William R. and Drossin, Julius. *Music of the Twentieth Century*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1980: 299.

and his ill mother. An extremely gifted child, he became the object of a study in intelligence and development of the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) by the psychologist Lewis Terman at Stanford University. "He (Henry Cowell) was tested at 14 ½, earning the mental age of 19 (IQ 131). Although the IQ is satisfactory, it is matched by scores of others among our records; but there is only one Henry."¹⁴⁴

In his musical background Cowell was influenced by his family's Irish traditions and by contacts with the surrounding environment of San Francisco. He listened to a large range of musical styles from Gregorian Chant to American hymnody, from Oriental music to Italian opera. Before he had a piano, Cowell invented his own way to satisfy his hunger for music, by forcing himself to repeat over and over in his imagination the music he had heard in concerts. He developed this skill to such a level, that he began experiencing original music uncontrollably rushing inside his head.

As a child I was compelled to make my mind into a musical instrument because between the ages of eight and fourteen years I had no other, yet desired strongly to hear music frequently... No sooner did I begin this self-training than I had at times curious experiences of having glorious sounds leap unexpectedly into my mind - original melodies and complete harmonies such as I could not conjure forth at will, and exalted qualities of tone such as I had never heard nor before imagined.¹⁴⁵

At age fifteen Cowell bought a used piano with money *he* had saved, and learned to write down one note at a time the sounds that were flowing inside his head. "I shall never forget the disappointment I experienced when I first wrote down a composition and played it. Could it be that this rather uninteresting collection of sounds was the same as the theme that sounded so glorious in my mind?"¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Lichtenwanger, William. *The Music of Henry Cowell: A Descriptive Catalog*. Brooklyn, NY: Institute for Studies in American Music, Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College, CUNY, 1986: xvi.

¹⁴⁵ Cowell, Henry. "The process of Musical Creation," *American Journal of Psychology* 37:2, April. 1926: 233-36. Quoted by Lichtenwanger: xviii-xix.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, xix.

During his teen years, Cowell gave his first public concert in San Francisco where he performed his own piano music, including his first published piece, *The Tides of Manaunaun*. In 1914 Cowell enrolled in the University of California at Berkeley, where he studied traditional counterpoint and harmony and participated in the “weekly discussions on contemporary music... with Charles Seeger,”¹⁴⁷ who had a profound influence on the young composer. Later, Cowell studied composition with Percy Goetschius in New York and, as a recipient of a Guggenheim grant, studied musicology in Berlin, Germany. In the period from 1923 to 1932 Cowell made sensational performance débuts with his compositions all over Europe, South America, and the United States. He had his Carnegie Hall début in 1924 and toured Russia in 1929. His avant-garde piano techniques and musical experiments shocked the musical world.

The history of early twentieth-century music criticism is filled with contradictory viewpoints about newly emerging musical phenomena. Cowell’s new music was often the subject of this controversy, as represented by the following quotes:

Henry Cowell stands in the front rank of ultra modern composers. His music, while individual in idiom and inspiration, is based on most solid and correct harmonic grounds, and has been developed with a thorough knowledge of the physics of sound. Already among the foremost in the New Music, Mr. Cowell will enjoy a future of inevitable brilliance.¹⁴⁸

Cowell is essentially an inventor, not a composer. He has discovered ‘tone clusters,’ playing piano with the fore-arm, and the string piano. Yet from a purely musical standpoint his melodies are banal, his dissonances do not ‘sound,’ his rhythms are uninteresting... His most interesting experiments have been those utilizing the strings of the piano.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Nicholls, David: “Cowell, Henry,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*. Ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com>, October 6, 2003.

¹⁴⁸ Adams, Ansel. “Henry Cowell in San Francisco,” *Carmelite* I/42, November 28, 1928: 7. Quoted by Manion, Martha L. *Writings About Henry Cowell*. New York: Institute for Studies in American Music, Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College, CUNY, 1982: 10.

¹⁴⁹ Copland, Aaron. “America’s young men of promise,” *Modern Music* III/3, March-April 1926: 16. Quoted by Manion: 7.

At the age of twenty-six he has achieved the highest honor the musical world has to offer. He has been elected a member of the board of the International Composers Guild. He has gone one step further than Stravinsky. He is not trying to startle a blasé audience into showing interest. He is offering to the world a new music.¹⁵⁰

Despite critics' contradictory opinions, Cowell's contributions to the music world and his influence on later generations of composers were significant. "Cowell contributed immeasurably to the cause of experimentalism and opened many doors to the future of American music."¹⁵¹

Throughout his life, Cowell demonstrated a remarkable enthusiasm, endless energy for work, tremendous creativity, and a highly innovative capability as a composer.

Cowell brought to the twentieth-century musical world a new, almost unprecedented manner of expression by pushing the boundaries of inherited stylistic conventions. His innovations were a result of the urge to express his inner perception of the world in sound. His experiments with rhythm resulted in the invention of the *rhythmicon* machine, which could produce sixteen simultaneous rhythms. He also devised the concept of *elastic form* to assist choreographers in adjusting musical segments to choreography. "The Eastern Asian influence had a significant bearing on Cowell's idea of *open* or *elastic form*, based on flexibility in the ordering of formal segments, an approach that was to become prominent among American and European aleatoric composers after World War II."¹⁵²

Cowell's deep interest in world cultures was reflected in his music. His compositions are colored by versatile motives from Native American and Irish folk legends to Asian and African tunes and rhythms. At the same time, Cowell was

¹⁵⁰ Todd, Marion. "The boy who heard the 'music of the spheres' astounds artists," *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 19, 1925: 10. Quoted by Manion: 5.

¹⁵¹ Ferris, Jean. *America's Musical Landscape*. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1990: 135.

¹⁵² Antokoletz, Elliott: *Twentieth-Century Music*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992: 197-98.

rational in his research and composition and based his creative impulses on principles of order and artistic logic.

[Mason:] You want to justify your work by law and order, don't you?
[Cowell:] Indeed I do, and, if you notice, when I have many dissonances, I like to employ a severe form, so as not to be revolutionary in every respect at the same time. Even an experiment must be law-abiding and, if it is successful, theory will prove that your innovations have value.¹⁵³

Cowell's individual musical pursuits were characterized by a restless quest for discovering the unexplored sonic limits of any musical instrument for which he ever wrote. In this context, the piano was always his favorite ground for research, discovery, and experimentation. Cowell incorporated numerous innovative techniques and applications in his piano music. "He was not a superlative pianist except in the applications of his own special techniques... Cowell had a superb knack for what some regarded as gadgetry and others saw as science and invention."¹⁵⁴

Cowell's explorations of piano-technique suggested unconventional ways of producing new sounds and sound combinations. In order to express his concept of sound, tone, melody, harmony, chord structures, and rhythms, Cowell found new ways to extend conventional piano performance: "His differing ways of producing sounds with a piano he once numbered at 165 - with the more common ways left uncounted."¹⁵⁵

In his piano works composed before 1930, Cowell developed performance techniques that included the use of elbows, forearms, wrists, fists, and palms. He also came up with the astounding idea of performing on the open strings of the piano! Cowell went further in his piano-sound experiments to insert objects between the strings.

¹⁵³ Mason, Redfern. "Henry Cowell tells of tone clusters and details his experiments in piano tone," *San Francisco Examiner*, July 19, 1925: 8S. Quoted by Manion: 6.

¹⁵⁴ Lichtenwanger: xiii.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Cowell also introduced the *tone-cluster*, which consists in the simultaneous striking of several keys with palms or forearms and producing unconventional group note soundings of major and minor seconds placed in a row. In *Antimony* (1914), a tone cluster of a *fffff* dynamic is achieved by using both forearms simultaneously to strike the keyboard keys.

Cowell experimented with myriad possible manners of producing sounds from the piano strings such as plucking, strumming, brushing, playing ascending and descending glissandi across the strings, as well as a variety of glissandi along the string length. This innovative discovery is known as the *string piano*. Any part of fingers and hands is used to accomplish particular types of striking the strings to produce distinct tone qualities and dynamics.

Cowell also experimented with changing the sound of the piano by inserting objects of every day use made of metal, plastic, and rubber, “. . .different substances like hammers, table knives, gong beaters, rubber bands, coins, etc. were placed between the strings – and he used these to develop the piano into an instrument in its own right.”¹⁵⁶

As a result of these experiments, Cowell thought it necessary to develop a more elaborate music notation system, which would enable him to more adequately represent his original ideas. Marks, graphics and detailed written performance explanations are added to the score, to help the pianist understand unconventional performance paths. Cowell even created a new system of rhythmic notation, which was introduced in his book *New Musical Resources*.¹⁵⁷ Somewhat in the manner of earlier musical notations such as Gregorian neumes, Cowell suggested geometric shapes to be used for different group-note systems. Triangular shape notes would be used to write

¹⁵⁶ Nyman, Michael. *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*. New York: Schirmer Books, a division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1974: 39.

¹⁵⁷ Cowell, Henry. *New Musical Resources*. With a pref. and notes by Joscelyn Godwin. New York: Something Else Press, 1969.

notes in groups of three and square shape to write notes in groups of five. Diamond shape was used to write notes in groups of seven, etc.

A degree of individual creativity and freedom is always allowed the performer in Cowell's piano music. Despite the detailed score instructions, there is always a possibility of a deviation from the score, from one pianist to another, depending on the length of forearms, or size of the palms of the hands. As a result there are always differing performances of the same works.

Cowell's piano music and the technique required to execute it, was significantly different from more traditional piano music. His most innovative applications mentioned above attracted the attention of the musical world in different ways.

Modern to the extreme are the methods of Henry Cowell. This modernism is not in his compositions. . . . Cowell is most original as a performer. To describe him as a pianist would be misleading. Rather he sees in the pianoforte a surrogate for the orchestral apparatus, and by alternate employment of his fingers, fists, and elbows, and by direct contact of his fingers and fists with the strings, Cowell strives for, and achieves, an astounding variety of tone-color. . . . His performance is unusual, often alarming, but always interesting. Its coming is timely, perhaps, at this moment, when the "virtuoso" school, built on the once epoch-making achievements of Chopin and Liszt, is beginning to outlive itself. Perhaps - who knows? - Cowell holds the key to new problems and possibilities of pianism.¹⁵⁸

In 1923 Cowell composed the *Aeolian Harp*. The artistic image is of a tiny wind harp to be hung in a window, where the wind will produce sounds from the silk strings. No wonder the traditional piano sounds would be too harsh for such a fragile image! In this composition the piano is used like a harp. Cowell used the idea of glissandi on the strings of the piano while silently suppressing triads on the keyboard. The result is that of chromatic glissandi which transform into arpeggiated triads obtained from the suppressed keys. This was a tremendous innovation, whose antecedents may be found in the pianissimo black and white-key keyboard glissandi in the music of Ravel and Debussy. However, Cowell's glissandi are different, because

¹⁵⁸ Bechert, Paul. "Cowellism," *Musical Times*, June 1, 1926: 559. Quoted by Manion: 8.

they are chromatic. He provides detailed written performance instructions for the pianist: "All of the notes of the 'Aeolian Harp' should be pressed down on the keys, without sounding, at the same time being played on the open strings of the piano with the other hand."¹⁵⁹

The *Banshee* was composed in 1925. The first time one hears a recording of this composition, the last instrument that comes to mind is the traditional acoustic piano. The title translates to: Woman of the Inner World. The *Banshee* is an Irish family ghost, an ancestor of the family whose duty is to take the soul of the dead into the Inner World. When she comes to the Outer World to perform her duty, she feels so uncomfortable that she starts wailing. This is what family members hear when she "comes" to retrieve the soul of their beloved family member for transport to the inner world. Cowell felt compelled to invent radically innovative sounds to bring the Banshee to life. He devised glissandi along the string length and whipping movements over and around the strings to produce wailing and wind like sounds. These glissandi are affected by the speed, weight, and pressure of the finger on the string. In a totally unconventional manner of piano performance, the pianist stands at the crook of the piano, and requires the assistance of someone to hold the damper pedal down to let the strings resonate for the duration of the piece. The score contains detailed written instructions to the pianist for the production of the sounds intended by the composer.

¹⁵⁹ Cowell, Henry. *Piano Music, Volume One*. New York: Associated Music Publishers, Inc., Milwaukee, WI: Distributed by Hal Leonard Corporation: 1960: 10.

CHAPTER SIX

John Cage
1912-1992

Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano (1946-48)
Sonata No. 5

For living takes place each instant and that instant is always changing. The wisest thing to do is to open one's ears immediately and hear a sound suddenly before one's thinking has a chance to turn it into something logical, abstract or symbolical.¹⁶⁰

- John Cage -

...my purpose is to remove purpose...¹⁶¹

- John Cage -

Art's obscured the difference between art and life. Now let life obscure the difference between life and art...¹⁶²

- John Cage -

Along with the work of Charles Ives and Henry Cowell, John Cage's musical experiments and compositions have had a profound impact on the evolution of music in America and twentieth century. Some of Cage's most significant musical innovations are the *prepared piano*; composition by *chance* (indeterminacy); and the music-theater collage. Another of his most influential ideas is the focus upon *music silence*, first introduced in his famous composition *4' 33"*. Cage is also credited with his significant contribution to the development of electronic music. His ideas about music,

¹⁶⁰ Nyman, Michael. *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1974: 1.

¹⁶¹ Kingman, Daniel. *American Music: A Panorama*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1998: 520.

¹⁶² Nyman: 32.

in some sense philosophical as much as aesthetic, influenced not only the development of twentieth-century American music but reached music throughout the world.

John Cage was born on September 5, 1912, in Los Angeles, California. He studied at Pomona College and began his musical career as a dance-troupe accompanist. In the early 1930s, Cage traveled to Europe and in 1933 returned to the United States and studied with Henry Cowell in New York. Cage was able to closely observe the musical world of his teacher, a world which he would explore in more detail during his own career. Cage also studied with Schönberg in California in 1934, but was not satisfied with the twelve-tone compositional technique, which "...offers bricks but no plan..."¹⁶³ Cage seems to have had a natural dislike of the sound similarities and uniformities of the Western tonal system. "As a child he was not interested in learning his scales since they all sounded the same..."¹⁶⁴

During the years he worked with dance troupes, Cage developed two very significant features of his compositional style: the elaborate rhythmic structures "...with a love of percussion sounds, particularly those of an Oriental character..."¹⁶⁵ and the spectacular character of the music, which later would culminate with his experimental theater-music of the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1936 Cage accepted a faculty position as composer-accompanist for the dance group at the Cornish School in Seattle. He envisioned the future electronic development in music, which he described with astonishing foresight: "Many musicians, ...the writer included, have dreamed of compact technological boxes, inside which all audible sounds, including noise, would be ready to come forth at the command of the composer."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Ibid: 28.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid: 38.

¹⁶⁵ Kingman: 491.

¹⁶⁶ Cage, John. Quoted by Griffiths, Paul. *Modern Music: The Avant Garde since 1945*. New York: George Braziller Inc., 1981: 35.

In 1938, during the work in Seattle, Cage experimented with the prepared piano. "The prepared piano, Cage's best-known 'invention,' is a unique cannibalization of piano and percussion orchestra."¹⁶⁷ This idea first came to Cage as a necessary compensation for the shortage of space on a stage that could not accommodate the percussion orchestra to accompany a dance group. By following in the footsteps of Henry Cowell, Cage came up with the idea of turning the piano into a "one-man percussion orchestra," by putting "hardware" materials, such as bolts and screws between the strings of the piano. The prepared piano, "...more than any other single idea, launched Cage's career."¹⁶⁸

Depending on what objects (screws and bolts of different sizes), on what materials (metal, rubber or plastic), are placed between which strings (between the first and second and/or third strings of each note), at what distance from the damper, a range of unprecedented timbres and sonorities is produced, often of an "exotic," mildly percussive nature.¹⁶⁹

Experimenting at the same time with electronic sound devices, Cage composed the *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* (1939), which "...is in effect the very first live electronic piece."¹⁷⁰ This composition incorporates a large Chinese cymbal, a piano (gong beaters and palms of the hands are used to play on the open strings) and electronic sound devices amplified by two microphones.

Consistent with his quest of bringing everyday sounds to the concert stage, Cage composed, during the 1940s, several works of a great significance, including the *Living Room Music* (1940), *Imaginary Landscape II for percussion* (1941), *William Mix* (1942), and *Perilous Night* (1944). In *Living Room Music* he uses common surrounding objects, including walls and windows, as percussion instruments; In *Imaginary Landscape II for percussion* (1941) Cage incorporates a giant metal coil amplified by a phonograph

¹⁶⁷ Nyman: 39.

¹⁶⁸ Kingman: 488.

¹⁶⁹ Nyman: 39-40.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid: 40.

cartridge; *William Mix* (1942) is a tape montage of more than 500 pre-recorded sounds; *Perilous Night* (1944) is written for a muted prepared piano.

Cage studied Zen Buddhist philosophy with Daisetz T. Suzuki at Columbia University in the 1940s. Zen and the *I Ching* (the process of chance selection by coin tossing) had a significant impact in Cage's compositional process.

In 1943, as music director of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Cage played a major role in the composition of dance music using the guidelines he evolved for his indeterminate music process. By this time, Cage's work had won wide recognition, and in 1949, he was given the Guggenheim Fellowship from the Academy of Arts and Letters. In the same year, Cage went to Paris, where he met with Pierre Boulez, who was also looking for ways to free his music from traditional limits.

During the 1950s Cage experimented with electronic sounds and indeterminacy. In the *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Chamber Orchestra* (1950-51) Cage used number charts "...as a means to attain non-intention."¹⁷¹

I let the pianist express the opinion that music should be improvised or felt... while the orchestra expressed only the chart, with no personal taste involved. In the second movement [of the *Piano Concerto*] I made large concentric moves on the chart for both pianist and orchestra, with the idea of the pianist beginning to give up personal taste. The third movement had only one set of moves on the chart for both, and a lot of silences. . . . Until that time, my music had been based on the traditional idea that you had to say something. The charts gave me my first indication of the possibility of saying nothing.¹⁷²

In 1951 Cage completed *Music of Changes* for piano, a four volume collection, in which every musical indication on the score is written based on the chance operation of the coin tossing process described by the *I Ching*. Cage used the same method in composing the electronic music *Imaginary Landscape* No. 4 (1951) for 12 radio receivers; *Imaginary Landscape* No. 5 (1951-52); *William Mix* (1952); and the 84 pieces of the *Music*

¹⁷¹ Griffiths: 66.

¹⁷² Cage, John. Quoted by Griffiths: 67.

for *Piano I-84* (1952-56). All were works composed with a variety of taped sounds, combined according to chance.

Just as Cage had found that 'silence' is full of (unintentional) sounds which may be of use to the composer and listener, so a 'blank' sheet is also already alive with prospective sounds. Cage asked the *I Ching* [method] as to how many notes should be used from each page; whether they are to be played normally, or are muted or plucked; whether they are sharp, flat or natural, or are noises to be produced by hand or beater, inside or outside the piano construction. The corresponding number of imperfections on a blank sheet of transparent paper were then marked out, and registered on a master page on which stave systems had been drawn. What resulted was a series of single notes and flurries of notes. The pieces may be played alone or together in an endless number of superimpositions, combinations, overlaps and successions.¹⁷³

One of Cage's most famous works is *4' 33"* (1952) "...a work that has outlived its usefulness, having been overtaken by the revolution it helped to bring about."¹⁷⁴ The score has the indications of three movements marked as I, II, and III, and includes only time measurements that together add to four minutes and thirty-three seconds of *silence*. The idea is to make the audience think about other sounds, created unintentionally by the audience during the "performance" time. These are the sounds, which surround people anywhere in their everyday life. Paul Griffiths describes the piece "...as a prototype of music-theatre, in that the performer or performers (originally the work was intended for a pianist, but it has since been revised and made available to any forces) are asked to make it clear that a musical performance is in progress..."¹⁷⁵

In 1957-1958 Cage composed the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* with "...14 solo parts of which the piano part is a gigantic 'composition' in its own right."¹⁷⁶ The composer instructs that the *Concert* may be performed by making individual choices on which solo parts should be played in a given moment, in any possible combination with

¹⁷³ Nyman: 53.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid: 2.

¹⁷⁵ Griffiths: 70.

¹⁷⁶ Nyman: 54.

the other parts, and by freely choosing to play it in part or in its entirety. Also the parts may be played simultaneously with any other music Cage had previously composed.

Cage's European concert tours of 1954 and 1958 assured his wide influence on that continent. It was only after these tours that "...the innovations of the American vanguard gain[ed] a wide following."¹⁷⁷

In 1961 Cage finished his book *Silence* and started delivering lectures on the topics treated in the book in many countries around the globe. In 1968 he became member of the Institute of the American Academy and the Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1986 Cage was given an Honorary Doctorate from the California Institute of the Arts.¹⁷⁸

In the 1960s John Cage collaborated with David Tudor, experimenting with electronic music. In 1960 Cage composed the *Theatre Piece*, and *Cartridge Music*, "...two works in which dramatic anarchy is at least as important as musical purposelessness."¹⁷⁹ In *Cartridge Music*, different objects, from feathers to piano strings, are inserted in the phonograph cartridges, to make possible the production of any unheard-of sounds.

The notation used in writing music of this type is significantly different from traditional notation. For writing *Cartridge Music* and *Variation II* (1961), Cage used transparent sheets with printed graphs that could be overlaid in any order. The final combination would then be written down in a master sheet, which would have all the indications of music and all the needed explanations to follow it. The score marks in *Cartridge Music* "...are 'useful' in performance since they 'enable one to go about the business of making sounds'."¹⁸⁰ The sounds produced are unpredictable, for example,

¹⁷⁷ Griffiths: 117.

¹⁷⁸ Cage's biography: <http://music.msn.com/artist/default.aspx?artist=16072623&app=2>, December 6, 2004.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid: 125.

¹⁸⁰ Nyman: 76.

“Tudor’s version of the piece [*Variations II*] uses the piano as a reservoir of sounds ranging from the most fragile resonances to the ugliest scrapes.”¹⁸¹ Because of the sophistication of the notation involved, only a very few dedicated professional musicians were able to understand and perform this music. These were mostly Cage’s closest collaborators and friends, like Tudor, Wolf, Cardew, Tilbury, and Mumma.

This style of music is based on a creative process asking for an interplay between audience and performer(s). For example, in Cage’s dance music, *Variation V* (1965), performers play a great role in “composing” the music. Sounds are created at unpredictable times by the movements of the dancers, which interrupt light-beam circuits arranged to activate switches of a tape recorder, and images from a film projection. This work was evaluated by Mumma as “...a superbly poly: -chromatic, -genic, -phonic, -meric, -morphic, -pagic, -technic, -valent, multi-ringed circus.”¹⁸²

In Cage’s work *33 1/3* (1970) the audience is the real performer, “...a number of record players and a vast, randomly selected, collection of LPs are made available to the audience to play in any way they wish.”¹⁸³

During his career Cage strove to free sounds from their traditional limits within musical composition.

I would assume that relations would exist between sounds as they would exist between people and that these relationships are more complex than any I would be able to prescribe. So by simply dropping that responsibility of making relationships I don’t lose the relationship. I keep the situation in what you might call a natural complexity that can be observed in one way or another.¹⁸⁴

Cage’s piano music developed as an attempt to create sounds and music that went beyond the traditional physical limits of the instrument. Starting with the prepared piano, which involves untraditional sound production and the amplification

¹⁸¹ Griffiths: 172-73.

¹⁸² Griffiths: 201.

¹⁸³ Nyman: 78.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid: 25.

of the instrument, Cage considered the entire structure of the piano as a potential percussion musical sound box. "Once you move to the exterior of the piano you find a number of wooden and metal surfaces which can be 'played'. Again it was Cage who pioneered this with the accompaniment to *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs* (1942) which is performed by the percussive action of the fingertips and knuckles on the closed keyboard lid."¹⁸⁵

This transformation of the experience of piano performance would not be complete without a similar transformation of the traditional notation of piano music. Gradually, by first transforming the sound concept and structure in piano works, such as *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano*, and later, by radically changing the way that piano sounds would be selected and the score notated using parallels from the *I Ching*, as in *Music for Piano I-84*, Cage reached a point of radical transformation of the concept of musical sound and notation, as in *4' 33"*.

Something else that emerges from Tudor's version of *4' 33"* is the notion that the use of a musical instrument need not be limited by the boundaries erected by tradition. Experimental music exploits an instrument not simply as a means of making sounds in the accepted fashion, but as a total configuration – the difference between 'playing the piano' and the 'piano as sound source'.

In the past, piano music viewed the keyboard-hammer-string mechanism from the vantage-point of the keyboard alone. (There have been exceptions, of course – Chopin's view of the art of pedaling as a 'sort of breathing' and Debussy's desire to 'forget that the piano has hammers'.) Experimental composers have extended the functions of the basic mechanism. They have brought about alteration of timbre by inserting objects between the strings (Cage's prepared piano) and by applying various electronic treatments of which the simplest is amplification. The piano becomes more than ever before a keyboard-operated percussion instrument. Cage devised the prepared piano as a one-man percussion band... And forget the hammer mechanism, replace it with any kind of 'manual' operation, and the strings may be activated in any way; they can be hit or scraped or bowed, with the fingers, hands or any other mechanical aids – the piano has become a pure percussion instrument. . . . When you have realised [sic] that the piano does have an outside then a series of extensions of the concept 'piano' become possible. The instrument can be seen as just a large brown, mainly wooden object, on legs with wheels, of a particular

¹⁸⁵ Ibid: 18.

shape, having curious mechanical innards and serving as a musical instrument. The inner mechanism may be completely disregarded (does it then cease to be a piano? – any complex object has a number of uses, most of them only partial) so that the piano can be treated as an object with surfaces to be hit or painted, have things thrown at, left on, hidden in, moved about or fed with hay.¹⁸⁶

In his later major piano work, the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, Cage permitted the performer even more freedom by allowing the pianist to build any structure desired with the musical material given in the score. Further, Cage rethought the dimensions and definitions of the length of a fixed piano composition. A piano piece composed through the indeterminate process could be adjusted to fit any given time or space available in a concert program. Finally, Cage's graphic music notation evolved to include numeric charts, geometric figures, and elaborate descriptive explanations that were often as long, or longer than the music composition itself.

Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano is Cage's largest work where he applied the idea of manipulating the sound of the acoustic piano by inserting extra objects between the strings and amplifying the instrument. Cage had experimented with the prepared piano since 1938. In 1940 he composed the *Bacchanale* for prepared piano.

In 1946, when he moved to New York, Cage returned to the prepared piano idea and began working on the *Sonatas and Interludes*, which he completed in 1948. *Sonatas and Interludes* is not just an attempt to enrich the percussive sonorities of the piano. The idea of using foreign objects to alter the sounds of the acoustic piano is a testimony to Cage's experimental tendencies. His imaginative approach led Cage in his quest for new ways of musical expression. Several distinguished features of this piano composition make it unique in the twentieth-century repertoire.

The terms *sonata* and *interlude* are familiar in the traditional Western Music. So is the rounded binary form Cage borrowed from the Baroque Era for his *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano*. "This short form is appropriate, since each of the sonatas

¹⁸⁶ Ibid: 17-18.

and interludes reveals its musical essence rather quickly and there is little change or development.”¹⁸⁷

There is a philosophical program to this cycle. The contrast between the pieces reflects characteristics of Indian aesthetics.

After reading the works of Amanda K. Coomaraswamy he [Cage] determined in the *Sonatas and Interludes* ‘to attempt the expression in music of the “permanent emotions” of Indian tradition: the heroic, the erotic, the wondrous, the mirthful, sorrow, fear, anger, the odious, and their common tendency toward tranquility.’¹⁸⁸

Influences of exotic music are obvious in the myriad colors and rhythms incorporated in the *Sonatas and Interludes*. “As Cage recognized, his use of fixed-proportion rhythmic structures owed much to examples from the East, and indeed the *Sonatas and Interludes* irresistibly recall, in color as much as in rhythmic style, the gamelan music of Bali...”¹⁸⁹

Specific directions are given in the score for the preparation of the piano and insertion of nuts, bolts, screws, and rubber parts between the strings. These directions are specified in the “table of preparation” preceding the musical score.

...the prepared piano is effectively a one-man percussion ensemble, with defined pitches largely replaced by noises and complex sounds. But in works... for prepared piano and those for percussion, his [Cage’s] concentration on percussive sonorities was not just a matter of taste but also the result of a need to obscure harmonic functions in order to emphasize rhythmic relationships.¹⁹⁰

Enhancing the altered sonorities of the acoustic piano with amplification, Cage brings his prepared piano experiment to the age of technology.

Preparation of the piano, which Cage had introduced in 1940 with his *Bacchanale*... offers the composer the opportunity to work with and transform

¹⁸⁷ Kingman: 491.

¹⁸⁸ Griffiths: 37.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid: 35.

his sound material in a very direct manner, inviting an empirical mode of working more commonly associated with the electronic medium. Indeed, the prepared piano was perhaps consciously developed as a home-made substitute for the synthesizer of the future.¹⁹¹

Sonata No. 5 is written in binary form with repeated sections. Colorful timbres created by the various objects inserted between the strings create percussion ensemble sonorities. Dynamics range from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* with various accentuation levels. The dotted line under the grand staff indicates *una corda* pedal use. Following this direction is important, since the hammer action is intended to the specific prepared strings of the piano. Pedal is only used near the end of the *Sonata* to emphasize the *fortissimo* dynamic of two sustained sounds and a grace note followed by a *pianissimo* dynamic.

Playing the *Sonata* on an unprepared piano creates harmonies that are gross distortions of the intended final product. For example, the notated pitches simply display chromatic scales, whereas the preparation of the piano transforms these chromatic scales into quasi-pentatonic scales. Careful consideration should be given to the appropriate preparation of the piano so that the extra objects create the intended overtones. The *Sonata* is comparable with a Czerny exercise in technical difficulty. When performing this sonata on the keyboard, fingers should imitate the action of mallets. The attack should be precise and immediately followed by the release in order to let the mutated strings vibrate and create ringing percussive sounds.

Although the *Sonata* is performed in various speeds the metronome marking of half note = 92 calls for a moderate speed. The rhythmic dimension takes precedence to the rate of speed. A moderate tempo allows for focus on timbre, articulation, dynamics and sonorities.

Cage's philosophical and aesthetic ideas about piano music influenced not only the development of the twentieth-century art music for the piano in America but impacted the piano music around the world. Few musicians in twentieth century have

¹⁹¹ Ibid: 34-5.

had such a profound effect on redefining what constitutes a piece of piano music, what shape it might take, and how the performer might interact in creating the final shape of the composition.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Heinz Holliger

(b. 1939)

Elis: Drei Nachtstücke für Klavier (Elis: Three Night Pieces for Piano) (1961)
II. *Leicht bewegt* (Moving softly)

The Swiss composer, oboist, conductor, and pianist, Heinz Holliger was born on May 21, 1939, in Langenthal, Berne.¹⁹² In the late fifties he studied composition with Sándor Varess in Berne and in the early sixties with Pierre Boulez at the Basle Academy in Paris, France. He also studied piano with Ivonne Lefébure, and oboe with Pierre Pierlot in Paris. Holliger received an honorary doctorate from Zürich University in 1998.

In winning first prizes in the Geneva and Munich oboe competitions in 1959 and 1961 and the soloist prize of the Schweizerischer Tonkünstlerverein in 1960, Holliger established an international reputation as an oboe player. As an oboist Holliger has become identified with the performance of unfamiliar repertoire by composers such as Luigi Dallapiccola and Sándor Veress. Distinguished composers like Berio, Carter, Krenek, Lutoslawski, Penderecki, Stockhausen, and Veress, have written works for him. In the mid seventies Holliger took an interest in conducting and appeared as guest conductor with the *Basle Chamber Orchestra* of Paul Sacher. Since then, he has become a prominent figure in conducting as well as composition and performance.

As a composer Holliger was the recipient of the *Ernst von Siemens Musikpreis* (1991), the *City of Basle Art Prize* (1989), the *Frankfurt Music Prize* (1988), the *Sonning-Preis* (1987), and the *Schweizerischer Tonkünstlerverein* composition prize (1985). In 1993-

¹⁹² Bibliographical information taken from: Kunkel, Michael (with Jürg Stenzl): "Holliger, Heinz," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music on Line*, ed. L. Macy <http://www.grovemusic.com>, September 10, 2003.

1994 he was the composer-in-residence with the *Orchestre de la Suisse Romande* and in 1998 at the *Lucerne Festival*.¹⁹³

Holliger was influenced in his compositions by the Second Viennese School, especially Berg and Webern. His studies in Berne with Veress (who was a student of Bartók) help explain Holliger's affinity for canonic techniques and formal symmetry. From his studies with Boulez, Holliger developed an affinity for harmonic considerations in contrapuntal textures and, in his earlier music, a preference for the dodecaphonic style of music (*Glühende Rätsel*, 1964 and *Der Magische Tänzer*, 1963). Later in his career Holliger evolved a uniquely individual style characterized by sensitivity to unusual tone color and artistic images derived from literature.

Holliger has introduced new effects in his instrumental music, experimenting with unconventional performing situations. He often integrates the performer's physical functions with the notated music. For example, in *Cardiophonie* (1971) the amplified heartbeats of the oboist, which accelerate as the music intentionally "accumulates physical stress,"¹⁹⁴ interact with the music in an indeterminate manner.

Literature also has played a profound role in Holliger's development as a composer. He has identified himself with poets such as George Trakl, Nelly Sachs, and Alexander Gwerder. In his early works, Holliger used literary works for word settings, but in his piano pieces, *Elis* (1961) which were inspired by George Trakl's poems, the composer *dissolves* the text "in the symbolism of [subcontinent] Indian rhythms."¹⁹⁵

Trakl's *Elis* character is a pure heavenly being with which the poet identifies himself. *Elis* exists between dream and death. Trakl's titles are episodes from *Elis'* life.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Barrett, Richard. "Holliger, Heinz," *Contemporary Composers*, ed. Brian Morton and Pamela Collins. Chicago: St. James Press, 1992: 398.

¹⁹⁵ Kunkel and Stenzl.

¹⁹⁶ Holliger, Heinz. Program notes printed on the score: *Elis:drei Nachtstücke für Klavier 1961* (revidiert 1966) Mainz, Germany: Schott c. 1964.

- I. Announcement of Death
- II. Fear of Death and Redemption
- III. Ascension to Heaven

Elis, Holliger's three nocturnal pieces, have the same subtitles. These pieces are written in the tradition of Berg, Webern, and Boulez. They are atonal with references to twelve-tone technique. The tone rows are not complete, but the chromatic combinations of chords are derived from dodecaphonic compositional techniques. The dynamics and rhythms are pre-determined before composition. The Indian rhythms in these pieces refer to Trakle's words in their symbolic meaning. As explained in the first page of the score the rhythms in which these pieces are based, are as follows:

Candratāla	Moon Rhythms
Candrakalā	1/16 of the Moon Indian Goddess
Vijaya	Victorious
Lāksmīs'ā	Goddess of Beauty and Fortune
Kankāla	Skeleton (Death)
Līlā	Divine Games
Turangalīlā	Game Wars
Pratāpase' ekhara	Summit of Power ¹⁹⁷

The poem printed in the beginning of the second night piece translates to:

*"Blue doves
are drinking at night the icy sweat
that runs from Elis's crystaline forehead"*

In *Elis*, Holliger experiments with new pedal techniques and is successful in reexamining the capabilities of pedals in the modern piano. One of the most fascinating effects in this composition takes place at the conclusion of the second piece entitled *Fear of Death and Redemption*. This effect is seemingly "magic" to an audience unfamiliar with the refined pedal techniques involved. A large-range crescendo and decrescendo takes place, while the pianist holds the hands far from the keyboard and strings. The crescendo is achieved by virtue of using only the pedals, while the previously sustained

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

harmonies of a loud low string glissando and silently suppressed keys are gradually released.

Holliger experiments successfully with the *sostenuto*- and damper-pedal capabilities of the modern piano. The performance of such a “pedal passage” is challenging, for one should find the right moment in the cycle of the vibration of the low strings to start releasing the damper pedal. While the damper pedal is being released, the dampers’ increasing proximity to the vibrating strings, in conjunction with the still-vibrating strings held by the *sostenuto* pedal produce a crescendo, while no hands are used on the keyboard or strings. To demonstrate that this is an “only-pedal” *crescendo*, the pianist may place the hands on the wooden part of piano, below the music stand, while the crescendo is created. It is hard to percept this crescendo in a recording and special consideration should be given in preparation for the performance of this passage. Numerous experiments are needed to determine the loudness of the low string *glissando* and the right moment to press the *sostenuto* pedal and release the damper pedal, as well as the time length between the uses of these pedals. Also it is important that the damper pedal is released gradually. A quick release of the damper pedal will destroy the crescendo effect.

The second movement of *Elis* is only eighteen measures long, but challenging for the finely graduated dynamic markings ranging from *ffff* to *pppp* and intricate rhythmic complexities. Holliger meticulously marks out refined dynamic variations. Almost every note is to be played at a specifically determined dynamic level. There is no meter signature used in this piece but there is a comparable relation among beats. For example Holliger uses 7:5 under a bracket to indicate that seven sixteenth notes should take the same duration of time in performance as the five sixteenth notes in the previous figuration, making reference to an implied quarter-note value equal to each multiple-note group. Holliger’s affinity with numerical invariants with enigmatic symbolism is obvious from the beginning of the piece. Numbers five and seven are established as two important numbers from the beginning of the piece (five and seven irregularly-grouped notes). In Holliger’s symbolism, the number five symbolizes death.

Holliger's abstract symbolism is based on Indian rhythms and can be observed in examples where the two predetermined rhythms of Kankāla (the skeleton) and Candratāla (Moon rhythms) create abstract symbolic artistic images. *Fear of Death and Redemption* (the title of this movement) establishes the emotional spectrum of the music and is embodied in a powerful music with effective crescendos, sudden dynamic and articulation contrasts, sharp and surprising rhythmic changes and unusual, almost unearthly pedal effects.

CHAPTER EIGHT

George Crumb (b. 1929)

Makrokosmos Volume I, (1972)
Twelve Fantasy Pieces after the Zodiac for Amplified Piano
X Spring Fire *Aries*
XI Dream Images (Love-Death Music) *Gemini*

I have always considered music to be a very strange substance, . . . a substance endowed with magical properties. Music is tangible, almost palpable, and yet unreal, illusive. Music is analyzable only on the most mechanistic level; the important elements – the spiritual impulse, the psychological curve, the metaphysical implications – are understandable only in terms of the music itself. I feel intuitively that music must have been the primitive cell from which language, science, and religion originated.¹⁹⁸

- George Crumb -

George Crumb was one of the most acclaimed American composers during the second half of the twentieth century. He sought and evolved a confluence between the traditional and the experimental in his work. Crumb took his first musical training from his father, who was committed to what he understood as traditional Western music. His father's influence was crucial in forming Crumb's aesthetic. This traditional background would blend in some very original ways with a more avant-garde twentieth century musical culture, Crumb's other focus of interest, and would result in a very personal and creative approach toward music composition. Crumb's own eclectic compositional style became a phenomenon of the 1960s and 1970s in American music. He "...embraced a tradition to lead it forward."¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Crumb, George. Quoted by Hansen, Peter S. *An Introduction To Twentieth Century Music*. Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978: 404.

¹⁹⁹ Borroff, Edith. *Three American Composers*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986: 254.

Crumb received his Bachelor of Music degree from the Mason College of Music in 1950 and earned his Master of Music from the University of Illinois, studying with Eugene Weigel. Crumb's generation was the first in American universities to pursue doctoral programs in composition, and he earned his doctoral degree from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where he studied with Ross Lee Finney. In Finney, Crumb found a composer with the same appreciation for the Western music tradition that Crumb had inherited from his father. From 1954 to 1955 he studied in the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin with Boris Blacher.

Even while still a graduate student, Crumb was successful in publishing his music. His earlier works show influences of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Bartók. Crumb's music was well accepted by audiences and became quite popular, rather unusual for a contemporary composer in the United States.

In 1962 Crumb composed *Five pieces for Piano*, considered his first mature work, and in 1963 he composed *Night Music* for soprano, piano, celesta, and two percussionists. Inspired by the poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca he wrote *Four Nocturnes (Night Music II)* for violin and piano (1964); four volumes of vocal music: *Madrigals I and II* (1965), *III and IV* (1969); *Songs, Drones and Refrains of Death* for baritone and instrumental accompaniment including electric guitars (1968), for which he won the Pulitzer Prize). During the three following years, Crumb composed *The Night of Four Moons* for contralto and four players (1969); *Ancient Voices of Children*, for soprano, boy soprano and instrumental accompaniment including electric piano and conventional and non-conventional percussion instruments (1970); *Black Angels* for electric string quartet; and *Lux Aeterna* for soprano and four players (1971). *Makrokosmos I and II* for piano were written in 1972-73 and *Makrokosmos III and IV* were completed in 1979. *Star Child* (1977), another well-known work for soprano, children chorus, and orchestra, was premiered by Pierre Boulez in New York. During the 1970s Crumb's music was performed and enthusiastically received by audiences throughout the world and brought him international acclaim and reputation.

Crumb is also a distinguished university professor and has taught at the University of Colorado and the University of Pennsylvania. He has been honored with numerous prizes, grants, and awards including a Fulbright Scholarship, (1955-6), Rockefeller grant (1964), Guggenheim grant (1967, 1973); Pulitzer Prize (1968) UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers Award, (1971), Ford Foundation Grant (1976), Prince Pierre de Monaco Gold Medal (1989), Cannes Classical Award for Best CD of a Living Composer, Bridge 9069 (1998), and Grammy for Best Contemporary Composition, *Star-Child* (2001).

Crumb's broad stylistic spectrum reflects numerous influences from the beginning of the twentieth-century.

. . .in writing music I never felt like it was a process of protest against prevailing styles. I guess [that is] because the influences on my music tended to be more turn-of-the-century rather than influences from exact contemporaries. Oh, there are some small things maybe, some vocal writing influence of Boulez and Berio. The larger things, I think, tend to, for composers, straddle the century: Bartók, whose early work crossed the century, Debussy, Mahler, and Charles Ives maybe; and those composers interested me because their music contains... it's an anti-purist approach. Their music pulls in all kinds of things that didn't seem to belong in the same piece, you know? And yet they were masters of style, and their style seems elegant and organic and compressed, you know? And entirely convincing despite the plurality of the things that went into their music.²⁰⁰

Crumb "...might be thought of as either avant garde or experimental"²⁰¹ composer. In his works for piano solo, or which include piano, Crumb incorporated many of the technical features prominent in the music of Cowell and Cage such as: clusters on the keyboard; plucking, strumming, and playing glissandi on the open strings; playing percussively on the outside of the instrument; and inserting extra materials between the strings of the piano to create different timbres and pitch levels. In his works for voice and instrumental accompaniment, Crumb applied experimental

²⁰⁰ Crumb, George. Interview by Robert Duckworth, John Harvey, and Julie Powell. <http://www.thing.net/~roddys/trickyol/interview3.html>, November 17, 2003.

²⁰¹ Nicholls, David ed. *The Cambridge History of American Music*. Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998: 517.

approaches to bring out particular emotional affects and unconventional sound combinations.

Crumb also maintained a strong commitment to the common practice tradition, particularly by using *quotation* and other stylistic features from this tradition. "Crumb's music cannot be placed conveniently within any single stylistic or technical category, but represents instead a confluence of various musical interests."²⁰²

Crumb freely used sound discoveries from the experimentalists and avant-garde composers before him, while adding his own discoveries. In *Black Angels* for amplified string quartet (1970) the sound dynamic is required to be "...on the threshold of pain."²⁰³ In *Voices of the Whale* the flute player is required "...to hum while playing the flute, achieving a sound eerily like that of the humpback whale."²⁰⁴ Crumb's music is a result of his experimentation with sound resources. His experimental approach was "...within the homely tradition of the inventor rather than the erudite speculation of the university scientist."²⁰⁵

Crumb's vocal music written between 1965-1969 is based on the poetry of Lorca, which impressed Crumb with its dark, dramatic overtones. The instrumental accompaniment plays a very important role on the realization of the emotional drama of these works.

Crumb's music reveals:

...an extraordinarily subtle and adventuresome tonal imagination, a unique "ear," especially for tiny and delicate shades of timbre. To realize his sonorous visions, Crumb has called on an immense range of new performance techniques: humming into wind-instrument mouthpieces, vocalizing into undamped (and amplified) piano strings, whispering, shouting, microtonal "bending" of pitch (by, for example, turning the tuning-pegs of a double-bass), and so forth. And

²⁰² Antokoletz: *Twentieth Century Music*: 522.

²⁰³ Crumb, George. Quoted by Kingman, Daniel. *American Music: A Panorama*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1979: 512.

²⁰⁴ Ferris, Jean. *America's Musical Landscape*. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1990: 264.

²⁰⁵ Borroff: 256.

from the worlds of traditional and popular music he has borrowed many instruments: banjo, mandolin, toy piano, jew's harp, musical saw, cowbells, electric guitar, and other amplified instruments.²⁰⁶

The use of quotations from Western repertoire, in particular, became one of the most distinguishing features of Crumb's musical style. "The direct quotations from Bach, Schubert or Chopin, heard through Crumb's strange and unworldly soundscape, acquire an amazing aura of distance both cultural and temporal. Surrealist museum exhibits, their mummified beauty seems utterly remote, like a childhood memory of warm, homely security."²⁰⁷ Crumb stated:

My quotations can range from more literal quotations to just evocations of the composer's style. Usually, even when the notes are recognizable as coming from another composer, usually something happens to the music: the timbre is different, it's rescored, the damper pedal of the piano (if it involves piano) is depressed so the music kind of runs together [Crumb laughs] and goes out of focus. Where there are overlays, usually it involves truncated segments that kind of lead nowhere. Psychologically, it's awfully hard to explain why I quote. I just do it instinctively, I guess, to make a reference to some earlier music that maybe has something to do with the music in that context. My own music, it suggests the other music. Sometimes it's nostalgia.²⁰⁸

Crumb's devotion to the traditional compositional techniques of Western European music extends as far back as the Medieval Era, from which he borrows monophonic compositional techniques for works such as *Ancient Voices of Children* (1970). He also employs in an original way the arch form, a musical structure inherited from the mirror form of the Western tradition. "For Crumb the arch form is not a mirror image; the center is sought, from less stable to more stable elements, and the most compelling central section seems to define what preceded it."²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Hitchcock, H. Wiley. *Music In The United States. A Historical Introduction*. Second Edition. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974: 265-266.

²⁰⁷ Steinitz, Richard. Quoted by Griffiths: 202.

²⁰⁸ Crumb, George Interview by Robert Duckworth, John Harvey, and Julie Powell. <http://www.thing.net/~roddys/trickyol/interview3.html>, Nov. 17, 2003.

²⁰⁹ Borroff: 255.

Theatrical elements relating to the thematic idea of a work are also involved in the performance of Crumb's works. Performers have to dress up in particular ways, and be seated in theatrical positions. The lights on stage are adjusted in particular colors, or the stage is lightened in a particular way so that the light plays a role in the dramatic action of the music, as in *Voice of the Whale* (1971) for electric flute, cello, and piano, where players wear masks and the stage is lighted in dark blue.

Crumb's popularity as a composer is attributed to the inspirational themes and the descriptive images of his compositions. His music reflects the dynamics of the cosmic fantasies of the seventies and speaks with the language of the time, but also evokes romantic voices and musical ideals of times gone by. This music communicates easily with audiences through the contrast of fantastic images created between the new and the traditional. At the premiere of the *Ancient Voices of Children* "...Mr. Crumb and the performers were awarded the kind of standing, cheering ovation that modern music audiences rarely are aroused to."²¹⁰ Also at another occasion of the performance of this work in 1973, "...Crumb was besieged by clamoring highschoolers asking for his autograph."²¹¹

Crumb composed Volumes I and II of *Makrokosmos* during the years 1972-1973. This is a cyclic-work of *Fantasy-pieces after the zodiac for amplified piano*. At first the cycle was meant to be in three volumes with nine pieces each, including also an epilogue. The *Epilogue* remained in the second version, in the two volumes titled *Musica Mundana I* and *Musica Mundana II*, but was excluded from the final version. Each volume includes 12 pieces related to astrological signs of the zodiac, and is associated with a person born under each sign, including Crumb (*The Phantom Gondolier*), his relatives, friends, and personalities such as Brahms, Chopin, and Lorca. Each book is divided into three parts, each part including four pieces marked consecutively in Roman

²¹⁰ Daniel, Oliver. "George Crumb," *Broadcasting Music, Inc. Brochure*. New York: Broadcasting Music, Inc. 1975: 1.

²¹¹ Borroff: 256.

numerals from I to XII. Pieces contain programmatic titles. The fourth piece of each part is the “Symbol” piece, the music of which is written in the geometrical shape of the symbolic title, as in *Crucifixus (Symbol), Makrokosmos Volume I, Part I/IV*, where the music is printed on two grand staves shaped like a cross. Similarly in *Spiral Galaxy (Symbol) Makrokosmos Volume I, Part III/XII*, the music is printed on a spiral grand staff.

The “inside and out” piano techniques included in the *Makrokosmos* volumes are numerous. The strings of the piano are depressed on their edges with the fingers of one hand while the keys are played with the other hand. Strings are slapped, struck, plucked, tapped with the fingertips, and are played with thimble-capped fingers and other metal objects. Papers and chains are placed over the strings. Vocal effects are performed by the pianist: whispering, whistling, and shouting of nonverbal sounds and recognized words. These sounds are particularly selected to reflect the theme of each piece.

Crumb’s sketches during the creative evolution of *Makrokosmos* include more than 150 pages, suggesting the extensive research and rigorously controlled rational process involved in the creation of this work. All musical materials as well as the notation and dynamic signs used are chosen to reflect emotional idea of the particular piece. The range of techniques used to elicit a variety of sounds from the piano is so extensive that, as Paul Hume has observed: “With his first large work for solo piano, composer George Crumb has won his right to a place among the instrument’s great innovators...”²¹²

Crumb’s characterization of *Makrokosmos III* as a “kind of cosmic drama”²¹³ could also apply to *Makrokosmos I* and *II*, given their universe-related programmatic associations. The program of each piece is suggested by its title, from the first piece of

²¹² Hume, Paul. Quoted by Daniel, Oliver. “George Crumb,” *Broadcasting Music, Inc. Brochure*. New York: Broadcasting Music, Inc. 1975: 2-3.

²¹³ Crumb, George. Quoted in “Spectacular New Work by American Composer George Crumb Presented in Nonesuch’s Contemporary Series” *Nonesuch Preview*, June 1975.

Makrokosmos I, Primeval Sounds (Genesis I) – Cancer to the last piece of *Makrokosmos II, Agnus Dei (Symbol) – Capricorn*.

Makrokosmos I is dedicated to the American pianist David Burge, and is also attributed to the memory of Béla Bartók. *Makrokosmos II* is dedicated to pianist Robert Miller, and also to the memory of Gustav Mahler. According to Antokoletz and Hansen, the entire work is "...based on certain conscious external associations to Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* and Debussy's *24 Preludes*..."²¹⁴ But, in reaching for sonorous characteristics, different from those of Debussy and Bartók, "...Crumb outstrips them in creating new sounds."²¹⁵ In the program notes printed on the score, Crumb reveals his thoughts regarding Bartók and Debussy associations: "...these are purely external associations, and I suspect that the 'spiritual impulse' of my music is more akin to the darker side of Chopin, and even to the child-like fantasy of early Schumann."²¹⁶

As he conveys in the notes printed on the score, Crumb wanted the programmatic associations of *Makrokosmos* to be enigmatic. The artistic images of *Makrokosmos* stem from a spectrum of ideas ranging from the "magical properties" of music to the "timelessness" of time. Life's mysteries, spiritual impulses, and metaphysical associations are what Crumb is communicating through his music.

He [Crumb] developed... a lifelong fascination for the mysteries of life, the deeper aspects of humanity's relationship with nature, some of which could not, and *should* not, he thought, be explained, only expressed. (Much later, ... as the Apollo 11 spacecraft took astronauts to the moon for the first time, he expressed a certain sorrow that human beings had set foot there; the moon would not be the same anymore, he said, for some of its mystery was gone.)²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Antokoletz: 522.

²¹⁵ Hansen: 404.

²¹⁶ Crumb, George. "Notes" *Makrokosmos Volume I for Amplified Piano*. New York: C. F. Peters Corp., No. 66539a, c1974. Excerpted from the notes written for the Nonesuch recording of *Makrokosmos, Volume I*, David Burge pianist, Nonesuch H-71293.

²¹⁷ Burge, David. *Twentieth Century Piano Music*: 211.

Makrokosmos Vol. I, Part III, No. 10: *Spring-Fire, Aries*, contains the initials of David Burge, to whom the volume is dedicated. The tempo is marked *prestissimo*, and this fiery piece demands brilliant finger technique and great organizational capability on the part of the performer. The two opening white key and black key forearm clusters set a “cosmic” mood. The range of the white-key left-forearm cluster spans the interval of two octaves and a major sixth, and the range of the black-key right-forearm cluster is two octaves and a major third. The precise notation of the forearm clusters might pose a problem for pianists with shorter or longer forearms. It is best to make sure that the “elbow” notes are played as indicated, so that the lowest note of the white-key left-forearm cluster and the top note of the black-key right-forearm cluster are heard clearly.

The amplification and the continuous use of the damper pedal (which is to be suppressed throughout the piece) maximize the volume of sound of the numerous technical effects used in this piece including: forearm clusters; scraping of the low strings inside the piano; the “extremely rapid” grace notes in irregular groups; toccata-like alternations between blocked major second intervals and single notes. The latter grow to toccata-like alternations between black-key and white-key six-note clusters to be played with the side of the hand. If the side of the hand is not long enough to include all the six precisely notated pitches, the pianist may use palm clusters (including the third finger in the length of the hand). In any case, the highest note of the right-hand cluster and the lowest note of the left-hand cluster should always be clearly voiced. All of these “inside and out” piano effects give a glimpse of the *Sounds of Spheres*²¹⁸ as reflected in Crumb’s musical world.

Makrokosmos I, Part III, No. 11 *Dream Images (Love-Death Music) Gemini* is a beautifully inspired piece. It contains poetic and Romantic Era associations. The piece concludes with the initials of Federico Garcia Lorca, who was born under the Gemini sign, thus the assumed poetic associations which are also reflected in the character of

²¹⁸ In comparison with the Ancient Greek “Harmony of Spheres” the “Sounds of Spheres” term (not to say the noise of Spheres) seems appropriate in George Crumb’s musical world (Author).

the piece. The Romantic Era associations are conveyed by the quotes from Chopin's *Fantaisie-Impromptu* in C-sharp minor.

The most challenging issue in the performance of this piece is the organization of the individual elements into a comprehensible whole. The piece resembles a "time machine" that takes one back to a "faintly remembered music." The juxtaposition of "now" and "then" is masterly achieved by several means. The first quote "emerges from a *ppppp* silence" to join the existing line of music which fades into silence in the third measure of the quote. At the *molto-ritardando* conclusion of the quote, the *ppp* B-major harmony in the bass joins the blurred harmonies of the last measure of the quote and the pedal is to be released gradually during a time frame of approximately five seconds. This gradual release of the D-flat major harmony and its satellites results in an unusual sound created by the dampers as they get closer to all the vibrating strings. The dampers' increasing proximity to the strings produces a very audible, if unconventionally created, crescendo effect, which then dissolves into the clear harmony of B major in the bass register. This is a perfect "time-machine" effect, the sound equivalent of the cinematic blurs created for the same effect. Also the Chopin quote from the past, with its crescendo, merges with the decrescendoing line of Crumb's music: the sound equivalent of the cinematic effects of two images combined into one to create the idea of a memory that comes into the present. The pianist should master the simultaneous independent increasing and decreasing dynamics in each hand. Simple five-finger exercises can be used as a starting point, where clearly defined dynamics for each note, in each hand part, will be controlled easily. For Example, in the five-finger passage, C-D-E-F-G-F-E-D-C, the following dynamics can be used in the right-hand part: *p-mp-mf-f-ff-f-mf-mp-p*. Simultaneously, the *ff-f-mf-mp-p-mp-mf-f-ff* graduated dynamic levels can be used with the corresponding pitches in the left-hand part. This passage can be transposed chromatically, and then repeated with inverted dynamic levels between hand parts.

The quarter-note triplets of the right hand should not literally be matched to the eighth-note triplets of the left hand from Chopin at the beginning of the first quote.

Rather, the rhythm should be thought of as two against three quarters in order for the accompaniment part of the Chopin quote to sound fluent and independent of Crumb's music. This will help the "quote" sound as if it is coming out of nowhere. The "past" is placed between a lower and a higher plane (register), both of which symbolize the "present" in this piece. The lower plane is made of open position triads and while major triads are used, the low register and the predominance of the black keys create a deep, warm, dark tone. The contrasting higher plane, with its *portamento* articulation, thin textures, and mostly white-key notes, creates bright and crystal-clear tones. All this sound spectrum "wraps" around the Chopin quotes: the first emerging from silence, the second set to a forte dynamic and decisive character. The past has now "metamorphosed" into the present, and the fragile third quote becomes only a "sonic image" of Chopin's music.

In David Burge's opinion, regardless of the free writing in *Makrokosmos*, Crumb's "...attention to matters of compositional craft – harmonic consistency, sense of inner formal logic, careful use of sonorous contrasts, and sense of cumulative drama – is, if anything, stronger than before."²¹⁹ Both pieces discussed above are unmeasured, except for the Chopin quotes in the second piece. Both compositions are written in an arch form with the beginning of the piece approaching the climax somewhere near three quarters of the length of the piece. The form cannot be analyzed according to harmonic implications, even in the second piece, where major triads are a part of the harmonic texture. Triadic sonorities work as individual entities, not as part of a tonal hierarchy or function. Crumb's ideas about music are more relevant than ever in these pieces: "Music is analyzable only on the most mechanistic level; the important elements – the spiritual impulse, the psychological curve, the metaphysical implications – are understandable only in terms of the music itself."²²⁰

²¹⁹ Burge: 217.

²²⁰ Hansen: 404.

It is important to *feel* this music when performing it, to feel the sense of balance and contrast. The world in its magnitude is perfectly reflected in these pieces: the stillness of Universe, the balance of planets, the contrast and unity of past and present.

I am optimistic about the future of music. I frequently hear our present period described as uncertain, confused, chaotic. The two decades from 1950 to 1970 have been described as “the rise and fall of the musical avant-garde,” the implication being that nothing at all worthwhile was accomplished during those years. I have even heard the extremely pessimistic idea expressed by some composers that “*Comoedia finita est*” – all possible combinations have by now been exhausted and music has finally reached a dead end. My own feeling is that music can never cease evolving; it will continually reinvent the world in its own terms. Perhaps two million years ago the creatures of a planet in some remote galaxy faced a musical crisis similar to that which we earthly composers face today. Is it possible that those creatures have existed for two million years without new music? I doubt it.²²¹

George Crumb

²²¹ Crumb, George. “Music: Does it Have a Future?” George Crumb Home Page: <http://www.georgecrumb.net/future.html>, Nov 17, 2003. (This article, here slightly revised, originally appeared in *The Kenyon Review*, summer, 1980).

CHAPTER NINE

John Corigliano

(b. 1938)

Fantasia on an Ostinato (1985)

Whatever I do, it will be comprehensible... Other composers can say to their listeners, 'You don't understand.' That's an excuse I can't make.²²²

- John Corigliano -

In winning the Pulitzer Prize for his *Symphony No. 2* in 2001, John Corigliano established himself as one of the leading contemporary American composers. He is internationally acclaimed "for his highly expressive and compelling compositions as well as his kaleidoscopic, ever-expanding technique."²²³

A composer who remained committed to tonality even when the modernists viewed it with scorn, Corigliano, ... has developed into American music's most skilled eclectic. In its expressive force, Corigliano's music... speaks the language of neo-Romanticism. But he has remained open to nearly every contemporary style and technique, and has absorbed and personalized elements from them all.²²⁴

John Corigliano was born in New York City on February 16, 1938. He was the child of two exceptional professional musicians. His mother was a pianist and his father was the concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

²²² Holland, Bernard. "Highbrow Music to Hum," *New York Times*. January 31, 1982: 70.

²²³ Schirmer, G. / AMP web page. "John Corigliano," http://www.schirmer.com/composers/corigliano_bio.html, Nov. 19, 2003.

²²⁴ Schwarz, K. Robert. "Outside It's America: Composers Corigliano and Reich trace the forms of the nation's current musical landscape" *Classical Pulse!* Oct/Nov, 1996: 11.

John Corigliano did not have any systematic music training in his childhood.²²⁵ He began to show interest toward music composition during high school years when he heard the Walton *Violin Concerto* performed by his father. The concerto impressed him with its rhythms. Corigliano was also impressed after his first hearing of Copland's music for the film *Billy the Kid*: "...I was so fascinated by what Copland was doing, that I tried to write a little bit like that. I went to Columbia and majored in music as a composer, but it was kind of a dream; I never really thought it would happen."²²⁶

Corigliano studied music with Otto Luening at Columbia University, New York. He also had one or two private lessons in composition with Vittorio Giannini, who was teaching at the Manhattan School of Music. Corigliano says: "He [Giannini] encouraged me. He said, 'You're doing well, just go on, compose' which is what I needed to hear at that time, because I was very insecure."²²⁷

After graduation Corigliano started his career in music broadcasting and the record production industries. For twelve years he was the Assistant Music Director of Leonard Bernstein's televised music-education program, *The Young People's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra*. In 1971 Corigliano accepted a teaching position in composition at the Manhattan School of Music and in 1974 became Distinguished Professor of Music at Lehman College of CUNY. In 1987 Corigliano became the composer-in-residence at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, a position he held until 1990.

During the 1980s Corigliano was considered "...one of America's most sought-after composers..."²²⁸ In 1980 he was an Oscar-nominee for the music score of the film *Altered States*, directed by Ken Russell and in 1981 was commissioned to write for the

²²⁵ Corigliano, John. Interview by Mira Kruja, August 15, 2003: Appendix B.

²²⁶ Corigliano, John. Quoted by Schwarz: 11.

²²⁷ Corigliano, John. Interview by Mira Kruja.

²²⁸ "John Corigliano Commissioned to Write Piece for 1985 Van Cliburn International Piano competition," *Van Cliburn International Quadrennial Piano Competition News*. October 20, 1983: 1.

100th anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In 1983 Corigliano was asked to write an opera for the 100th anniversary of the Metropolitan Opera and in the same year, was commissioned to write a solo piano work for the 1986 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, joining Copland, Barber, and Bernstein who had previously written music for the competition.

In 1991 Corigliano was appointed to the composition faculty of the Julliard School of Music and elected a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. The year 1991 also marked another high point in Corigliano's career with the premiere of his "grand buffa"²²⁹ *The Ghost of Versailles* by the Metropolitan Opera.

Corigliano's many prizes and awards include the *Academy-Institute Music Award* (1989); the *Grawemeyer Award* and the *Stereo Review of the Year Award*, for his *Symphony No. 1* (1991); the *International Classical Music Award* for *The Ghost of Versailles* (1993) the *Oscar* for the sound track of *The Red Violin* (2000), and the *Pulitzer Prize* for his *Symphony No. 2* (2001).

Corigliano presently teaches composition at the Julliard School of Music in New York City. He loves teaching and considers it an important part of his self-development. But he would advise students to be realistic in their dreams about music, which he calls "a glorified hobby..." He says: "The idea that you can make a lot of money composing doesn't hold a candle anymore..."²³⁰

Music critics refer to the "eclectic" style of Corigliano's music:

His scores often contain numerous disparate elements, which can run a gamut from conventional chords, simple, tonal part-writing, and regular metrics to polytonal and tone-cluster structures, twelve-tone rows, violent off-beat accents, and dissonant avant-garde color effects. There might also be a section that sounds like eighteenth-century drawing-room music, or a quotation from Giovanni Gabrieli, or a German chorale-manque.²³¹

²²⁹ Term used by Corigliano in "Composers for the '90s," Interview with Corigliano and others by John Duffy (October 20, 1989). *Central Opera Service Bulletin* Vol. 30/1. Spring 1990: 74.

²³⁰ Corigliano: Schwarz: 12.

²³¹ Ramey, Phillip. "John Corigliano," (Excerpt of Ramey's article) *Performing Arts, California's Theatre & Music Magazine*. February 1982/Vol. 16, No. 2: 6.

Describing his own compositional style Corigliano states: "I'm like a computer that takes in lots of information of incredibly disparate kinds, and all of it mixes up within me and comes out without my necessarily controlling it; it's part of what I'm amassing."²³²

Some of Corigliano's earliest works are the *Kaleidoscope* for two pianos (1959), premiered at the Spoleto Festival; *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1962), which he dedicated to his parents, and which won the First Prize for the Chamber Music Competition in the Spoleto Festival (1964); and the *Piano Concerto* (1968), commissioned for the inaugural concert of the 1968 *HemisFair*. These works "...were often imbued with the lyric spirit that remains a hallmark of his style."²³³

His more mature works include the *Oboe Concerto* (1975), *Clarinet Concerto* (1977), *Flute Concerto* (1981), the *Promenade Overture* (1981), and *Three Hallucinations for Orchestra* (1981).

Corigliano initially collaborated with poet William M. Hoffman for the song cycle *The Cloister* (1965). In 1983 they began work on *The Ghost of Versailles* opera, commissioned for the one-hundredth anniversary of the Metropolitan Opera. From its first creative stages this opera was "...considered a landmark in the recognition of U.S. composers."²³⁴ This opera was completed in 1989 and premiered in 1991. It is Corigliano's major stage work, which remains his favorite work even today after over ten years. At that time it was the first contemporary opera staged by the Metropolitan in the previous 25 years. The success of *Ghost* had an "...international critical acclaim and an unprecedented audience response which generated sold-out performances..."²³⁵

²³² Schwarz: 12.

²³³ Keller, James M. "John Corigliano's *The Ghost of Versailles*: A Spirit of American Opera Revisits the Met," *Musical America*. Vol. CXI/No 6, Nov./Dec. 1991: 20.

²³⁴ "World of Opera Booming to Yankee Beat," *U.S. News & World Report*, April 5, 1982: 79.

²³⁵ Snapp, E. Inc. "Composer John Corigliano Wins New International Classical Music Award for *The Ghosts of Versailles*," *Press release*. New York: E. SNAPP. Inc., January 5, 1993: 1-2.

Corigliano's compositional style was formed through his study and reaction to the music that has surrounded him throughout his life. He studied composition in college at "...the height of the dogmatic 12-tone era, when that was the only music acceptable to write."²³⁶ This style did not particularly attract Corigliano. After graduation, while working in the music broadcasting and record production industries Corigliano had the first contact with "the real world"²³⁷ of music. He was confronted with the contradiction between the language of the "real music" and the "scholastic-music" of composers who "...had gotten so rarefied that they didn't know how to speak a language that anyone else could understand, except other composers."²³⁸ Corigliano observes: "I felt that was very narrow, and I wanted to investigate other worlds."²³⁹

Most of Corigliano's compositions have been commissioned for a special event or for a distinguished performer. This has intrigued him to experiment with different compositional *designs*: "I tend to write music not by formula or pre-set style or techniques, but by designing works for specific concert situations."²⁴⁰

Based on this *strategy*, of taking advantage of the already defined circumstances of commission, Corigliano has arrived at original ideas that triggered compositions of instant and sustained success. The *Concert for Clarinet and Orchestra* (1977), which "...established his reputation,"²⁴¹ was written for the principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic, Stanley Drucker. His commissioned work, *Fantasy-Concert for Flute and Orchestra* (1981), is a programmatic music inspired by a commission for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, to be performed by the flute virtuoso, James Galway at the 1980

²³⁶ Corigliano, John. Schwarz : 11.

²³⁷ Ibid: 12.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Corigliano, John. "Note by the Composer," *Performing Arts, California's Theatre & Music Magazine*. February 1982/Vol. 16, No. 2: 6.

²⁴¹ Holland, Bernard. "Highbrow Music to Hum," *New York Times*. January 31, 1982: 25.

Hollywood Bowl. Galway's predilection for playing encores on a "tin whistle" triggered the idea of the legend of *the Pied Piper of Harmelin*. "Galway as the Piper seemed the most natural thing in the world, for to many, myself [Corigliano] included, he is a kind of Pied Piper."²⁴² The result was a fantastic theatrical-concert music.

A principal characteristic of Corigliano's creative process is the planning of the architecture before writing the music. He builds in his mind the structure of the work before he begins to put notes on paper. "Corigliano's planning takes many shapes – sometimes diagrams and colored charts, often typed-out scenarios."²⁴³

I work very, very hard. Actually, before I write the notes, I spend more time writing the piece abstractly. I plan the whole architecture, I draw symbols of it on a page, I try to sketch it out so that I know what the building is, before I build it. Otherwise you just write little events and they are not part of a greater structure.²⁴⁴

Corigliano developed a successful career as a composer in an atmosphere where the European musical culture predominated. He observes that: "The American musical language is thought of as a second-class art-form; it's kitsch, it's light compared to the serious music that comes from Europe."²⁴⁵

Corigliano blames this prejudice mostly on a culture, which has given more importance to the commercialism than to the development of serious music. He has committed himself to attracting the attention of audiences, by writing a type of serious American music, which is equally intellectual and accessible. "While most serious composers are writing difficult music directed primarily to their peers, John Corigliano dares to write crowd-pleasers."²⁴⁶ This has been Corigliano's creative motto from the start. He writes music for the audiences. "Whatever I do, it will be comprehensible, ...

²⁴² Corigliano, John. *Performing Arts*: 6.

²⁴³ Holland, Bernard. "Highbrow Music to Hum," *New York Times*. January 31, 1982: 65.

²⁴⁴ Corigliano, John. Interview by Mira Kruja.

²⁴⁵ Corigliano, John. Schwarz: 13.

²⁴⁶ Holland, Bernard. "Highbrow Music to Hum," *New York Times*. January 31, 1982: 25.

Other composers can say to their listeners, 'You don't understand.' That's an excuse I can't make."²⁴⁷

The response has been extraordinary. Audiences respond with ovations to the performances of Corigliano's compositions and critics with flattering reviews. The most prestigious prizes and awards in the field are a testimony to his success as a composer.

Corigliano's first piano piece was *Kaleidoscope* for two pianos (1959). The *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1963) was "...in fact virtuoso for both instruments."²⁴⁸ *Gazebo Dances* for piano, four hands, followed in 1973. The *Piano Concerto* (1968) and *Etude Fantasy* (1976) are quite virtuosic ranging in technique from percussive to difficult successive blocked chord and interval passages. He wrote *Phantasmagoria* for cello and piano in 1993 and *Chiaroscuro* for two pianofortes tuned a quarter-tone apart in 1997.

When commissioned by the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition to write a solo piano composition, Corigliano decided to write a work that would be technically appropriate for the young virtuosos, but intellectually challenging enough to give competitors the opportunity to demonstrate their individual creativity. *Fantasia on an Ostinato* was "...to be performed by all competitors who [would] reach the semi-final round of the 1985 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition..."²⁴⁹

Corigliano found his inspiration in Beethoven's theme of the second movement of *Symphony No. 7*. The middle section of the *Fantasia on an Ostinato* is written in a minimalistic style, also incorporating aleatoric elements. Depending on the performer's choice of the number of interlocking repeated patterns in the middle section, this work may vary in length from 7 to 20 minutes, allowing the performer to reconstruct its structure and be an active creator in the finished form of the composition. He envisioned a composition that would not allow room for influences from teachers or

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Corigliano, John. Interview by Mira Kruja.

²⁴⁹ Van Cliburn International Quadrennial Piano Competition News. Fortworth, Texas, October 20, 1983: 1.

recordings of famous pianists. Competitors would have to deal more with the undefined structure of the *Fantasia* than with the technique of performing it. They would have to think on their own what the piece would be, by making individual choices about its structure. "This composition [*Fantasia on an Ostinato*] gives the judges an opportunity to see the intelligence of the musician, because those decisions have to be made by that pianist. Their teacher will not be able to tell them anything."²⁵⁰

...I constructed the beginning and end of *Fantasia on an Ostinato* precisely: The work was a giant arch built upon these foundations, but its large central section was a series of interlocking repeated patterns. The performers would decide the number and, to a certain extent, the character of these repetitions. In other words, the shape was theirs to build...²⁵¹

Fantasia on an Ostinato was conceived in a "free-variation" style inspired by the theme of Beethoven's second movement of *Symphony No. 7*. In the *Fantasia on an Ostinato* Corigliano was inspired by the "minimalist" characteristics of this particular movement by Beethoven. "The second movement of the *Seventh Symphony* is one of very few, if not the only piece of Beethoven, where the same thing is repeated over and over again for nearly five minutes... I had always wanted to write a comment on minimalism and this Beethoven movement was an ancestor in this form."²⁵²

In the *Fantasia*, Corigliano uses the twentieth-century techniques of *minimalism* and *quotation*. The rhythmic pattern of the first measure of the motive borrowed from Beethoven plays a crucial role in the development of the entire work. It will be present as the *ostinato* accompaniment in the first and the third sections of the piece, as well as in its transfigured form as a diminished rhythmic pattern, during the middle section. The entire work is a ternary form with the A section built with materials from the first phrase of Beethoven's theme, the B section build with materials from the second phrase


²⁵⁰ Corigliano, John. Interview by Mira Kruja.

²⁵¹ Corigliano, John. *John Corigliano's Phantasmagoria*. (CD liner notes). Produced by Steven Epstein. © 2000 Sony Music Entertainment, Inc.

²⁵² Corigliano, John. Interview by Mira Kruja.

of Beethoven's theme, and the A1 section containing both sections of Beethoven's theme.

The *Fantasia* starts without a defined meter, with an A-major chord suspended in the upper register, in a *ff* dynamic. Next, Corigliano juxtaposes an a-minor chord in the left hand as a far-away echo in a *pp* dynamic, which is being held as a pedal while the right hand starts playing the rhythmic motive on a single G#-note in the middle register. The composer asks that this note be repeated at the discretion of the pianist in several bars of this introduction section. Then the 4/4 meter is introduced. At m. 6 the A minor left-hand harmony changes to E major in first inversion. The right-hand part gains some speed through a short *poco accelerando* and *crescendo*. The harmonies develop into alternating chords of augmented E major and E major/minor with diminished fifth on the higher octave. The music comes to a climax of a *ff* dynamic. Soon after the texture decreases in dynamic and pitch numbers, the repeated single Bb note in the upper octave returns to a *pp* dynamic. Here the introduction ends, having briefly exposed the essential musical materials.

During the first section Corigliano uses musical material from the first phrase of Beethoven's theme. At this point the music is not quite a quotation, but builds upon the musical materials, particularly the basic *ostinato* rhythmic pattern: . The music also evokes the major-minor harmonic dichotomy found in the Beethoven original. The music builds gradually in dynamic, rhythmic, and harmonic intensity, stretching gradually from the middle register to higher and lower extremes.

In contrast, the middle section applies minimalist techniques. According to Simms, "Minimalism originated in the mid-1960's as a reaction against the complexities of the avant-garde. This reaction led to a conscious reduction of musical materials in order to create simple, accessible forms."²⁵³ Corigliano expresses his opinion on *minimalism*:

²⁵³ Simms, Beverley Singleton, *The Solo Piano Works of John Corigliano: "Etude Fantasy" (1976) and "Fantasia on an Ostinato" (1985)*. D.M.A. Dissertation. University of North Texas, 1990: 72.

I approached this task with mixed feelings about the contemporary phenomenon known as minimalism, for while I admire its occasional ability to achieve a hypnotic quality (not unlike some late Beethoven), I do not care for its excessive repetition, its lack of architecture, and its overall emotional sterility.

In Fantasia on an Ostinato I attempted to combine the attractive aspects of minimalism with convincing structure and emotional expression.²⁵⁴

Corigliano's structural concept of the middle section is ingenious. Depending on the way the pianist will treat this section, it will hold the whole work in balance or it will destroy the balance. "Considering the size of the outer sections, it's only so much repetition you could put into the middle section, and if you put too much, the architecture becomes weak..."²⁵⁵ This section is very interesting for its interplay between right and left hand parts. It requires imagination on the performer's part to maintain the balance. The pianist is given the task of composing the architecture of the work. Minimalist technique is the basis of the repetition of short motives, some times only two notes. Slight variations in the intervallic structure of the motives, dynamic levels, and tempo create phrases and climaxes within the section. It is an expressive minimalism. Corigliano uses minimalist technique in a new way, emphasizing its hypnotic quality and enhancing its architecture and expression.

²⁵⁴ Corigliano, John. Quoted by Simms: 84.

²⁵⁵ Corigliano, John. Interview by Mira Kruja.

CHAPTER TEN

Alexina Louie (b. 1949)

Scenes From a Jade Terrace (1988)
II Memories in an Ancient Garden

I write music because I have a commitment to making Art.²⁵⁶

I'm a thoughtful individual, concerned about the times we're living in. It's my responsibility as an artist to bring that to life, to bring the emotions to life.²⁵⁷

- Alexina Louie -

With a worldwide reputation, Alexina Louie is among the most frequently performed Canadian contemporary composers. "Through her expertise, her art, her culture, and her philosophy, Louie has helped put a new face on Canadian contemporary music."²⁵⁸

Alexina Louie was born to "second-generation Chinese-Canadians."²⁵⁹ in Vancouver, British Columbia, on July 30, 1949. Although she came from a non-musical family, Louie was encouraged by her parents to start musical studies at an early age. She was first introduced to music through piano lessons with two local teachers, but music did not become a means of self expression for Louie until about age twelve when

²⁵⁶ Louie, Alexina. Interview by Kruja, Mira. July 17, 2003: Appendix C.

²⁵⁷ Louie, Alexina. Quoted by Anderson, Mike. "Listening to the Ringing Earth," *Ottawa Fulcrum*, Canada, June 1986.

²⁵⁸ Bégay, Diane. *Contemporary Music in Canada: Alexina Louie*. Master's Thesis. University of Ottawa, May 1994. Abstract: iv.

²⁵⁹ Canadian Broadcasting Company. *Alexina Louie*. <http://infoculture.cbc.ca/programs/2newhours/louie.htm>, 2 September 2003.

she started taking piano lessons with Jean Lyons.²⁶⁰ She went through rigorous traditional western music piano studies and completed the examinations of the Royal Conservatory, Canada, where she received her AA Diploma in 1967. In 1970 Louie received her Bachelor of Music degree from the University of British Columbia, where she majored in music history. At UBC Louie studied music theory and composition with Cortland Hultberg, who encouraged her to pursue musical composition studies.²⁶¹

In 1970 Louie went to the University of California, San Diego, where she studied composition with Robert Erickson and Pauline Oliveros, at a time when the musical directions of this school were headed almost entirely toward avant-garde and experimental styles.²⁶² During this time Louie continued her piano studies and made a living as a cocktail pianist for six years.²⁶³ Because a problem developed on her right wrist from intense piano practicing (1972),²⁶⁴ she had to give up the idea of a piano-performing career, and "...turned to composition seriously, as the way of self expression."²⁶⁵

At the University of California, San Diego, Louie's traditional music education was faced with an entirely different reality - experimenting with twentieth century techniques and sonorities. Being a student of Oliveros was a challenging experience for Louie.²⁶⁶ She had to deal with the complex "...scientific and analytical... mystical and

²⁶⁰ Louie, Alexina. Interview by Kruja. "...it was when I started taking lessons with her, that I realized what music could be... She taught me how to play everything expressively, from technique to pieces."

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

introspective...²⁶⁷ character of her professor, "...a controversial figure in the contemporary music scene, a strong personality with unusual ideas about music and the role of music in society."²⁶⁸ Louie observes: "It was scary. I had to learn a whole different kind of lesson. She questioned everything I did – nothing was accepted. She taught me how to listen in a different way, forced me to justify *everything* I had written on the page..."²⁶⁹

Louie would later find useful what she had learned from this experience with Oliveros: "We were her guinea pigs, but it changed the way I listened to and perceived sound."²⁷⁰ Changing perceptions would become Louie's stylistic focus when, through her individual rational approach, she would bring to her own music a rich and diverse complexity of ideas and emotions.

Louie received her Master's degree in composition from UCSD in 1974. For nearly a decade she taught different music subjects (including electronic music) at several colleges in California. In the late 1970s she returned to composition with works that reflect the influence of Asian culture. "My parents were born in Canada; I was born in Canada; and yet, at the same time, I have a very strong oriental heritage."²⁷¹ "From 1973 to '78 I read a lot, all the things that inspire me now – oriental literature and philosophy, I studied the Chinese zither, the *ch'in*, and tried to fashion my own voice with a very specific oriental flavour."²⁷²

²⁶⁷ "Two Elegant Pages from Louie's Original Score of *O Magnum Misterium: In Memoriam Glenn Gould*," *Toronto Symphony Magazine*. February 1987: 5.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Louie, Alexina. Quoted by Jordan, Robert, "Composed of Two Heritages: Classical Training and Asians Roots Meet in Alexina Louie," *The Georgia Straight*. July 22-29, 1994: 32.

²⁷⁰ Louie, Alexina. Quoted by Colgrass, Ulla. "It was the best of years for Alexina Louie: Opera, film, ballet and the 25,000 Jules Léger Prize too! This composer's on a roll," *Globe and Mail*. Toronto, December 23, 1999: R5.

²⁷¹ Louie, Alexina. Quoted by Kimura Parker, Jon. *The Solo Piano Music of Alexina Louie: A blend of East and West*. DMA Dissertation. The Julliard School, March 1989: 6.

²⁷² Louie, Alexina. Quoted by Colgrass: R5.

Upon her return to Canada in 1980, Louie was entirely devoted to composing music. A decade of prolific creativity and artistic recognition would follow. She became “new music’s rising star”²⁷³ of Canada. With the ballet *One Hundred Words for Snow* (1982) and then with *O Magnum Misterium: In Memoriam Glenn Gould*, (1984) her reputation spread throughout Canada. She gained international recognition through performances of her music by prominent orchestras and soloists throughout the world.

Louie reached her artistic success and worldwide acclaim by surviving the “crocodile- and shark-infested waters”²⁷⁴ of the arts environment, where being a woman was not an easy task. “I did realize that the world of composition is a boys’ club. It is definitely a boys’ club!”²⁷⁵

Louie has also had an intense pedagogical career, starting with her piano teaching since the age of 14. During her teaching experience in the colleges of California, and in Toronto, Canada, she sought ways to make music an exciting experience for students of all levels of interest and experience. “I feel it is extremely important to touch the emotions of students. The connection between music and emotion ignites their imaginations and is a common bond. My classes are always about talking and opening up because music is what we are.”²⁷⁶

In 1984 Louie was one of three distinguished Canadian composers and performers to be involved with the pedagogical project “*Creating Music in the Classroom*” directed by the Canadian Music Center. Their goal was to consolidate a music education program for the Ontario district education system.

²⁷³ Quoted from *Macleans* by Anderson.

²⁷⁴ Louie, Alexina. Quoted by Colgrass: R5.

²⁷⁵ Louie, Alexina. Interview by Kruja.

²⁷⁶ Louie, Alexina. Taken from Louie’s biographical file. Canadian Music Centre, Toronto, Canada.

Louie and her music are recognized and honored by many awards and prizes, such as: Composer of the year of Canada for *The Ringing Earth* (1986); Juno Award²⁷⁷ (for Best Classical Composition) for *The Eternal Earth* (1986) nomination for the Juno Award for *Cadenzas* (1988); Juno Award for *Songs of Paradise* (1989); SOCAN Award for being the most frequently performed Canadian composer (1990 and 1992); Chalmers Award for Best Canadian Composition for the *Obsession* (1994); Chalmers Award for *Their Own Words* (1995); nominated for Juno Award for *Winter Music* (1998); Genie Award for Best Original Score in film music, as co-author with Alex Pauk (1998); Jules Léger Prize for the *Nightfall* (1999).

Louie received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Calgary for ...being one of the foremost composers of her generation, and for her unique explorations of her Chinese heritage through traditional Western classical music... Alexina Louie has won the hearts of the music world in Canada and abroad. Blending her Chinese heritage with her training in Western classical music, Louie has cultivated a uniquely personal and expressive style. From delicate sonorities to pounding primeval rhythms, her music explores a broad spectrum of emotions and ideas with a musical language that is deeply authentic. Imbued with profound compassion and insight into the human condition, Louie's music leaves its imprint on all who listen.²⁷⁸

Louie's music blends Eastern and Western cultures. Her "...style is noted for its romantic inclinations and Oriental influences."²⁷⁹ During her studies in California, Louie experimented with twentieth-century musical approaches and later developed her individual style. During her years in California, Louie studied various Asian musical traditions and developed strong interest in them. The friendship with her

²⁷⁷ *Juno Award* is an annual ceremony honoring outstanding achievements in Canadian recorded music since 1970. The title was established in honor of Pierre Juneau, the former head of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission and for "Juno" the Chief Goddess of the Roman Pantheon.

²⁷⁸ "Music Maker, Peace Maker Earn Honorary Degrees," *Gazette*. University of Calgary, Canada. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/events/unicomm/Gazette/Archives/Nov3-97/honorary.html> November 3, 1997, Vol. 27, No. 17, 11 December 2004.

²⁷⁹ Reid, John. "U of C Presents Special Concert: Music of Canadian Composer-Of-The-Year, Alexina Louie," *Public Affairs*. The University of Calgary, Canada. October 29, 1986.

colleague Peter Salemi played a significant role in her Oriental experiences. "...it was he that introduced me to *Gagaku* music, and he who introduced me to *Gamelan* music, and he who introduced me to Chinese ensemble music."²⁸⁰

Louie was also profoundly influenced by *Gagaku* Japanese music. "It opened my ears, introduced me to oriental music, and in doing so, helped me find my own voice."²⁸¹

Louie creatively blended her Asian and Western traditions with the twentieth-century music styles and techniques. "She seeks to find a way of expressing the contemporary experience in terms unique and relevant to today, without rejecting all of the musical conventions of the past."²⁸²

From the start of her composing career, Louie strove for originality in style and ideas, with particular attention to experimenting with timbre, sonority, and extended instrumental and orchestral techniques. She was fascinated "...with the exoticism arising from the combination of oriental musical influences and avant-garde techniques,"²⁸³ which turned out to be the most distinguished element of her musical style. Her works reflect a sensitivity to romantic and impressionistic styles and the dramatic intensity of her own emotional viewpoint. Titles like *Afterimages* (1981), *One Hundred Words for Snow* (1982), *O Magnum Misterium: in Memoriam Glenn Gould* (1984), *The Ringing Earth* (1986), *The Eternal Earth* (1986), *Star-filled Night* (1987), *Music from Night's Edge* (1988), *Songs of Paradise* (1989), *Scenes From a Jade Terrace* (1988), *Bringing the Tiger Down from the Mountain II* (1991), *I Leap Through the Sky with Stars* (1994), *Obsessions* (1994), *Thunder Gate* (1995), *Starstruck* (1996), and *Nightfall* (1999) are spectacular visual

²⁸⁰ Louie, Alexina. Interview by Kruja.

²⁸¹ Louie, Alexina. Quoted by Chu, Esther Yu-Hui. *On The Musical Silk Route: Piano Music of Alexina Louie*. DM Dissertation. University of Alberta. 1997: 3. (Originally quoted by Littler, William. "Music a tribute to Glenn Gould," *Toronto Star*, 7 October, 1984).

²⁸² "Two Elegant Pages from Louie's Original Score of *O Magnum Misterium: In Memoriam Glenn Gould*," *Toronto Symphony Magazine*. February 1987: 5.

²⁸³ Louie, Alexina. *Pearls*. Programme Notes. From the Canadian Music Centre biographical file.

poetic images. Her enchanting musical *fantasies*, full of Asian mythical, philosophical, and spiritual motives about the unification of material and spiritual worlds, travel from the stars to the simplest human feelings and emotions. Louie's compositional ideas come from the spectrum of visual and emotional impressions: "The stimulus for Star-filled Night (1987) was the sight of a myriad of tiny pinpoints of brilliant stars against the dark, vast sky."²⁸⁴

Sometimes I dream about a sound, and that might take me into a whole realm of sound and colour and music. Sometimes it is a visual image... For instance, in *O Magnum Misterium*, the opening is a falling sound, from the top register of the violin to the lowest registers of the cellos and basses. And that, to me, represented a sigh going through the universe. So I wanted to capture this feeling, this falling, and the sighing, and the sadness.²⁸⁵

Trained as pianist herself, Louie has written several piano works, including: *Afterimages* for two pianos (1981), *Music for Piano* (1982), *Star Light Star Bright* (1995), *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1984), *Scenes From a Jade Terrace* (1988), *Changes* (1997), *Put On Your Running Shoes* (2003), and *Dans Le Jardin de Luxembourg* (to be published). Piano is also incorporated in many of her chamber ensemble and orchestral works.

The influence of Debussy and Ravel is present in Louie's piano works. Their stylistic conventions are combined with Asian musical influences and with applications of twentieth-century avant-garde piano and compositional techniques, such as prepared-piano, open-string piano, pre-taped music, pitch-bend technique and minimalism. Louie's music blends the musical cultures of East and West and realizes the quintessential element of Chinese philosophy, the *yin-yang* concept. Her music strives for the synthesized coexistence-in-comparison of ratio relations of extreme material and spiritual phenomena like: small-big, close-far, black-white, bad-good, earth-sky, weak-strong, feminine-masculine, slow-fast.

²⁸⁴ Louie, Alexina. *Star-filled Night*, Program notes. Canadian Music Centre, original copy, 1987.

²⁸⁵ Anderson, Mike. "Listening to the Ringing Earth," *Ottawa Fulcrum*, Canada, June 1986.

In her piano music Louie uses a combination of tonal, modal, pentatonic, and octatonic scales. She often uses *octatonic* and *pentatonic* scales, individually or together, (this combination is named “semi-chromatic” by Parker).²⁸⁶ Her music also combines tonal and modal scales, and sometimes is based upon “invented” scales, created by adding or omitting certain tones in a tonal or modal scale. These scales are used as the bases of Louie’s compositions and become an individual stylistic element of her music.

Louie also uses chord progressions with a tonal center deriving from these scales, incorporating fourths, fifths, and on occasion, the tritone interval (*Scenes From A Jade Terrace*). Her harmonies consist of combinations of dissonant-consonant chords, and the free addition of non-chord tones, as she calls them: “color notes,”²⁸⁷ which are similar to Prokofiev’s “wrong-notes.”

The peculiar use of the dynamic markings is another characteristic of Louie’s piano music. “A successful performance of Louie’s music requires the control to produce a whispery *pianissimo* and the power to attain a correspondingly violent *fortissimo*.”²⁸⁸

When in California, Louie learned to play the aristocratic Chinese string instrument *ch’in*. Attracted to this Chinese instrument’s timbres and especially the high register pitches, Louie frequently uses the higher register of the piano to suggest *ch’in* timbres. She often combines these timbres and registers with virtuosi Asian-flavored passages and with percussive modal harmonies. Louie often “avoids” the middle register of the piano by juxtaposing the lowest register with the highest one. In her first piano work, *Dragon Bells* (1978), Louie combines Asian influences with the twentieth-century technique of prepared piano. In this composition she has “recreated” Chinese bell sounds by inserting wood, plastic, corks, and metal objects between the piano strings.

²⁸⁶ Parker: 20.

²⁸⁷ Louie, Alexina. Quoted by Parker: 38.

²⁸⁸ Ibid: 26.

Louie enhances piano sonorities in her music by effectively using the pedals. She uses pedaling in search of creating unusual sonorities. Detailed directions on the use of pedals are given in aid to creating the sonorities sought.

Louie uses the arch form as the general architectural principle in her works.²⁸⁹ Tempo and character are contrasted between fast and slow movements and also reflect the *yin-yang* concept. Changes of meter, involving regular and combined metric values such as 3/4 - 5/4, 2/4 - 11/16, 2/4 - 3/4 - 5/8, etc., play a significant role in Louie's compositional style.

Her music notation is particularly interesting to observe and is far from traditional. The piano writing is often expanded to three or four staves to fit the range of certain passages. In *Afterimage*, (m - 57) the writing of an intense-dynamic tremolo passage appears in a graphic drawing of tilted and horizontal lines, marked tremolo and accompanied by crescendo-decrescendo and *ff-pp* marks. This passage omits bar-lines and time signatures for the entire section. Abundant written performance and dynamic explanations accompany her piano scores. At times she also uses her own music-notation symbols to facilitate the understanding of her music: "...the oversized natural sign and the oversized flat sign indicate that all notes in the right hand are natural, while all notes in the left hand are flat."²⁹⁰

Louie composes continuously for long hours working for several commissioned projects simultaneously. "To meet the demand, Louie must compose every day - often for as long as 14 hours... Louie is not only one of Canada's most popular composers, but one of the few to earn a living solely from composition."²⁹¹

Louie composed *Scenes From a Jade Terrace* (1988) as result of several persistent requests from the renowned pianist Jon Kimura Parker. The commission was

²⁸⁹ Louie, Alexina. Interview by Kruja.

²⁹⁰ Louie, Alexina. *Music for Piano*. Performance Notes. Toronto, Canada: Gordon V. Thompson Music, 1993.

²⁹¹ Snider, Roxanne. "New music's rising star" Louie's biographical file, Canadian Music Centre, Toronto.

supported by a grant from the Ontario Arts Council and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Parker premiered *Scenes From a Jade Terrace* on March 28 in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Louie, with her sophisticated pianistic expertise, combined in this work many of the compositional innovations she had devised during many years of research and practice in developing her musical language.

Compositional techniques, including the use of semi-chromatic scales, bitonality, exotic timbers, minimalist rhythmic patterns, and right and left hand mirroring are woven together into this work. Through a unique manipulation of the timbral possibilities of the piano and a carefully hewn structure, Louie has succeeded in creating an original and significant piano composition.²⁹²

Scenes From a Jade Terrace is composed in three movements set in a traditional fast-slow-fast arrangement. The movements are entitled: I - Warrier, II - *Memories in an Ancient Garden*, and III - *Southern Sky*, with the first two being "reminiscences of an imaginary lone figure seated on a terrace in ancient China. This terrace overlooks a fragrant garden set against the backdrop of a valley."²⁹³ The second movement, *Memories in an Ancient Garden* is a "mood" piece of an intensely expressive character. As described by William Litter this movement is "an Eastern-flavored page of 1980s impressionism..."²⁹⁴ In order to convey the sense of mystery and otherworldly contemplation the composer instructs the pianist to play "as if intoxicated by the scent of a thousand blossoms." The mysterious character of the movement is enhanced by the playing inside the piano and an ostinato in the second section of the movement. Special *sulle corde* effects, such as striking the strings inside the piano with open palms, are called for in order to suggest the sounds of gongs and wind chimes. This haunting movement portrays "ancient ghosts" raised from the seated figure. The Ying-Yang

²⁹² Parker: 58.

²⁹³ Louie, Alexina. *Scenes From a Jade Terrace*. Program Notes. Gordon V. Thompson Music, Toronto, Canada, 1996.

²⁹⁴ Littler, William. "Pianist Parker's program stimulating," *The Toronto Star*, November 13, 1996.

mode is exemplified by the choice of extreme dynamics and registers. Louie imitates the timbres of extreme instrument sections of an orchestra by using the extreme low and high registers of the piano.

The movement is composed in an improvisatory arch with two defined sections. The first one explores the timbre possibilities of the instrument by means of the keyboard register, scalar and harmonic properties, and “inside the piano” techniques. The opening black-key and white-key clusters in the lowest possible register of the piano set the mysterious mood of the movement. The following chords derive from the so-called semi-chromatic scale, which, according to Jon Kimura Parker is a combination of the octatonic and pentatonic scales. These chords contain intervals of major and minor seconds (characteristic of the octatonic scale), as well as thirds (characteristic of the pentatonic scale). The way the chords are set may also suggest temporary bitonality. For example in m. 7, beat one, the left hand plays a B major chord in root position, while the right hand plays a D minor chord in second inversion with the addition of the non-chord tone of G-flat, which is at the same time the enharmonic of the F-sharp in the left-hand B major chord. If put together, these notes create a semi-chromatic scale: B-D-D#-F-F#(Gb)-A (which, with the addition of C and G#, would be an octatonic scale). This chord passage is followed by a shimmering contrary-motion scale passage set in a free *senza misura* on m. 27. Exercises No. 8 and No. 9 in Appendix A will facilitate the mastery of octatonic-scale passages in Louie’s *Memories in an Ancient Garden* and in other twentieth-century repertoire.

At the conclusion of the movement, the pianist reaches inside the piano to dampen the strings creating varied overtones as different resonating points of the strings are touched.

CONCLUSION

There has been a tremendous evolution in the perception and use of the modern acoustic piano during the twentieth century. The piano is no longer used only in the traditional sense of playing with fingers on the keyboard. The keyboard is played with fists, palms, forearms, and other objects to create powerful and dissonant cluster sounds. The strings of the piano are whistled, sung, and screamed at by pianists. “Inside the piano” techniques such as glissandi lengthwise and over the strings, strumming, plucking, and modification with foreign objects have extended the sonorous and expressive capabilities of the instrument.

The brilliant keyboard technique of Ravel and Debussy redefined the status of pianism at the beginning of the century and foreshadowed the ways in which piano technique would develop in the following years. Prokofiev and Bartók introduced the deliberate use of percussive keyboard technique. Cowell influenced the concept of the piano sound with his innovative “inside the piano” techniques. Cage inserted foreign objects between the strings of the piano to create percussion-like sonorities and Holliger created dynamic effects using only the pedals. Crumb amplified the piano, used forearm clusters and “inside the piano” techniques, and Corigliano found ways to stimulate the imagination and make the performer an active creator of the final shape of the composition. Finally, Louie used the interior components of the piano to produce varied harmonics, as ascending and descending overtone points of the strings are gradually touched.

Twentieth-century innovations have had the most profound effect on redefining what constitutes a piece of piano music, what shape it might take, and how the performer might interact in creating the final shape of the composition. It is almost a truism to observe that much of the piano music of the twentieth century eschews convention and invents its own vocabulary & syntax. The expansion of the technical, sonorous, and expressive spectrum in twentieth-century art music repertoire has literally turned the concept of the modern acoustic piano “inside out.”

APPENDIX A

Twentieth-Century Technique and Finger Exercises

► Sound

Exercise No. 1

Back to text ◀

The musical score for Exercise No. 1 is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The first system includes fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4 in the right hand and 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4 in the left hand. The second system is marked with a '2' at the beginning. The third system is marked with a '3' at the beginning. The music features repeated chords and single notes in both hands, with chromatic transposition indicated at the end.

continue transposing chromatically

Mastering this Exercise will facilitate the performance of the difficult opening passage in the right-hand part in *Ondine* from *Gaspard de la Nuit* by Maurice Ravel. This Exercise reflects the increased use of repeated note/chord passages within one hand in the twentieth-century piano literature. It will help develop accuracy and evenness in the right hand, as well as the ability to voice chords, balance them with the alternating single notes, and to create a background-like sonority and atmosphere. ²⁹⁵

²⁹⁵ The right-hand part of Exercise No. 1 is adapted from the opening of *Ondine* from *Gaspard de la Nuit* by Maurice Ravel.

The image shows a musical score for Exercise No. 2, consisting of four systems of piano and right-hand parts. The piano part is in 3/4 time and features a sequence of triplets in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The right-hand part is in 3/4 time and features a sequence of triplets. The score includes fingerings and dynamic markings such as *8va* and *8va*.

System 1: Piano part (measures 1-2) has fingerings 4 3 2 1 5 1 in the right hand and 1 2 4 5 in the left hand. Right-hand part (measures 1-2) has fingerings 3 3 3 3 3 3. *8va* marking is present.

System 2: Piano part (measures 3-4) has fingerings 3 3 3 3 3 3 in the right hand. Right-hand part (measures 3-4) has fingerings 3 3 3 3 3 3. *8va* marking is present.

System 3: Piano part (measures 5-6) has fingerings 3 3 3 3 3 3 in the right hand. Right-hand part (measures 5-6) has fingerings 3 3 3 3 3 3. *8va* marking is present.

System 4: Piano part (measures 7-8) has fingerings 3 3 3 3 in the right hand. Right-hand part (measures 7-8) has fingerings 3 3 3 3.

continue with the second recurrence of the whole-tone scale

This Exercise is created in Debussy style using the two whole-tone-scale recurrences as the basis of the horizontal progression and harmonies.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁶ The right-hand and left hand-piano figurations of the first measure, beat one of Exercise No. 2 are adapted from *Pour Les Notes Répétées*, by Claude Debussy. These piano figurations are used in whole-tone-scale horizontal progression to reflect Debussy's use of whole-tone scales, and to help performers acquire technical skills related to such scales and progressions.

► Sound

Exercise No. 3

Back to text ◀

Percussively

4 ms sopra

continue transposing chromatically

This Exercise will help master toccata-like passages involving alternating use of the hands. Double triads in all inversions in the right-hand part are followed by left-hand single notes, which repeat the lowest note of the preceding right-hand triad inversion. The note accuracy and the evenness of tone and rhythm are demanding while changing triad inversions. This Exercise will enable the pianist to acquire some of the technical skills needed to perform Prokofiev's *Third Sonata*, and in general help with percussive, repeated-note, and toccata-like alternating passages in other twentieth-century piano literature.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁷ The motive in measure 1 of Exercise No. 3 is adapted from the beginning passage of the *Third Piano Sonata* by Sergei Prokofiev.

It is time to add to our daily-technique routine twentieth-century scales such as whole-tone scales and octatonic scales. Following are the two recurrences of the whole-tone scale with the finger numbers suggested by this author:

► Sound **Exercise No. 4** Back to text ◀

Whole-Tone Scale in C

► Sound **Exercise No. 5** Back to text ◀

Whole-Tone Scale in D flat

This scale can be played in thirds, sixths, and tenths, similar to the diatonic scales in thirds, sixths, and tenths. Following is the whole-tone scale in C, played in thirds, with the same fingers as in Exercise No. 4 for the respective notes in each hand:

► Sound **Exercise No. 6** Back to text ◀

Whole-Tone Scale in Thirds

Also, it would be appropriate to add other combinations such as, tritones, augmented fifths, and augmented sixths. While the tritone would sound harsh within the context of the tonal system (if used in diatonic scales), it sounds quite natural in the context of the whole-tone scale, because the tritone is one of the properties of this scale.

► Sound

Exercise No. 7

Back to text ◀

Whole-Tone Scale in Tritones

The next two exercises represent two of three recurrences of the octatonic scale, which starts with the *half step*, with the third recurrence (not shown here) being in D. There are also three other recurrences of the octatonic scale (not shown here) with the same initial pitches: C, D-flat, D, which start with the *whole step* rather than the *half step*.

► Sound

Exercise No. 8

Back to text ◀

Octatonic Scale in C

► Sound

Exercise No. 9 Octatonic Scale in D-flat

Back to text ◀

3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 3 3
8va-
3 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 3

► Sound

Exercise No. 10 Melodic-Tritone Exercise

Back to text ◀

1 3 2 5 5
5 2 3 1
4
7
10

► Sound

Exercise No. 11 Blocked-Tritone Exercise

◀ Back to text

3 1 5 2 5 2 3 1
2 1 5 3
3
5
b

► Sound

Exercise No. 12 Tritone-Derived Chord Exercise

◀ Back to text

3
5
b

Exercises No. 10, 11, and 12 will help develop performing skills associated with tritone and half-step derived passages and harmonies, first in arpeggio form (No. 10), then in blocked interval form (No. 11), and finally in four-note-chord structures (No. 12). Similar chord structures can be found in Bartók (for example in the eighth movement of the *Improvisations* Op. 20).

APPENDIX B

Transcribed and Edited Interview with the American Composer John Corigliano

August 15, 2003
10:30 am

- MK First of all, how would you like me to refer you?
- JC John is fine.
- MK Thank you.
Could you please tell me about your musical upbringing? I have read that you showed considerable talent as a pianist as well as a composer . . .
- JC I will. Tell me what it is in reference to... You are doing a doctoral thesis, is that what it is?
- MK Yes.
- JC And what is it on?
- MK It is mainly on twentieth-century piano techniques and extended expressive means of the acoustic piano as an instrument. Among other works, I am examining your *Fantasia on an Ostinanto*, and so I am very interested in your musical upbringing and your opinion on the acoustic piano as an instrument.
- JC ...Well my upbringing, let me do it very briefly, ...My mother was a pianist, and she taught piano. She played in private with my father occasionally, and I heard piano music all my life but I did not study the piano. She gave me a few lessons, we didn't get along, and I stopped studying. So all my piano technique comes actually from my own figuring it out. I cannot play a Mozart sonata: I am not a trained pianist at all. My father was the concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic. Through my father I've got the feeling for the performer when he stands on a stage, which would, then ...translate to any thing I wrote for a soloist, be it pianist, violinist, or cellist.
- MK You didn't study with any other piano teachers, only your mother?

- JC No, I had only one or two lessons and then I stopped, so I really never studied the piano. I just played by putting my hands on it. I was playing by ear as a little boy.
- MK How about the violin, did you ever study?
- JC No, I never studied the violin.
- MK It's amazing! The way you write for violin and piano, one would think that you are a skilled performer!
- JC Well, not at all (laughs). I rely on skilled performers, but I am not a skilled performer. In my childhood I heard a lot of violin and piano playing and I played the piano by ear and of course wrote for the piano when I got into college and started composing. Then I wrote the violin sonata for my parents, which is another piece for piano too, because it is a big violin and piano sonata and in fact virtuoso for both instruments.
- MK Could you tell me about your composition studies with Otto Luening?
- JC Otto Luening taught class composition. I basically was more self-taught than not, but Otto Luening was very encouraging to me all my life.
- MK How about Vittorio Giannini...
- JC Well I only had one or two lessons with Giannini, because my father knew him. He encouraged me. He said, "You're doing well, just go on, compose" which is what I needed to hear at that time, because I was very insecure.
- MK So mainly, you studied directly from sources...
- JC Listening to recordings, looking at scores: that's how I learned.
As far as my piano works, my piano concerto is from 1967 and '68. Then I have two solo piano works. *Etude Fantasy* is a virtuoso work I wrote for the pianist James Tocco to premiere in the Kennedy Center for the bicentennial year in 1976. Then the Van Cliburn Competition commissioned me to write a piece for their competition, and that's when I wrote *Fantasia on an Ostinato*.
- MK Yes, I heard *Fantasia on an Ostinato* in a live performance by Emanuel Ax. I was introduced to your music through *Fantasia on an Ostinato*. I loved the piece and eventually performed it in my lecture recital on twentieth-century art music for the piano.

JC That's great!

MK It is very interesting to me that, in this composition you have chosen to investigate the performer's musicality and imagination.

JC Well, I especially did that because it was for a competition. I felt that the judges would be hearing a Liszt *Sonata* and all sorts of things that show the performers' technique. While the interpretation is theirs to a certain degree, it's also their teachers'. Their teachers tell them the style and how to do things: how to play Mozart, how to play Beethoven, and how to do these technical things, how to finger this and how to touch this. So, basically, what the judges are hearing is a combination of the abilities of the student, and the personality and the intelligence of the teacher.

My new work was the only one in the competition in which a teacher could be of no assistance, because it's a new piece, and so it's not something that they learn with their teachers. Not only that, but the contestants can't go buy a record of a "Horowitz" playing it. This means that this was the only piece which they had to figure out themselves. The point of the competition, to me, was that these people, who've learned so much from the teachers, records, and great pianists are suddenly faced with a piece of music, where they just see the dots and instructions, and they have to make music. They have to build a musical structure and a proportion. So I composed the outer sides of the piece and left the middle section as a series of interlocking repeats. That meant they could play the patterns in the middle section as many times as they wanted, either with the right hand, or left hand, or also together: they could extend any moment of the central section.

MK Yes, and I read in the program notes of *Phantasmagoria* (CD with Corigliano's music) that the Van Cliburn Competition performances of the *Fantasia* varied from seven to over twenty minutes.

JC That's right, they did. They were completely different. Some people played every repeat four times, and of course, the judges hear that and they realize that there is no imagination to that. Considering the size of the outer sections, it's only so much repetition you could put into the middle section, and if you put too much, the architecture becomes weak...

MK Out of proportion?

JC Yes. ...This composition gives the judges an opportunity to see the intelligence of the musician, because those decisions have to be made by that pianist. Their teacher will not be able to tell them anything.

- MK Would your ideal performance be that of a pianist who very explicitly decides the number of the repetitions before performance in order to create the right proportion?
- JC It can be done both ways. One is that you work it out, and the other is – like a jazz player – that you are in the room and you feel the right moment to change each pattern. Both ways can be correct if you are a good musician. You might not feel comfortable making decisions at the moment, but if you work it out so that it's a beautiful segue from one pattern to another, it will work. Then again, you might be the kind of musician who is very free and plays things in that manner, like Horowitz, whose two performances were never alike. He never knew what he was going to do, he didn't work it out in terms of the kinds of *rubato*, and the ways he would deal with the phrase. They happened at the moment in the hall, and it had to do with the hall, the audience, the tension, what piece came before, what piece was coming after, and he made the right decision by doing it that way. Other people work it out. Manny Ax (Emanuel Ax) works things out, so that's fine, it does not matter, because he is a great musician. But if you are not a good musician you don't even understand what to do in this piece.
- MK Now, in relation to the compositional process: many people refer to your music as being very accessible. In my opinion it's not only accessible, but it is also highly intellectual.
- JC Yes it is, and I am glad you are saying that, because a lot of people, who hear pieces that are accessible, automatically assume that they are intellectually not stimulating, that music is either intellectual or it is emotional and accessible. And the answer, in my opinion, is that the greatest composers do both!
- MK Exactly, and I think the greatest success comes with a great rapport of intellect and accessibility.
- JC You are exactly right! Yes, it's a balance.
- MK It is a balance, like in nature. For example: consider the golden section within the relation of the shorter to the longer bones in our hand structure. We see it all the time and we never think about it. There is a structural perfection there, which appears to be simple. And it is the same with your music. Everything seems so much in proportion with every thing else that surrounds it...
- JC Well, thank you!
- MK So I am interested to know, do you make compositional decisions thinking about proportions or is it just natural genius.

JC Oh, I work very, very hard. Actually, before I write the notes, I spend more time writing the piece abstractly. I plan the whole architecture, I draw symbols of it on a page, I try to sketch it out so that I know what the building is, before I build it. Otherwise you just write little events and they are not part of a greater structure.

MK So you create the structure of the whole piece... and then you write the music.

JC Yes. Then I find the material, the music. Whether it is an F sharp or an A is very little difference compared with what's going to happen in fifteen or thirty minutes.

MK Another thing I noticed in *Fantasia* is that you "play" so beautifully with the major-minor harmonies, and initially in the Beethoven theme they are major and minor triads...

JC That all came out of the Beethoven [the composer refers to the second movement of the *Seventh Symphony* by Beethoven].

MK But then you enlarge the triads into different kinds of chords, which are outlined in arpeggios in the middle section. You can still feel that changing from major to minor, but it is a kind of metamorphosis . . .

JC Actually... I do a sequence of major and minor through every key twice. It starts in C then moves down to B, B flat, A, A flat and it continues moving down. If you trace it, you see a major-minor chain that goes around our key system twice. So it's always the major to the minor and descending. The plan was to do that.

MK A predetermined decision?

JC Yes! Music is like architecture, frozen in the dimension of time. If you look at the Capitol building in Washington you will see ternary form. On either side is an A, and the middle is a B. Architecture has repetition of things, which make you comfortable, and then has new things in it, and how they are put together is the architecture, that's the building. Now you would not expect an architect to start building with bricks and not know what the building is! You wouldn't expect him to say I wonder if this is an office, or the White House, or a private home. Well, I'll put a few more bricks then. Just as a sculptor would not start with a huge block of marble ten feet high and sculpt a finger, and not know that it was a person. He would draw sketches of a person then he would begin chiseling. The architect would draw plans of the whole building then they would put the bricks down. Composers today often compose from note to note,

but I write the whole piece in the plan and then find the music that fits the plan, which is like an architect saying, no I will use this kind of brick instead of this brick, because this is what the building needs. So that's one reason why it is intellectually stimulating. The problem is that some people confuse accessibility with a lack of intellectual curiosity. Those two can and should be the same.

MK There is another thing. For example, in the *Chaconne* from the *Red Violin*, the melody changes so unexpectedly, that it keeps even the most sophisticated musician interested. Every time you hear it, the music still . . .

JC Because it's all built on the chaconne and the chaconne has a downward twist. It moves upwards melodically, and then the bottom voice drops a half step and the whole relationship changes. The movie took place in five countries and five languages over three hundred years, and I needed to have something very, very solid to tie together five different stories, because the only thing in common in the stories was the violin. The characters were all different. So I wrote the *Chaconne* specifically to make something so strong that every melody in the film would be based on it. The *Chaconne* and the melodies based on it are played no matter whether you are in China, England, Italy, or Vienna. That's how the movie became one. Otherwise the movie would be a bunch of vignettes. What tied it together was architecture.

MK I heard the Canadian performance. Was it with the Montreal Symphony?

JC Yes.

MK ...And listening to the music without the movie... it's just such a beautiful symphonic piece!

JC Well, thank you. Actually that was the first movement. I have written three more movements that have not been played. The full concerto will be premiered in Baltimore this September.

MK Joshua Bell is playing?

JC Yes.

MK This is wonderful violin repertoire, I think, and it is strange that it comes from a movie, because usually we're used to hearing movie music that is only descriptive...

JC Well, that's usually because most movies are written on short cues. My purpose with the *Red Violin* was to write the *Chaconne* and build it in a big structure, so

each cue relates to it. That tied together the stories. It also tied together the music. If you write each cue as a separate event they have no relation and it makes no sense.

MK That was probably the most deserved *Oscar* ever for a sound track.

JC Oh, thank you.

MK You have received a major award for every major work that you have written. Is that right?

JC Well pretty much.

MK Of all these awards, which one do you consider the most significant?

JC Most composers feel the *Pulitzer Prize* is the most important for a composer, because it started out with Aaron Copland and included many of the great composers of the twentieth century. The *Pulitzer* is very well known because it's also a journalism award so all the journalists write about it in the paper, it's a very famous award. Of course the *Oscar* is most glamorous. It's the one that everybody in the world knows. The *Grawemeyer Award* is a wonderful award because it's actually a financial award, too.

MK In an interview with Michael Bagg you explained the final movement of the *First Symphony*, dedicated to the memory of AIDS victims. You related these final sounds to your philosophy of life and rebirth. I was wondering if you could give me similar ideas that relate to the *Fantasia on an Ostinato*?

JC The final chord of the *Fantasia* is the A minor chord with the fifth in the bass that Beethoven used. The idea of having a chord in a 6/4 position and leaving it unresolved was very unusual, and could still be today.

MK In one of his mazurkas in A minor Chopin also did not resolve the concluding chord which was in first inversion. He actually didn't conclude in A minor, he concluded in an unresolved first inversion triad of F major.

JC So he does not resolve the F down?

MK (sings the mazurka)

JC (sings few notes) that's very chromatic, I love that one... Well, he is taking the F as a suspension, but he is not resolving it to the E, which would have ended it in A minor. That's the imaginary thing he never went to. He did that so that he

would tantalize you but he didn't give you the end in the key. In other words, he left it unresolved. Mahler did that also. But the 6/4 (chord) with the fourth in the bass is the most unstable chord, that's the one that always resolves. The unresolved 6/4 chord in the *Fantasia on an Ostinato* was an homage to Beethoven. I was always thinking of Beethoven (second movement of the *Seventh Symphony*), taking it apart, why does it work the way it does, and then coming out with a piece in which the imagination of the performer is revealed to an audience. And the audience heard twelve people play it because it was in the semifinals. The audience in Fort Worth loved it [*Fantasia on an Ostinato*] because unlike the other pieces, where they couldn't tell the difference from one player to the other, in this one they had many different opinions. They would come to me and say: "I thought this boy did this with this and then extended this." and they were really listening to the differences in the *Fantasia*. Because the performances varied from seven to twenty minutes, they could really hear the differences. It was very interesting for them not to hear the same thing over and over again.

MK Did you decide to use Beethoven for the possibilities it gave in the form that you wanted to create, or because of a special affection with that piece of music?

JC The idea of repetition in today's music is called minimalism. Philip Glass and John Adams are two of our important minimalist composers. But Beethoven, changed (his music) all the time. He never played a phrase twice the same way. The second movement of the *Seventh Symphony* is one of very few, if not the only piece of Beethoven, where the same thing is repeated over and over again for nearly five minutes. All he does is add another voice each time it repeats. So it was like an early version of minimalism. There are few pieces where the repetition is the point of the piece. I had always wanted to write a comment on minimalism and this Beethoven movement was an ancestor in this form. So, for example is the Pachelbel *Canon*. It is like a minimalist piece: it just repeats and adds on a voice with each repetition.

MK Yes, but your minimalism is different...

JC Oh, it's different, because... well I don't really like minimalism, but there are things about minimalism that are interesting and hypnotic. Ravel's *Bolero* is like minimalism. It repeats for twenty-five minutes, except that Ravel, like me, wouldn't have written it (the *Bolero*) if it weren't a treatise on orchestral color. The whole point of the *Bolero*, is that the melody just repeats, so that all you're hearing is what happens to an orchestra, how can an orchestra make colors. And Beethoven did his repetitions to hypnotize you in his *Seventh Symphony*. It was very different from many of his other pieces. He repeats the material and adds one line each time it repeats. A counter melody. And as it grows, the intensity grows, because of the repetition. So I thought, if I am going to write something

in which the hand parts have to repeat patterns, then let me do it based on something that also gets its intensity from repeated patterns, which is the Beethoven.

MK A comment that you made in one of your interviews was the influence that film and cinematography have had on your music. You were observing how you can go from being here to being one hundred miles away in an instant. I feel that especially when I play the *Fantasia*. I almost have visions of images coming in and out of the “stage.” Sometimes they are simultaneous, and some times successive. I experience such a vivid imagination when I perform that piece!

JC Two things are very often happening at one time at slightly different tempos so you get an idea of the existence in more than one plane of activity.

MK And it's also in the two sides of the form, not necessarily only in the middle section.

JC Right!

MK Another part of testing the performer's imagination is the simultaneous use of crescendos and decrescendos in different layers of texture.

JC Yes, I think layering is an interesting device for today's composer to explore.

MK Do you think of piano as a string instrument or as a percussion instrument...

JC Oh, it depends on the music.

MK Your music is very linear, of course.

JC It depends on how lyrical the music is. Very often I use it as a percussion instrument, too.

MK Yes, one of the etudes in your *Etude Fantasy*, I would say, is more percussive.

JC Yes, the fourth etude, the one with the ornaments.

MK And the repeated chords on the left hand. Is it more like Prokofiev?

JC Yes, I love percussion, Prokofiev, Bartók, and also to treat the piano as a percussion instrument.

MK Do you ever feel limited by the shortness of sound in the acoustic piano?

JC Well, you always feel restricted by limits, but you work around them and they give you new ideas. Everything has its limits. The voice has a limit. It can sustain, but it can't play a chord. A clarinet can sustain, but there is no harmony. But these limits help your imagination focus on solutions.

MK Especially with the pedals on the piano.

JC Well, yes, of course.

MK How do you feel about the prepared piano?

JC I have never done it. I have written for two quarter-tone pianos.

MK Sure, in *Chiaroscuro*.

JC It would be fun to write for a prepared piano, but if you prepare the piano you have to be sure you don't damage it. Some people don't even like tuning the piano down a quarter-tone. John Cage took old pianos and prepared them, but they would never be used as traditional pianos again.

MK It's not very practical.

JC Well it's fun to do, and I wouldn't say I wouldn't do it, but I haven't really at this point...

.....

MK I would like to thank you for this opportunity: it was great to talk with you.

JC A pleasure! Thank you and good luck to you!

APPENDIX C

Transcribed and Edited Interview with the Canadian composer Alexina Louie

July 17, 2003
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Canadian Music Centre
Toronto, ON
CANADA

MK I would like to start by thanking you for your availability for this interview, and for helping me discover the sources regarding your music and biography. Thanks to the Canadian Music Centre in Toronto and the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, I have had access to numerous relevant resources. But it is especially delightful for me to be able to ask you questions in person about your musical upbringing and your views upon your own music.

According to the Canadian Music Centre biographical resources, you started studying piano at age 7. Could you please comment on your first introduction to piano and music.

AL I didn't ask for piano lessons. My parents just decided that it was time for me to learn how to play the piano. So, I never had a burning desire to enter music at all. That's how it happened (laughs). My first two piano teachers were just the local piano teachers in my neighborhood. And neither of them was very good. So by the time I was about twelve or thirteen, I think, I had switched to a teacher, Jean Lyons, who is still a friend of mine today. And she really was a wonderful piano teacher. And it was when I started taking lessons with her, that I realized what music could be.

MK She must be very thrilled to see your career progress, and what a wonderful composer you have become. What was so special about her teaching style that drew you to music.

AL She was demanding but very kind. She had a real sense of humor, but she was also very, very organized. And those of us who had lessons with her (we took all of our Royal Conservatory Exams together) would play for each-other and she would have a group of us meet, all of us within a certain age, once a month and that was...

MK Master class?

AL It wasn't a master class it was just like a "music get together." And those of us who had pieces that were ready to play, we just performed. We wouldn't discuss the pieces necessarily. It wouldn't be like a master class where she would...

MK A concert mainly

AL It was like just playing for each other. But we also would have musical games and she would talk a little bit about music. But it was just like a social get together with music. You didn't have to pay extra for it. It was just something she would do. The other thing that she did was that at certain points in your years of lessons, she would give you a prize for having earned a certain amount of stars. At every lesson she would give you stars...

MK Star stickers?

AL Star stickers, so that, if you had a good lesson you had a certain kind of star, if you had a very good lesson, you had a different kind of star. So when you collected a certain number of stars over the years, she would give you a gift. And for me very often the gifts were concerts. And because my parents never took me to a concert in my life, never, it was she, who introduced me to concerts and particularly I remember being taken to Rubinstein, at least twice. And that was really a humbling experience. He played wonderfully, but imagine...

MK You were 12 or 13 at the time?

AL Maybe I was a little older. She also corrected my technical errors. I had a bad hand position, because the two teachers that I had before weren't sophisticated teachers. I learned how to read music, and obviously I had some kind of talent for it, because I progressed. But fixing my hand position took a lot of effort, both on my part and the part of my teacher. And she was very patient and just kept at it, so over a period of time that was corrected. But it was the interpreting skills that she taught me, and also the self-confidence that she gave me. She chose pieces specifically for each student (you know there are some teachers who teach the same repertoire all the time, but she never did that). She also taught me how to express myself in a line of music so the music was played expressively, it was never played as an exercise. She taught me how to play everything expressively, from technique to pieces.

MK That's wonderful! It should be very encouraging for all students of piano to know that a composer like you didn't want to take piano lessons. And it took a persistent, loving, and knowledgeable teacher, to actually bring out the music in you.

AL Yes, Yes. Well, teachers are very important. And parents and piano students don't realize, really quite how important, but you know if one is not the right teacher you just shop around until you find the right teacher. Because there are different personalities that one has to deal with. But, she really nurtured us, and she was kind, but strict. And we had to practice. We just had to practice, that's all there is to it...

MK About how many hours a day?

AL By the time I finished high school I was practicing two or three hours a day.

MK So, when was it exactly that you made a shift in your career? I read about your wrist injury. Was that the main factor that made you discover this other way of musical expression?

AL When I entered University I had no idea what I wanted to major in. So I took an arts program in first year, and I thought maybe I would study psychology. But at the same time I took two music classes. One was a theory class, which met every morning at 9:30, five mornings a week, and it was theory before 1750, (a period of music that I had absolutely no clue about). And I just thought: how can we spend a whole year doing the theory of music before 1750?

MK Did you go through...

AL Actually it was before that, it was music of before 1600, or 1650

MK Did you go through ancient Greece and everything?

AL Everything, everything.

MK That's wonderful, we had a class just like that...

AL Renaissance music and Medieval music was what we were really concentrating on. And the other class was a Music History class, which followed exactly the same time line. Both classes were very demanding. But it was my theory teacher, whose name was Cortland Hultberg, who was a very amazing man. He was a composer, but he didn't spend a lot of time composing. He wrote a very witty music, especially for chorus.

MK At UBC (University of British Columbia), right?

AL At UBC. He was such a wonderful teacher! He was very kind and very, very funny. He was a very funny man... very ironic sense of humor. So, those of us who were (just by circumstance) placed in his class were very lucky. And we knew we were lucky, because he made you learn without beating it into you, and everything felt very spontaneous. I think I was really fortunate, because I know that there are many teachers who teach the same thing year in and year out, without changing their program of delivery. Terrible teachers. But he was remarkable. We learned really through osmosis rather than instruction. He loved music, he played a lot of music for us, and really showed us how much he loved music. So, at the end of that year, I realized that psychology was not for me, and I realized that music was really what I wanted to study, and it was at that time that I had to make choices about second year. It turned out that the only thing that he taught as a second year class was composition, and it was private lessons, we didn't start out with a class of composition, we started out with lessons. So the only thing that he taught that I could take in the second year was composition. And that's basically why I took composition.

MK Sounds like destiny...

AL Exactly! I mean, I didn't ask to take piano lessons. And if he had taught choral conducting in the second year, I'm sure that's what I would have been doing, choral conducting, because he was so special, and charming, and wonderful human being, I just wanted to learn from him.

MK It's so interesting! When I read about your wrist injury, I was thinking that it was destiny, like Schumann and his third and fourth finger injury, which kind of made him become a composer. But actually, I suppose... it was another destiny factor here.

AL I know. That was the first factor, but at that time I never wanted to be a composer, and even all through my undergraduate degree. My music major was history. I always thought I was going to end up being a music professor. So I thought, well what's a good music background to have that would apply to teaching, so I was a music history major. But I took enough courses to minor in many things. I mean the only thing that was missing in the composition (I don't think I took orchestration), ... I didn't give a graduating recital. But I was taking composition for three years with him. I wrote nothing of consequence. But I knew I wanted to express something. I wasn't interested in doing (even at that time) intellectual compositional pursuits. Although I did study theory seriously and almost graduated with a theory major as well. I loved theory and I loved

finding out what made music work. So there was something about studying that's important: architecture of music. It was important to me. And I also went into the study of composition, because I knew that if you study composition, you could learn about music writing in a very visceral way, rather than just as analysis or historical studies, or even as performing. When you write it's really grappling with what it is to make a theme that makes sense or to make a transition that makes sense. Whereas in an analysis you just say that's the theme and this is a transition. But if you actually have to create a theme, and create a transition it's much different than just recognizing what it is.

MK It's like the role of the creator and the observer

AL Right. So, as I went through those four years, it was a good music school. I discovered so much repertoire. I became more and more curious about why the great pieces of the great composers Brahms, Bach, ... what made them so great, whereas music by Clementi or by some of the other lesser composers was not... they basically were writing in similar forms and structures, but genius wasn't there. And yet, they were still writing within the same tonal frame-works. (laughs...)

MK Yes!

AL And when I started analyzing particularly the Brahms Op. 119, you know that just was like... I remember that being just like a lightning bolt, because those pieces are great, and they're very small. And yet every thing that he learned through his lifetime as a composer was distilled in the most beautiful and intimate manner

MK Very concentrated, every thing is essence.

AL That's right. So, you know, when I did all these analyses and continued my writing, in fact when I graduated from UBC and decided to go to graduate school, my teachers all gave me sort of different advice. But it was Cortland Hultberg who actually said, and I don't mean to denigrate other disciplines, but he said to me, just think about something, do you want to spend the rest of your life in a library doing research, because I was going to go into theory and I did apply as a theory major in some universities

MK Or in a practice room, practicing piano.

AL Yes, but I continued my piano studies as well, and actually made my living as a cocktail pianist for six years as a student. So that's basically how I studied composition again in graduate school: not because I had a burning desire, but

because of his guidance. And when I was an undergraduate I wrote some pieces that showed something, I mean they were expressive and exploratory but they were not indicative of what was to come, really, except that there was that need for expression in the music and I did find some beautiful things, but the acquiring of skill takes a long time.

MK So mainly you don't feel like you created your unique voice as a composer during your studies.

AL Well, as an undergraduate at UBC it was at a very slow rate. I moved very slowly, and it took me forever. So that's why I didn't feel like graduating in composition, I didn't think I would be able to have a program together by the time I graduated. But apparently I had enough music of interest (when I sent out my music to graduate schools, I was accepted at five universities). And again it was the choice that I made of the five that accepted me that determined... all these things happened, I don't know how they happened, because there was some direction that happened. Had I gone to any of the other schools, I am sure I would not be a composer today. I am absolutely sure. I went to UC (University of California) San Diego on a Regent's Fellowship, on a big fellowship.

MK ...were Erickson and Oliveros your composition professors?

AL Yes.

MK What did they bring into your...

AL (laughs) ...it's really a lot of what they didn't bring that affected me. You see, my story is not a normal one in the growth of a composer. It is an abnormal one. And it continues to this day to be abnormal. I am a composer in spite of many things that have happened to me in my life.

First of all, my means of self-expression was always playing the piano from the time I was a child, from the time I studied with Ms. Lyons, because, before that, the teachers who taught me didn't teach me self expression. It was she who taught me self expression. And so from the time I studied with her, piano playing was that for me. It was a world that you create for yourself. And once I was there playing and practicing, it was to the exclusion of every thing else. And that's normal also for a musician. But when I went to graduate school, although I was writing music, it was still playing the piano that utilized most of my time. And I would stay on campus late at night till 11:00 o'clock working in a little Quonset hut that had a bad upright piano... I would be writing and practicing. But it was at that school where I was asked to play chamber music, which I had only basically begun to work on at UBC, a little bit. But at UC San Diego they didn't have a lot of pianists, you know performance standard quality,

so I was one of the main ones, and I started playing quite a bit of chamber music at that point, which entailed a lot of practicing for me. Because I am not a quick study, I have to really practice. So at that point I was given the Brahms *Clarinet Trio* to learn, because there was a clarinetist and a cellist there and they were looking for a pianist. The piece of course is a beautiful piece, but it's a big piece. The piano part is... Brahms wrote the piano part for himself, so of course you have to be able to reach tenths to play the part. And I damaged my hand at that point, playing that piece.

MK Oh, it was that piece!

AL It was that piece. It was that, I mean I know exactly which piece I am referring to...

MK Brahms can do that to you...

AL Yes. But I didn't realize that. So, when my hand started getting stiff and hurt, it was just because I thought I had to practice more, which was not the case at all, I was getting tendonitis. And it became so bad that eventually I couldn't play any more and I eventually had to have an operation on my wrist, which destroyed my capability of practicing five hours a day, which means you can't play the piano any more. So when that happened I turned to composition seriously, as the way of self expression. And it was at that point that composition became a necessity for me, for self expression. And so, to this very day, I say that the music that I write is very, very much influenced by the fact that music making was always a form of self expression from the time I was twelve. So that sort of follows a basic logic, but at UCSD, a very unconventional music school, completely unconventional, in fact at the time that I was there it was only six years old, they taught basic music poorly. If I hadn't had the background that I had, theory, analysis, and history from UBC, again the UC San Diego would not have provided me with the necessary things to go on with my career. The entire faculty was all, at that time, involved with contemporary music. The performers were all involved with contemporary music. Hardly anybody played traditional music. The bass teacher was Bertram Turetsky, who specializes in twentieth-century bass music. And he was a real character. The head of the department was (at the time I was there) Will Ogden, who specialized in Schoenberg. And the person who took over the chairmanship of the department was a trombone player, who played only contemporary music and all faculty, other than those two, were composers. Roger Reynolds, Ken Gaburo, Pauline Oliveros and there were electronic music classes going on at the same time, so it was a lively group.

Many, many of the students had come from the mid West, from, I think, University of Illinois and I forget the other school, but basically many of the students came with Ken Gaburo from the Midwest and Roger Reynolds... So

you had these composition teachers on faculty who were all involved with writing music. They were all active composers. They were not teachers of composition per se, although they taught composition, but they were all active composers, and each one of them was completely different from the next. The personalities were wild and rather crazy. We were thrown into this mix, and all the graduate students that came to that faculty were extraordinary students because of the uniqueness of teachers. Many were experimental composers, who were developing new computer and electronic techniques, and alternative singing, and multi-phonic singing, Tibetan chanting and all these things that at UBC I never was exposed to... anything and everything was possible. It was the first time that I was introduced to theatre music. All the graduate students had to perform in these theatre pieces. You had to “play” water and I remember having climbed up on a ladder with a pitcher of water and dump the water into a big drum at the bottom of the ladder. All these strange and incredible things that we had to perform in and experience...

The other thing was that every quarter there would be a remarkable composer that would be in residence. He wouldn't teach us. He would maybe give a talk or two about his music, but we usually performed his music. And they were strange and remarkable composers, again, not the usual academic composers. They were people like Robert Ashley, Nicolai Castiglioni, who was just the weirdest possible person, very strange guy, Terry Riley came, he performed with an Indian singer... They gave a concert and stayed for few days. But those were composers that would never come necessarily to a regular academic situation, so (it) was the exposure to these alternative people, and it wasn't that my music became that either but it did...

MK Open your mind...

AL Yes... And, the study of timbre was very important and all these people that came, they were all, with the exception of Nicolai Castiglioni, who was very European, you know he is Italian composer, all the other ones did these pieces that droned on and changed timbres. Color was very important in pieces. And I had never been exposed to music like that before. My music didn't become that, but I used my ears in a different way than I had before. And also I was involved with Pauline Oliveros in a women's ensemble where we did meditations. That was when she started her meditations through sound and we would improvise together on these pieces. She would give the instructions to us, and we met every Tuesday night as a group of women. There was a whole slant... towards the empowerment of women at that time in the seventies with Pauline. So I became thrown into a whole gender politics situation. I came from Vancouver, where this was never even an issue. So the challenges that were given to me in graduate school were challenges both musically, where I was writing music on paper (and I came under a lot of flak from my colleagues and my teachers). I

was writing what they would consider old-fashioned music, because I wrote on paper with a pencil. I didn't do conceptual music. So I had to follow my course, I mean my internal drive. I had to follow through on that, regardless of all the disinterest and, I wouldn't say condescension, but it was something like that. (laughs) And also there was the whole gender politics that went on that I had no clue about, because again I came from Vancouver, and I came from Canada, which is a whole different, an entire different social...

MK Are women in Canada treated more equally to men?

AL I wouldn't say that, but at that time we weren't questioning those things, I mean I wasn't questioning. When I went down there, the fact that I would occasionally wear a dress to class or a skirt, or whether I would wear lipstick, I mean it was just...

MK A little extreme, wasn't it?

AL Very extreme, and I had to actually deal with that. At the time California was considered so open and free, and yet, to be there, I realized that it was not, because you had to conform to what their idea of open and free was. And if you didn't, then you were on the outs. I had to deal with that in my personal development and also with my musical development. So I learned how to survive, I learned a big lesson. And that's that...

MK But it seems like... you have not had a problem at all comparing with male composers in your life, and you are one of the most successful women composers, so apparently you didn't have a problem with feeling under...

AL No... I didn't because of my own musical nature. I am very self critical, I don't write music just to make a living, I write music because I have a commitment to making Art.

MK Yes. This is another question I have. Do you only compose for commissions or also compose pieces that are not commissioned because you need to...

AL Well, I have to explain. Here in Canada we have very many agencies where you can get a commission. I am at the point in my career now, and I really have been almost from the beginning, at a point where all my pieces are commissioned. But I have at this point maybe forty performers, groups, orchestras that want me to write music for them.

MK So it is a waiting line.

AL So I have to choose the project that I want to do. I always do only music that I choose that I want to do at a certain point. I have turned down many commissions. Jackie Parker's piece [the composer means Jon Kimura Parker's commission]; I turned down twice before he convinced me to write this piece for him, *Scenes From a Jade Terrace*.

MK And I am so glad you did. Because I just fell in love with this piece the first moment. I have told you probably on the phone that I was driving with 70 miles an hour when I heard his performance on the National Public Radio in USA, and I fell in love with the piece. And even though I didn't hear the complete title well or your name well, I thought I have got to find this piece and it took me a while, but then, I came to Canada and bought it right here [the author means at the Canadian Music Centre in Toronto].

AL Well he is a remarkable pianist. And this, you know is the first big piano piece that I wrote. And again, there are composers who just write piano music, because most of us are pianists and you can just write. Well it took me six months to write this piece.

MK Six months?

AL Yes. Because I wanted to write a good piece, and I wanted to make art, and it's not easy to do that. Music doesn't always have to come out of a struggle or art doesn't always have to come out of a struggle, but I think if the making of art is too facile, then it comes out as being... sounding sometimes irrelevant. Music is such a struggle for me, and I had to pay a price to become a composer so that every piece I would write, I want to make count. So it doesn't matter if it is a festive piece that I write, it will be the best festive piece that I can write. And if it takes me six years to write an opera when I have only been paid for three years of work, then that's what I will do, because I am an artist.

MK So, are you a perfectionist?

AL I wouldn't say a perfectionist. I just try to live up to my own standards. So if something isn't good enough, or if I feel that there is a flaw, then I will work to fix it the best I can. And so, I wouldn't say things have come easily for me, because they haven't, I've worked hard, but when it comes to gender... the whole gender politics, I don't... I really walk right by it. It exists! There is just no two ways about it. And never really acknowledged it before, ever. I didn't have any time for it, because I was just...

MK busy working...

- AL busy working, but it gets in the way! But that being said, I did realize that the world of composition is a boys' club. It is definitely a boys' club!
- MK This is my fascination with you, because in this group of composers that I have chosen for my dissertation you are the only women composer, and to me, I have been the same... during all my life, I have never recognized that there is difference. And as I go through, doing my work to my best ability, I never recognize a difference. This is how I always regarded you: like a human being and like a composer. Gender is not an issue. It is only your music and your human experiences expressed through music that speak to me. Gender is just out of the question.
- AL I know, it's out of the question. Except that it exists. There are many things that I have to tell you. One is that in Canada as I started to say, you can get commissions to write music, but we lack a lot of things here. We lack a whole infrastructure, we lack a whole publishing industry for our music, and we lack publicists for our music. You have the ability to earn a certain amount of money, but you do not have the ability to actually earn a good living here as composers in the whole rest of the developed world have. Our performing-rights fees here are so low as to be laughable. If I had a piece performed in Europe, the same piece, the royalty is ten times more for the same piece in Europe.
- In the United States you make stars out of some of your composers and we have none here because there is no system to do that. So you go through your life being very busy as a composer. I am very busy as a composer, but I don't earn the same kind of money at all by writing my music as I would if I was at the same level of development as I am now and if I lived in Finland, or if I lived in the United States even. It's a completely different thing, so you really sacrifice a lot in order to give. I mean I have a good reputation, and I have good performances of music but I don't earn a good living by writing the kind of music that I write.
- MK I didn't realize that, I always thought Canada supports composers more than other countries. That was my impression from outside, but maybe not financially, more like, morally.
- AL Yes, there are more opportunities in a way, but it's not like in Germany. In Germany it's serious; I mean it's a serious part of life. The government and the country, the population realize how important it is, so there is this extraordinary support system toward creators as a part of their cultural heritage. But it's the same in Finland, or it's the same in Sweden, the same in the Netherlands and Denmark.

MK But the greatest composers in history have struggled making a living, because they were more interested in creating something that would be for centuries, than trying to sell it.

AL Well, but if you look at the people with the biggest names, the ones that are living now have their publishers, who take care of business for them. I have no publisher to take care of business for me, so I have to take care of my own business. Whereas, those other composers can really spend their time thinking about music making.

MK Could you become, for example, a composer of Schirmer in the United States?

AL Yes, if they decided to take me on. But there is no composer in Canada who has a major publisher, not one. The only one that has is a colleague who died at the age of 36, his name is Claude Vivier. He has international support, but he died twenty years ago, and he is published by Salibert but there is no major international publisher that really has any of us.

MK What would it take for them to... take you

AL Money. You have to have money, or the system that supports you has to have money. Or you have to be someone that they feel they can make money from. And those major publishers haven't discovered any of us, nor have they felt that any of us has the capability of doing that for them. So the business of composition is a catch 22, we haven't had the... at least I haven't had the kind of international exposure in the way that a publisher can do it for you. There are agents for you, they are the ones that knock on the doors... Meanwhile I go on, and I know that my catalog is strong. It's not just the piano pieces that you are looking at. The catalog that I have written is deep and it's strong.

MK That's wonderful

AL So the other thing I wanted to say about gender is that finally I realize that it's a boys' club, after all these years of actually just writing music, just being an artist. There are cases where the boys shut you out even though I sit at the same table with them and I insist on being at the same level as them. And I am talking about my colleagues, even colleagues that I love and respect. When we get together I insist on just being treated like one of the boys, but (laughs), but there is that whole notion that there is a difference. The other thing that I have to say, being where I am is that... in fact I never acknowledged this before as I was working. I just kept working to the best of my ability. But you have to be better in order to be the same and that gets tiring, you have to be better. That's my experience.

MK I wanted to ask you some other questions. You wrote a piece for prepared piano and prerecorded prepared piano *Dragon Bells*. Was that an experimental piece?

AL Yes. There were six years of my life when I stopped writing music when I graduated from UC San Diego. I realized that the study of composition wasn't going to make me a composer. So I didn't even consider entering a doctoral program. By the time I finished my Master's degree, it was almost, it was two and a half years of a lot of challenges, for the reasons I told you, but getting my master's degree was not the easiest thing and I just felt that a lot of that was irrelevant, so, when I finally got my degree, which was my goal, they were going to kick me out, but I was going to take my degree with me. You know, they play these little games by the time you get closer to finishing your degree they would say, no, we want you to change this to be this, so you would change it to be this, and then they would say, no we want it to be changed to be this. I didn't realize that two members of my graduate committee were fighting with one another.

MK It's like a group of creators. It's not only you mainly...

AL I just found it distasteful. It was so much game playing and not really about the specifics. Writing wasn't really about creating and writing music, it was a whole system of politics, and I just had no patience for that, so I didn't want to enter a doctoral program by any means. What happened was I ended up teaching in Los Angeles, and I stopped writing music for six years, because I didn't feel I needed to write. And also because I realized that there were so many people writing music! All these academics and all these people coming out of graduate programs, all writing music, but who cared about that kind of academic music! I found it very uninteresting. And how to get into the next echelon... Past the academic music, or even the experimental academic music. The music didn't speak to me, nor did I want to be involved in it. It wasn't what I was interested in. So at that point I totally lost interest in writing. But over the course of six years I realized that writing was still important to me. But I had to write with my own expression, not with anybody else's expression. Which is what I had been doing in graduate work. I'd been working towards making sensuous music rather than intellectual music. How do I get these sounds, well I would use my imagination to get these sounds.

MK Was this prepared piano piece more influenced by John Cage's prepared piano or by oriental ensemble music.

AL It was both. Over the course of six years I realized that in order to have people want to play my music, it would not be because I would force them to play my music, it would be because I would have a means of self expression musically

that would make people be interested in taking the time to learn the music. And if your music was different from everybody else's, because it was your form of self expression, then that's what people would find interesting.

So over six years I had to find out who I was in order to put it into the music. So those six years I realized that this combination of Asian and Western culture in me, because my knowledge of Asian music was almost nil, I was really raised with the Western in a Western musical milieu it's all the music I played, it was all the music I listened to. During those six years I actually studied a Chinese instrument at UCLA, I read a lot of Chinese poetry, I studied, read, and understood the principles of Yin and Yang,

MK So it was at UCLA that you were exposed to...

AL No, it wasn't at UCLA, it was still just at the end of UC San Diego, because of a friend of mine. Again, through circumstance. The other Regent's Fellowship winner in that department (that was the biggest fellowship that you could get at that time in the UC system) was a friend, who is still a friend of mine today, Peter Salemi, an Italian-American from Illinois.

MK Yes, I read about him in an internet source, but it wasn't clear whether he was a professor, or a colleague.

AL He was a colleague. He was an oboist, but he personally ventured way past the oboe. He felt the oboe was just like a really limited instrument. And he started studying hichiriki, which is a very small Japanese double-reed instrument that you hear in *Gagaku* ensembles. We would practice late at night in our adjacent Quonset huts. I practiced Brahms and he practiced hichiriki. It was not like a regular university campus. It was really in the eucalyptus trees. And there were these two army huts side by side. (Very dark, nobody on campus in California) they were all, I don't know where they were... at the beach (laughs). And Peter and I would be there every night side by side. He exposed me to this deeply-felt music that I didn't realize was so fantastic. So it was he that introduced me to *Gagaku* music, and he who introduced me to *Gamelan* music, and he who introduced me to Chinese ensemble music.

MK And Yin-Yang philosophy?

AL Right. So... he's the person that said: "you have to go to UCLA and study the ch'in [Chinese stringed instrument] with Mr. Lui." So that's what I did. I didn't study for long, but I studied enough to understand what it was in the music, and the great artistry that there was in parallel cultures. So over the course of the six years, toward the end of that time, I actually tried to utilize Asian musical influences, and I would actually, I might even have made lists of the kinds of

things I was interested in. Bending tones, whole-tone harmonies, repetitive patterns etc. I mean, I did a conscious shift by using my Western musical skills with this Asian overview. And it was at that time that I wrote three pieces, which use this kind of fusion. And that was one of the pieces it's called *Dragon Bells*.

These three pieces obviously were... I was on the right road... but they were... very self-conscious use of these techniques. So from that point I received my first commission out of that whole time, and I applied for a Canada Council Grant while I was still in California to follow through on more studies of this kind of music and to write pieces. And it was out of that Council grant that eventually came one piece that I still have in my catalogue today, that I think it's really an important piece, and I still, I love this piece very much. It's called *Afterimages*, and it is for two pianos. And that was written on a Canada Council Grant.

MK In the broadband video-conference-master-class for the National Arts Center in Ottawa and the University of British Columbia, you mentioned the influence of Ravel and Debussy on your music. Could you elaborate a little bit more on it.

AL The colors and the expression through impressions it's what really, it influenced me. I didn't play a lot of Ravel at all, and in fact, I did play some Debussy. But the music itself is so beautiful. I mean the way that it captures sound and light in a different kind of way than anything else, because the music is so much timbre, and the piano has the capability of being that kind of instrument as compared to percussion, or compared to just playing notes per se, for notes' sake or just to create washes of sound. Through that music, I've always loved the upper end of the piano. So there are all these coloristic bell-like sonorities that are capable of being produced in the upper register.

MK So it's mainly timbre. How about harmonic language?

AL Harmonic language as well. I mean much of it is based on whole-tones,

MK Pentatonic...

AL Pentatonic. But it was actually the way that I improvise on the piano that affects the way that I write. I put my hands on the piano and I improvise. And when I finally started analyzing what it was that I was improvising, I was playing a lot of octatonic scales, because I would put one hand on black keys and one hand on white keys, and I would have this, which I used to think was polytonality, but really in the end, when I analyzed the lines of the harmony, it came out being more octatonic.

- MK A combination of half steps and whole steps...
- AL Yes, that's right. That came out of improvisation, but the improvisation was most likely coming out of sounds that I liked in Debussy and Ravel. I don't know which came first the chicken or the egg, so it's a discovery about my own music
- MK And as far as form, do you approach the form of your works more in the classical way, like straight-cut four, eight-measure phrases or (it seems to me) more like direction-destination and arch forms...
- AL It's always direction-destination and arch forms for sure. And again I don't always think about it, it's just the way that it goes. Music is...
- MK Expression dictated...
- AL Yes, it is. In fact, much to my chagrin the way that I write, in most cases, if you saw my first drafts they are quite, they are like chicken scratches that are almost illegible, because I write everything at the piano, which is physically awkward. So, when I'm writing and I try to capture an idea, because I am writing at the piano, it's very physically awkward, because the music is on the music stand, and I write with a pencil and I try to hold notes down with one hand, while I am writing with the other hand. It's physically difficult to do. But, I don't write with bar lines. I don't set out to start in 3/4 or 4/4 or 7/8 or whatever it is I start at. I just write the music in its relative durations and I will write passage after passage with crossed out points and, you know, go to insert B or whatever, like, it's a road map of almost illegible quality, and it has no bar lines in it usually. And then I go back and my music has a kind of flexibility in its feel, and I wouldn't say improvisatory, because it's not necessarily improvisatory, but it's a flexible feel, it is not in a four-square set up by any means it's where the musical line and harmony flow naturally, so then I go back and I put the bar-lines in after.
- MK Where they fit...
- AL Where they fit, right. And some times it takes a bit of maneuvering to find out that's why if you look at much of my music, in most cases the music has meters. The bars change... every couple of bars it might be a different time signature. But basically the eighth-note usually stays the same. So it does not matter if it is a 3/16 bar or if it's a...
- MK Why do you say the eighth and not the quarter for example

- AL I don't know, because I think that... that's the way that I think!
- MK So you are thinking in smaller values.
- AL Yes, because those values are the ones that continue through, I mean the eighth note is constant.
- MK Especially in a 3/8 time signature...
- AL Yes, right, because my music always changes like that. So you know I never thought about that until I had to start thinking about it for analysis purposes, but that's basically why I write like that, and it drives me a little crazy, but at the same time the music has that kind of flexibility to it, a flux to it. And also when I finally get to the point where meter has no meaning, then the music goes into a *senza misura* section, which is always controlled by me, I always control how long that *senza misura* will go on, be it 35 seconds or a minute and 10 seconds, but within that *senza misura* I will actually put points at which certain things have to happen, so I control the *senza misura* but I give the performer a certain amount of freedom. And you shouldn't be able to really feel when that necessarily happens...
- MK It's like breathing.
- AL Right. Much of my writing is based on breathing. It's a natural flow to get through to a point. So when a performer plays my music incorrectly in terms of that, because I feel it, I feel the flow of the music, I get quite taken aback because to me it's so obvious that it's that and as a composer I put those things in, but also as a composer I realize that I can not put every *ritard*, every *rubato*, every *accelerando* or whatever in a piece. But I like the music to be more expressive than mechanistic but I also don't want it to wallow into this kind of emotional mush.
- MK In these scores that I see in here (this author is referring to hand-written piano scores, property of Canadian Music Centre), is this your own hand writing?
- AL That's my writing.
- MK It's beautiful! What I was thinking is... your meticulous writing... with all the directions and the notes... is very beautiful...
- AL I try...
- MK It reminds me of George Crumb.

AL Oh. That's nice!

MK Also the second durations of the notes and also another thing that reminds me of his music in your music is the cosmic correlations.

AL ...When I was a student, when I first heard his music, it made me realize that contemporary music did not have to be ugly. That it could be expressive, and something deeper. And he has his own musical language that he is an absolute master at, and it's fantastic that he is still doing what he does, and he does it well. And it didn't matter what styles happened within the time that he was writing, it was his path that he chose, so I definitely was inspired by his music.

MK I feel like you two are similar in one way that both of you have decided to speak to audiences through music in your unique way that speaks directly, without having to understand it, you kind of feel the music. So you send a direct message. I mean you both have very different styles, unique and individual...

AL Totally...

MK ...but this is what is in common in my opinion

AL I think that you are right! But the other thing too is that both he and I, although the music does speak directly, it's also based on real *métier*, real technique and real...

MK Craft...

AL Craft. Even though it sounds a certain way it's still highly crafted, it's not just mush.

MK Exactly!

AL Both our musics [sic] are controlled by a very strong technique in an individual kind of way. So I do find it very interesting.

MK Me too. Of course you have crafted these pieces, since you give such careful playing directions to the performer. I have seen copies (of your manuscripts) in Jon Kimura Parker's dissertation, copies of your handwriting and compared them with the published versions. And you know it's almost...

AL It gives you an idea... but...

MK It's almost as good as the published version.

AL Here, you can have this one (the composer gives this author a copy of the manuscript of *Scenes from a Jade Terrace*). Because it is published, they (Canadian Music Centre) don't release it in this form anymore...

MK It's beautiful! See, I mean I wouldn't have any trouble at all learning the music from this handwriting. It's so carefully written.

AL It took almost as long to copy it as it took to write it

MK I know, it's art, it's not only musical ideas, it's art.

AL But anyway, I still write music with a pencil and a piece of paper. I don't write at a computer.

MK But then you copy this with pen and ink, after it is in its final form.

AL Yes.

MK It's really beautiful...
I keep asking you about these composers, who are the subject of my dissertation, this is why I've mentioned, John Cage...

AL Oh, I see...

MK And Crumb, because it's interesting to know how you feel... how they effected you in your music, being a younger generation composer.
About Henry Cowell, what was the most significant thing in his music...

AL I am trying to think when I heard Henry Cowell's music first, probably at UBC, but maybe more in California than at UBC. But it was, again, you know completely individualistic writing. A real pioneer as a composer and in fact he influenced a lot of composers, definitely. I was also interested in Ives, very much at a certain point I read a number of books on Ives and looked at his music, and really came to love those pieces like *Central Park in the Dark* and *The Unanswered Question*. He was another composer that certainly...

MK Spoke to you...

AL Yes, oh Yes!

MK in the *Scenes from a Jade Terrace*, the middle movement: *Memories In An Ancient Garden* you use the insides of the piano, so this is where I would have mostly related your music to Cowell's.

AL *Banshee*

MK The *Banshee* and *Aeolian Harp*.

AL Yes the *Aeolian Harp*, yes, that's right. But the reason why I did that was because the piece is really tailored for Jon Kimura Parker, and I knew his playing well. It's very musical kind of piano playing, again very visceral, very sensuous piano playing, deep and sonorous. I knew him from Vancouver, because we used to play in Kiwanis Music Festivals together, and he always won. (laughs) So it was interesting that I became a composer and he went out to win the Leeds Competition in Great Britain to go on and have a great career as a pianist and teacher.

He asked me to write this piece for him for a tour and he wanted a piece that would open a concert, so I didn't want to write a nice little apologetic opening, I wanted to really get people's attention with a powerful piece, and also because his mother is Japanese and his father is Caucasian it was a perfect opportunity for me to express myself in my first big piano piece. And because his technique is big, you don't even have to think about his technique, he can do anything! So I wrote this piece particularly for him to show off his power, his deep sonorous sound, but the piece became more mine than his. It wasn't just his musicality or his capabilities, but it was my need to express what I decided that I wanted to do at this piece. I remember wrestling with this piece quite seriously. Because I write music all the time, (I don't have another job per se, I write music). I have to constantly write music and I really can not have any stumbling points, or writing blocks, or blank times. I have to really always find my solutions as quickly as possible and get on with it. But with his piece there were many times when I didn't know where the piece wanted to go and even though intellectually I would say, well, why don't I try this, or why don't I try this, there were some stumbling blocks in the piece, I didn't know what to do next. So I would actually walk around the piano and talk to the piece. His premiere was coming up, you see, and I know it's technically difficult, and I knew I had to get it to him quickly so that he had enough time to learn the piece, because pianists are not like other instrumentalists. It takes a long time to learn all of those notes and those big chord clusters for instance at the tempos that you write, etc. So being a former pianist I know, and many composers don't really understand how long it takes a pianist to really know a piece and know it well. So I felt under great pressure. His deadline was coming up, and I just would be sort of at this point in the piece where I didn't know what the solution was, so I would actually talk to the piece. I would ask it: "where is it that you want to go

now?" (laughs) "What do you want to do!" And finally, you know, as I said, I can't spend more than a day for instance thinking about a passage, I have to... keep writing. Things have changed slightly now, because I've written so much music now, I really enjoy a time when I can breathe. I really appreciate that a lot. Whereas at the time I was writing this, I had to keep writing. Also being a free-lance composer, if you don't write, you can't feed your children. You have to keep writing or there is no money that comes in.

MK It's a full-time job.

AL So, the first movement is big, and bravura... and it has big chords in it and it's loud. It's called *Warrior*, and it's really about that, about being a champion, and about having courage actually, having courage to write, as well as having courage to perform. The second movement then I wanted to be completely contrasting. This is where beautiful sonorities in the piano came into the writing of it. I sat at the piano and started improvising. I just started playing chords and the notes would blend into each other so beautifully, so at the beginning it's just this breath of sound. And I really wanted to write a little bit of prepared piano for Jackie, but I realized that he was going to be playing this in real concert halls, not any music concert halls, regular concert halls, with Steinways and the best of pianos, because he is that *calibre* of pianist, so I realized that the people that run the halls would not be happy,

MK Wouldn't be very happy...

AL Even though it doesn't damage any thing if you are careful you don't, force things in between strings, but I loved the sound, always, of Cage's screws, and erasers, and dimes, and nickels, and whatever... inside, but I realized he wouldn't have time to prepare pianos and then he would have to unprepare pianos, and then, by the time he'd unprepare the piano, when he went to play a Beethoven piano sonata, it might be out of tune, slightly. So I just threw that whole notion out, but I thought to myself, what can I do that he can perform, relatively easily without damaging or even scaring anybody (laughs) that runs those concert halls, without damaging the piano. I always played on the inside of the piano. A part of the piano improvisation for me is to play the inside of the piano, so I wrote that into the piece. When I use new techniques on an instrument is not for show. It's because It has to work in the sound environment of the piece. It's not just for a little trick

MK Were the mutations of the strings with hand at the end mainly your invention?

AL Well, not really, because the strings inside the piano are like the strings inside any instrument, and if you touch it at different note points you get a harmonic.

MK I know. What's different in your piece though, is that these harmonics change gradually.

AL Yes.

MK And I haven't myself seen another piano composer do that. When you have a prepared piano, you have different harmonics, but they are stable. And in this piece harmonics keep changing gradually. I think that is very individual.

AL That's very sensual. For the pianist is very sensual to do that.

MK Yes, because it's like a violinist almost

AL And it's also over the same repeated bass line. So it becomes kind of a hypnotic alteration of color. The search for the right sound at the right time is an interesting journey. When you find the right answer it's heaven. I can only tell you, it's like heaven! Before you find that answer it's like hell

MK I always look for these new effects, and to the best of my knowledge, I hadn't seen any other piano piece that requires the movement of the hand on the strings to create gradual harmonics, so even if someone else might have used the same effect, [I guess] you were not aware of it, so it's your invention

AL It's out of a necessity of sound inside of my head that I am looking for, and you just find a solution, and, whatever it happens to be.

MK It happened once to me, I was so young that I had not been introduced to the music of Ravel and Debussy yet, and I composed a piano piece, (which tells me why I like your music so much too), which was about moon and stars. And it had these effects with whole-tone scales, which I thought I invented myself, of course not for very long, until I met the first composer who heard that piece and mentioned Ravel and Debussy, but, in my own way, I came up with it myself, so in a way it was "my" invention.

AL Yes. A discovery!

MK And I was so excited about it

AL I know. It is a discovery for you, yourself. As you know, we are influenced by so many different things, and you don't know what it is, it all goes into the same mix and then it comes out in your own way.

MK Another thing that is important in your music is resonance.

AL Yes. Absolutely!

MK So when you use pedal directions, how strictly do you want performers to follow these directions. Does the performer have any flexibility into pedal changes?

AL Oh, Yes! But in some cases, if I want something really blurred, hopefully the pianist is sensitive enough that they understand that that's what I'm after, so you know there are different acoustical qualities in different rooms and different pianos, so of course they can be changed individualistically. But in a lot of cases you can tell, at least I think, the sound that I want. If I wanted something to be *secco*, there would be no piano pedaling in it, and because of the way that I write the pedaling in other parts, you would know that, if that whole passage had nothing in it. But also in instructions I do say that in many cases use the piano pedaling as written but in, in...

MK when nothing is written

AL Yes, sometimes I say "at the discretion of the performer."

MK Do you ever use the *sostenuto* pedal?

AL Seldom, Seldom. I don't know why...

MK Because you like the blurred harmonies better, maybe than...

AL Yes. I use it sometimes, but very seldom.

MK And do you think of the piano generally as a percussion instrument or as a string instrument.

AL I don't know if I think about it as any of those instruments. It's just an instrument that...

MK Gives you all these possibilities...

AL Yes, It's coloristic, it's percussive, you know, there are some parts where I absolutely want a *martellato* effect, and I will write that in. I guess I know the piano so well, I don't even think about those things. I get out of it what I want.

MK It's your own "language." One thing you said that I liked in the broad-band video-conference master class was about the *una corda* pedal. That is a comment

I make in every piano competition I judge. About pianists using the *una corda* pedal as a substitute for a *piano* dynamic. I find myself repeatedly writing that whole sentence: “please don’t use the *una corda* pedal just to create a *piano* dynamic, save it for a special timbre, special effect!” I’m glad that you have the same idea about this. So do you use the soft pedal a lot?

AL You will see points in the music where that is used, or I sometimes say “*una corda* pedal may be used.” Well, it’s the same thing; we’ve all played all these different kinds of pianos. There are some pianos that you put your hands on as quietly as possible, and press as gently as possible, and it comes out so loud that you actually have to use the soft pedal, even though you haven’t been practicing it with the soft pedal, because of different pianos.

MK But I make even a comparison with like, imagine a violinist using the mute to create a piano dynamic, or a trumpet player. It changes the whole timbre. And I am very sensitive to that...

Could you tell me a little bit about your most recent piano piece that you wrote for *Esther Honens Piano Competition* in Calgary.

AL Yes, it was written for Katherine Chi, who was one of the laureates. I don’t know if they have an actual piano competition winner. But she was the *Esther Honens* Laureate two years ago. I was asked to write a new piece for her, because, as the Laureate, she comes back at the end of October to do a whole concert.

If one includes all the nine pieces in *Star Light Star Bright* and the four pieces in *Music for Piano* and all the other piano pieces I’ve written that are just for solo piano, I must have written about fourteen piano pieces, and when I was asked to write this piece, again, I didn’t want to write it, because I’d written all these piano pieces already. But because it came at a time when I was writing my Opera, which is the biggest, most immense piece that I have written, and maybe one of the biggest pieces that one can write, it’s a two-hour opera for big orchestra and chorus

MK Wagner?

AL Well, it might as well quite as big! (laughs) I don’t think I would ever attempt to do that. I spent six years exclusively, almost exclusively writing this opera. And it really took up every moment of my time. I did five drafts of act one and that’s the reason it took me so long to write this opera (one of the reasons).

I was towards the end of this opera, getting it prepared for a concert performance (it hasn’t yet been staged, but the concert performance happened in April 2002). I guess I was at a weak point, because I was asked to write this piece, and I didn’t want to write it, but then I thought more about it, and I decided that I would do it because it’s an opportunity to write for really a fine

pianist. Whoever wins that competition has to be of a certain *calibre*. It's an instrument that I know well, so I wouldn't have to think very hard about it, because I was exhausted from writing the opera, which is called, *The Scarlet Princess*. And at the same time I decided that I was going to write a string quartet. Both the piano solo and the string quartet are kind of clarifying ensemble/instruments to write for. So after writing mega music, I would have to go back to distilling myself in the finest way possible. So, unfortunately, both pieces were hard to write, because of that, because I went exactly in the opposite direction of the opera. And I thought with my careful planning that it would be the opposite, that it would be easy to go to the finest distillation, but it's not, because to write a good piano piece takes effort. To write a good string quartet might take more effort. So just in the last few months I've completed both pieces.

The piano piece I wanted to be completely different from any thing I had ever written. So it took me a bit of wrestling to find out what it was that I wanted this piece to be. I went to a concert of Katherine Chi, when she was here in Toronto, to hear how she played. I decided just to write a piece. This piece was not tailored to any styles that I connected with her. But I did know she was a very good pianist. So this is a technically virtuosic piece, and it's probably just over ten minutes long, but it is a lot of notes and it's called *Put On Your Running Shoes*, which as you know from looking at all my other pieces, I never had a title like *Put On Your Running Shoes!* It's a kind of urban funky, quirky piece. It's an avant-garde boogie-woogie. So I wrote something I don't do a lot. The left hand just plays patterns, just a pattern that repeats for pages, which might drive the pianist crazy. The right hand is playing very funky quasi-jazz lick punctuations. It's a quirky piece and quite entertaining, but it goes like blazes...

MK In ten minutes...

AL In ten minutes, and you keep going. And so there are points where the passage work, the repetitive passage pattern moves into the right hand, and the left hand does all of this quirky, off-beat jabbing playing, while the right hand is doing repetitive patterns and then it goes back again. So really the repetitive patterns go on for a long, long time. It's the opposite hand that has the harmonic and the motivic interest. So it's like a completely different kind of piece, which was very refreshing for me to write. I was having a lot of fun doing this.

MK So left hand is mainly with single-note passages?

AL Yes, running passages of sixteenth notes. Just running sixteenth notes that repeat over and over and over and over.

MK Is it within one octave or is it a large range?

AL No, within the octave range. It's the right hand (when the passage work is on the left hand) that jumps around from place to place. There's not too much hand crossing in it though. Then it changes to a 7/16 pattern, which goes on forever and ever. It's quite a lot of fun, and there are some glissandi at the end...

MK I can't wait to see it. Will it be published soon?

AL The copyist has it right now...

MK Will it be available at the Canadian Music Centre here?

AL I will make it available at the Canadian Music Centre. But she's got the premiere in October

MK So, after that?

AL Right after that I could. In fact I just talked to Jackie Parker about the piece and I said, "I have a piece for you" (laughs) and the other pianist that I think could be very interested in [it], is a pianist also who I've touched base with, but he has never performed my music, and that's Marc André Hamelin. It's a technically brilliant piece and it's a lot of fun and I have a sneaking suspicion that it is going to be a big crowd pleaser. But it takes a lot to play this piece well.

MK Maybe a final piece in a recital program...

AL Or it could be, maybe a longer...

MK Encore?

AL Yes, It's a long encore, but some pianists play longer encores. But it's hard, and there are no places for page turns, so that the pianist would either have to memorize it or have a page turner. And most pianists with contemporary music don't use turners, but they read from the score of course.

MK Is this a measured score?

AL Yes.

MK But it has many meter changes?

AL No, actually, it's completely different. It goes in 2/4 and 4/4 for four pages, and then it has a small passage with non-metered music, and then... or maybe I did finally put a meter, because I wrote it as a non-metered passage, but I might have

put on a meter... and it's that middle transition part that's freer in nature, that breaks away from pattern, and then it goes into a 7/16 bar which goes on, again for pages and pages before it gets to the end. So we will see how it goes, I'm dying to hear it, because I have only heard myself stumble through it.

MK Will it be played in Calgary?

AL In Calgary.

MK These pieces that you have written for pedagogical purposes for students. I think it's a wonderful idea, because children have all kinds of methods out there, but none that is really tailored to prepare them for performance of the twentieth-century music. And I know from your biographical sources that you were trained using the Royal Conservatory system. Did you ever use any other methods, or it was only through classical pieces?

AL Just through classical pieces.

MK I like that way a lot. You know there are so many available methods...

AL Yes, it wasn't the methods that I learned through, it was just how to play well, how to get a good sound, how to start a new technique, Hannon exercises, you know the very basics, as pianists have learned all through time. So there is not a method that I learned from, but different books that would teach me how to read music, for instance. And you learn from the pieces. If the teacher is trying to teach you some kind of pedaling, then the teacher will find for you the piece. My children are studying right now with a Russian teacher. Although her method of teaching really comes from her Russian studies, her Russian background, which is very, very good, and a whole different way of teaching, for instance pedaling, than I was taught. Coloristic pedaling, rather than...

MK Marking the beats with pedal...

AL That's right. It's very complex pedaling. For my children, who are nine and twelve, it's like second nature to them.

MK What is important to me is, knowing how to pedal in polyphony, if you should.

AL It's very difficult. I always use pedaling to get me out of problems with my fingers, but their teacher doesn't allow that at all.

MK So you consider your pedagogical pieces to be *Star Light Star Bright* and *Music for Piano*?

AL Absolutely!

MK Are there any other pedagogical piano pieces.

AL And also this little piece for duo for little children...

MK *Afterimages*?

AL No, the one for the little kiddies.

MK What is the title of that?

AL *Dans Le Jardin de Luxembourg*.

MK Is that available?

AL No. It's in pencil score on my piano, and I will have to give it to my copyist. It's very charming. I love this piece as well, as it captures the time when we were in Paris, my family and I. We spent time at the Luxembourg Gardens together, because we stayed at an apartment two blocks from the Gardens. It's a charming little piece.

MK It sounds (from the title) like an impressionistic piece. Is that what you would say? Maybe it's the French that makes me think that...

AL Not necessarily. It's just a very charming little piece and our piano teacher wants me to write a whole series of these pieces, but I have to get on to other commissions right now.

MK One of the pieces in your pedagogical sets is a minimalism-training piece. *Changes*. Is that the one?

AL Yes, *Changes*.

MK Which kind of minimalism do you think mostly of...

AL None of them really. It's just the fact that the repetitive patterns that change harmonically ever so and then shift, but it also probably stems from my study, my listening to *Gamelan* music. And also my two-piano piece *Afterimages*, the middle movement is called "*The Ringing Earth*" which was written early in 1980. The second movement was inspired by *Gamelan* music. And it has the same patterns, the shifting accents that are found in *Changes*.

- MK What I find interesting is that it is not the kind of pattern that puts you to sleep. It has contour, it has form.
- AL Yes. It does. In fact when you looked at that master class that I did, I think I might even have talked about how you have to hear where it goes, because there is an inner propulsion to it in the harmony. It gets you to certain spots, and you have to move towards those spots. But actually, I find the piece quite moving in a way.
- MK Could you tell me why you decided to write *O Magnum Mysterium: In Memoriam Glenn Gould* for orchestra, as opposed to piano?
- AL Because I was writing on a commission. The commission came in 1981 and it was from McGill University for their student string orchestra. And at that time I decided to use the piece to explore timbres in strings. And I sat down and I actually had a road map for the piece. I wrote it down on this road map, because of timbres, areas that I was going to explore. And I actually (at the time) was inspired by a book of images from the universe: *The Milky Way*. I thought I would try to conjure this great vastness with strings, and I also decided... at that time they had 44 string players in this orchestra, which is quite big for a university string orchestra, and I thought, these kids don't show up to all rehearsals. Some come, some don't. It's not a hundred per cent all the time. So I thought, if I gave each one of them their own part, that's not the same as anybody else's, they will play certain passages all the same, but at some point, it would make their part unique from all the others, they would want to show up, because without them, that part would not be there. It's not like twelve violinists playing the same part. So of course, that was a naive thought of mine, because what happened was that they didn't show up all the time. They weren't all there until the final performance...
- MK The conductor had to sing the parts?
- AL You know, they could get the gist of it... So what happened was, I was moving toward, I was sort of at the beginning of this planning and waiting, and I was in rehearsals with New Music Concerts here, which produces new music concerts, that's Robert Aitken's group. They had commissioned a new piece of mine and it was going to be my first major Toronto performance. They were premiering two compositions of mine on the same program, which was pretty heady. I was very naive and inexperienced at that time, and didn't realize what that entailed. So I showed at one of the rehearsals and the harpist said to me, "We were listening to CBC radio this morning, did you hear what happened?" I said, "No." She said, "Glenn Gould had a stroke, and it's a serious stroke and he is

not expected to recover.” And so all of us (the piece is written for twelve players, it’s called *Sanctuary*), all of us sort of came together, we were kind of gloomy and sad at the beginning of the rehearsal. We all talked about Glenn Gould, and what a tragedy, and how shocked we all were. We went through the motions of going through rehearsal for an up-coming concert. I had just moved here from California, and I had no piano in my apartment. I took a job at the conservatory teaching music just because I had to have a piano. So right after the rehearsal I went to my practice room at the conservatory and I started writing, working on my piece, because the deadline was in a month or something, and instead of working on the piece... I would start with the piece, but then I would end up playing Bach. And I would say, no, no, no, I can’t, I’ve to go back to working on this, and I would work on that passage, and then I would end up playing something else. I started doing more of that than working on my piece. I would be playing pieces, classical pieces, and I started meditating through the music, and again that was when I held the pedal down and I got the essence of music by having the harmonies just blur into one another, and I was thinking more about Glenn Gould than about my piece and so this went on and on, and I kept shifting my brain back to my piece, and it ended up trailing into something else.

Then I began thinking (as I was working) about why he was in that situation, because he gave so much. His whole life was his music. He had problems with his health and you know, he didn’t take care of himself. He ate poorly, he didn’t sleep. All his energy went into his music making. So music making and creation often entails a great deal of sacrifice, and whether or not you go into it realizing that’s what it is, or whether you fall upon it, that’s what happens in many cases. Not in every case, but in many cases. So I began to think, what does it mean to be doing this, even at that time, when I was just beginning my professional career.

The whole notion of not being understood, of pressing towards excellence, when nobody else really perceives excellence, your excellence or the excellence of your attempt. The fact that if you put the same amount of effort into writing a piece of music as you would in becoming a neurosurgeon, that you have a respect in society, and you earn a living that is commensurate with your skill, whereas a composer hardly ever, ever, ever reaches that situation. All of these things came flooding in. Why does one sacrifice one’s life to this sort of amorphous thing, which is music making! So all these thoughts went through my mind as I wrote my piece, and finally in the piece *O Magnum Mysterium* is everything that I experienced right at that time, as he was dying and in the following month, because he died within three days after having the stroke. So the piece has great moments of torment, but it has great moments of sublime music. In fact over the course of that time I listened to, I played the Bach *French Suite* to myself, I played a recording of the Bach *Orchestral Suite* (the one that has the *Air on the G String* in it), I played Mahler (*Das Lied von der Erde*), and I played the Bach *B-flat minor Prelude and Fugue*. I went to his memorial service, which

was held at a big church right down Bloor Street, and we sang two hymns, one of which was *Nun danket alle Gott*, a piece that I sang as a chorale prelude when I was an undergraduate student at UBC. So what happened was, portions of all these pieces are found in *O Magnum Mysterium: In Memoriam Glenn Gould*.

MK Are they quoted?

AL They are all quoted. But in most unusual ways, so they become the ghostly echo of the piece, or I try to recreate the sound from when I improvised that piece on the piano with the pedal held down, so you hear this kind of really blurry... and... Then the music goes into clarity, from blurring to clarity. Sometimes it went the other way. So it's all in the texture... this piece. And to this day, even though the piece was completed in 1982, that's one of my real signature pieces, and I remember to this day, when that piece was performed, all those feelings...

The last two quotations on the piece are from *Das Lied von der Erde, Der Abschied* and at the end the music just disappears into nothingness, and there is a real moment of acceptance. In this piece I worked out the answer to why it is that one gives one's life over to art... and that's because in the end, what you leave behind is the essence of something important,

MK Bigger than you...

AL Yes. And that creation and the art of making something, creating something that's an expression of yourself, pure and genuine, it's of such great importance, that everything else pales in comparison with that.

The National Ballet of Canada, which is one of Canada's most highly regarded companies, a choreographer named Dominique Dumais choreographed the work on a program called "*Inspired by Gould*." And it was a whole program of many works that were dedicated to Glenn Gould. And she asked me if she could use this piece. The original one is made for 44 divisi strings. Why 44? (laughs) Because there were 44 players at the University of McGill's String Program. And they needed it for 33 players, that's as many string players as they had in the orchestra. So it was a version commissioned, which is exactly the same piece, for 33 strings. And they are remounting it this Fall, on this first program of the 2003-2004 season. And I have to say, I tried to talk her out of using the piece, because it's such, it's probably my most personal piece, and it is to me, non danceable, because it has no meter, just a flow of feeling.

MK Have you seen the choreography?

AL Yes I did, and I found it stunning when I saw it! It is greater than the sum of its parts. It makes my piece even more expressive.

MK I would think so. Ballet doesn't have to be only dance, it could be this prolonged expression...

AL Yes... Incredible! In the hands of somebody else it could be made so banal. But it was not at all. It was a sheer expression of what I worked through in my piece, and she understood that inherently, without my telling her. It was a real amazing coincidence. That kind of thing has happened in my life. I don't often plan things. I fall into them, or I make myself available to things, to events, to people, to musicians, to projects.

MK That's wonderful!

AL I find my way through life that way. Sometimes it's horrendous doing that.

MK I have to say that from what I have read about you it is obvious that you are a communicator through music and as a human being. I respect you so much for that. I love every thing that you have done. Exactly what you are saying: you make yourself available and you are so accessible. It's wonderful for me to have this opportunity to really be able to talk with you in person. You are probably the only composer, whose phone number can be found on the Internet (the composer laughs), you are so open and available. In your master class you give so much of yourself! The first time I heard your music, I had a feeling that you would be the kind of composer whose music I would want to play, because you communicated that kind of humanity through your music.

AL Well, I have a commitment to myself as a human being, but also I have a commitment to music making, because I feel seriously as part of a tradition of creation and I take it further in my own way. I am not happy just recreating something that has already been done; it's not of interest to me. And again that choice is a tougher choice to make than to write in a style that is more accessible, to write in a style that's easier to perceive, to write in a quasi-tonal style.

.....

After an almost two-hour interview, the recording resources were exhausted and the conversation continued longer in a more informal way through lunch, where among other discussions this author thanked the composer for the interview.

APPENDIX D

Musical Scores and Discography of Selected Repertoire

Maurice Ravel: *Gaspard de la Nuit: 3 poèmes pour piano d'après Aloysius Bertrand.*

- Scores

Ravel, Maurice. *Gaspard de la Nuit*. London, New York: Edition Peters, 1991.

Ravel, Maurice: *Gaspard de la Nuit: 3 poèmes pour piano d'après Aloysius Bertrand* (3 poems for piano after Aloysius Bertrand) edited and fingered by Gaby Casadesus. New York, NY: G. Schirmer, 1990.

Ravel, Maurice. *Piano Masterpieces of Maurice Ravel*. Includes *Gaspard de la Nuit*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., No. 0-486-25137-3, 1986.

Ravel, Maurice. *Gaspard de la Nuit: 3 poèmes pour piano d'après Aloysius Bertrand*. Paris: A. Durand, c1909.

- Recordings

Calliope Records CD 3824/5. *Ravel: Intégrale de l'oeuvre de piano*. Includes *Gaspard de la Nuit*. Jacques Rouvier, piano 2003.

Sony Classical CD 63316. Complete Piano Music of Maurice Ravel. Includes *Gaspard de la Nuit*. Robert Casadesus, piano 1998.

Decca CD 433515. *Ravel: Complete Works for Solo Piano*. Includes *Gaspard de la Nuit*. Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano 1992.

EMI Classics Series CD p1991. *Mussorgsky: Kartinki s vystaoki (Pictures at an exhibition)*. Ravel: *Gaspard de la Nuit*. Alexander Toradze, piano, 1991.

Claude Debussy: *Douze Études Pour Piano*.

- Scores

Debussy, Claude. *12 Etudes for piano*. Ed. Zóltan Kocsis. Urtext. Budapest: Könemann Music, K247, 1998.

Debussy, Claude. *Douze Études Pour Piano*. Kraków: Boleslaw Woytowicz, 1967.

Debussy, Claude. *Douze Études Pour Piano*. Paris: A. Durand, c1916.

- Recordings

Deutsche Grammophon, CD 471359. Debussy: *Twelve Etudes*. Boulez: *Second Piano Sonata*. Mauricio Pollini, piano, 2003.

Epic LC 3842. *Debussy: Twelve Etudes*. Charles Rosen, Piano, 1962.

Decca gold label series DL 9599. Debussy: *Twelve Etudes*. Monique Haas, piano, 1952.

Sergei Prokofiev: *Sonata for Piano No. 3, Op. 28 in A minor*

- Scores

Prokofiev, Sergei. *Piano Sonatas No. 1-4*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, c2002.

Prokofiev, Sergei. *Complete Piano Sonatas*. Ed. Gyorgy Sandor. New York: MCA Music, c1967.

Prokofiev, Sergei. *Sonata No. 3 ("from old notebooks") for piano*. Edited with special annotations by Harry Cumpson. New York: Leeds Music, c1945.

- Recordings

Arte Nova CD. *Prokofiev: Piano Sonatas (Complete)*. Peter Dimitriev, piano 2003.

Olympia CD 705. *Prokofiev: Complete Piano Sonatas*. Murray McLachlan, piano, 1999.

Chandos CD 9637. *Prokofiev: Complete Piano Sonatas*. Boris Berman, pianist, 1998.

Newport Classics CD 60092. *Prokofiev: Complete Piano Sonatas: Vol. I*. Barbara Nissman, piano, 1993.

CBS Records CD 559. Includes *Sonata for Piano No. 3, Op. 28 in A minor*. Gary Graffman, piano, 1989.

Béla Bartók: *Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs Op. 20.*

- Score

Bartók, Béla. *Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs Op. 20, Piano Solo.*
London: Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited, B & H 17656, c1939.

- Recordings

Eroica Classical CD 3136. *Bartók: Solo Piano Works.* June De Toth, piano, 2004.

Vox CD 3610. *Eight Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs for piano, Sz. 74, BB 83, Op. 20.* Gyorgy Sandor, piano, 2003.

Sony CD 63380. *25th Anniversary Edition.* Murray Perahia, piano, 1997.

Pearl CD 9166. *Bartók plays Bartók.* Béla Bartók, piano, 1995.

Henry Cowell: *Aeolian Harp & The Banshee.*

- Score

Cowell, Henry. *Piano Music.* Volume I includes *Aeolian Harp & The Banshee.* New York: Associated Music Publishers, Inc. Milwaukee, WI: distributed by Hal Leonard Corporation, c. 1960

- Recordings

Composers Recording, Inc. CD 837. *Wizards & Wildmen: Piano Music of Charles Ives, Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison.* Anthony De Mare, piano, 2000.

New Albion CD 103. *New music: piano compositions by Henry Cowell.* Chris Brown, Sorrel Hays, Joseph Kubera, Sarah Cahill, piano, 1999.

New World Records CD 80203-2. Includes *The Banshee, & Aeolian Harp.* Robert Miller, piano, 1995.

Composers Recording, Inc. CD 670. *The composer-performer.* Includes *Aeolian Harp & The Banshee.* Henry Cowell, Piano, 1994.

John Cage: *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano: Sonata No. 5*

- Score

Cage, John. *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano*. New York: Henmar Press, c1960.

- Recordings

Bridge CD 9081. *Cage: Sonatas and Interludes*. Aleck Karis, piano, 1998.

Mode CD 50. *Cage: Piano Works 2*. Includes *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano*. John Cage, 1996.

New World Records CD 80203. *Sound Forms for Piano*. Includes Cage's *Sonata No 5*. Robert Miller, piano, 1995.

Wergo CD 60156. *Cage: Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano*. Joshua Pierce, 1993.

Heinz Holliger: *Elis: Drei Nachtstücke für Klavier*. (Elis: Three Night Pieces for Piano)

- Score

Holliger, Heinz. *Elis: Drei Nachtstücke für Klavier*. (Elis: Three Night Pieces for Piano). Mainz, Germany: Schott, ED 5383, 1964.

- Recording

Schott Archives CD, Germany: *Elis: Drei Nachtstücke für Klavier*.

George Crumb: *Makrokosmos, Volume I: Twelve Fantasy-Pieces for Amplified Piano*.

- Score

Crumb, George. *Makrokosmos, Volume I: Twelve Fantasy-Pieces for Amplified Piano*. Facsimile printing from the manuscript by the composer. Edition Peters No. 66539a. New York: C. F. Peters Corp. c1974.

- Recordings

Furious Artisans CD 6805: *Makrokosmos I, II*, Laurie Hudicek, piano, 2002.

Music & Arts CD 1044: *Makrokosmos I, II*. Jo Boatright, piano, 1999.

Koch Schwann CD 364092-2: Includes *Makrokosmos I*. Christiane Mathé, piano, 1997.

Musiques Suisses CD 6091-2: *Makrokosmos I, II*. Emmy Henz-Diémand, piano, 1994.

Attacca Babel CD 9371/2: Includes *Makrokosmos I*. Robert Nasveld, piano, 1993.

Centaur 2050 CD: Includes *Makrokosmos I*. Jeffrey Jacob, piano, 1990.

Nonesuch LP H-71293: *Makrokosmos I*. David Burge, piano, 1974.

John Corigliano: *Fantasia on an Ostinato*

- Score

Corigliano, John. *Fantasia on an Ostinato for Solo Piano*. New York: G. Schirmer, Winona, MN: Distributed by H. Leonard, Ed. 3574, c1987.

- Recordings

Sony Classical CD 60747. *Phantasmagoria / John Corigliano*. Includes *Fantasia on an Ostinato*. Emanuel Ax, piano, p2000.

Chandos 8761. *American 20th century piano music*. Includes *Fantasia on an Ostinato*. David Allen Wehr, piano, 1989.

Alexina Louie: *Scenes from a Jade Terrace*

- Score

Louie, Alexina. *Scenes from a Jade Terrace*. Toronto, Canada: Gordon V. Thompson Music, V1464, 1996.

- Recordings

CMC Distribution Center CD A04: *Ancient Gardens*. Includes second movement: *Memories in an Ancient Garden*. Colleen Athparia, piano.

CMC CD AR 794. *Scenes from a Jade Terrace*. Jon Kimura Parker, piano. May 15 1991, Zurich, Switzerland.

RECITAL PROGRAM NOTES

Program I

University of Kentucky – College of Fine Arts – School of Music
Present

MIRA KRUIJA – PIANIST

Recital Hall

Singleton Center for the Arts

Friday, September 5, 1997 – 8:00pm – Lexington, KY, USA

Choral Prelude in G minor (c. 1739 / arr. 1909) J. S. Bach / Ferruccio Busoni
(1685-1750) (1866-1924)

Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland
(Now comes the Gentiles' Saviour)

Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111 (1822) Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

I *Maestoso; Allegro con brio ed appassionato*
II *Arietta (Adagio molto semplice e cantabile)*

Makrokosmos, Volume I (1972) George Crumb
Twelve Fantasy-Pieces after the Zodiac for Amplified Piano (b. 1929)

X *Spring-Fire, Aries*
XI *Dream Images (Love-Death Music), Gemini*

Carnaval Op. 9 (1835) Robert Schumann
Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes (1810-1856)

- *Préambule* • *Pierrot* • *Arlequin* • *Valse Noble* • *Eusebius* • *Florestan*
- *Coquette* • *Réplique* • *Sphinxes* • *Papillons* • *ASCH-SCHA Lettres Dansantes*
- *Chiarina* • *Chopin* • *Estrella* • *Reconnaissance* • *Pantalon et Colombine*
- *Valse Allemande* • *Intermezzo: Paganini* • *Aveu* • *Promenade* • *Pause*
- *Marche des "Davidsbündler" Contre les Philistins*

Encore

Preludes Op. 23 (1903) Sergei Rachmaninov
(1873-1943)

Prelude No. 4 in D Major

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of musical Arts

Choral Prelude in G minor (c. 1739 / arr. 1909)
Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland
(Now comes the Gentiles' Saviour)

J. S. Bach / Ferruccio Busoni
(1685-1750) (1866-1924)

In 1524 Martin Luther adapted the Latin hymn *Veni Redemptor Gentium* as a congregational hymn for the German Protestant service. *Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland* became a traditional hymn. The text translates in English as "Now comes the gentiles' Savior, as the Virgin's child revealed, at whom all the world marvels, that God this birth ordained to him."

In the early eighteenth century, Johann Sebastian Bach used this hymn tune in cantatas BWV 61 and 62, which he composed for the first week of Advent in years 1714 and 1724 (respectively). Bach also composed chorale prelude settings for organ based on this traditional tune, including BWV 599 (in *Orgel Büchlein*, 1713-15), as well as BWV 659, 660, and 661 (1735-1744). These organ chorale preludes are characterized by decorative ornamentation, polyphonic accompaniment, and interludes, which separate the repetitions of the verse taken from the traditional chorale.

Among many other transcriptions of J. S. Bach's works Ferruccio Busoni transcribed ten chorale preludes. Based on the Lutheran tradition of using a hymn of the service as an improvisatory and polyphonic organ prelude, Busoni created highly improvisatory settings of Bach's chorale preludes. His transcription of *Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland* is related to J. S. Bach's BWV 659 and while no virtuosic gestures are present in this setting, a highly refined control of touch is called for. Individual polyphonic layers require specific "timbres" made possible by the use of differentiated touch to create a colorful "instrumentation." The ability to use the pedals in a sensitive manner adds to the performance of this setting. The damper pedal is not to interfere with the individual articulation of each polyphonic layer but rather is used to enhance sonorous color. The *sostenuto* pedal can be used as a substitute for the prolonged pedal sounds of the organ. A successful performance of this beautiful setting depends on a perfect balance among technical attributes, including sensitive touch, meticulous legato, an ability to differentiate layers, and artful use of the pedals.

Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111 (1822)

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

- I *Maestoso; Allegro con brio ed appassionato*
- II *Arietta (Adagio molto semplice e cantabile)*

Ludwig van Beethoven was one of the most influential composers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He extended the inherited Classical tradition and foreshadowed the Romantic Era. The evolution of his innovative style can be traced in the thirty-two piano sonatas. The early sonatas are written in classical style, but those of the middle period are characterized by experiments with form and harmony. The later sonatas represent a consolidation and synthesis of form and the five last sonatas are characterized by perfect unity of form and sublime ideals.

Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111, is Beethoven's last piano sonata and one of his greatest achievements. Completed in 1822 and published in 1823, this sonata was dedicated to Archduke Rudolph who was Beethoven's sponsor, friend, and student.

In Op. 111 Beethoven returned to the concise two-movement form. The first is written in sonata form and the second is a series of variations. Answering the question posed by publishers as to where was the third movement of the sonata, Beethoven ironically replied that he did not have time to write a third movement. In fact the two movements provided a perfect form for Beethoven's ideas. These tightly organized movements stand as a concise relationship of opposites. They relate to each other as a question to an answer – *Must it be? It must be!* – words underscored in Beethoven's last string quartet from the same period. As a conflict and its resolution, these two movements embody the opposites of Beethoven's character: the powerful temperament of his early years and the philosophical, deep, and thoughtful nature of his late life. These opposites in these two contrasting movements are reflected through the juxtaposition of C minor to the C major key; dissonant diminished sonorities to primary tonic and dominant harmonies; the tempo of Allegro to Adagio; and the *Appassionato* character to *Semplice*. These contradictions symbolize the metamorphoses of human

confrontation to serene spiritual surrender, and the resolution of earthly turmoil to heavenly peace.

In the first movement, a sense of overwhelming power is combined with profound sensitivity and uncompromising logic into a concise formal architecture. The cataclysmic *Maestoso* unleashes this power with its forte dynamics, full-chordal texture, double dotted rhythms, and diminished seventh harmonies. The tempo contributes to the architecture of the movement. There is only one continuing rhythmic pulse from the *Maestoso* to *Allegro*, and the thirty-second notes of the introduction lead naturally to the sixteenth-note pulse of the *Allegro*, without changing the general flow, but increasing in intensity and dynamic level.

Beethoven's innovative changes to the traditional sonata form are seen in the extended size of the introduction (with its precedents only in his *Pathétique Sonata*); the short second theme in the exposition which seems to herald the serenity of the second movement; the extensive elaboration of the main theme in the development section; and the elaboration of the second theme in the recapitulation. In the first movement, complex polyphonic writing within simultaneous layers of the texture creates the idea of a massive confrontation. The conflict "resigns" itself into a calm C-major harmony which echoes to the beginning of the *Finale*.

The second movement is a series of variations on the theme entitled *Arietta* by Beethoven. This theme is characterized by a serene lyrical melody and choral texture, based on consonant triads. The movement is a magnificent example of Beethoven's mastery of the variation technique and reflects the spiritual and philosophical character of his late music. The unity of the variations is such that they flow without clear division from one another. The last three variations especially are written almost in a *fantasia* style. While the tempo remains unchanged throughout the variations, the complexity of subdivisions of the meter increases to conclude in ethereal trill passages in as many as three simultaneous voices.

Op. 111 is a *summary* of Beethoven's achievements in the piano sonata and a legacy for the evolution of the genre in the future.

Makrokosmos, Volume I (1972)
Twelve Fantasy-Pieces after the Zodiac for Amplified Piano

George Crumb
(b. 1929)

- X *Spring-Fire, Aries*
- XI *Dream Images (Love-Death Music), Gemini*

Crumb composed Volumes I and II of *Macrokosmos* during the years 1972-1973. The two volumes comprise a cycle of “Fantasy-pieces after the zodiac for amplified piano.” Each volume includes 12 pieces related to astrological signs of the zodiac, and is associated with a person born under each sign, including Crumb (*The Phantom Gondolier*), his relatives, friends, and personalities such as Brahms, Chopin, and Lorca. Pieces contain programmatic titles. The fourth piece of each part is the “Symbol” piece, the music of which is written in the geometrical shape of the symbolic title, as in *Crucifixus*, where the music is printed on two grand staves shaped like a cross. Similarly in *Spiral Galaxy*, the music is printed on a spiral grand staff.

There are numerous “inside and out” piano techniques included in the *Makrokosmos* volumes. The strings of the piano are depressed on their edges with the fingers of one hand while the keys are played with the other hand. Strings are slapped, struck, plucked, and tapped with the fingertips, and are played with thimble-capped fingers and other metal objects. Papers and chains are placed over the strings. Vocal effects are performed by the pianist: whispering, whistling, and shouting of nonverbal sounds and recognized words. These sounds are particularly selected to reflect the theme of each piece.

Makrokosmos is programmatic music, described by Crumb to be a “kind of cosmic drama.” The program of each piece is suggested by its title. As he conveys in the notes printed on the score, Crumb wanted the programmatic associations of *Makrokosmos* to be enigmatic. The artistic images of *Makrokosmos* stem from a spectrum of ideas, ranging from the “magical properties” of music to the “timelessness” of time. Life’s mysteries, spiritual impulses, and metaphysical associations are what Crumb is communicating through his music.

Spring-Fire, Aries contains the initials of David Burge, to whom the volume is dedicated. This fiery piece demands brilliant finger technique for its *Prestissimo* chromatic passages. The combination of hand-palm and forearm clusters with quick, chromatic finger passages and on-the-strings glissandos, call for high organization capability on the part of the performer. The two opening white key and black key forearm clusters set the “cosmic” mood.

The amplification and the continuous use of the damper pedal (which is to be depressed throughout the piece) maximize the volume of the numerous technical effects used in this piece including: forearm clusters; scraping of the low strings inside the piano; the “extremely rapid” grace notes in irregular groups; toccata-like alternations between blocked major second intervals and single notes. The latter grow to toccata-like alternations between black-key and white-key six-note clusters to be played with the side of the hand. All of these “inside-and-out” piano effects give a glimpse of the *Sounds of Spheres* as reflected in Crumb’s musical world.

Dream Images (Love-Death Music) Gemini contains poetic and Romantic Era associations. The piece concludes with the initials of Federico Garcia Lorca, who was born under the Gemini sign, hence the assumed poetic associations, which are also reflected by the character of the piece. The Romantic Era associations are conveyed by the quotes from Chopin’s *Fantaisie-Improvisation* in C-sharp minor.

The piece resembles a “time machine” that takes one back to a “faintly remembered music.” The Chopin quote from the past, with its crescendo, merges with the decrescendo line of Crumb’s music: the sound equivalent of the cinematographic effect of two images combined into one to create the idea of a memory that comes alive into the present.

The world in its magnitude is perfectly reflected in *Makrokosmos*: the stillness of Universe, the balance of planets, the contrast and unity of past and present.

Carnaval Op. 9 (1835)
Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

- *Préambule* • *Pierrot* • *Arlequin* • *Valse Noble* • *Eusebius* • *Florestan*
- *Coquette* • *Réplique* • *Sphinxes* • *Papillons* • *ASCH-SCHA Lettres Dansantes*
- *Chiarina* • *Chopin* • *Estrella* • *Reconnaissance* • *Pantalon et Colombine*
- *Valse Allemande* • *Intermezzo: Paganini* • *Aveu* • *Promenade* • *Pause*
- *Marche des "Davidsbündler" Contre les Philistins*

Robert Schumann met his future wife, Clara at an early age, when taking piano lessons from her father, Friedrich Wieck, but in 1834, while Clara had left town and her father had forbidden her to see Schumann, a new piano student came to Leipzig to study with Friedrich Wieck. Her name was Ernestine von Fricken. At "first-sight" in love with Ernestine, the young Schumann was intrigued by the association of his own surname with Ernestine's hometown, Asch. He discovered that the only letters that are musical-note letters in his name are those, which unscrambled, match the letters of the town of Asch: according to German terminology AS stands for A flat, C for C, and H for B natural. Also AS could be interpreted as A for A natural and S(es) for E flat (S being an abbreviation of ES). Likewise, the musical interpretation of Schumann's name would be S(es) for E flat, C, H for B natural, and A.

Schumann came up with musical-note combinations to base his *Carnaval* upon, hence the subtitle *Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes* (miniature scenes on four notes). The note combinations are represented in the *Sphinxes*, about one third from the beginning of the set: S(es)-C-H-A (E flat-C-B-A) for Schumann, and AS-C-H (A flat-C-B) & A-S(es)-C-H (A-E flat-C-B) for Asch. *Sphinxes* are not usually performed, but printed in the score. They cryptically symbolize "night" thoughts, which are to be transformed to "day thoughts" in the next piece, *Papillons*. Rachmaninov used to include *Sphinxes* in his performances of the *Carnaval*. *Sphinxes* will be played in this recital, performed on the low register, with *tromolo* octaves on the left hand and single line melodies on the right hand. *ASCH-SCHA: Lettres Dansantes* also reconfirms Schumann's obsession with the association between Asch and his own surname.

Schumann's imagination is at full bloom in this composition: *Carnaval* represents a masked ball where "musical portraits" of myriad characters come together in a brilliant set of pieces based on the four above-mentioned notes. Real characters such as *Estrella* (Ernestine von Fricken) and *Chiarina* (Clara Wieck) meet fictitious *Florestan* and *Eusebius*, who represent the two contradictory sides of Schumann's character: *Eusebius*, the lyrical and poetic Schumann and *Florestan*, the fiery and passionate Schumann. The composer used these two names as his own pseudonyms in his youth.

Characters from the *commedia dell'arte* come alive in *Pierrot* (the clumsy clown), *Arlequin* (the skilful acrobat), and *Pantalon et Colombine* (the arguing father and daughter). The latter makes reference to Clara's father and his paternal authority.

Real protagonists of the Romantic Era come to *Carnaval*. *Chopin* is represented in a beautiful lyrical piece, and intentionally placed between *Chiarina* and *Estrella* to emphasize the romantic involvement of the composer with both women. *Paganini* is represented in an extremely difficult piece with large leaps that make reference to the virtuosic character of his music.

In his magazine *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Schumann speaks of the fictitious "Davidsbünd" society which represents new ideas in art and their protagonists as opposed to the conservative *Philistins*. Within the whole composition the "Davidsbünd" society is represented by *Paganini*, *Chopin*, and *Schumann*.

In the final scene: *Marche des "Davidsbündler" Contre les Philistins* Schumann satirizes the conservatives of art and their archaic ideas through a seventeenth-century German folk tune: *Grandfathers' Dance*, which recurs twice in clumsy octaves on the low register of the piano. Written in the untraditional $\frac{3}{4}$ meter, the powerful march of *Davidsbündlers* juxtaposes the old clumsy *Philistins* tune several times throughout the finale to conclude in a brilliant coda which uses thematic materials of *Préambule*.

It is not known why *Carnaval* Op. 9 was dedicated to the violinist Lipinsky. The associations mentioned above are just a glimpse of what must have been going through Schumann's mind when he composed this work. *Carnaval* remains mystical, to be enjoyed for its extraordinary fantastic imagery!

Encore

Preludes Op. 23 (1903)

Sergei Rachmaninov
(1873-1943)

Prelude No. 4 in D Major

A famous concert pianist, composer, and conductor, Rachmaninov premiered most of his solo piano compositions at his professional performances. Rachmaninov's solo piano works are among the most popular written for the instrument. A piano virtuoso himself, Rachmaninov used the instrument to explore its technical limits and expressive possibilities.

Rachmaninov's fame as a pianist and composer was established at the age of nineteen with the composition and performance of the well-known *Prelude in C sharp minor* for piano, from *Morceaux de Fantaisie* Op. 3 (No. 2). Several other collections followed, including *Morceaux de Salon* Op. 10 (1893-94), *Moments Musicaux* Op. 16, (1986), and *Variations on a Theme of Chopin* Op. 22 (1902-03).

In May 1902 Rachmaninov married his cousin Natalia Satina, and after their honeymoon in Western Europe, the couple returned to their Ivanovka estate in Russia. In February 10, 1903, Rachmaninov premiered in Moskow his *Chopin Variations* and three *Preludes* from Op. 23. While expecting his first daughter's birth in May of that year, Rachmaninov completed composing the set of *Ten Preludes* Op. 23, dedicated to Alexander Siloti, who was Rachmaninov's cousin and best man at his wedding. A former student of Franz Liszt, Siloti had also been Rachmaninov's piano professor at the Moskow Conservatory.

The *Ten Preludes* Op. 23 can be performed as a set or separately. A beautiful solo piano composition in its own right, the *Prelude in D Major* Op. 23, No. 4 is one of Rachmaninov's most inspired piano compositions. Its deep sensitive lyricism unfolds in a multi-layered texture to achieve one of the most beautiful climaxes in piano literature.

Program II

University of Kentucky – College of Fine Arts – School of Music

Present

JENNIFER SCHILLER – VIOLINIST

MIRA KRUIJA – PIANIST

Recital Hall

Singleton Center for the Arts

Friday, January 23, 1998 – 8:00pm – Lexington, KY, USA

First Rhapsody for Violin and Piano (1928)

Béla Bartók
(1981-1945)

Lassú: Moderato

Sonata No. 9 for Violin and Piano: “Kreutzer” (1803)

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

I *Adagio sostenuto; Presto*

II *Andante con variazioni*

III *Finale: Presto*

Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano (1886)

César Franck
(1822-1890)

I *Allegretto ben moderato*

II *Allegro*

III *Recitativo-Fantasia: Ben moderato*

IV *Allegretto poco mosso*

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of musical Arts

Lassú: Moderato

Bartók wrote his *First Rhapsody for Violin and Piano* in 1928. This Rhapsody contains the subtitle *Folk Dances* and includes two parts: *Prima Parte* (“*Lassú*”) and *Seconda Parte* (“*Friss*”). *Lassú* and *Friss* are associated with the traditional Hungarian dance *Verbunkos*, which derives its name from the German word *werbung* (recruiting).

Verbunkos was a recruiting dance originating in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Hungary. Musical and dance presentations would be used to encourage young men to enlist in the army. The first section of this dance – *Lassú* or *Lassan* – was in a slow tempo. The sergeant would lead this dance starting with slow and dignified movements. Then, the light cavalry officers and soldiers would gradually join while the intensity of the music, speed of tempo, and energy of dance movements would increase. The fast section of *Verbunkos* was called *Friss* or *Friska*.

The custom of recruiting by music and dance presentations came to an end in 1849, when the Austro-Hungarian army began to recruit by conscription. At this time the *Verbunkos* evolved to another dance form, *Csárdás* which became a national Hungarian dance. The two dances were used as sources of inspiration for contrived music, not only in Hungary, but other Eastern and Western European countries.

Bartók’s *First Rhapsody for Violin and Piano* contains the characteristics of *Verbunkos* and *Csárdás* dances, with the first slow part (*Lassú*), which makes use of dotted rhythms and powerful gestures, and the fast, accelerating second part (*Friss*). The two parts can be performed as a set, or separately. Bartók even provided two different endings for the *Friss*, one for its performance as a single piece, and one for the performance following *Lassú*. The *First Rhapsody* was dedicated to the violinist Joseph Szigeti, with whom Bartók performed many of his own compositions as well as standard Western violin and piano repertoire. The *First Rhapsody* also exists in violin/orchestra and cello/piano versions. This composition is an invaluable addition to the violin and piano repertoire of the twentieth century.

Sonata No. 9 for Violin and Piano: "Kreutzer" (1803)

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

- I *Adagio sostenuto; Presto*
- II *Andante con variazioni*
- III *Finale: Presto*

In 1803 the English mulatto violinist George Bridgetower asked Beethoven to compose a work for his Augarten Pavillion debut in Vienna. Beethoven used a movement from an earlier violin and piano work as the third movement, and added a first and a second movement to create what became known as the *Kreutzer Sonata for Violin and Piano*. Bridgetower received the score shortly before the performance and, with Beethoven as pianist, gave the premiere of this sonata at one of the Viennese Augarten Pavillion matinée concerts in May 1803. During the performance Bridgetower imitated on the violin Beethoven's several-octave piano arpeggio from the beginning of the *Presto*. After the premiere, and still excited by Bridgetower's brilliant and successful performance, Beethoven wrote on the top page of the score: *Sonata per uno mulattico lunattico*. Later Bridgetower and Beethoven had an argument about a lady, and Beethoven consequently changed his dedication of the work to the French violin virtuoso Rudolphe Kreutzer. But Kreutzer never gave a public performance of the *Sonata*, and considered it impossible to play!

The *Kreutzer Sonata* is written in a brilliant style for both instruments, described by Beethoven: "*in un stilo molto concertante quasi come d'un concerto.*" The slow introduction of the first movement starts with a series of double stops in the violin – an extremely difficult opening passage because of its demand for sound quality and intonation accuracy. This A major violin introduction is followed by an "echo" in the piano, colored with minor harmonies of the subdominant. Through a dialog between the instruments, the introduction leads to the A minor *Presto*, a striking example of energetic and passionate writing in chamber music. Throughout the movement, the piano part is technically demanding, and carries a *solo-concertante* character.

The second movement is a series of highly ornamented variations based on a lyrical theme written in binary form. The four variations are followed by an extensive coda. The high register of the violin and the contrasting textural qualities of both instruments are explored in this slow movement.

Written in sonata form, the *Presto Finale* returns to the energy of the opening movement. But while the first movement, with its A minor tonality and 2/4 meter is characterized by profound drama, the third movement brings a note of joy and festivity with its 6/8 meter and A major tonality. There is no motivic relationship between the movements, but the unity of the cycle stands in the character of the movements, and the “*stile concertante*” writing. The *Kreutzer Sonata* has enjoyed immense popularity and has inspired literary works by writers of such stature as Leo Tolstoy. It is one of the most performed works by Beethoven.

Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano (1886)

César Franck
(1822-1890)

- I *Allegretto ben moderato*
- II *Allegro*
- III *Recitativo-Fantasia: Ben moderato*
- IV *Allegretto poco mosso*

César Franck was born in Liège, Belgium, in 1822 and became a citizen of France in 1873. He was trained as a pianist at the Paris Conservatoire, and later studied both organ and composition. His compositions are characterized by Romantic expression and colored with Wagnerian chromatic harmonies. Franck was also an innovator in the treatment of classical forms. He often used cyclic forms with themes that recur in several movements of the work.

The *Violin and Piano Sonata in A Major* is one of Franck's best-known compositions. It was composed in the last decade of the composer's life and as a wedding gift for the famous Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaye. Although not fully understood during Franck's lifetime, the *Violin and Piano Sonata in A Major* has become an important part of the standard violin repertoire. Continuing Beethoven's tradition, Franck writes his *Violin and Piano Sonata* in a highly *concertante* style for both instruments. The piano part is demanding throughout the cycle, with beautiful solos, that compare favorably with any solo piano repertoire writing. Highly influenced by French and German music, the work is characterized by beautiful melodies, chromatic harmonies, and organized in a cyclic form. The four movements share themes, which return throughout the cycle in new contexts.

The sublimely serene first movement is followed by the stormy Allegro of the second movement, again, highly demanding technically for the piano. The third movement, entitled *Recitativo-Fantasia* is characterized by a free *fantasia* style, which combines *recitativo* sections with dramatic episodes. The beautiful song-like dialogue between the two instruments in the first theme of the fourth movement is juxtaposed with highly dramatic episodes returning from the third movement, and the sonata concludes its cycle with a brilliant coda.

Program III

University of Kentucky – College of Fine Arts – School of Music
Present

UK
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MICHAEL LUXNER – GUEST CONDUCTOR

MIRA KRUIJA – PIANO SOLOIST

Winner

UK Symphony Orchestra Solo Concerto Competition 1998

Concert Hall
Singletary Center for the Arts
Thursday, February 25, 1999 – 8:00pm – Lexington, KY, USA

Reels and Reveries (1991)

Philip Rhodes
(b. 1940)

Symphony No. 81, G Major

Franz Joseph Haydn
(1840-1893)

- I Vivace
- II Andante
- III Minuetto Allegretto
- IV Allegro ma non troppo

**Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 23 in B flat minor* (1875)

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikowsky
(1840-1893)

- I *Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso – Allegro con spirito*
- II *Andantino semplice – Prestissimo – Tempo primo*
- III *Allegro con fuoco*

MIRA KRUIJA – PIANO SOLOIST

*The Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto performance is presented in partial fulfillment of
Mira Kruija's Doctor of Musical Arts degree

Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 23 in B flat minor (1875)

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikowsky
(1840-1893)

- I *Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso – Allegro con spirito*
- II *Andantino semplice – Prestissimo – Tempo primo*
- III *Allegro con fuoco*

Tchaikowsky completed the *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 23* on February 21, 1875. He had originally dedicated this composition to Nicholai Gregorievich Rubinstein, who rejected the work as “unplayable,” and offered to perform it only with the editing that he suggested. Determined not to alter a note from the score, Tchaikowsky changed the dedication to the world-renowned pianist Hans von Bülow, who promised to play the concerto in his upcoming American tour. The composition was premiered on October 25, 1875, by the Boston Symphony Orchestra with Hans von Bülow as soloist. The American audiences obliged Bülow to repeat the entire finale after every performance. In 1881 Tchaikowsky conducted the *Concerto* with pianist Adèle aus der Ohe at the Carnegie Hall in New York City. This was the first time a concerto was performed in this auditorium. Rubinstein, the pianist who had formerly rejected the concerto, performed it at the Paris Exposition with great success.

Beloved by audiences throughout the world, Tchaikowsky’s *First Piano Concerto* became one of the most performed works in the twentieth century. World-renowned pianists such as Sviatoslav Richter, Vladimir Horowitz, Emil Gilels, Van Cliburn, Martha Agerich, and Gary Graffman have played and recorded the concerto, a landmark of piano virtuoso writing from the high Romantic Era.

The *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 23 in B flat minor* is written in the traditional three movement scheme with the first movement in sonata form. The most well known tune of this concerto comes from the introduction of the first movement, but is not repeated later during the concerto. The introduction, written in three-part form, is complete in itself. The middle section of the Introduction is a solo cadenza of considerable technical difficulty. It introduces octave passages, which will be elaborated later in the third movement. Octaves, chords, arpeggios, and arpeggiated-chord runs as well as brilliant

scalar passages cascade throughout this *Cadenza*, to introduce the “conquering” power of pianistic technique.

The symphonic character of the orchestral writing plays an important role in the dramaturgy of the work. The orchestra is as important as the solo instrument, and at times the piano simply accompanies the full-textured orchestral themes. The piano and tutti interplay reveals virtuosic possibilities of pianistic and orchestral writing. The major *Cadenza* of the first movement is known for its virtuosity and technical demand.

The second movement, *Andante Semplice* contains a *Prestissimo* middle section, which takes the place of the scherzo in the traditional four-movement cycle. The beautiful pastoral-character *Andante* sections of the movement are contrasted by this spirited *Prestissimo*, reminiscent of a ballroom scene.

The *Allegro con Fuoco* finale brings on energetic Russian folk-dance-tune characteristics that build to an extraordinary octave-passage in the final solo *Cadenza*. Scalar double octave passages, which span a several-octave range transform into leaping double octaves, to prepare the Coda, which brings back the second theme of the third movement in a concluding pianistic and orchestral triumph.

Program IV

University of Kentucky – College of Fine Arts – School of Music
Present

LECTURE RECITAL: ART MUSIC FOR THE PIANO SINCE 1900

The expansion of expressive, technical, and sound spectrum
of the modern acoustic piano in selected twentieth-century piano repertoire

MIRA KRUIJA – LECTURER & PIANIST

Recital Hall

Singletery Center for the Arts

Tuesday, April 3, 2001 – 8:00pm – Lexington, KY, USA

<i>Gaspard de la Nuit</i> (1908) <i>Three Poèmes pour le piano d'après Aloysius Bertrand</i> <i>Ondine</i>	Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
<i>Douze Études</i> (1915) <i>Pour Les notes Répétées</i>	Claude Debussy (1862-1918)
<i>Improvisations Op. 20, VIII</i> (1920)	Béla Bartók (1881-1945)
<i>Aeolian Harp</i> (1923) <i>The Banshee</i> (1925)	Henry Cowell (1897-1965)
<i>Makrokosmos Volume I</i> (1972) <i>Twelve Fantasy Pieces after the Zodiac for Amplified Piano</i> <i>Spring Fire – Aries</i> <i>Dream Images (Love-Death Music) – Gemini</i>	George Crumb (b. 1929)
<i>Elis: Drei Nachtstücke für Klavier, II</i> (1961 / revised 1966)	Heinz Holliger (b. 1939)
<i>Fantasia on an Ostinato</i> (1985)	John Corigliano (b. 1938)
<i>Scenes From a Jade Terrace</i> (1988) <i>Memories in an Ancient Garden</i>	Alexina Louie (b. 1949)

This lecture recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of musical Arts

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	Master of Arts in Music, Piano Performance and Pedagogy Radford University, Radford, Virginia, USA	1995
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Certification

Nationally Certified Teacher of Music, MTNA, USA	2004
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Pedagogical Experience

University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky	since 1996
Assistant Professor: piano, theory School of music	since 2004
Master Teacher, piano, organ Preparatory Program	2000-2003
Teaching Assistant, piano School of Music	1996-2002
Centenary School of Music, Lexington, Kentucky	since 2002
Piano and Theory Faculty Piano Department	
Governor's School for the Arts, Lexington, Kentucky	since 2001
Instrumental Ensemble Coach, Piano Faculty	
West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia	1996
Teaching Assistant	
Radford University, Radford, VA	1993-1995
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Radford University Community Arts School, Radford, Virginia Principal Piano Teacher	1994-1996
The National University Conservatory of Albania, Tirana Albania Pedagogue of Advanced Piano	1990-1993
The National University Conservatory of Albania, Tirana Albania Assistant Pedagogue of Piano	1987-1990

Awards and Honors

Teacher Who Made a Difference Award, UK, College of Education	2004
Dissertation Enhancement Award, UK Graduate School	2003
Annual Travel Grants to adjudicate international piano events, UK	1998-2003
Chancellor's Outstanding Teaching Award, University of Kentucky	1998
Pi Kappa Lambda National Music Honor Society, Radford University	1998
Who's Who in American Universities and Colleges, Radford University	1995
Phi Kappa Phi Academic Honor Society, Radford University	1995

Leadership

President, BAMTA	2004
Music Theory Chair, KMTA	2004
Publicity and Promotion Chair, BAMTA	since 2000

Professional Membership

College Music Society

Music Teachers National Association

American Guild of Organists

National Federation of Music Clubs

National Guild of Piano Teachers

Kentucky Music Teacher's Association

Kentucky Federation of Music Clubs

Bluegrass Grass Area Music Teachers Association

Lexington Federation of Music Clubs

Adjudication

Governor's School for the Arts Auditions, (Invited to judge)	2004
LFMC Piano Festival	2004
LFMC Piano Festival	2003
KFMC Piano Festival	2003
Cliburn Piano Competition, Cincinnati Conservatory of Music	2003
23rd Bartók-Kabalevsky-Prokofiev International piano Competition, USA	2003
KMTA Piano Festival, Transylvania University, Lexington KY	2003
Georgetown Piano Festival, Georgetown KY	2003
NFMC Piano Festival, Lexington, KY	2003
22nd Bartók-Kabalevsky-Prokofiev International Piano Competition, USA	2002
KMTA Lexington Piano Festival, Transylvania University, Lexington, KY	2002
NFMC, Lexington FMC Junior Piano Festival, Lexington, KY	2002
Bach Piano Competition, Lexington, KY	2002
Lois McCoy Fall Performance Festival, Lexington KY	2001
Cliburn Piano Competition, Cincinnati Conservatory of Music	2001
Nathaniel Patch Piano Competition, Lexington, KY	2001
21-st Bartók-Kabalevsky-Prokofiev International Piano Competition, USA	2001
KMTA Piano Festival, Transylvania University, Lexington, KY	2001
20-th Bartók-Kabalevsky-Prokofiev International Piano competition, USA	2000
Lewis Award Competition, University of Kentucky, School of Music	2000
KMTA Piano Competition, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY	1999
Cliburn Piano Competition, Cincinnati Conservatory of Music	1999
19-th Bartók-Kabalevsky-Prokofiev International Piano Competition, USA	1999
Dayas/McElroy/Gorno Piano Competitions, CCM	1998
18-th Bartók-Kabalevsky International Piano Competition, USA	1998
Lewis Award Competition, University of Kentucky, School of Music	1998
National Federation of Music Club, Junior and Senior Piano Festival	1998
University of Kentucky School of Music scholarship auditions	1996-2001
Radford University Music Department entrance auditions	1993-1995
National Piano Competitions, Academy of Arts, Tirana, Albania	1987-1993

Representative Recordings, Piano Competitions, and Performance Honors

CD Recording: *Aeterna - Mira Kruja - Pianist* Disc Makers, New York, NY
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Ludvig van Beethoven	<i>Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111</i>
Robert Schumann	<i>Carnaval Op. 9</i>
George Crumb	<i>Makrokosmos Vol. I: X, XI</i>
Sergei Rachmaninov	<i>Prelude in D major, Op. 23. No 4</i>
J. S. Bach-Ferruccio Busoni	<i>Choral Prelude in G-minor</i>

UK Symphony Orchestra Solo Concerto Competition, SCFA, Lexington, KY
First Place Winner, performed Rachmaninov *Piano Concerto No. 2*

UK Symphony Orchestra Concert, SCFA, Lexington, KY
Piano soloist in the performance of Tchaikovsky *Piano Concerto No. 1*

The Festival of Albanian Composers' Works performances, Tirana, Albania
First Place winner
Honor Diploma

The National Piano Competition, National University Conservatory of Albania
First Place winner out of forty pianists

The Fifteenth Bartók-Kabalevsky International Piano Competition
Radford, Virginia, adjudicated by the world-renowned pianist Gyorgy Sandor
Fourth Place in Artists' Level
Honor Diploma in Artists' Level

Bach Anniversary Celebration Festival, UK Chamber Orchestra
Singletary Center for the Fine Arts, Lexington, KY
Soloist in Concertos BWV 1063 and BWV 1065 for Piano and Orchestra

The National Opera and Ballet Symphonic Orchestra of Albania

National Radio TV Symphonic Orchestra of Albania

Durrës City Philharmonic Orchestra

UK Symphony Orchestra

UK Chamber Orchestra

Premiered numerous twentieth-century compositions as a soloist
Performed numerous standard piano/orchestra repertoire as a soloist

Mira Kruja
December 17, 2004