

Tariverdiev North American Selection Round  
Monday, 29 June 2009  
Pakachoag Church - Auburn Massachusetts

- Allegro brillant, op.92 Felix Mendelssohn  
(1809-1847)
  
- Moro lasso Carlo Gesualdo  
(1566-1613)
  
- Watercolors - Five Romances to the verse of Medieval Japanese Poets Mikael Tariverdiev  
(1931-1996)
  - I. The Way
  - II. The Ways to Capital - How Long You Are!
  - III. Before Execution
  - IV. Morning Fog
  - V. Dream
  
- In a Mist Leon "Bix" Beiderbecke  
(1903-1931)
  
- Symphony in F-Sharp Minor, op.143 Sigfrid Karg-Elert  
(1877-1933)
  - I. Lento misterioso
  - II. Allegro brioso ed energico
  - III. Presto demoniaco
  - IV. Largo e quieto
  - V. Vivace e brioso

Robert Horton, *organ*  
(○ works arranged for organ by Robert Horton)

## Program notes

### **Allegro Brillant, op.92**

On the surface, the organ missed out on the Romantic era. Starting with Beethoven and continuing through Schubert, Berlioz, Chopin, Schumann, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, &c., major composers showed little interest in the King of Instruments. Bach was a distant memory; fugue was a dry ritual inflicted on young students and music at large brimmed with new, exciting possibilities outside church walls. Even in composers such as Mendelssohn who *did* compose for the organ, what organ works we have are more an asterisk than a central part of their oeuvre.

If the Romantics shunned the organ, however, organ music itself seems to have gone underground. Its essential features—intricate polyphony, a keyboard's velocity, wide range, and capacity for a thrilling mass of sound—found an exiled home in the piano duet. Thus, translating piano duets for performance at the organ is a surprisingly straightforward process. While the resulting score is by no means easy to play, there is natural "fit" between instrument and musical idea, giving one to wonder if the original was actually organ music in disguise.

The present work dates from March, 1843 and is one of only two mature piano duets by Mendelssohn. It presents us a prime example of why Mendelssohn's work attracted both criticism and acclaim: The work breaks no new artistic ground, a capital offense in the mind of futurist composers such as Richard Wagner. And yet, with a bouncy scherzo and a lyrical secondary theme, the work never fails to bring a friendly smile.

### **Moro Lasso**

*"Through the uneven phrases of the madrigals, the music pursued its course, never sticking to the same key for two bars together. In Gesualdo, that fantastic character out of a Webster melodrama, psychological disintegration had exaggerated, had pushed to the extreme limit, a tendency inherent in modal as opposed to fully tonal music. The resulting works sounded as though they might have been written by the later Schoenberg."*

Aldous Huxley, The Doors of Perception (1954)

A nobleman from the southern Italian town of Venosa, Don Carlo Gesualdo spent his childhood consumed by music, singing and playing the harpsichord at every waking hour. As second son, he could afford to leave the family's affairs to his older brother. When his brother died, however, it fell to Carlo to marry and produce a male heir.

Accordingly, in 1586, he took Maria d'Avalos as his wife. Their marriage, however, was purely political and neither had any great affection for the other. Once the requisite progeny was produced, the two busied themselves in their own pursuits: Carlo in his music and Maria with Don Fabrizio Carafa, Duke of Andria. This lasted for two years until October, 1590: Gesualdo left their Naples estate on a pretense of an extended hunting trip but returned unannounced, broke down the bedroom door and caught them in the act.

He slaughtered them both, taking particular care to stab his wife multiple times while assuring his servants, "No. No. She's not dead yet." Doubting even the legitimacy of their child, he grabbed their infant son from the cradle and swung him about the room until the child stopped breathing. Dawn saw Maria and Fabrizio strung up outside the castle—her nude and him dressed in her nightgown as a grisly, parting humiliation. The coroner's report stated that Maria's stab wounds were "...concentrated more particularly in those parts that she ought to have kept chaste."

Aristocratic privilege made him immune from legal prosecution, but not familial retribution. Gesualdo fled, his subsequent travels marked by fiery depression. This is reflected in

his books of madrigals: Pushing dissonance to psychedelic levels, his writing is indeed more akin to the atonal expressionism of Alban Berg and Arnold Schoenberg than to any of his Renaissance contemporaries. *Moro lasso* was published in 1611 and—as do many of Gesualdo's works--broods over a particularly dark text:

*Moro lasso al mio duolo* I die, alas, from grief  
*e chi mi puo dar vita* And the one who can give me life  
*abi, che m'ancide* Ah, kills me  
*e non vuol darmi aita* And will not come to my aid.  
*O dolorosa sorte,* Oh sorrowful fate  
*chi dar vita mi puo,* The one who brings me life  
*abi, mi da morte.* Ah, brings me death.

Producing a stylistic arrangement of this work was challenging and radically unlike any other arrangement I had attempted. Starting with Bach, keyboard transcriptions of orchestral music became a reductive process—not so much duplicating as paring down the essential parts of a complex texture to fit ten fingers. Keyboard and lute intabulations of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, however, involve an additive process in which the (comparatively) clear texture of a vocal work becomes more elaborate.

Musicians such as Girolamo Dalla Casa and Giovanni Battista Bovicelli left encyclopedic treatises on such ornamentation. A melodic step, for example, is demonstrated in a thousand progressively complex formulas the same way one might decorate a noun piling adjective upon adjective: The sea...the calm sea...the calm, gray sea...the calm, gray sea blanketed in fog...Inevitably, the musical result is that the original vocal composition is unrecognizable, buried in a new and highly personal creation.

## Watercolors

*"Whoever the personage of this cycle is, He never stands apart from the author himself. Here the visionary philosophy is revealed, when Tariverdiev watches his life as something already completed almost at its beginning. This ability is a kind of mystical self-perception, a predictive propensity. When the beginning is absent and there is no end, either future, or past do not exist. Only the Present, the consubstantial one exists. The integrity of self-perception, when the predestination and conclusion are united at the same time."*

- Vera Tariverdieva, Vox Humana

Though Kaliningrad's semiannual competition has greatly expanded public appreciation of Mikael Tariverdiev's (1931-96) organ music, his vocal music presents the most complete picture of Tariverdiev as a composer. In his song cycles, we see the full range of his output: Popular songs, art song and hybrids that he called "the third direction". The latter epitomizes his work: Seated at the piano with a microphone and narrating in a homespun baritone, he mingled both vernacular and cultivated styles. In this, he was neither a Zhdanovist<sup>1</sup> tied to state approval nor a dissident breaking rules for rulebreaking's sake, but a unique character with a voice all his own.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrei Aleksandrovich Zhdanov (1896-1948), member of the Bolshevik party and instrumental in developing cultural policy after World War II. He called artists to renounce un-Soviet (i.e. western) ideas in favor of a "new simplicity" derived from folk art and compatible with Soviet values.

Dating from 1957, the present cycle is one of Tariverdiev's "academical" works—i.e. a song cycle written for a professionally trained singer—and begins his long connection to Japan. (In 1978, he was awarded a Victor prize and travelled to Tokyo and Kyoto; recently, The Toei company launched a new initiative to publish his music in Japan.) The five movements are as fleeting as the poetry that inspired them:

Как странник, я одет, готов к пути, *I am dressed as a wanderer, ready for the road,*  
а путь в волнах безбрежных исчезает. *and the way disappears in the waves of infinity.*

Когда вернусь? не знаю ничего, *When will I return? I know nothing*  
как белые те облака не знают. *as the white clouds are unknown.*

На миг один, пока зарницы блеск *At one instant, summer lights shine*  
успел бы озарить колосья в поле, *lighting ears in the field;*  
в осенний день, на самый краткий миг *In the brief instant of an autumn day*  
я позабыть тебя не волен! *I am loathe to forget thee!*

- Anonymous

Пути в столицу как вы далеки! *Roads to the capital how you are far!*  
И далека любимая моя *And far is my favorite.*

Пусть каждый вечер ей клянусь в любви, *Let me swear in love every evening,*  
но в сновидениях и то не вижу я! *but in dreams I can not see!*  
подняв свой взор к высоким небесам, *Lifting my eyes to high heaven,*  
я вижу этот месяц молодой, *I see the young moon,*  
встает передо мной изогнутая бровь той, *before me as a curved eyebrow,*  
с кем лишь раз мне встретить ся пришлось! *arising in front of me as one with whom I just met!*

- O. Yakamoti

Я сейчас дослушаю до конца *I now listen before the end*  
в мире мертвых песнь твою, кукушка. *of the world's dead, to your song, cuckoo.*

- Anonymous

В тумане утреннем вся бухта Акаси, *In morning mist over Akashi bay*  
которой свет едва коснулся. *where light barely touched*  
Не видно островов... *invisible islands*  
И думы все мои окорабле, *And bound in my thoughts*  
что не вернулся...А! *what never came back...Ah!*

- Anonymous

От вздоха ветерка промчался легкий шелест, *From the sighing rustle of a light breeze,*  
бамбук под окнами учть потревожил онтам, *Bamboo under the windows scarcely disturbed,*  
где я спал...То был совсем, совсем короткий, *where I slept ... It was very, very short*  
на грёзу легкую похожий, *dreams like light,*  
на грёзулегкую похожий сон! *sleep like a daydream!*

- S. Noisinho

Russian translations by A. Gluskina and Vera Markova  
Approximate English via google.com and reverso.net

## In a Mist

*"Lots of guys tried to play like Bix...ain't none of them played like him yet."*

- Louis Armstrong

The son of a lumber company operator in Davenport, IA, "Bix" (short for Bismarck) Beiderbecke proved a prodigious talent, mastering both cornet and piano at an early age. Indeed, young Bix's natural musical ability proved a mixed blessing: With such a gifted ear, he never bothered to learn how to read music. His parents, despondent at the thought of a "degenerate" career for their son, sent him to Lake Forest Academy in northern Illinois.

Lake Forest—a short ride from Chicago—proved a poor choice: Bix spent most of his time gigging downtown and was expelled after a year. He drifted about and ultimately landed in New York where he played for the Jean Goldkette and later the Paul Whiteman Orchestras. His phenomenal ability as an improviser was rivaled only by fellow cornettist Louis Armstrong. Sadly, the musical world of the 1920s—segregated along lines of white and black jazz—prevented any possible collaboration. Frustration at being denied a large (and vastly more stimulating) side of the jazz scene led him to alcoholism and the toxic rotgut brewed during prohibition.

His health and work suffered, whence the handwritten reminder "Wake up Bix" near an important entrance in one of the Whiteman orchestra scores: If Bix wasn't soloing, he was likely passed out at the back of the bandstand. In 1928, he returned to Davenport in hopes of recovering. He was devastated to discover that all of the recordings he had proudly sent home to his family were buried unopened in a hallway closet. Beiderbecke sunk deeper into depression and died alone at age 28 in Queens, NY.

"In a Mist" is one of only a handful of Bix's works to pass from improvisation into composition. Unable to read music, Bix relied on Whiteman's staff arranger, Bill Challis, to notate the work for him. In a program on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1928 at Carnegie Hall that included George Gershwin's "Concerto in F", Bix played a three-piano arrangement of this work with great success.

## Symphony in F-Sharp Minor, op.143

Writing to his friend Godfrey Scaats in September 1930, Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877-1933) recounts, "...ten days ago I finally intended to go away for twelve days. But just then I had a call from C.F. Peters asking for a large-scale organ composition, and all at once it welled up within me:



"Yet another Gregorian 'plant', then. And what has become of it in the meantime? This very night I gave it the finishing touches...Gosh! A symphony for organ alone!"

After the work was completed on December 7<sup>th</sup>, however, it sat shelved at Peters' publishing house in Leipzig. Five weeks later, Peters sold the work to the Hinrichsen firm who also declined to publish it. The Great Depression had taken its toll and publishers could scarcely give music away. Considering the rapid change in musical fashions, perhaps even Karg-Elert's music wasn't quite futuristic enough. Moreover, his coloristic writing—closer to Debussy and Scriabin than to Wagner—had earned a few detractors in Germany. In a letter to a friend, Karg-Elert quipped, "it would seem I am not German enough." Rumors even circulated that his ancestry was part Jewish. Following Karg-Elert's ruinous concert tour of America in 1932, his subsequent spiral into poor health and death in 1933, opus 143 quietly vanished.

The manuscript reappeared in the Leipzig Musikbibliothek in 1964. Access to materials behind the Iron Curtain was extremely difficult: it was not until 1985 that scholars and performers got hold of the work. Wolfgang Stockmeier gave its premier performance in Altenburg Cathedral. The following year, musicologist Günther Hartmann prepared and published (ironically, with C.F. Peters in Leipzig) a first edition.

The Symphony gives us a fascinating snapshot of music in the early 20th century with the kaleidoscopic range of ideas, flavors and colors current at the time: The "Gregorian plant" demonstrates renewing interest in sacred chant. Lilted pentatonicism evokes the fashionable orientalist *chinoiserie* that fascinated Parisians. Sharp syncopations and blazes of colorful dissonance hail straight from jazz. "Quartal" sonorities (ambiguous stacks of fourths and fifths that lack a characteristic third to qualify them as major or minor) show us the more acerbic style of Paul Hindemith. The form of the work—a pair of fast movements bookending a dance and a slow movement—is a clear nod to Joseph Haydn.

Its texture balances both the ponderous density of Max Reger and the lithe, transparent sounds gaining popularity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The technical demands of the work are extreme, abundant and rapid-fire changes in registration tax even the microprocessor-driven combination actions of today's organ. The consistent presence of a small core of tuneful ideas (chief among them the initial "Gregorian plant"), however, ensures that such technique is not flaunted for its own sake, but rather submitted to a grand musical whole.

Notes by Robert Horton, ©2008