

Homeland 1

Songs my mother taught me



Antonin Dvořák (Czech 1841-1904)

Piano Trio No. 2 in G Minor Op. 26

Allegro moderato

Largo

Scherzo: Presto

Finale

Duration: 28'

Antonín Dvořák is one of the great nationalist composers. He was born in Nelahozeves, Bohemia, as revolution swept across Europe and nationalism became a dominant feature in European art. In 1864 he became a violist with the Prague National Theatre Orchestra, where the chief conductor, Bedřich Smetana, encouraged him to compose. During his 11 years there Dvořák composed copiously, influenced by Wagner as were many of his contemporaries. Smetana suggested instead that he should draw on his native folk music for inspiration. Dvořák's deep affection for his homeland became an integral part of his music and he went on to produce a lasting and much-loved body of work that spoke with a national voice and brought him recognition and success.

The early Piano Trios No.s 1 and 2 date from the period when Dvořák began to create his individual musical style. The first trio, with its succession of attractively natural themes, and the often poignant second trio, written four months after the death of his baby daughter, reveal the composer's emerging Czech national style. Grove suggests that the prominence of minor keys in the G minor Trio can be attributed to Dvořák's distress at his daughter's death even though Dvořák gave no indication of this.

The G minor Trio opens with two assertive chords leading into a motif of repeated turns on the piano which is then taken up by the violin. This 'turning motif' becomes a second theme played by the cello and is skilfully developed as the movement unfolds.

Similarly, the lovely Largo is fashioned simply from a poignant cello melody, at first poetic, until a persistent low drumbeat on the piano gives a hint of a funeral march. After a sudden stillness, the tenderly repetitive theme becomes reflective and chromatic harmonies in the strings add new nostalgia.

The Scherzo, full of nervous tension and rhythmic invention, is built on a five-bar phrase which is chased from instrument to instrument. It is briefly interrupted by a wistful cello melody, which has taken the opening motif and slowed it down. The ingenious central trio is built on an arpeggio of rising chords and has an improvisatory air.

As with the first movement, the finale announces itself with assertive chords, but now in G major. This leads to a piquant dance at first hesitant, and then bolder until it resembles a polka. As the movement develops, the tantalising dance interrupts twice – and eventually has the last word.

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Daniel Temkin (USA)

Five Bagatelles

I. Fugue (Homage to Benjamin Britten)

II. Ostinato (Homage to Béla Bartók)

III. Romanze (Homage to Aaron Copland)

IV. Rondo: Cadenza (Homage to Henri Dutilleux)

V. Chorale (Homage to György Ligeti)

Duration: 13'

'rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul.'

- Daniel Temkin quoting Plato's Republic

Composer/percussionist Daniel Temkin is passionate about programming contemporary music. One of the youngest professors at Bucknell University Pennsylvania, with awards, fellowships and critical acclaim the length and breadth of the USA (the Aaron Copland prize is one of them), he has been composing for and theorising about how to engage audiences, develop oneself as an artist, and the purpose of it all for well over a decade now.

About this work Daniel writes:

"Written in 2007, Five Bagatelles is one of my earliest compositions. At the time, I was an undergraduate music student focusing on percussion, and I was discovering a lot of great 20th-century music for the first time. Pieces by Bartok, Dutilleux, Corigliano, and countless others were striking my ears, and I was enraptured with the colors, sounds, and rhythms of this music. This early piano trio is a set of homages, each movement dedicated to a different composer. It reflects very pure impressions I had of the music I was hearing at that time in my life, unfiltered and without a thorough intellectual lens or strong technical composing skills. In this sense, these miniatures are some of the purest and most earnest pieces I've written, they are a youthful love letter to music and composers who made me want to write music myself.

This piece received the New England Conservatory Honors Ensemble Prize in 2010, and I am especially grateful to Trio ING (Qing Jiang, piano, Ying Xue, violin, and Angela Park, cello) who helped perform and record it in May 2010. Their recording has inspired many other groups to take on the piece, and working with them was especially meaningful."

Eve de Castro-Robinson (NZ)
the willing air (new commission)

1. *The Quiet Place*
 2. *Bring me now your stress and sorrow*
 3. *Breathe*
 4. *The Rock*
 5. *The Bird's Wing*
 6. *Let there be silence*
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Recently retired as Associate Professor and Head of Composition at the University of Auckland, Eve de Castro-Robinson now works as a freelance composer, music consultant and writer. Her output ranges from large orchestral to vocal, chamber and electroacoustic works which are performed in NZ and internationally. Eve's inspiration comes from a wide range of eclectic sources, including hymns, sonic art, free jazz, poetry, punk, abstract painting and contemporary dance.

About this work Eve writes:

*"The title is a phrase taken from a poem of my mother's:
Were we to meet in unexpected places
A sudden warmth would fill the willing air..."*

It is dedicated to the memory of Aotearoa composer Jenny McLeod, an inspirational woman and composer. Always reflective, she told me, "You can't fool the Muse, she is higher than God, a memorable phrase elevating the creative impulse." My own composerly balancing of the creative and spiritual involves the belief that each dimension is beyond human understanding.

The character of this trio is directly influenced by a visit to a sanctuary in Melbourne, the Mingary Quiet Place. Intimate, meditative, and generally sotto voce, the willing air's six movements reflect on Mingary's elements of nature; rock, water and light, and its invitations to visitors, to Breathe. Refocus and reflect. Touch the stone. Go further.

I'm fortunate in having been to many meditative spaces, from Kyoto's Ryōan-ji rock garden, the Rothko Room in London's Tate, to The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Mingary had a special impact - its unexpected position on a busy city street, its unassumingness, its absence of gold and riches, its gentle suggestions. While the instruments are the voices of the players, the added use of the human voice deepens a sense of humanity, so I employ humming, whistling and other vocalisations, as well as a steady pace, and a simplicity of material, to encourage a meditative state in the listener."

Mieczysław Weinberg (Poland 1919 - 1996)
Piano Trio in A minor, Op. 24 (1943)

I. Prelude and Aria. Larghetto
II. Toccata. Allegro
III. Poem. Moderato
IV. Finale. Allegro moderato

Duration: 29'

One of the great suppressed voices in music, regarded in Soviet Russia as following only Prokofiev and Shostakovich as the third great Soviet composer, Weinberg survived against the odds. Several members of his family were massacred in the anti-semitic Kishinev pogroms early in the century; one of his cousins was executed by the Soviet regime in Baku; graduating in 1939, just ahead of Hitler's army, he fled to Soviet Russia while his parents and younger sister, remaining, were rounded up and murdered in the Trawniki concentration camp; settling in Minsk and marrying, his wife's father was assassinated on Stalin's orders; he fled again to Uzbekistan and finally to Moscow, only to become the target of Soviet agents himself and eventually arrested and jailed on charges of "Jewish bourgeois nationalism".

Shostakovich, his friend, worked tirelessly to try and save him and just as it seemed hopeless, a massive stroke of luck - Stalin died. Weinberg was released from jail, his music was at last allowed to be heard, and he spent the rest of his life in Moscow performing and enjoying a success that until Glasnost, remained relatively unknown to the west.

It sounds as if all of that experience and emotion has been distilled into this trio, finished the same year that he fatefully wrote to Shostakovich, aged 24, hoping to impress him with his first symphony. (He did. Shostakovich even stood ready to take on the Weinbergs' young daughter if the worst happened to both parents, and they remained close friends for life.)

A strident opening - the prelude - passes over into a poignant theme between the violin and cello. The piano, softly echoing the strings, is awaiting its moment to erupt in the ensuing toccata, a frenzied perpetuum mobile, while the violin sings a beautiful Jewish melody above. The 'poem' is the heart of the piece; expansive, lyrical, it builds to a stormy climax before subsiding again; and the violin begins the finale, handing over to the cello in a hair-raising fugue before the opening returns on all three instruments, ending on a quiet chorale of almost religious intensity.

Antonín Dvořák (1841 - 1904)

Když mne stará matka/Songs my mother taught me (1881)

NZTrio arrangement

Duration: 5'

The most beloved of all Dvorak's gypsy songs, his first song cycle originally commissioned by the famed Viennese tenor Gustav Walter which shows how Dvořák's fame was growing abroad; they had met the year previously at conductor Hans Richter's invitation to the Vienna Philharmonic to discuss a possible new Symphony No. 6. Dvořák relates the story so adorably!

Riddled with nerves at the thought of meeting such an important personage, he walked into the Musikverein at the appointed time only for the entire orchestra, the most famous orchestra in Europe, to stand up from their rehearsal and applaud him - and then was astonished to learn that they knew his music well, having already played through 60 (sixty!) of his works. Brahms was there to cheer him on and is probably the one to introduce him to Walter; and Dvořák threw himself into the task with enthusiasm, choosing his favourite Czech poet (Adolf Hejduk) and excelling even himself at this beautiful melody.

The words go:

When my mother taught me to sing when I was small, she would often shed tears, strangely.
And now it's me that cries, tears pour down my cheeks when I teach gypsy children to play and sing, play and sing!

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