



EXPERIENCE WORLD-CLASS ARTISTRY AT

New England Conservatory

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Leland P. Ko
cello

Recital in partial fulfillment of the
Artist Diploma, 2023
Student of Yeesun Kim and Donald Weilerstein

with
Adria Ye and Anna Han, piano

Fairytales, Fantasies, and Faraway Places

Friday, March 3, 2023
7:30 p.m.
NEC's Jordan Hall

PROGRAM

Leoš Janáček
(1854–1928)

Pohádka (Fairytale), JW 7/5 (1910)

Con moto

Con moto

Allegro

Adria Ye, piano

Toshirō Mayuzumi
(1929–1997)

Bunraku (for Solo Cello) (1960)

Sulkhan Tsintsadze
(1925–1991)

Five Pieces for Cello and Piano (1950)

Urmuli

Chonguri

Sachidao

Nana

Tsekva

Anna Han, piano

Intermission

Florence B. Price
(1887–1953)
arr. for cello and piano

The Deserted Garden
Elfentanz

Adria Ye, piano

Fazıl Say
(b. 1970)

Dört Şehir (Four Cities) (2012)
Sivas
Hopa
Ankara
Bodrum

Anna Han, piano

Antonín Dvořák
(1841–1904)

Klid (Peace), op. 68 no. 5

Adria Ye, piano

*Leland P. Ko is the recipient of the
Edward P. and Margaret Richardson Presidential Scholarship.*

Janáček's *Fairytale* for cello and piano originated in 1910 (finished on Feb. 10th, 1910). Leoš Janáček stood, of all the Czech composers, in the heartiest relationship with Russia. As proof of this we have his visits to Russia (from 1896-1904), his knowledge of the Russian language, his chairmanship and founding of a Russian Circle in Brno (1897-1915) and his sincere admiration of Russian music and literature. Janáček showed this friendly attitude towards Russia by composing music either to Russian text directly or under the influence of Russian authors. He was fondest of Russian realistic literature. Lermontov, Tolstoj, Žukovskij, Gogol, Krylov, Ostrovskij, and Dostojevskij were his favorite Russian authors.

Under the influence of Žukovskij's Russian stories of Czar Berendej he wrote his *Fairytale* for cello. Žukovskij's story tells of the Czar Berendej who was sad because he had no children. But in the course of his long absence a son was born to him, whom he pledged to the Immortal Skeleton.

– from the publisher, *Hudební Matice*

Janáček's musical language definitely falls on the less intuitive side of things for me – it's quite fragmented, with things occurring in bursts of ideas and sharp turns rather than a steady storyline. But what results from this language is something marvelously obsessive, often dreamy, sometimes heartbreaking, and frequently passionate or even violent. My interpretation is that the first two movements are two different sides of the same story, and the third movement is a light epilogue to that story. I think the piece follows a beautiful thread, in a way that I'm not sure we have elsewhere in the cello repertoire.

Mayuzumi's *Bunraku* (1960) references the Japanese puppet theater tradition of the same name, in which the puppets' voices and other narration are chanted and sung by the *tayū* (narrator and vocalist) and accompanied by the *shamisen*, a three-stringed plucked lute.

As a leading postwar Japanese composer with a foot in both the world of traditional Japanese music and avant-garde Western styles, Mayuzumi defies easy classification. The picture is complicated further when his right-wing political affiliations are considered in conjunction with his music. What does one make of a composer who embraces avant-garde styles, writes almost exclusively for Western instruments, and yet who publicly aligned himself with nationalists seeking to reinstall the emperor, rid Japan of Western military occupation, and regain its national sovereignty? ...

Mayuzumi was acutely aware of his own status as an individual with the power to affect Japan's musical future. He actively sought to contribute to that history by writing music for a modern Japanese repertory, thus participating in a long Japanese tradition of transculturation ... The process of assimilating and adapting musical styles to produce a uniquely Japanese music is a transcultural tradition that has continued throughout the centuries. Nearly a thousand years later, Mayuzumi's *Bunraku* for cello represents, in

part, a modern continuation of that tradition.”

– from *Venerable Traditions, Modern Manifestations:
Understanding Mayuzumi’s Bunraku for Cello* by Lisa M. Cook

I’ve loved getting to know this work, and loved even more watching and listening to traditional *bunraku*. The only way I can describe it is like reading a book you can’t put down. I’ve found it to be an unbelievably characterful art form—sometimes it can feel so majestic, at other times incredibly violent, and everything in between—and imitating sounds of something other than the cello is always an honest challenge (especially given that, as far as I know, there is no notation for this traditional Japanese music). This piece has really opened up my imagination, and I’m extremely excited to be able to present it tonight.

Sulkhan Tsintsadze is known today as one of Georgia’s most prominent and original composers, merging 20th-century classical music with the rhythmic, melodic, harmonic and modal elements of Georgian folk music—yet he began his career as a cellist, studying first in Tbilisi and then Moscow before joining the Georgian State String Quartet. He composed his *5 Pieces for Cello and Piano*, one of his earlier works, while studying in Moscow in 1950 at the age of 25. The first piece, “Urmuli,” is an improvisatory and free song, typically sung by the likes of someone in a village driving an ox cart, and is symbolic to and for those who endured hard labor. Next comes “Chonguri,” which refers to the *choghur*, a lute-like folk instrument with three to four strings, and is played by the cello alone. The third piece, “Sachidao,” translates to “wrestling,” which my (Georgian) friend notes Georgians are very good at, but also that this probably refers more to the fun villagers might engage in. This is followed by a lullaby, “Nana,” and then one last village dance, “Tsekva”, to round out the set of five pieces. For me, these pieces stand out amongst the canon of works for cello written by actual cellists. Very often, works in this category end up being in danger of sounding simple or like technical exercises, but to me these pieces are nothing short of transportative, full of spirit, and full of beauty.

–Written with help from a wonderful pianist, and my source on all things Georgian,
Sophiko Simsive

Florence Beatrice Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1887 to a dentist and a music teacher. She gave her first piano performance at the age of four, composed her first piece at the age of eleven, and graduated at the top of her class before attending New England Conservatory in 1902. She graduated with degrees in organ and piano pedagogy, and also studied composition—at a time when the school’s graduation rate was 3%—and would go on, in the face of the racial and gender barriers of the early 1900s, to produce an immense body of over 300 symphonic, vocal, string instrumental, and solo piano music. I admittedly had a difficult time sourcing information about tonight’s two works, *The Deserted Garden* and *Elfentanz*. This is perhaps not surprising, not just given how much her music has been overlooked, but also given that her abandoned summer home outside of Illinois, containing dozens of

manuscripts, was nearly destroyed in 2009. I have no information about the circumstances under which they were composed, their year of composition, or even, in the case of *The Deserted Garden*, what the original instrumentation or voice is (the only sheet music I could find was from one of the more suspect looking links on IMSLP). Despite my lack of insight, I've become deeply attached to these two works as a pair. While the influence of spirituals is strong in both works, they are quite different—*The Deserted Garden* is short and soulful, while *Elfentanz* (lit. "dance of the elves," bearing no resemblance to the cellist's nightmare that is David Popper's *Elfentanz*), is slightly longer, is full of playfulness and perhaps a little mischief, but not without the most nostalgic of middle sections. We played these for school children once, and one little girl raised her hand to ask why it sounded like Hollywood. I still don't have any answers, but I think she's onto something—underneath the classical writing, there is something distinctly, uniquely, and beautifully American about this music.

Fazıl Say's *Four Cities* sonata (2012) can be considered as a journey through four cities of Anatolia. This work has taken its inspiration from Fazıl Say's memories and events of his life. Bodrum is well known as a city greatly frequented by tourists which sets it apart from the other three locations. These four very different cities with their individual cultures have been selected from the nearly 2000-km wide expanse of Anatolia.

Sivas: Sivas is a conservative city located in Eastern Anatolia which is known for its large Alevi population. Âşık Veysel is an Alevi Ozan (poet) and Fazıl Say has been inspired by his song *Sazım* (my saz/my instrument) in the first part of this work. The movement is concluded on a melancholy tune in imitation of this ethnic instrument.

Hopa: A traditional wedding provided Fazıl Say with his inspiration for this second movement which embraces Eastern Black Sea culture. Horon is a very fast folk dance in 7/16 time which is played on the *kemence*, a typical instrument of the Eastern Black Sea region. The music also touches on Caucasian, Georgian and Laz dances, anonymous songs, *Laz women* and *Cilveloy nanayda* (a Turkish song).

Ankara: Ankara was declared the capital city of Turkey by Atatürk in 1923. This city with its population of four million was where the composer was born and also spent his childhood. *Ankara'nın Taşına Bak*, a rebellious song dating back to the First World War, can be discerned in the mournful middle section. The movement with its atmosphere of tragedy evokes the republican spirit and the ambience of former times.

Bodrum: Bodrum is universally known as the Saint-Tropez of Turkey. A famous street in the city is fringed with countless bars and pubs from which a cacaphony of different music can be heard, ranging from jazz, pop and rock to folk songs. Fazıl Say blends the sounds from these pubs in this movement which includes a walking theme in a swinging jazz tempo. The movement makes a reference to the song *Yıldızların Altında* which was performed by the

famous singer Zeki Muren who was also born in Bodrum. Âşık Veysel's song *Uzun İnce Bir Yoldayım* which is well-known in numerous arrangements is also featured in this movement. It is brought to an abrupt and absurd conclusion in its depiction of a pub brawl as frequently experienced in this city."

— from the publisher, Schott Music

I’ve always been fascinated by the intangible part of music — not just the sounds themselves, but the words and images that inspire them, or the places to which they bring us in our minds. **Antonín Dvořák** (more commonly known as “Silent Woods”) is perhaps a perfect example of my (over)fascination with this subject: For a farewell concert tour in the few months before Antonín Dvořák left for America in 1892, he decided to arrange one of his previous compositions—*Klid*, the fifth piece in a set of six called *From the Bohemian Forest* for piano four-hands—for cello and piano. Its popularity skyrocketed, Dvořák transcribed the work for cello and orchestra, and the publisher (Simrock) arranged—for whatever reasons publishers have—to have the German title changed from “Die Ruhe” (peace, calm, silence) to “Waldesruhe,” or “Silent Woods,” which is now the work’s predominant title.

Several years earlier, in 1883, Simrock asked Dvořák to write a cycle of pieces for piano-four hands. Dvořák found inspiration for this cycle in Sumava, a mountain and forest range in South Bohemia (he would travel there occasionally with friends, including Leoš Janáček). As he composed, his librettist Marie Červinková Regrová recounts:

“[Dvořák] would now like to write some pieces for four-hand piano, *Charakterstücke*, to be called *Aus dem Böhmerwal*—From the Bohemian Forest. This is apparently what Simrock wants. ‘But I do not feel inclined to comply with his wishes,’ Dvořák stated. ‘I have yet to come up with any appealing titles.’ Schumann had apparently used up all the suitable titles Dvořák had in mind, and it was difficult to find new, characteristic, and original names for this colourful collection of piano pieces. I said to him: ‘It doesn’t matter about the titles, it is the music which counts.’ ‘The music isn’t the problem,’ Dvořák answered, ‘I have the music, but I haven’t any titles.’ He then asked me to think up some suitable poetic designations as images, just a few words to conjure up these images, and his imagination would do the rest.”

The final titles he came up with are: *Na prásti Křehkého jazyka*, *Na časovatojanská*, *Na čekání*, and *Z bouří do ticha*. Unfortunately I cannot provide translations for these, as I haven't been able to find any consistency between translation apps and actual publisher's titles, so as of now I still don't know the true meaning behind any of these titles (and therefore perhaps the inspiration behind any of this music). If there are any Czech listeners tonight, please let me know! But perhaps the titles don't matter as much as I sometimes think they do. As Marie Červinková Řádrová says, it is the music which counts, and there are countless arguments to be made about how music persists where words fail. And I guess part of the beauty of this music is that it

means different things to all of us, or brings all of us to different places—whether what you hear tonight is “peace” or “silent woods,” and whether those two titles are similar or quite different, is perhaps no matter—and this is true of all the works on tonight’s program—as long as the music takes you somewhere...

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