

Music of Alexei Haieff

Leo Smit, pianist

Sonata for Piano (1955)

Notes of Thanks

Gifts and Semblances

Alexei Haieff (b. Blagoveschensk, Siberia, 1914), is one of the composers of the so-called "neo-classical" period of the 1950s, which is now remembered as a kind of "neo-romantic" one. His own music is lean, precise and tonal.

In the 1930s, after becoming an American citizen, he went to the Juilliard School and studied with Rubin Goldmark, Frederick Jacobi and, later, with Nadia Boulanger. He also became friendly with Rachmaninoff, and Stravinsky. (In 1946 he helped out by conducting Stravinsky's Ebony Concerto with Woody Herman's famous big band when it went on tour.) Major orchestras have performed his music, as well as leading soloists, and one of his works (Divertimento) became a Balanchine ballet. He has held several distinguished teaching positions, and has won many important prizes and awards. Haieff lives and works in New York and Rome.

Leo Smit is one of America's outstanding pianists with a decided flair for contemporary music. His own music may be heard on CRI SD 370. He is Professor of Music at SUNY, Buffalo.

Notes by Alexei Haieff

Sonata for Piano (1955)

To Nadia Boulanger

The Sonata is in three parts, played without pause:

Part 1) Maestoso, Doppio Movimento, Maestoso

A slow introduction, with ideas later heard in the fast section, and a return to the introductory material;

Part 2) Andante

A lyrical fantasy with strong contrasting sections;

Part 3) Maestoso (Allegro)

An expanded return to the Maestoso of the first movement.

This sonata was transcribed by me in 1957 for orchestra, as an experiment in changing the medium without changing the pitches. I did allow myself a metric change in the last "chord": in the sonata it comes on the first beat, in the orchestral version on the second. The sonata became Symphony No. 2.

Notes of Thanks

1) Canzonetta Sporca (1956)

A dirty little song.

2) Minsky's Sans Souci (1958), for Ann and Francis Thorne

The old-time burlesk of carefree unconcern; for bald businessmen with cigars.

3) Love Song Italienne (Serenata) (1955)

A birthday present to Samuel Barber, including all the twelve tones.

4) Chanteuse (1958), for Priscilla Morgan

A touch of Lautrec

5) Echo-Berceuse (1954), for Isabelle Kayaloff

A lullabye for grown-ups.

6) Finalino, for Luisa and Domenico Gnoli

A tiny finish.

Gifts and Semblances

1) For and About Aaron (1942)

As the title implies, a portrait of Copland, musical and otherwise.

2) Two Ostinati (1940), to no one

An abstraction in three parts.

3) To Hang on a Christmas Tree (1945)

A seasonal gift for an elderly lady (Mrs. Elizabeth Ames).

4) Scirocco-Porto Ercole (1948), to A. G., R. F., E. C., and the C. Family

A stay-at-home piece during a South Wind on the Mediterranean.

(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)