



ComposerUSA

THE BULLETIN OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMPOSERS, U.S.A.

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The Banishment of Apollo

by Matthew Hetz



In Greek mythology Apollo, among other attributes, is often identified with his lyre and was considered the god of music. It was the sorry person who would challenge Apollo to a music competition, as they would invariably lose, and then be subjected to some type of punishment for not only losing, but also as a lesson when a mortal considers challenging a god. In one case, with the Muses as judges, the challenger and loser, Marsyas, was flayed alive and his skin nailed to a tree. Apollo would later defeat Pan to become the undisputed god of Music.

To the Greeks, as it is for us today, Life was a journey, sometimes long, sometimes not. In this Grecian journey the individual was expected to take part in Life's many initiations through an examined life, and music often played a part. Music and dancing were integral in Greek life and initiations, which is reflected in Greek vases with their superb drawings of music making, and men and women dancing with abandon. Apollo would be remembered in these initiations.

The Greek gods and myths have been closely associated with Classical music for centuries: the first operas, created during the Renaissance were based on Greek myths, European court dances were dedicated to the god of dancing-Terpsichore, among other works with Greek references. This association of Apollo with music carried into the Twentieth Century. Stravinsky paid homage with his ballet, *Apollon musagete*. While there seems to be less reference to the Greeks in specific musical works in the most recent past, the relationship between the ancient Greeks and their gods and classical music remained. The serious pursuit of music, particularly classical music, could be considered as initiations in the pursuit towards an ideal of the higher sensibilities in life.

For professionals and devoted amateurs (with amateur based on the root word amator-lover), the initiations are music lessons, and as one continues the journey there are recitals, performing, and the attending

of concerts. For composers their works are their initiation, some of which are moments of triumph, and sometimes they are filled with disappointments. For those who just love music, they seek out music for its own sake by attending concerts and listening to recordings, somewhat similar to an ancient Greek who would seek out wisdom from an initiation journey to a temple.

The Greek gods are now consigned to history. While individuals no longer hold up the Greek religions in their lives, there remains a cultural association of classical music and the Greeks, with an appreciation of the disciplines of classical music associated with the age of Classical Greece which achieved so much in art, literature, drama, science, government, the marketplace and trade, and warfare, all of which continue as the foundation for the West. The most profound of Beethoven's music is often portrayed as achieving Olympian heights.

But lately, there are worrying indications that the Olympian ideals of classical music have fallen like a toppled Greek statue, its face shattered, its limbs broken off, and laid ingloriously on the ground when it should be standing upright and erect. I've noticed this through how classical music is used and portrayed in the popular culture and media.

When watching television, I am a student of commercials. In the good ones, their compacted messages are sometimes brilliant in their succinctness and cleverness. There is a lot of visual information to try to convey their pitch as quickly, effectively and efficiently as possible to rise above the enormous visual clatter in our lives from the many medium which pursue our attention all day and night, every day and night.

Besides the visuals, the audio is equally important. With sound effects, dialogue, and especially music, the mood of a commercial is quickly set. As a classical musician and composer, my ears are tuned for classical music, and I am most intrigued on how commercials, which I think reflect the popular culture, use classical music. It seems that classical music is used to convey seriousness and higher aspirations (the Greek-Olympian ideals); however the incredible misuse of classical music is very troubling as this powerful medium reduces these higher aspirations to caricatures and parody.

--Continued on back page

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President's Message

by Greg A. Steinke

Editor's note: Greg is on an extended trip overseas with very limited internet and is unable at this time to write a President's Message. He tells me he will have some in depth observations when he gets back in May and has internalized all that he has observed in a trip that is literally taking him around the world. In the meantime, he deeply appreciate all the many concert activities that he knows are going on amongst our several chapters and the diligent efforts it is all requiring to make all the events successful. Also, we can look forward to the national concert(s) we have coming up this fall.

**FROM THE EDITOR**

AL BENNER

I waited, but no information came in and I felt the need to conclude the last series. The result is this four page issue. I do have an excellent article from the Greek News about Dinos Constantinides' music being played at Carnegie Hall but it was too long for a four page issue and not long enough to make an eight page issue. Look for it in the issue after this. My apologies to Matthew Hetz, whose article does appear in this issue, who actually sent it to me a little over eight years ago and I never until now found a way to get it in print. However, I find it is still relevant today.

Hopefully in the next issue—which I want to put out almost immediately—besides the above Constantinides article will be information about our National Concert in the fall. This means that if you have any information or articles that I can use, please email them to me ASAP. As usual, please try to format them in the same way I present the information in the newsletter.

I took over as the fourth newsletter editor in the summer of 1994. This is the 54th issue I have produced. Since I like numbers that correlate, in two years at three issues a season, the spring of 2015 will be my 60th issue. I will also be 60 years old. After twenty years I think that is a good time to stop, so I am giving my two year notice. I also think technology is a younger man's game and I know someone out there knows a better way to assimilate, format, and produce this newsletter better than I. I am still producing this newsletter the same way I did when I began, only over the years instead of having to retype articles or information that was given to me on paper, at least now it is coming to me electronically so in a lot of instances I can cut and paste.

Of course, if someone wants to volunteer before the next two years are up, I am willing to talk. I will be happy to help the new editor in any way that I can and given that producing the newsletter will be out of my hands, I hope to go back to writing and contributing those "Point of View" columns I wrote in the early portion of my tenure.

Hope the rest of your spring and the upcoming summer is a good one. †

All changes to membership status, address changes, or delivery of **ComposerUSA** should be sent via the internet to the NACUSA website or mailed to the National Office in California,
P.O. Box 49256, Barrington Station, Los Angeles, CA 90049.



NACUSA CONCERTS

Southern Oregon Chapter Grand Duo Piano Concert

featuring
pianists Mikiko Petrucelli and Mark Reppert
guest baritone Nathan Condrat

Saturday, October 27, 2012, 7:30 PM

Rogue Performance Hall, Rogue Community College, Medford, OR

The Rose-Lipt Girls are Sleeping WILLIAM ASHWOOD
Petrucelli and Reppert

Confusion, Clarity, Conservation KENNETH DEVENEY
Petrucelli and Reppert

Dancing with my Angel THEODORE J. DOLLARHIDE
Petrucelli and Reppert

Random Blackouts GREG A. STEINKE
Condrat, Petrucelli and Reppert

Short Piece R. BARRY ULRICH
Petrucelli

For Persons Out-of-Time I'LANA S. COTTON
Petrucelli and Reppert

San Francisco Chapter A Walk in the Park

featuring the Composers Performance Ensemble
Monika Gruber, violin; Dahna Rudin, cello
Diana Tucker, flute and soprano sax
Libby Kardontchik and Miles Graber, piano

Saturday, November 3, 2012, 8:00 PM

San Francisco Community Music Center, San Francisco, CA

Van Gogh Vignettes GREG STEINKE
#1 and #3
flute and cello

The Shooting of Dan McGrew KEN MALUCELLI
baritone and piano

Beauty CYNTHIA LIUSKA
soprano and piano

Variations on Glinka and Rachmaninoff SIMON BOKMAN
piano four-hands

Afternoon in Asbury Park NANCY BLOOMER DEUSSEN
soprano saxophone and piano

New York Gardens ADRIENNE ALBERT
soprano saxophone, cello and piano

La Canzone del Violino Verde ALESSANDRO ROTUNDO
2012 NACUSA-SF Student Competition Winner
violin and piano

Beauty from Forgetfulness JOHN BILOTTA
2nd movement
violin, cello and piano

Trio No. 4, A Little Night Music KARL SCHMIDT
violin, cello and piano

Convergence MARK BEHM
violin, cello and piano

Dances to Mytilini DAVIDE VEROTTA
flute/alto flute, violin, cello and piano

San Francisco Chapter Scenes and Sonatas

Composers and Friends I

Saturday, February 23, 2013, 8:00 PM

Lucie Stern Ballroom, Palo Alto, CA

Shadow Dance ANNE BALDWIN
piano

Reflection – a suite for piano DALE VICTORINE

Three American Scenes SONDRAL CLARK
piano four-hands

Trio VLADIMIR KLIBONOV
piano, violin and cello

Sonatina KARL SCHMIDT
clarinet and piano

Easter Prelude JAY LYON
flute, cello and piano

Ukiyo-e: Pictures of the Floating World G. BARTHOLOMEW
clarinet and piano

In Seaspray, Barefoot GREG BARTHOLOMEW
violin and piano

Cascadia Chapter

Pulling Out All the Stops

Sunday, February 24, 2013, 3:00 PM

St. Anne's Chapel, Marylhurst University, Marylhurst, OR

featuring organists Tom Curry, Greg Homza, and Corina Hughes
with the Resonance Ensemble directed by Katherine FitzGibbon

Works performed by local composers

DANIEL BRUGH, MICHAEL JOHANSON, DAVID C. LEETCH,
BONNIE MIKSCH, JAN MITTELSTAEDT, ART RESNICK,
PAUL SAFAR and TOMAS SVOBODA

PERFORMANCES

Al Benner: Oct. 6—*A Psalm of Life* and *Psalm 100* by soprano Lisa Benner and pianist Charles Jones, LSMSA Arts Faculty Showcase, CPT Recital Hall, Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts, Natchitoches, LA.

Dinos Constantindies: Nov. 30—Eleven selections including *Fantasia for Stelios and Yiannis* (vln/vla), *Delphic Hymn* (sax/gtr), *Impressions II* (sax/pno), *20th Century studies* (2vlns), and *Hellenic Musings* (vln/sax/pno) by Michael Gurt, piano, Griffin Campbell, saxophone, Ronaldo Cadeu, guitar, Lori Bade, voice, Espen Lilleslåtten and Renata Arado, violin, Distinguished Concerts International, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, New York, NY. This concert was previewed on Nov. 27 on a LSU faculty recital concert, School of Music Recital Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.

Charles Halka: Nov. 4—*Dipuku Rauda* (SATB) by the Aquarius Chamber Choir (choir) at the ISCM World Music Days 2012, Belgium.

Karel Husa: *Les couleurs, Music for Prague 1968, Saxophone Concerto* and *Concertino for Piano* were performed on "Kael Husa Celebration" at the New England Conservatory in Boston on Feb. 26 under the batons of Charles Peltz and Frank Battisti. Numerous music schools in the USA have been celebrating Husa's 90th birthday such as the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, where *Music for Prague 1968* and *Divertimento* were performed together with *Apotheosis of this Earth* in version for wind ensemble and chorus, with the participation of the Cornell University choral ensembles. This program was repeated at Cornell the next day.

Daniel Kessner: Nov. 3—*A Serene Music*, for solo alto flute, Nov. 3 – *Dances for Clarinet and Guitar* by the Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble, Steven Klimowski, clarinet, Peter Matthews, guitar, at Middlebury College, VT.

Michael A. Kimbell: July 15—*Poème for Flute and Harp*, by Funda Dastan and Katrina Szederkenyi, Schloss Erbach im Odenwald, Germany.

July 14—*Poème for Violin and Harp*, by Nandor and Katrina Szederkenyi, J.S. Bach-Haus, Bad Hersfeld, Germany.

RECORDINGS

Dinos Constantindies: *Concerto for saxophone quartet and chamber orchestra, LRC 178, Concerto for violin and chamber orchestra, LRC 142b, Homage to Louisiana for chamber orchestra, LRC 150, Threnos of Creon for English horn and string orchestra, LRC 218, and Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra, LRC 154a* on Centaur Records #3036.

Karel Husa: *Quartet No. 3* along with music of Charles Ives and Ernst von Dohnányi by the Portland String Quartet, available online at www.portlandstringquartet.org/record_almei@maine.rr.com.



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Apollo *Continued from the front page*

I have seen a car commercial which uses the Verdi *Requiem* as the background music. I consider this some of the most powerful music of the Romantic era, and at times I am awe struck by its power. Yet I remain dumbfounded that the commercial would use it. The *Requiem*, the *Mass of the Dead*, contains some of the most serious utterings in music. When I hear a part of the *Dies Irae* for a car commercial, I can only scratch my head and mutter "what were they thinking?" Music for the dead for a car commercial? The possible connotation is that this vehicle could be very dangerous to drive. But it also lessens, if not pulls through the mud, the seriousness of this music. Are the greater popular culture implications and references of classical music boiled down to that it sells cars?

I spend part of my life in popular culture. I listen to all types of music, see many popular films, but know to separate that (popular culture) from this (classical music and the arts). However, this commercial doesn't seem to blur the lines of this distinction so much as it either doesn't know the lines, or perhaps doesn't care?

I saw another commercial for a laxative. It sells the one and only implied need of this product with the "Choral Movement," the *Ode to Joy*, of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. Is there any greater disuse of the Olympian ideal than this? What joy is this?

I also notice the banishment of Apollo from recent experiences that have me seriously doubting the place of classical music in the culture of this country. In restaurants, film theaters, office buildings, shopping malls and elsewhere, I have been left in a complete state of disbelief when I visit various men's restrooms and hear classical music piped in.

What is this purpose? Am I to feel better hearing this music when I am in these restrooms, if indeed I can hear it over the flushing toilets, the water running in the sinks, and the clanking towel dispensers? Musical accompaniment at those times is really not required, anyway. But why the purposeful effort to pipe in classical music into the restrooms when different music is piped into other areas of the same building? What is

inherent to classical music to make it appropriate for public restrooms?

It appears that classical music is more and more marginalized. Some of its greatest perceived worth is to be used as an advertising vehicle, or thought of as appropriate bathroom music. This marginalization is even harder on composers. As composers we try to make inroads into the established culture of classical music trying to have our voices heard. This can be a hard nut to crack. We prod and plea, ever seeking some way to have our compositions considered for the brief moment of a performance in the canon of classical music, whose repertoire stretches back hundreds of years. But with classical music itself so far marginalized, the role of the composer, an outsider of types within classical music to begin with, is pushed further and further to the fringes.

The visual arts do not seem to be in such a dilemma. Record prices are paid for modern art, with galleries springing up in my city (Los Angeles) all the time. But symphony orchestras nationwide are cutting back or closing. Film stars and celebrities collect art, yet there is scant mention in the media of the importance of classical music in their lives or in popular culture.

The Los Angeles Times ran an op-ed article on the resurgence of cities. The ending paragraph stated, "A successful city must be a home not only to edgy clubs, museums and restaurants but also factories, schools, companies and neighborhoods capable of regenerating themselves for the next generation." Note that opera, symphony orchestras, ballet nor chamber music are not considered needed to make cities livable.

Where is the self knowledge and enlightenment in our lives and culture when the initiations along the journey are reduced to such levels when classical music is considered appropriate for only commercials and restrooms? It seems that not only is Apollo banished, but any last traces of the dignity, nobility, and searing emotions of classical music when sought for the sole purpose of just listening to music are lost and forgotten. It seems that our culture is not concerned with the personal initiations which can lead to a deeper appreciation of Life.