ULRICH LEYENDECKER’S 65TH BIRTHDAY

In the Shadow of the Great Khachaturian:
Yervand Yerkanian

With the Directness of a Natural Phenomenon

Sofia Gubaidulina Turns Eighty

BIRTHDAYS AND COMMEMORATION DAYS 2011
Dear Readers,

Sofia Gubaidulina’s remark that she allows a work to grow like a plant reveals a great deal about her personality and the way she works. In her opinion, something perfect can only be created when one calmly allows it to thrive. The Russian composer will turn eighty next year and can look back upon a truly gigantic catalogue of works. Many colleagues and friends have made statements in this issue about Gubaidulina and her unique oeuvre.

The music world has an important anniversary to celebrate in 2001 with the 200th birthday of Franz Liszt. This great pianist and composer was a cosmopolitan whose portrait was more famous in the 19th century than some historical personalities. Other cosmopolitans were the “Italian in the States,” Gian Carlo Menotti and the creator of the hit of the century “Lili Marlene,” Norbert Schultze. Both would have turned 100 in 2011.

As always, you will find a detailed calendar with all the upcoming birthdays and commemorative days of the New Year as well as a preview of the most important anniversaries in 2012.

Let yourself be inspired to find out more about our composers,

Dagmar Sikorski
Dr. Axel Sikorski
“With the Directness of a Natural Phenomenon”

- Sofia Gubaidulina Turns Eighty

SHE IS THE GRANDE DAME OF THE NEW MUSIC, THE MOST IMPORTANT RUSSIAN COMPOSER OF THE PRESENT DAY AND A PENSIVE PERSON WHOSE SPIRITUAL HORIZON DOES NOT END WITH MUSIC: SOFIA GUBAIDULINA

Gubaidulina writes music that speaks directly to the soul. Her pieces live from sound, which penetrates into the listener with the directness of a natural phenomenon, without any detour via artistic forms. Gubaidulina has continued to develop this language ever farther, and most recently, for example, with her “St. John Cycle” and the violin concerto “In tempus praesens” premiered by Anne-Sophie Mutter, reached many people, including those not at all predisposed to the New Music.

Gubaidulina was born in Chistopol in 1931. In 1959 she completed composition studies with Nikolai Peyko, an assistant of Dmitri Shostakovich, at the Moscow Conservatory. Since the beginning of the 1980s, her works rapidly found a place in western programmes, thanks especially to the commitment of the violinist Gidon Kremer. Commissions soon followed from renowned institutions (including the BBC, the Berlin Festival, Library of Congress, NHK, New York Philharmonic) as well as CD recordings which made her known throughout the world. Gubaidulina, who has been living near Hamburg since 1992, is a member of the Academy of the Arts in Berlin, the Free Academy of the Arts in Hamburg and of the Royal Music Academy in Stockholm. In 1999 she was received into the order “Pour le mérite.”

Gubaidulina received numerous prizes for her works, e.g. the Prix de Monaco (1987), the Koussevitzky International Record Award (1989 and 1994) and the Japanese Emperor’s Prize Praemium Imperiale (1998).

The following quotation is surely also indicative of Gubaidulina’s thinking: “As an ideal, I consider a relationship to tradition and to new means of composition in which the artist masters all means – both old and new, but in such a way that he would not pay special attention to one or the other. There are composers who construct their works very consciously; I am among those, however, who instead “cultivate” their works. And for this reason, the entire world that I assimilate more or less forms the roots of a tree, and the work growing from it are its...”
Her works are intended to grow, as she so graphically formulates, “grow” like the branches and leaves of a tree.

branches and leaves. One can call them new, but they are leaves nevertheless, and from this standpoint they are always traditional, old. Dmitri Shostakovich and Anton Webern had the largest influence on my work. Although this influence has not appeared to have left any traces on my music, it is nonetheless true that both these composers taught the most important thing: to be myself.”

Sofia Gubaidulina will celebrate her 80th birthday on 24 October 2011. Meeting this composer has been a notable event for many friends, companions, composing colleagues and interpreters of Gubaidulina’s music, performed all over the world. The Russian-American composer Lera Auerbach, 42 years younger, for example, calls Gubaidulina a sound magician whose root is rooted in a deeply religious conviction and great truthfulness.

Gubaidulina is at the same time a composer and a philosopher who ponders the eternally existing problems – the meaning of life, the fate of today’s civilisation and about the purpose of the artist in this world, says Ivan Monighetti, cellist and friend of Gubaidulina’s for many years. “Her musical language has many roots. What is important is that there is a ‘visible’ and an ‘invisible’ side. The externally perceptible sonic components are not as ‘new’ as, above all, the way she deals with time. It is not merely about rhythm in the traditional sense, but also about the externally hardly visible, but nonetheless genuinely existing rhythm of the musical formal relationships as a whole, which have an effect upon consciousness. But it also has to do with the rhythm dictated by the relationship between pitch and tone duration.”

Whoever has the privilege of personally meeting Gubaidulina immediately notices the gentleness, calmness and seriousness of her extraordinary personality. When she is happy, her face often lights up. Viktor Suslin already sensed this at their first meeting in 1963. “It took place at the home of our composition professor Nikolai Peyko in Moscow,” he remembers. “I can no longer remember the individual details of this meeting, but I still have the memory of the form of a reserved and elegant young woman in dark clothing. Also unforgettable were her penetrating ‘oriental’ eyes.”
Franz Liszt

“Music is a Language” - The 200th Birthday of Franz Liszt


Not only was his piano music revolutionary in the technical demands it made on the pianists of his time; his compositional style, harmonic language and the expansion of many romantic forms were equally revolutionary. Originating in the conviction that music is a language, the musical work of art for Liszt – who was also a music critic – was always the formation of a poetic idea, a poem in tones.

Liszt’s incomparable production, at times free of all compromise, bridged many styles and schools. Modern composers always considered Liszt to be an essential provider of impulses. There are various works by Liszt in the Sikorski catalogues, including the piece “Malédiction” for piano and string orchestra, the three-act ballet “Mayerling” modelled by John Lanchbery on Liszt’s original music, as well as the orchestral version of the piano piece “Lyon” by Frank Heckel. Franz Liszt composed “Lyon” for piano solo in about 1834, inspired by the revolts of the Lyon silk weavers, as part of his “Album d’un voyageur.” During the later revision of the cycle into the first part of the “Années de pèlerinage,” Lyon was replaced by “La chapelle de Guillaume Tell” and was forgotten. Heckel succeeded in orchestrating “Lyon” exactly in the style of Lisztian symphonic poem, using only the orchestral possibilities of Liszt’s time. For example, the fifth string of the double basses is not used. To produce the characteristic Lisztian orchestral sound, Heckel composed some new material and modified the very “pianistic” passages as similarly found in works that Liszt composed both for piano and for orchestra.

LISZT’S WORKS AT SIKORSKI:

- “Malédiction” for piano and string orchestra
- “Mayerling” for ballet in three acts by John Lanchbery based on music by Franz Liszt
- “Lyon” for orchestra (arr.: Frank Heckel) SIK 1727 (score)

NEWS

Shostakovich, Prokofiev and Abrahamsen on the of German Recording Critics’ Best List 4/09

Three productions with music of Sikorski Music Publishers were awarded prizes on the German Recording Critics’ Best List 4/09;

Orchestral music:
- Sergei Prokofiev: Cello Concerto in E Minor, Op. 58; Symphonic Concerto in E Minor, Op. 125. Alban Gerhardt (violin); Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, cond.: Andrew Litton. Hyperion CDA 67705 (Codex)

- Dmitri Shostakovich: The Nose. Vladimir Sulimsky, Alexei Tanovitski, Tatiana Kraftsova and others, Maryinsky Soloists, Choir and Orchestra, cond.: Valery Gergiev. Maryinsky 2 SACD MAR0501 (Note 1)

- Contemporary music:

Requiem and Symphonic Movement:

Lera Auerbach’s “Requiem for Icarus”

The Requiem for Icarus by Lera Auerbach will receive its world premiere on 18 February 2010 in Washington with the National Symphony Orchestra under the direction of James Gaffigan. This is the final movement of Auerbach’s Symphony No. 1 “Chimera.”

Engel Prize 2010” for Benjamin Yusupov

Benjamin Yusupov has been awarded the Engel Prize 2010 of the city of Tel Aviv for his Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra. The award is endowed with 5,000 Euros and was presented on 10 December at the Einav Hall in Tel Aviv. Kristina Cooper Reiko (violin) and Benjamin Yusupov (piano) musically framed the ceremony with Yusupov’s Cello Sonata.

The prize is named after Joel Engel, an emigrated Russian composer, and has been awarded every three years since 1944 to outstanding Israeli composers. The jury included Prof. Josef Bardanashvili (composition), Prof. Jonathan Zak (piano) and Robert Moses (violin).
Ulrich Leyendecker

65th Birthday
Ulrich Leyendecker

ULRICH LEYENDECKER WILL TURN 65 ON 29 JANUARY 2011. HARDLY ANOTHER COMPOSER OF HIS GENERATION HAS DEVELOPED HIS STYLE AS STRINGENTLY AND PRECISELY AS LEYENDECKER, WHO HAILS FROM WUPPERTAL.

He has been able to pass on a great deal to his pupils during a long period as Academy Professor in Hamburg and Heidelberg-Mannheim. Orchestral works, chamber and piano music, as well as vocal compositions, sometimes in quite widely varying ensemble formations, dominate Leyendecker’s catalogue of works. Titles of works often point to an extra-musical inspiration processed and reflected by the composer in a variety of ways. Characteristic of Leyendecker is his adherence to older genre designations of music history such as the symphony (he stills spells the term in its old German form) concerto and trio. Whoever suspects traditionalism or any backward-looking tendencies, however, is on the wrong track. Arnd Richter comments: “The relationship of tension between the given work designation and the emotional, formal, and technical solution of the problem posed creates music of emotional comprehensibility. The broad arcs characteristic of many of his works and which decisively determine the essence of his process of creation are not romantic traits, but expressive means in a manner of composing which searchs for and prefers large-scale continuity without forgetting attention to fine details.”

Two of his principal works, the Violin Concerto premiered by Roland Greutter, concertmaster of the NDR Symphony Orchestra, and the 3rd Symphony, have been issued by Naxos (Naxos 8.557427) on a highly recommended CD with the NDR under the direction of Johannes Kalliwoda. Another piece, given the mysterious title of “Evocazione” by Leyendecker, was composed during the Mozart Year of 2006. “For me, Mozart, Haydn, Bach and Beethoven belong to the best that our culture has produced,” Leyendecker once said. His Evocation, however, should not be considered a literal homage to Mozart. “Evocazione is my very own piece in terms of rhythmic language, sound and harmony, as well as in style and form. There exists, however, a relationship to Mozart’s Don Giovanni: the rhythmic and melodic elements distilled from a characteristic quotation from the Commendatore scene form the basis of the thematic development, but with the means of my own language and formal development.”

Following György Ligeti’s “Hamburg Concerto,” Ulrich Leyendecker wrote a piece entitled “Mannheim Concerto.” The concerto for “double chamber orchestra,” also performable by a divided symphony orchestra, was commissioned by the Kurpfälzisches Kammerorchester Mannheim. The world premiere took place on 7 January 2007 at the Mannheim Rose Garden. The desired ensemble of “double chamber orchestra” arose because, at this concert, the Munich Chamber Orchestra was performing alongside the ensemble from Mannheim. We now eagerly anticipate the world premiere of Leyendecker’s Concerto for Viola and Orchestra on 19 March 2010.

Daniel Smutny

New at Sikorski:
SOMETIMES HIS MUSIC SOUNDS SPHERICAL, THEN AGAIN NOISE-LIKE, INTERNALLY AGITATED OR MYSTERIOUS. THERE IS MUCH TO DISCOVER IN DANIEL SMUTNY’S MUSIC.

Smutny has already gained successes at the most famous and important new music festival, the Donaueschingen Music Days. His latest works reveal a unique variety.

Born in 1976 in Mannheim, Smutny in early years already won prizes and awards for his first compositions. Already during his studies with Hans Zender and Bernhard Kontarsky in Frankfurt am Main, he received invitations from renowned interpreters and organisers such as Ensemble Modern, Forum, SWR, Academy of the Arts in Berlin and the International Biennale for New Music.

He won the Stuttgart Composition Prize twice (1998, 2009), made his debut with commissioned works at the Donaueschingen Music Days and the Stuttgart State Opera. In addition, he won the renowned BMW Composition Prize of ”musica viva” and commissions for the Klangforum in Vienna, the SWR Vocal Ensemble and for his first full-length music theatrical work (Festival Hall of the European Centre of the Arts in Helferau). The German Music Council will be presenting a portrait of the music of Daniel Smutny on an edition CD. Smutny lives in Leipzig as a freelance composer.

CURRENT PROJECTS:
- Auf den Flügeln des Gesangs (On the Wings of the Song) for clarinet solo
  World premiere: 22.02.2010 in Munich (musica viva, Museum Villa Stuck, Christopher Corbett)

- So zaghaft diese Worte der Nacht (So Timid These Words of the Night) for String Quartet
  Next performance: 14.02.2010 in Stuttgart (Eclat, Studlar Quartet)

- Velouria: Madrigal Book for 24 Voices
  World premiere: 14.02.2010 in Stuttgart (Eclat, Theaterhaus, SWR Vocal Ensemble Stuttgart)
Escuela rusa de piano

The “Russian School of Piano-Playing” is the most successful pedagogical work for pianists. Meanwhile, along with the two volumes of the teaching work (SIK 2353 and 2354) and the tape (SIK 2379), there are also accompanying CDs with the recorded pieces for demonstration purposes and individual study. The latest high point is now the translation of the standard work into Spanish: Escuela rusa de piano.

Arcs of Light on the Orchestral Horizon: Jörn Arnecke’s New Piece

On 19 February 2010, the Göttingen Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Christoph-Mathias Mueller will perform the world premiere of the new orchestral work “Lichtbogen” (Arcs of Light) by Jörn Arnecke. In this piece, Arnecke says, he combines, so to speak, “two electrodes which are under sufficiently high tension. The arc of light bridges over an area. It contains an entire spectrum of colours. And, most importantly: it shines!”

Finnish Premiere of Shostakovich’s “Battleship Potemkin”

Frank Strobel’s congenial adaptation of the film music “Battleship Potemkin” by Dmitri Shostakovich will be presented in Finland for the first time on 22 February 2010. The Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra will perform under the direction of Frank Strobel.

Peter Ruzicka Awarded the “Rienzi” Prize

The composer, conductor and artistic director Peter Ruzicka was awarded the “Rienzi” prize of the Cultural Academy and the National Opera of Latvia on 24 October 2009. The presentation of the award, named after Richard Wagner’s opera, took place in the Latvian capital of Riga. The prize is awarded every other year. “Ruzicka’s achievements as a cultural manager are being honoured with this prize,” says the Honorary consul of Latvia in Hamburg, Sabine Sommerkamp Homann.

In the Shadow of the Great Khachaturian:

Yervand Yerkanian

WHOEVER WANTS TO BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH MODERN ARMENIAN MUSIC, RECOMMENDS THE MUSICOLOGIST TATIANA PORWOLL, SHOULD GO TO DILIJAN, WHERE THE ARMENIAN COMPOSERS’ UNION AND THE SO-CALLED “HOUSE OF CREATION” ARE FOUND.

Armenian Composers’ Union and the so-called “House of Creation” are found. “From the small houses bordering on the slopes of the forest-covered hill,” tells Porwoll, “one hears tones that seem to be in harmony with the unspoilt nature. According to legend, planks of Noah’s Ark were found here at the foot of the Ararat.”

The music of Armenia is still associated first and foremost with the great, pre-eminent Aram Khachaturian. The musical life of the country is very rich and variegated, however, and is worth discovering from many perspectives. Two nowadays world-famous names in Armenian music are Avet Terterian, whose opera “The Earthquake” was a sensational success in Munich, and Tigran Manssurian, born in 1939 in Beirut. The works of many contemporary Armenian composers are characterised by a striving towards originality and the desire to bare the roots of their own culture and free themselves from the folkloristic interpretation of the sources of Armenian music. Much younger than Terterian and Manssurian is Yervand Yerkanian, who will celebrate his 60th birthday on 5 November 2011, and is also an example of these tendencies.

Yerkanian was born in Leninakan, Armenia. He first attended the Kara-Murây Music School in Leninakan and then studied composition and violin at the Yerevan Conservatory. In his music, Yerkanian combines modern, classical elements with the stylistic characteristics of folkloristic and medieval music from his homeland, which lends his pieces an archaic atmosphere comparable to works of Arvo Pärt. In addition, in 1978, he worked as an editor on the complete edition of the works of Soghomon Komitas, a composer who represents a milestone for him and for modern Armenian music. Since 1985 Yerkanian has been Chairman of the Department of Opera/Symphonies/Chamber Music of the Armenian Composers’ Union. Yerkanian is surely one of the most productive younger composers in Armenia. In his piece “Intenzia” for string orchestra in memory of Aram Khachaturian written in 1981, he consciously carries several typical rhythmical formulas of the “Armenian classic” ad absurdum. The incessant repetition of the same motif was ultimately felt to be an ordeal, “from which one wished to free oneself as if from a spell,” comments Porwoll.

THE MOST IMPORTANT WORKS OF YERWAND YERKANIAN
- Quintet in memory of Anton Webern for flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello and piano
- Sonata for Bass Clarinet and Piano

Frank Strobel’s congenial adaptation of the film music “Battleship Potemkin” by Dmitri Shostakovich will be presented in Finland for the first time on 22 February 2010. The Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra will perform under the direction of Frank Strobel.