

COMPLETE WORKS
FOR PIANO

VOLUME

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NORMAN DELLO JOIO

DEBRA TOROK, pianist

Albany
CLASSICAL

The distinguished professional musical career of Norman Dello Joio began at age fourteen when he became a church organist and choir director of the Star of the Sea Church on City Island, New York. A descendant of Italian church organists, he was born January 24, 1913 in New York. His father was an organist, pianist, singer, and vocal coach. Dello Joio recalls that his father was working with singers from the Metropolitan Opera who used to arrive in their Rolls Royces, and that his childhood was surrounded with musicians and music in the home. Dello Joio's father taught him the piano at age four, and in his teens he began studying organ with his godfather, Pietro Yon, organist at Saint Patrick's Cathedral. In 1939, he was accepted as a scholarship student at the Juilliard School and studied composition with Bernard Wagenaar.

As a graduate student at Juilliard, he arrived at the conclusion that he did not want to spend his life in a church choir loft, as composition began to envelop all of his interest. In 1941, he began studies with Paul Hindemith, the man who profoundly influenced his compositional style, at Tanglewood and Yale. It was Hindemith who told Dello Joio, "Your music is lyrical by nature, don't ever forget that." Dello Joio states that, although he did not completely understand at the time, he now knows what he meant: "Don't sacrifice necessarily to a system, go to yourself, what you hear. If it's valid, and it's good, put it down in your mind. Don't say I have to do this because the system tells me to. No, that's a mistake."

In the latter part of the forties, Dello Joio was considered one of America's leading composers, and by the fifties he had gained international recognition. He received numerous awards and grants including the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Award, the Town Hall Composition Award, two Guggenheim Fellowships, and a grant from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He won the New York Music Critics' Circle Award in 1948 and again in 1962. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1957 for *Meditations on Ecclesiastes* for string orchestra, and an Emmy Award for his music in the television special, *Scenes from the Louvre*. In 1958, CBS featured him in a one-hour television special, "Profile of a Composer."

She has recorded a CD entitled *Through and Within This Century Past*. It contains works from each decade of the twentieth century American solo piano repertoire. *Fanfare Magazine* describes it as “a compelling snapshot of a particular view of American piano music.” In addition to performing and recording, Dr. Torok presents workshops, master classes, and lectures, and has taught at music schools and colleges in addition to New York University, including Moravian College and Lehigh University.

Debra Torok first spoke with Norman Dello Joio about this recording project in the beginning of May 1997. Their initial meeting had been anticipated by the artist who, through research and performance, saw a need to make the public aware of these pieces. They began working together on interpretation and to correct scores. During this time, Dello Joio continued to compose, giving her a rare glimpse into the composer and his works in progress. New pieces include the *Songs Without Words*, premiered on Volume One. This two volume set of the solo piano music is the first recording of the complete piano works of Dello Joio. These will be followed by a CD of children’s works, which the composer wanted recorded separately from the solo piano works, and will include the pieces for four hands and two pianos. The CD will also include Norman Dello Joio speaking about his thoughts on music. Additionally, a newly published complete edition of his piano works will be released, compiled and edited by Dr. Torok.

Suite for Piano

Premiered at Carnegie Chamber Music Hall on March 9, 1941 as *Sanburg’s Phrases*, the Suite consists of four short movements. It was written for pianist Lillian Lefkovsky in 1940, and is the composer’s first published piano work. As Dello Joio recalls, it is the first piece written after studying with Hindemith. Each of the four movements was inspired by the poetry of Carl Sandburg. The mood of the opening movement, marked *Moderate*, rises from a line in the poem *Interior* from *Cornhuskers*: “Out of the window ... prairie lands.” The second movement, *Bright*, is taken from the line: “Why does a hearse horse snicker hauling a lawyer away?” from the poem titled *The Lawyers Know Too Much*. *Lost*, from *Chicago Poems*, is the source of inspiration for the third movement marked *Calm*. The first part of the poem reads:

Introductions and Fantasies on a Chorale Tune

Written in 1986, this work was commissioned by the U.S. Information Agency for the Artistic Ambassadors Program. The Introduction is based on the chorale theme, *Herr Gott dich loben alle wir*. The four fantasies that follow move from an *Andante* lyrical treatment into a dynamic octave *Allegro con fuoco*. The third fantasy is a blues-like, rhythmically playful *Andantino*. The closing fantasy, *Allegro assai, scherzevole*, dramatically recalls the theme in a powerful final statement.

Short Intervallic Etudes

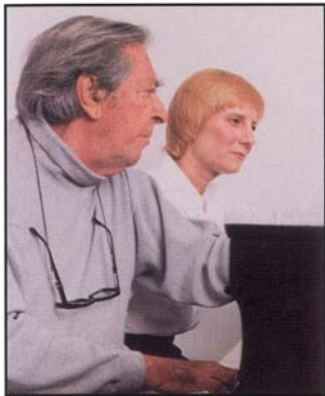
The subtitle of this set of studies is *For Well Tempered Pianists*. This group of six short pieces was published in 1988. It consists of diverse treatments of fourths and fifths, thirds, seconds, sixths, sevenths, and octaves and unisons. Each study provides a variety of rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic settings and moods. The first etude, on fourths and fifths, along with the etudes on the sixths, number four, and sevenths, number five, are slow, expressive, and lyrical. In contrast, the etudes on the seconds, number three, and number six, on octaves and unisons, are fast and spirited with crisp articulation, both marked *secco*. The etude on thirds is marked *Moderato*, combining both melodic and harmonic intervals of the third as the basis for thematic material. This was the last work written for piano by the composer for nearly a decade until the recent *Songs Without Words* was composed in 1997 for a special Carl Fischer publication.

Concert Variants for Piano

The Concert Variants, written in 1980, consists of a theme with five variants. This piece is actually the piano transcription for an orchestral work written in 1981. The first variant, an intense *Andantino*, is followed by an *Andante moderato* in which thirds and sixths are characteristic. The third variant, *Allegro, molto animato*, consists of staccato leaps and octaves. Marked *p sempre spumante*, it is bright and energetic. In the fourth variant, *Lento funebre*, one can hear the drums from the onset, and continuing throughout this funeral march. The fifth variant, *Allegro, molto animato*, contains energetic staccato writing which drives to the fortissimo closing.

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— In Loving Memory of Ida Kuplen Torok —

Project Coordinator



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