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# Tanya Bannister

piano

**This is  
the story  
she began**

music by  
David Del Tredici  
Suzanne Farrin  
Sheila Silver  
Christopher Theofanidis

Albany



**Contemporary music has been a part of my musical life since I began playing piano at the age of four.**

Bartók, Messiaen, Shostakovich, and Janáček were among my favorites. Unfortunately there is a strange divide in so much of the music world between composers and performers; though I had played works written in the 20th century, none were by composers I could meet or with whom I could work. Not until graduate school at Yale, where I met Suzanne Farrin, did I have a close friendship with a composer, and through her I have gained an immense respect for the composer's place in contemporary musical life.

Since 2004, when I joined the roster of Concert Artists Guild, I have been fortunate enough to have three works commissioned for me. In 2005, CAG commissioned *Three Gymnopédies* from Pulitzer Prize Winner David Del Tredici and *This is the story she began* by Suzanne Farrin, who is Chair of Composition and Theory at SUNY Purchase in New York. In 2006 CAG and Meet the Composer co-commissioned *All dreams begin with the horizon* by Rome Prize Winner Christopher Theofanidis. I had opportunities to meet and work with these three composers and with Sheila Silver, whose *Six Preludes on Poems of Baudelaire* also appear on this recording. I find the experience of working with composers to be an enlightening and energizing one, as we can discuss different concepts of interpretation and nuance.

I want to thank David Del Tredici, Christopher Theofanidis, Suzanne Farrin, and Sheila Silver for the magnificent pieces they composed, and Concert Artists Guild and Meet the Composer for making the project possible. Augusta Gross, Leslie Samuels, Miles Kahler, and Steven Schwartz deserve special thanks for playing the timeless role of patrons of music.

—Tanya Bannister, August 2008

Lauded by *The Washington Post* for playing "... with intelligence, poetry and proportion," pianist **Tanya Bannister's** victories at the Concert Artists Guild International Competition and the New Orleans International Piano Competition confirm her status among the leading pianists of her generation. Receiving further distinction as an "Artist to Watch" on the cover of *SYMPHONY Magazine*, Ms. Bannister's career has brought her to many of the world's great concert halls including the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Salle Cortot in Paris, Teatro Communale in Bologna, Tokyo's Nikkei Hall, London's Queen Elizabeth and Wigmore Halls, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center in Washington DC.

Her debut recording, featuring three late piano sonatas of Muzio Clementi, was released in 2006 on the Naxos label. *BBC Music Magazine* declared: "Barenboim's EMI Beethoven sonata cycle is readily brought to mind. Yet although she possesses enviable articulate and accurate fingers, she is also sensitive to the music's many lyrical asides."

Ms. Bannister has a special affinity for contemporary music. Her three appearances at New York's Symphony Space on the *CAG/New Works at the Thalia Series* featured premieres of three of the solo piano works on this disc—those by David Del Tredici, Suzanne Farrin and Christopher Theofanidis—and a piano quintet, also by Suzanne Farrin. Ms. Bannister was joined by the Parker String Quartet for the first performance of the quintet.

As a concerto soloist, she has performed Mozart's Concerto No. 21 and Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto* with the Louisiana Philharmonic, Mozart's Concerto No. 23 with the Baton Rouge and Harrisburg Symphonies, Shostakovich's Concerto No. 2 with the Victoria Symphony (TX) and Mozart's Concerto in E-flat for Two Pianos, K.365 with pianist Stephen Buck and the Westchester Philharmonic.

Ms. Bannister's devotion to music has led her to create additional vehicles for sharing her talents. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which occurred soon after Ms. Bannister's victory in the New Orleans International Piano Competition, she joined forces with three previous winners of that competition to form "Pianists for New Orleans." These artists have performed together across the US in an effort to raise \$100,000 to help support the classical music community of New Orleans. And in 2007, Ms. Bannister and a circle of colleagues created the Alpen Kammermusik Festival. In the spectacular setting of the Austrian Alps, amateur chamber musicians study, practice and perform with professional musicians from around the world.

Born in Hong Kong, Ms. Bannister holds degrees from the Royal Academy of Music in London, Yale University, where she studied with Claude Frank, and New York's Mannes School of Music, where she received an Artist Diploma as one of a handful of pianists selected to study with Richard Goode.

### **Three Gymnopédies** (2003)

The gymnopédie is a slow, solemn dance in three-quarter time, evocative of ancient Greece. It is of course closely associated with Erik Satie, coiner of the word and composer of the first set of three. Thus, my set, written in 2003, is indebted to that enigmatic French composer.

*No. 1, My Goldberg*, was inspired by the theme of Bach's monumental *Goldberg Variations*—not the lovely soprano melody, as one might expect, but rather the stepwise, descending bass line. Above this bass, I have composed a bittersweet melody that ranges freely. At the very end, Bach's soprano theme is briefly quoted. This gymnopédie is dedicated to the pianist Bruce Levingston, who said to me after I played him No. 1, thinking of it as a stand-alone piece, "You know, David, gymnopédies always come in sets of three." And so, my gym-work wasn't yet done!

*No. 2, My Re*, is a harp-like, delicate dance in C-major whose two-bar phrases always end on the note D (re). Ray happens also to be the name of my life-partner, Ray Warman. So, the dedication to him is doubly appropriate.

*No. 3, My Loss*, is an *in memoriam* for my dear teacher and friend, the pianist/composer Robert Helps, who died in December 2001. It is the longest and weightiest of the three. The melody, always exploring the interval of the perfect fifth, two octaves apart, is accompanied by bass chords of (for me) surprising dissonance. Tonality barely enters the picture. After an ecstatic climax and a falling-away, however, we reach the coda and, with it, the first arrival of clear-cut tonality. In G-sharp minor, then, the piece comes to a very sad close.

—David Del Tredici, 9/11/05

**David Del Tredici** is generally recognized as the father of the Neo-Romantic movement in music. His music has been commissioned and performed by nearly every major American and European orchestral ensemble. Much of his work has involved vocal settings of James Joyce, Lewis Carroll and more recently a cavalcade of contemporary American poets, often celebrating a gay sensibility. In 1980 he won the Pulitzer Prize for his *In Memory of a Summer Day*—an hour-long work for voice and orchestra. In May 2005 Robert Spano conducted the Atlanta Symphony and Chorus in the premiere and subsequent recording of *Paul Revere's Ride*, nominated for the 49th Annual Grammy Awards as the Best New Classical Composition of 2006. November 2005 held the world premiere of the melodrama *Rip Van Winkle* with the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leonard Slatkin and narrated by world famous Broadway actor, Brian Stokes Mitchell. March 2007 marked David Del Tredici's 70th birthday, with concerts given throughout the year.

### **All dreams begin with the horizon** (2007)

The occasion for the commissioning of this piece was something right out of the 19th century—a piece written as a birthday present to be performed at a salon-style party. I took great delight in writing this work, not only for the personalized nature of the occasion, but also because it is the first solo piano work I have written in almost 15 years, and since I started my musical life as a pianist, it gave me a wonderful excuse to reconnect with the physicality of the piano. This work was written at the piano, for the piano.

The salon nature of the first performance made me think about composing a series of miniature movements—something along the lines of the Schumann piano cycles. The attractive thing to me about this was that I could concentrate on delineating very strong characters between the movements, and on differences in pianistic approach.

The first movement is impressionistic and gestural in nature, and I think comes from the ephemeral, atmospheric writing one finds in pieces like “Ondine” from “Gaspard de la nuit” by Maurice Ravel. The second movement is quite different—much more earthy and raw. It contrasts an explosive opening figure with an erratic rhythmic motive. The third movement was meant as a kind of ‘toast’ to love which seemed to befit the occasion (as much as my own love-drunk nature). It basically presents a lyrical melody in three very different ways—once highly ornamented, once rhythmically pressing, and once broadly and expansively. Not wanting ultimately to succumb to my more lyrical side, I chose a last movement which is more of a trouble-maker. It is based around a very fast septuplet figure that is split up between the two hands and is really almost an etude.

The title comes from something my father once told me. In the early sixties he had a series of dreams which strangely all came true in time. He said that each of those dreams began with the horizon.

—Christopher Theofanidis

**Christopher Theofanidis** has had performances by leading orchestras from around the world, including the National Symphony, the London Symphony, the Oslo Philharmonic, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, the Moscow Soloists, the Atlanta and Houston Symphonies, the California Symphony (for which he was composer-in-residence from 1994 to 1996), the Oregon Symphony, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, and the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra. He is serving as Composer of the Year for the Pittsburgh Symphony during their 2006-2007 Season. Mr. Theofanidis holds degrees from Yale, the Eastman School of Music, and the University of Houston, and has been the recipient of the Masterprize, the Rome Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Barlow Prize, six ASCAP Gould Prizes, a Fulbright Fellowship to France, a Tanglewood Fellowship, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters' Charles Ives Fellowship. Mr. Theofanidis is a former faculty member of the Juilliard School and he currently teaches at the Peabody Conservatory at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

### **This is the story she began** (2005)

The title of this piece comes from Book IV of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, subtitled "The Daughters of Minyas," which leads into the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. In the prologue, he describes the daughters of Minyas who stay indoors to weave as the Theban women celebrate outside. One of the women asks to "lighten our useful toil with talk" and the storyteller begins to tell the tale of the star-crossed lovers. She chose this one for the reason that "this last she liked the best, because the tale was far from widely known, and as she spun her wool, this is the story she began."

I feel my musical process is somewhat similar to the unfolding of a semi-coherent story. Imagining that memory and detail change with every telling, the gestures of this piece also continually re-shape themselves until they are spun out.

—Suzanne Farrin

**Suzanne Farrin's** music has been heard across the United States and in Europe and South America at venues including Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Symphony Space and the Atlantic Center for the Arts and at festivals including Festival Dancing in Your Head (Minneapolis), Look & Listen (New York), Philadelphia Fringe, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival (CT), Music99 (Cincinnati), Nuevo Mundo (Maracaibo) and Avant-garde Schwaz (Austria). Musicians and ensembles that have performed her music include Ms. Bannister, Steve Mackey, Jason Treuting, Mark Stewart, ICE, So Percussion and the Parker and Arditti String Quartets. She has received commissions from a wide variety of sources and for combinations as diverse as the Irish bagpipes and string quartet to works for vibraphone and solo piano. She is chair of the composition department at the Conservatory of Music at SUNY Purchase. Suzanne Farrin studied at Yale with composers including Martin Bresnick, Ezra Laderman, Joseph Schwantner and Evan Ziporyn. Other important influences to her musical language are Messiaen, Debussy, Berio and folk music of the US and Argentina.

### **Six Préludes pour piano, d'après poèmes de Baudelaire**

The *Préludes* were written in 1990 while Sheila Silver was in residence at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France, a small picturesque Mediterranean fishing village.

The first prelude, *La mer à Cassis*, is inspired by Baudelaire's poem *La musique*, in which the poet's experience of listening to music is likened to a sailboat carried by the wind on the sea—sometimes gentle, sometimes stormy.

The second prelude, *La pendule*, comes from *Rêve parisien*, in which the poet describes his dream of a city built of marble, metal and crystal, brilliant and surreal.

The third prelude, *La descente vers l'enfer*, comes from the poem, *L'irremédiable*. In it, the poet describes a descent into hell, down a long spiraling staircase, with goblins and creatures jeering at every turn. At the end comes "Judgment."

The fourth prelude, *Dan la forêt, demi-brulée* takes its title from my frequent walks in a Mediterranean pine-forest, which had just suffered a devastating fire turning everything black. Gradually within weeks, a new growth of green carpeted the forest floor and wild flowers began to bloom. Baudelaire's poem, *Bohéméniens en voyage*, describes a similar image.

The fifth prelude, *La, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, Luxe, calme, et volupté*, is the refrain from *L'invitation au voyage*. It reflects the poet's dream of escaping to an exotic place where all is bliss and perfection.

The last prelude, *Vers le paradis de mes rêves*, comes from *Le vin des amants* and invites the reader to lose his sorrows in wine and soar the heavens on winged horses, leaving all cares and troubles behind.

—Sheila Silver

**Sheila Silver's** compositions range from works for solo instruments to opera, orchestral and feature film scores. Her unique style combines aspects of tonal and atonal music with an emphasis on rhythmic complexity. Ensembles and artists who have performed her works include the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the American Composers Orchestra, the Indianapolis Symphony, the Gregg Smith Singers, Gilbert Kalish, Timothy Eddy and the Muir and Ying String Quartets. Ms. Silver's honors include the Rome Prize, awards and commissions from the Rockefeller Foundation (Bellagio Residency), the Camargo Foundation and the MacDowell Colony, and the 2007 Raymond and Beverly Sackler Prize in Music Composition in Opera. Ms. Silver is Professor of Music at SUNY Stony Brook.

#### Acknowledgements

*Three Gymnopédies* was commissioned for Tanya Bannister and Bruce Levingston by Concert Artists Guild, Augusta Gross and Premiere Commission, Inc.

*This is the story she began* was commissioned for Tanya Bannister by Concert Artists Guild and Augusta Gross.

*All dreams begin with the horizon* was commissioned by Miles Kahler in association with Meet The Composer for Concert Artists Guild and pianist Tanya Bannister in honor of Steven Schwartz's 50th birthday.

The *Préludes* were commissioned by the Heckscher Museum in Huntington, NY for the opening of its art exhibition, "Baudelaire: The Poet and his Painters."

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