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# MUSIC OF THE SUPERPOWERS

SPUTNIK, SPIES,  
AND THE SPACE RACE

BRIAN LUCE, *FLUTE*  
REX WOODS, *PIANO*

WORKS BY  
ROBERT MUCZYNSKI  
EDISON DENISOV  
VERNE REYNOLDS  
GALINA SMIRNOVA  
SAMUEL BARBER  
OTAR TAKTAKISHVILI



Albany  
Symphony

## **THE MUSIC**

As events and figures of the Cold War are still emerging from the shadows, recent revelations are only now beginning to show just how turbulent the decade of the 1960s really was. From the launch of Sputnik I in 1957 to Neil Armstrong's, "One small step for man," in 1969, the period was also permeated by the technological and industrial growth resulting from the Space Race. The decade, often romanticized for the countercultural revolution in the United States and the spread of the Soviet Union's communist influence in Latin America, progressed most substantively from the work of the technological age's unsung heroes, the engineers. Engineers created the rockets and capsules that took the astronauts and cosmonauts beyond their Earthly bonds, created the U-2 spy plane that alerted Americans to the presence of nuclear missiles in Cuba, and created the forerunners of the computer age. Like these engineers, who worked tirelessly in the background, classically trained composers in both countries created both conservative and experimental works. It was these composers who continued the longstanding development of Western art music during such a tumultuous period.

Meanwhile, with the spread of American rock and roll music throughout the world, the resulting British Invasion of the Beatles, and impact of television, musical culture around the world was both adapting and, for those trying to maintain a cultural identity, entrenching. American composers were developing styles that hybridized popular, contemporary, and avant garde music. This new generation of composers was now the product of American music schools, in contrast to the earlier generation's European training. As their musical voices now reflected a pure Americana, their works displayed a freshness and experimentalism free from European hegemony or constraints. Private programs like the Ford Foundation's Contemporary Music Project furthered this work by immersing composers in school music programs.

On the other side of the Iron Curtain, Soviet composers were struggling with the convergence of two divergent influences: the creative and the state's artistic precepts. Following the codification of socialist realism by Andrei Zhdanov at the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, composers were charged with creating works that reflected this philosophy.

The main attention of the Soviet composer must be directed towards the victorious progressive principles of reality, towards all that is heroic, bright, and beautiful. This distinguishes the spiritual world of Soviet man and must be embodied in musical images full of beauty and strength. Socialist Realism demands an implacable struggle against folk-negating modernistic directions that are typical of the decay of contemporary bourgeois art, against subservience and servility towards modern bourgeois culture. (Taruskin 1997)

However, composers throughout the Soviet Union could easily have difficulty limiting their oeuvre to *songs for the masses* or works, like Prokofiev's *Limpid Stream*, that glorified collectivization. Influenced by the few Western performances within the Soviet Union, like Glenn Gould's 1957 tour, and composers like Shostakovich and Shebalin, the generations of composers writing during the 1960s were faced with two distinct paths. They could write to receive approval and accolades from the political hierarchy of the Soviet Composers Union or compose beyond of the constraints of socialist realism, thereby all but ensuring their failure within the bureaucracy.

A gifted pianist, Robert Muczynski's music has been performed throughout the world and he has received accolades including two Ford Foundation fellowships, over thirty ASCAP creative merit awards, first prize at the Fifth International Piano Competition in Sydney, Australia for his *Second Piano Sonata*, a Pulitzer Prize nomination for the *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra, Op. 41*, and the 1961 Concours Internationale Prize in Nice, France for the *Sonata for Flute and Piano, Op. 14*. This staple of the flute repertoire was deemed "Too difficult, few will choose to play it," at the first reading of the sonata with Muczynski at the keyboard. The technical interplay between both instruments makes it equally daunting and rewarding as Muczynski set out to write a work that he describes as, "devoid of frills and cascading swirls of notes which have become flute clichés in much of the early 20th century literature for the flute." Composed in the spring of 1960 in Oakland, California while on a Ford Foundation Grant, he later completed the work in Chicago. The four-movement work begins with a sonata-allegro opening movement employing a high degree

of syncopated elements, characteristic of some of the popular dances at the time. The second movement, a scherzo that he describes as, “chattering, whimsical, and headstrong,” is followed by an intimate and lyric Andante. Immediately the fourth movement resumes the “impetuous character of the opening music and sweeps along until arriving at a reckless cadenza.” The cadenza concludes with the piano interrupting this soliloquy with an all-out tempestuous reprise of the movement’s opening five-note motive.

Considered the father of the Soviet avant garde, Edison Denisov, whose progressive works received numerous performances throughout the West, faced severe criticism and sanctions from the political bureaucracy of the Union of Soviet Composers. The first Soviet composer to have a serial composition, *The Sun of the Incas*, performed outside the Soviet Union, he wrote numerous works for leading performers including, Gidon Kremer, Heinz Holliger, and Jean-Marie Londeix. Denisov’s compositional style can best be described as anti-collectivist. He intentionally wrote distinctly individual voices in his mature compositions reflecting a desire to emancipate the individual from the collective. The use of note spelling motives (e.g. E–D–E-flat or E–D–Es for Edison Denisov; D–E-flat–C–B or D–S–C–H for Dmitry Shostakovich) and Morse code rhythmic quotations are employed as unifying mechanisms in his works. One of his many works published by Western European publishers but neglected in his homeland, the *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, was written in 1960 and dedicated to Alexander Korneyev, principal flutist of the Bolshoi Symphony Orchestra. Premiered in March 1962 by Alexander Kozlov and Galina Rubtsova, the work is a through-composed work of three distinct movements: a somber bitonal opening interrupted by an

angular *Allegro impetuoso* underscored with highly rhythmic punctuation leading into a fortissimo reprise of the opening. The sonata concludes with the incessant Morse code rhythmic pattern developed throughout the piece.

Verne Reynolds was the professor of Horn at the Eastman School of Music for 36 years. Among his sixty works, many receiving awards, he wrote for ensembles and musicians including the Eastman Brass, Cincinnati Symphony, and Doc Severinsen. The *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, written in 1962 for James Pellerite, was regarded by *Music and Letters* as a work, “where seriousness of intention is matched by technical resource,” and is one of the more esoteric and compelling American works. Written in a style harkening to that of Hindemith, the sonata opens with a solemn melody spartanly harmonized in B-flat at first, then enriched with the addition of more dissonant sonorities. The movement affords both performers an interchange of soliloquies emphasizing the interval of the minor third before reaching the climax and closing to a restatement of the soliloquy motive. The second movement *scherzo* is a contrapuntal tour de force as the voices exchange the disparate elements of this molto perpetuo from the ensemble tutti to the three-part fugue. Following the tumult of the second movement, the third is the most tuneful allowing the ensemble to display the widest variety of tender, majestic, and serene moments. As the third concludes with poignant harmonies, the flute immediately launches into the theme of the last movement’s tarantella, which is given to the piano, harmonized, and developed into a brilliant piano flourish. The flute takes the material from the tarantella and, at the insistence of the piano’s chorale, relents to shape the tarantella into the eventual tranquil closing.

Galina Konstantinovna Smirnova studied music history and theory at the Moscow Conservatory from 1932-35 and was in the composition class of Vissarion Shebalin from 1935 to 1940. Apart from serving as a musical editor of the Radio Center in Alma-Ata in 1931, she wrote numerous choral works and a handful of instrumental compositions. Her *Sonatina in B Minor for Flute and Piano*, dedicated to Alexander Korneyev, was written in 1959 and premiered in 1962. The sonatina is rife with Soviet Realist elements from the folk tunes to the vibrant piano orchestration. Opening with a quintessentially Russian theme, the work leads to an archetypal folk song in 5/4 meter that climaxes in the relative D major. After this brief moment of pure joy, the piece relents to the sobriety of the modal tonic.

Samuel Barber's lush *Canzone*, incorporated into the second movement of his piano 1962 Concerto, Op. 38 was originally composed as the *Elegy for Flute and Piano* in 1959. Barber wrote the *Elegy* for Manfred Ibel, a young German art student and amateur flutist with whom he shared a house on Martha's Vineyard. Barber later helped Ibel, the son of a painter, come to the United States in 1960 by allowing him to stay in a cottage on the grounds of Barber's New York home. As both men enjoyed passing the time by playing Bach sonatas, it is not difficult to imagine that the rich piano texture and lyric melodies in the *Canzone* could easily have been inspired by the exquisite writing of Bach. The haunting ostinato opens and propels the work throughout while the flute paints a lugubrious melody emphasizing the interval of the minor third. The instruments exchange the ostinato and melody rising and falling throughout the tessitura to finally conclude with the descent of the figure to the opening flute pitches.

Celebrated Georgian opera composer, Otar Taktakishvili, lived his entire life in Tbilisi. After studying at the Tbilisi Music College from 1938 to 1942, he studied composition under Sarkis Barkhudarian at the Georgian State Conservatory. While a student, he wrote the anthem of the Georgian Republic and later became a professor at the conservatory in 1949. He received the Stalin prize for his Symphony No. 1 in 1951; was awarded the People's Artist of the USSR for his opera, "The Abduction of the Moon," and violin concerto; headed the Union of Georgian Composers; chaired the Tbilisi Conservatory; and was the republic's Minister of Culture. The *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, written in 1966, includes all the necessary Soviet realist musical materials: folk songs, dances, and marches. The first movement opens with a fluid piano introduction to a high arching melody in the flute. Several dance and march elements alternate for prominence leading to a broad, movie soundtrack-like development. The recapitulation begins with the second march theme followed by the opening cantabile melody. After the first movement concludes with a tongue-in-cheek tiptoe ending, the second movement provides a somber palette that is punctuated with almost jazz-like cadences. The third movement, written in a rondo-allegro form is a fast-paced dance that abounds with charming and almost bittersweet folk music. The folk music gives way to a triumphant fascist march that, after a brief piano solo, returns to the opening. A particularly succinct review perhaps summarizes the work best, "Carrying the Socialist Realism Seal of Approval, it marched, sang, danced...and marched again."  
—Brian Luce

**THE  
PERFORMERS**



## **FLUTIST BRIAN LUCE**

praised for his “technical agility” and “lyric power,” has performed throughout the United States and Europe. Winning prizes in the National Flute Association, Myrna Brown, Mid-South, and Kingsville International young artist competitions he is in demand as a solo recitalist and teacher. Audiences have heard him in concerto performances with the Dallas Chamber Orchestra, Tucson Chamber Orchestra, Arizona Symphony, and University of North Texas Symphony Orchestra. He made the premiere recording of Anthony Plog’s *Concerto for Flute and Wind Ensemble* with the Arizona Wind Ensemble, also on the Albany label. Having presented master classes throughout the United States and Europe, his articles and reviews have appeared in *Flute Talk Magazine* and the *Flutist Quarterly*. An expert on Soviet-era music, Dr. Luce has given numerous lectures and performances based upon his award-winning dissertation, *Light from Behind the Iron Curtain: Style and Structure in Edison Denisov’s Quatre Pièces pour flûte et piano*. Previously principal flute of the Champaign-Urbana, Midland-Odessa, and Johnstown symphony orchestras, he has also performed with the Dallas Chamber Orchestra, Dallas Bach Society, Dallas Wind Symphony, and Keystone Wind Ensemble. He is a faculty member of The University of Arizona School of Music and is a member of the Arizona Wind Quintet. A Yamaha Artist, Brian has played Yamaha flutes exclusively since 1996.

**PIANIST  
REX WOODS**

has performed in the United States, Canada, Mexico, France, China, and Australia, but is best known to regional audiences for his frequent solo and chamber performances. He has collaborated in recitals and recordings with such musicians as: Faye Robinson, soprano, and Richard J. Clark, baritone; cellists Gordon Epperson, Nancy Green, and Pamela Frame; violinist John Ferrell; violist Hong-Mei Xiao; saxophonist Harvey Pitell; and trombonist Donald Knaub. He has been heard in concerto performances with the Tucson Symphony Orchestra, the Catalina Chamber Orchestra and the Arizona Symphony Orchestra. He is a member of The Bruch Trio along with Jerry Kirkbride, clarinet, and Jessie Levine, viola. Mr. Woods received his musical education at Brigham Young University, the University of Arizona, the University of Southern California, and the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau. He was awarded the Otto Guth Memorial Award from the San Francisco Opera Center for excellence in vocal coaching and was the recipient of the Premier Prix de Fontainebleau in chamber music. Mr. Woods holds the degree of Juris Doctor from Arizona State University. He has served on the faculties of the University of Texas at Austin and the Interlochen Center for the Arts. Since 1988, he has taught at the University of Arizona.