

Notes:

Evening Rain (2005) was the first successful advanced piece I composed. It is inspired by a lovely poem by Carlo Toselli, from a collection called "What is Time?". I stumbled across this poem because my wife Susan, also a piano teacher, taught Mr. Toselli's grandchildren, Domenic, Chiara and Francis Toselli. The book was given as a gift to Susan by the family, and I immediately fell in love with the poetry. An unusual feature of his poetry is that he has written it all in three languages: Italian, French and English.

Evening Rain

Far off I hear
a sound of rain
a sound of nothing
a sound of peace

quiet drops
quick drops
thickening
fall aslant
and flow down
on windowpanes
pattering out
changing rhythms

it rains in the dark
on thorny brambles
on bared bushes
on my naked soul

Carlo Toselli

From "What is Time?" (2003), published by Le Grazie, West Vancouver
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Fantaisie (2012) was inspired by and dedicated to a former teacher of mine, Jean-Paul Sevilla. As head of Academy Piano at MRU, I had invited Jean-Paul to come and give some masterclasses for our advanced students. One evening, after a busy day of music making, we were at dinner and he told me that he had always wanted to write variations on Purcell's aria, "If Love's a sweet passion, why does it torment?" from the Fairy Queen. He then suggested that I try it. I listened to the theme, but decided that I didn't really want to write variations on it. While he was visiting, though, I started playing with some other ideas for a new piece, and somehow fragments of the Purcell kept sneaking their way in. So, surrendering to the inevitable, I decided to write a fantasy using elements of the Purcell aria as a base. One can hear a direct quote from the theme near the end, although re-harmonized in way that most likely would have startled and perhaps dismayed Purcell.

Three Haiku (2007) A haiku is a traditional Japanese poem. It consists of three lines with a total of seventeen syllables. The first contains five syllables, the second has seven and the third five again. They usually have an allusion to nature and the seasons. Three Haiku was inspired by the poetry of Inge Israel and dedicated to my former teacher, Helmut Brauss and his wife Kuniko. Susan and I were invited to dinner at their home in Victoria where we met Inge and her husband Werner. She was kind enough to give me a book of her poetry, which I read with delight. I loved the concise precision of the haiku form, and I found Inge's images captivating. The titles for the three pieces are my own, taken from the poetry: Ice Crystals, The Heron and Spider's Web. She has also written several other books of poetry which I highly recommend.

Sparkling ice crystals
know how to die in the sun.
Plum blossoms linger.

Water beat quickens.
The river swells, rewarding
the heron's patience.

A spider's web, jewelled
with dew, in my path. I take
the long way to town.

Reprinted from Inge Israel's poetry collection,
Raking Zen Furrows (1991),
with the kind permission of Ronsdale Press.

To Quiet Lands (2008) was written for my mother, Elise Marie Therese van der Leeuw. I put her maiden name in here because she was intensely proud of being both Dutch and a van der Leeuw. At the time I was composing the piece, she was in the later stages of Alzheimer's disease and fading fast. For inspiration, I visited a website posted by Walter Aue (see below) and came across his translation of Waldlied (Forest Song) by Nicolas Lenau. Walter was also kind enough to give me permission to use his lovely photograph, "Leaves and Waves" for the cover of this CD. The poem suited my mood exactly, and I was inspired to write the piece. I gave the premiere in a recital at Leacock Theatre, Mount Royal University, Calgary four days before she died, February 13, 2008. I like to think that she was waiting for me to play it before she left.

Waldlied

Rings ein Verstummen, ein Entfärben;
Wie sanft den Wald die Lüfte streicheln,
Sein welches Laub ihm abzuschmeicheln;
Ich liebe dieses milde Sterben

Von hinnen geht die stille Reise,
Die Zeit der Liebe ist verklungen,
Die Vögel haben ausgesungen,
Und dürre Blätter sinken leise.

Die Vögel zogen nach dem Süden
Aus dem Verfall des Laubes tauchen
Die Nester, die nicht Schutz mehr brauchen,
Die Blätter fallen stets, die müden.

In dieses Waldes leisem Rauschen
Ist mir, als hör ich Kunde wehen,
Daß alles Sterben und Vergehen
Nur heimlichstill vergnügtes Tauschen.

Forest Song

The sounds and hues around are fading;
How soft the winds caress the forest
and pluck its foliage like a florist:
I treasure gentle Death parading.

To quiet lands the journey's tending:
The time of love has been degraded,
sweet calls of birds have slowly faded
mongst dried-up leaves in calm descending.

The birds are gone, their South was calling.
Above the fallen leaves now hover
their nests, no longer needing cover:
The tired leaves are always falling.

In this old forest's rustling leisure
I seem to hear it softly saying
that all this dying and decaying
is just exchange of secret pleasure.

Nicholas Lenau

English translation: Walter A. Aue

Source: <http://myweb.dal.ca/waue/Trans/O-TransList.html>

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beyond darkness, there lies light (2009) was written immediately following the death of my brother, Thom, on January 9, 2009. It was the day before his 50th birthday, and he inexplicably took his own life. As is often the case with suicide, nobody has any idea why he did it, although he struggled with bi-polar depression all his life. The title was paraphrased from a film, "Brick Lane". A young Bangladeshi woman is trapped in a loveless and apparently hopeless marriage in London, far away from home and her

family. In a moment of desperation, she prays, "Beyond this darkness, let there be light."

In Memoriam (2011) Dedicated to both my parents, Elise Marie and Włodzimierz Karol Jancewicz. My father died in August 2011, the last of my immediate family. I had spoken with him the afternoon of his death from Johnson's Canyon, near Banff, where I was vacationing with Susan, my sister-in-law Gayle, and Grant and Ellaina, my brother Thom's children. He sounded fine on the phone. We returned that evening, and the phone rang during a big thunder and hail storm. It was the nursing home informing me that my father was on the way to the hospital. When we got to the hospital, we were informed that he had passed away. He was old and ill, and I believe more than ready to go, but it was still difficult for all of us. On the positive side, I think he generally had a good life, despite his continued struggles with bi-polar depression. Those with sharp ears will hear the "Dies irae" theme played in several guises.

...like the night of starry skies... (2012) After writing a series of pieces dealing with death and grief, my wife Susan thought it was time for me to write something in another vein. I agreed, and set out to write a beautiful piece. It was inspired by a lovely romantic poem by Lord Byron, and dedicated to Susan.

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired that nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,

So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

George Gordon, Lord Byron

Baética Variations (2008) was written for and dedicated to my wife Susan. It is a set of variations written on the theme of the intermezzo from Manuel de Falla's *Fantasia Baética* (1919). It was commissioned by and dedicated to Artur Rubinstein. I wrote the variations on a suggestion by Susan, and since her hands are small for a pianist, she requested that there be no large stretches in the piece. "Provincia Baética" is the old Roman name for the area along the Mediterranean in southern Spain known as Andalusia. Fans of Spanish music with sharp ears will notice a quote in one of the variations: the "Chanson du Feu Follet" from Falla's "El Amor Brujo". Susan asked me to write it without articulation markings to see if we felt the same way about the piece. We did. She also played some of the fast variations faster than I thought necessary. I came around to her way of thinking.