
Meridian
Mountain Songs
Music for flute and guitar by
Beaser, CastelNuovo-Tedesco, Haug and Moyse
Marcelo Barboza - flute
Fabio Zanon - guitar

A SONG TO THE EARTH

Fabio Zanon

There is an elemental quality to the act of blowing a reed or a bone, or stretching a string over a resonant box with the aim of producing musical tones. Greek mythology confirms the archetypal status of these acts: the duel between Apollo, playing his lyre, and Marsias, blowing his flute, is judged by the Muses on top of Parnassus, where they have to decide what is the most appropriate sound to accompany the voices of mankind at each sunrise, to dissipate melancholy and to enliven celebrations. Apollo's victory may represent an ideal of clarity and virtue at the birth of civilization, but the legend acknowledges the fact that music can also reveal the obscure, irrational side of human soul.

Centuries have added many layers of technology to these simple acts, but these are still the principles behind the modern flute and guitar. Composers have been aware of the hieratic quality of the flute combined to a plucked instrument, from the recorder and lute duets of the Renaissance and Baroque to the consecration of the flute as the ideal partner of the guitar in chamber music in the second half of the 20th century. Along the way, we have also witnessed the central place occupied by the flute and guitar in the early Romantic domestic music making and the “Hellenic” atmosphere created by the flute and harp in the late 19th century.

The first half of the 20th Century saw the ascension of the guitar as a concert instrument, an era dominated by Andres Segovia, an extraordinary musician who had very little interest in chamber music. Flute repertoire in this period also expanded more noticeably in the solo field and its associations to French music. After the war, a new generation of guitarists came to realize the importance of chamber music for a definitive integration of the guitar into the classical music scene, and the repertoire for flute and guitar has been much more widely favored than any other. Two regular partnerships have proved particularly inspiring to composers. The exceptional duo formed by the first flautist of the Vienna Philharmonic, Werner Tripp, and the doyen of Austrian guitar, Konrad Ragossnig, has to be credited for the creation of a body of major works in the '60s, by composers like Haug, Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Burkhard and Wissmer, which have become the foundation stone of the 20th Century repertoire. More recently, the American duo of Paula Robison and Eliot Fisk has enlarged the repertoire with works by American composers like Beaser, Rochberg and Liebermann.

The difficulty of making a compilation of these works is that most composers have visited this combination only once or twice, and attempts to group these pieces either in chronological order or by composer's nationalities have felt rather fabricated and un-natural. Perhaps the reason for that resides in the fact that the back-to-basics sound-world created by the flute and the guitar suggests a certain holistic inclination, where composers have associated specific musical characteristics to the elements of nature a sound-world as a world-view.

The underlying feature of the four pieces here presented is the earth and its associations. Earth as nurture for the roots of folksong, earth as a burial ground where forms are dug from the past; earth as the solidity of rocks, earth reaching to the sky as a backdrop to mountain songs.

Hans Haug (1900-1967) was one of the most significant Swiss composers of the 20th Century. In addition to his large output, which includes fourteen operas and operettas, oratorios, concertos and film music, he made his mark in Swiss musical life as a conductor of the Swiss Radio Orchestra in Zurich, and also as a highly regarded teacher at the Lausanne Conservatoire. Although the guitar frequently appears in his orchestrations, a stronger bond to this instrument was created in 1951, when his Concertino for guitar won the composition prize at the Chigiana Academy in Siena. This attracted the attention of Andrés Segovia, by then already a legend in the guitar world, who played and recorded two of Haug's solo pieces. Haug twice visited the flute & guitar combination, once in 1966 with a Concertino for flute, guitar and orchestra, and once in 1963 with the Capriccio in three movements, the earliest piece here recorded, dedicated to the Tripp-Ragossnig duo.

In this Capriccio one senses his preoccupation to attain a homogeneous and well-grounded style out of the amalgamation of seemingly conflicting sources. The approach to form, as in many of his works, is essentially neo-classical. Apart from the obvious baroque flavor of the Gigue, the Prélude is built upon a two-bar-long ground, and the Sérénade is in da-capo form. That provides a solid and symmetrical field for a style which, although essentially cantabile as one might expect from an opera composer, attains considerable complexity within an enlarged chromatic palette and finely grained counterpoint. Haug also had a particular taste for troubadour music, which one can detect in the constant appropriation of modal features, most notably in the Sérénade and Gigue, which brings a freshness and elemental flavor a certain earthiness - to his music.

One should not be mislead by the fact that the ground upon which the Prélude is built is based on a 12-tone row. This is not developed along dodecaphonic premises; in fact it has a rather tonal feel and is at once juxtaposed to a flute arioso, which starts with a whole-tone scalar movement. It is more of an excuse for exploration of the unexpected colours created by the high incidence of upper and lower leading-notes. This constant reinforcement of the relative weight of far-away tonal areas is also found in the two other movements. Another interesting feature is the Spanish atmosphere created by the employment of the Phrygian mode in the Sérénade and the Gigue contrasting section. It seems that as late as the 1960's it was still mandatory for composers to draw on the Iberian associations when composing for the guitar.

Haug achieves a perfect balance in his textures: a clear two-part counterpoint in the Prélude, an accompanied melody, in dance form, in the Sérénade, and an exciting unison in the Gigue. Perhaps the greatest sign of mastery in this piece is the evident seriousness of intent behind the clarity of writing.

If Haug spent all his life by the Swiss Alps, the Italian Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895-1968) became an involuntary exile of his beloved Tuscan hills. He studied in his native Florence with Pizzetti, and later became a protégé of Alfredo Casella. His fine literary culture impregnated his early production of songs and ouvertures for Shakespeare's plays, and he achieved considerable success with his second violin concerto, I Profeti, which was recorded by Jascha Heifetz.

Being an Italian Jew meant exile in 1939. He first went to the East coast of the U.S.A., but he finally settled in California and, fearing for his ability to

support his family, became a movie soundtrack composer and signed a contract with Metro Goldwin Meyer. Later he taught at the Los Angeles Conservatory, and many of his students became quite powerful in the movie industry.

Notwithstanding the admiration of many prominent performers like Arturo Toscanini and Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, who often programmed his music, nowadays his name is mainly kept alive by the popularity of his 300 or so guitar works, which include four works for guitar and orchestra. In fact he is one of the most fertile guitar composers of the 20th Century, in spite of the fact he couldn't play the instrument himself.

It seems just natural that he should find such an affinity with the magical art of Andrés Segovia. They first met in 1932 and from then on hardly a year went by without a new guitar piece, as his mature style suited the Spanish master like a glove. Castelnuovo-Tedesco is one of the most gifted of the many composers who found themselves compressed, surrounded by many vectors of progressive musical thought they were aware of but could not relate to. The way he found to liberate his creative power was to dig his style out of the past. A serene lyricism betrays his admiration for Schubert, and his decidedly neo-classical inclination attains a remarkable clarity, even when confronted with the thorniest formal problems, that could only come from a mind thoroughly absorbed by the study of the Italian and Viennese classics. A refined taste for harmonic colour and a certain folksy sap compound a personal style, always pleasant and engaging.

His Sonatina op.205 is one of the most popular pieces for flute and guitar. As Haug's Capriccio, it was dedicated to the Tripp-Ragossnig duo. The main reason for its success is the composer's remarkable craft at inventing themes that sound virtuoso but absolutely natural to two instruments of totally different nature. These themes unfailingly present a bold upward design; accordingly, the score almost looks like a mountain range, and the performers delight in mischievously chasing each other in canonic fashion. Contrast is provided by the folk inspiration of secondary material, and by a delightful siciliano 2nd movement.

If Haug and Castelnuovo-Tedesco have a portentous output, which deserves attention well beyond specialized interest, Louis Moyse (1912-2007) has worked mainly in his own field of interest, the flute. It runs in the family: his father, Marcel Moyse, was one of the most distinguished and influential flautists of the last century, and Louis has carried the torch. He has composed a substantial body of works for the flute, edited tons of flute music for Schirmer's, performed on both the flute and the piano, and developed also a strong reputation as a teacher, having been associated to the Paris Conservatoire, Marlboro Festival, Boston University and the University of Toronto, before settling in Montpellier, Vermont.

He is an inheritor of the French impressionistic view of the flute, which exploits to the full its coloristic possibilities, associated to a musical language that draws extensively on the possibilities of ancient modes, exotic scales, fluid formal concept and assimetry of phrasing.

French music at the turn of last century had as a recurrent characteristic an idealization of the magic of Spain a side-effect of the Alhambrismo movement, which captivated French imagination at the time. This also informs Cantos de las Sierras

(1972). The laconic titles of the these three movements do not give a hint of which of the Spanish mountain ranges the title refers to, but the music is so vivid in its Moorish evocation that it doesn't take much imagination to formulate a private "guided tour".

The first movement has a seductive perfume of seguidilla, and the ornamental profusion should not be seen as a hindrance to the admirable sense of harmony. In fact it creates a kaleidoscopic texture, which is held together by the recurrance of the Spanish Phrygian mode, by the archaic-sounding parallelism, and by an original overall harmonic design, which reaches the main functions by way of neighboring chords. The second movement is hypnotic in its caravan-like step, only interrupted by the sudden evocation of a zapateado the classic lament-excitement-recollection form, typical of gipsy music. The third movement is a rondo based on the rhythm of a fandango and, like the first, it brings a fair deal of harmonic surprises. Even the listener who might feel uncomfortable with the glossy surface will marvel at the composer's solid command of harmonic development and the truly virtuoso writing for both instruments.

If composers like Haug and Castelnuovo-Tedesco had to resign to an status of outsiders, the 21st Century seems to be a much more friendly time for composers who prefer to work within a tonal framework. This is particularly true of North America and its peculiar socio-economical environment, where the necessity to an immediate communication to a larger audience seems to be much more of a priority to classical music composers. There are some significant differences between the early 20th Century tonalists and the ones of today. Where those thought of themselves as the end result of a continuous tradition and frequently resorted to an academic shelter and a taste for the evocative and characteristic which gave room to criticism of a lack of aesthetic commitment -, the ones of today are inclined to self-confidently affirm themselves as a product of post-modern deconstruction and are motivated by a clear philosophical agenda, which discusses the role of serious composition in a world dominated by media and mass culture. Formal procedures and the textural inheritance of the post-serialism do not go unchecked, and for that reason the so-called group of American New Tonalists has deserved an acceptance that was never conceded to the tonalists of a few decades ago.

Robert Beaser, born in Boston in 1954, is one of the most prominent composers generally placed under this umbrella.

His Mountain Songs, composed in Rome in 1978, were dedicated to the duo formed by Paula Robison and Eliot Fisk, and, in spite of the heavy technical demands, have quickly become a favorite of the repertoire. With one exception (Quicksilver) they are ingenious arrangements of a variety of folk tunes, which manage at once to preserve the down-to-earth personality of old folk and to render them in a formal and textural design that enlarges their scope and in a couple of cases present the original tune almost as though it had been heard in a dream.

The Appalachian Mountains are home to a glorious tradition of folk song. Originally the dwelling place of a particularly hostile group of Native Americans, the difficulty of access and uneven fertility of the soil attracted poorer farming families and religious groups in the 18th Century. Ethnomusicologists generally divide Appalachian music in two periods:

a first “traditional” period of some 200 years through 1900, which includes ballads and dance tunes mostly brought over by anglo-celtic immigrants, and the “old-time” period from 1900-1930, which blended that tradition with parlour, vaudeville and African-American music, and minstrel-show tunes. The early tradition was developed and kept alive mostly by women in the domestic milieu, who incorporated the improvisation of Celtic ballads into a nasal solo singing quality. These ballads follow the British tradition of the single personal narrative. A second major component to this style was the arrival of African slaves and their own ballads, which incorporated the use of the fiddle and the banjo. Music hall and religious songs also became part of the folk tradition through sheer repetition.

Barbara Allen is of British origin and appears in hundreds of versions, not only in Britain and the USA, but also in Italy and Scandinavia. In the Appalachian version of the tune, Barbara Allen is a beauty who can only be united to her lover in afterlife. Beaser's arrangement presents the tune first on a lone guitar, then on the flute, and they gradually start to get intertwined, thus suggesting the meeting of the lovers' souls.

The House Carpenter is a moral tale of a wife who leaves her children and husband, the carpenter, to run away with a richer man. Their ship capsizes and they are both condemned to climb the hills of Hell. Here Beaser manages to sustain the pointed rhythmic structure of the song while the guitar follows its own thickly grained, metrically complex, percussive course.

To many listeners, American nationalist music is synonym to Copland's “open prairie” style of writing long, static, resonant melodies, with a predominance of wide intervals and parallelism. Beaser conjures this atmosphere in an arrangement of disarming tenderness for the well-known song He's Gone Away. To many listeners the lyrics of this song will bring images of the Civil War to mind: “I'm goin' away for to stay a little while,/But I'm comin' back if I go ten thousand miles./Oh, who will tie your shoes?/And who will glove your hands?/And who will kiss your ruby lips when I am gone?/Oh, it's pappy'll tie my shoes,/And mammy'll glove my hands,/And you will kiss my ruby lips when you come back!”

What makes some of these arrangements so engaging is Beaser's ability to mould a structure of great impact with subtle additions to what is basically a strophic repeat. In the case of Hush You Bye (also known as All the Pretty Little Horses) this architectonic project illustrates the lyrics content in the form of a quasi-Renaissance fantasy: “Hush-you-bye don't you cry/Go to sleepy, little baby./In your dreams you shall ride/All the pretty little horsies.” Accordingly, there are suggestions of a galloping movement, which gradually takes over and later fades away.

The origins of Cindy lie in the minstrel show and the appropriation of its style by African-American mountain fiddlers. The exhaustion of the minstrel show popularity bequeathed the banjo to Appalachian folk players, and one can say it is the emblematic instrument of American folk song. Cindy is a dance number of common stock for fiddle or banjo and fit for a square dance or a reel: “I wish I was an apple ahanging on a tree,/And ev'ry time my Cindy passed she'd take a bite of me!/ Get along home, Cindy, Cindy,/I'll marry you some day.” Beaser's arrangement perfectly translates the exhilaration of the fiddle & banjo combination.

Beaser's arrangement of The Cuckoo, for piccolo and guitar, is one of the most atmospheric and the least attached to the original song tune (whatever that is, as it exists in hundreds of different versions). Its first appearance dates from 1779, and it is one of the many old songs about infidelity. As some cuckoo species have the habit of laying eggs on other birds nests, they frequently appear as a representation of infidelity. The piccolo part has an ornithological twist, but the general atmosphere of the arrangement is one of sorrow and claustrophobia.

Fair and Tender Ladies, which first appeared in 1906, is also a touching lament for men's infidelity: "I wish I were some little sparrow/ And I had wings and I could fly/I would fly away to my false true lover/And while he'll talk I would sit and cry". Beaser's delicate arrangement underlines the lyric aspect of the song, whilst creating a silky texture of canonic imitation.

Quicksilver is an original song by Robert Beaser, composed for a Christmas celebration concert, but the simple strophic melody almost makes us believe that it is a tune that might have been buried by many layers of repetition, variation, adaptation through decades, only to blossom as a collective creation.

Marcelo Barboza

Flautist Marcelo Barboza has been noted by the critics for his versatility, inventive programming and persuasive performance, on stage as well as on CD. In his native Brazil he was a Co-Principal flautist at the Sao Paulo Symphony Orchestra OSESP from 1994 to 2002 and he is currently the Principal Flute at the Sao Paulo Opera House Orchestra and the Brazilian Opera Company.

He has also been constantly involved in a variety of artistic endeavors, feeling as much at home playing in jazz and contemporary music groups as in early music ensembles. Most notably he has sought to increase the presence of Latin American music in the flute repertoire, both in concert and in his recordings.
Marcelo Barboza graduated at the University of Sao Paulo, where he studied with Antonio Carlos Carrasqueira. He pursued a post-graduate course at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he studied with Michie Bennett, Richard Taylor, Sebastian Bell and Lisa Beznosiuk (baroque flute). He finished his studies with the RAM Diploma of Advanced Studies and a Master's Degree at the University of London, with a Distinction in Performance. He is now an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.

Fabio Zanon

Fabio Zanon is one of the pre-eminent guitarists of today. As a solo and chamber player, author, conductor, teacher and broadcaster, he has sought to expand the perception of the guitar in the concert scene.
Born in Brazil, he started his musical studies in early age with his father, and completed his education at the São Paulo University and at the Royal Academy of Music in London. His most significant teachers were Antonio Guedes, Henrique Pinto, Edelton Gloeden and Michael Lewin, and he also attended the Julian Bream master classes in London.
He won both the GFA Competition in the USA and Tarrega Competition in Spain within weeks of each other in 1996, has received many awards for his concerts and recordings, as a conductor as well as a guitarist and in 2008 he was appointed a Visiting Professor at the Royal Academy of Music in London. In 2009 he published his first book, Villa-Lobos, to mark the 50thanniversary of the death of the great Brazilian composer.

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Robert Beaser: Mountain Songs

1	Barbara Allen	3:40
2	The House Carpenter	2:08
3	He's Gone Away	6:30
4	Hush You Bye - fantasia	4:35
5	Cindy	2:35
6	The Cuckoo	5:56
7	Fair and Tender Ladies	3:42
8	Quicksilver	3:14

Hans Haug: Capriccio

9	Prélude	4:15
10	Sérénade à L'Inconnue	3:04
11	Gigue	4:37

Louis Moyse: Cantos de las Sierras

12	Allegro	3:59
13	Andante	6:08
14	Allegro	5:55

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco: Sonatina op.205

15	Allegretto grazioso	4:08
16	Tempo di Siciliana	4:16
17	Scherzo-Rondo	4:09

Marcelo Barboza - flute
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