



GLOBAL FLUTESCAPE
PREMIERES AND RARE GEMS

Jan Vinci, *flute*

Hugh Sung, *piano*

Mark Vinci, *alto saxophone*

Jennifer Higdon, *flute*

Through the years, every now and then, a classical musician will discover an exceptional piece. When played, it creates a special connection between its musical sound and one's heart. As these compositions are encountered we must embrace them and frequently perform them...for the sake of our listeners and, just as important, for the sake of our own artistic well-being. My hope is that this eclectic program of premieres and rare gems will exude passion, create intrigue and fascinate both audiences and performers.

German composer, organist and educator Heinz Benker (1921-2000) is not well known in the flute world. But his almost-never-played *Der Abreiss - Kalender: Miniaturen Suite for Flöte and Klavier* (1955) is a delightful composite of spritful and melodious portraits depicting the days of the week. The compositional influences of this suite hail from the jazz world and, apparently, from the German composer Paul Hindemith, who believed that divergent styles of the early 20th century should converge from a foundation of tonality. The "Tear-Away Calendar" suite incorporates an array of emotions that one may experience throughout a week — presenting motives with major and minor thirds, which represent moods of joy and exuberance versus sadness and gloom. As days are cyclical in order, so is Benker's suite — as it ends with a recapitulation of the first movement, which represents the optimism of the first day of each week.

During my early college days, Judith Bentley and Harvey Sollberger unveiled a jewel to me that continues to possess a special place in my heart — *MEI* (1962) by Kazuo Fukushima (b.1930). "Mei" means the obscure, pale and intangible. According to ancient Japanese legend the sound of the flute can reach those who have passed on. *MEI* was written to comfort the soul of Dr. Wolfgang Steinecke of

Darmstadt, who died in a tragic accident. Fukushima, a resident of Tokyo, beautifully depicts the sounds of traditional Japanese flutes, Nohkan and shakuhachi, through our modern flute.

Hsueh-Yung Shen (b. 1952), whose works have been premiered by the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and the American Composers Orchestra, wrote about his piece *And Then, Things Changed* for flute and piano (2003):

“This work came about more as a suggestion from flautist Jan Vinci, who had inquired about a work for flute and piano. While the flute is featured often in my chamber works, a flute-and-piano piece was indeed lacking. This situation is now rectified.

The starting point for this piece is a jaunty and quite extroverted passage for the flute — in its low register, still an unusual aspect when flutes still tend to be heard in stylized birdcalls. The insistent beat of the piano is perhaps a take-off on certain styles which favour such a metronomic thump. With such a beat, of course one just has to find ways for it to go elsewhere. Initially, one feels a sort of Rondo-pattern where the opening idea recurs with contrasting ideas in-between. After a while, things indeed change; the low registers of the piano, which has been absent for a bit, returns to precipitate a crisis-point.

Out of the depths, an organ-like chorale emerges — at first a comforting presence, but another crisis-point comes about when the piano finally launches into a rather terrifying cadenza. The flute eventually picks up all the pieces, and the work turns full circle, to end at the work’s starting point. Particularly at the crisis-points one notices the full use of piano resonances through long-held pedals; the piano is very much used for its particular sound resources.”

An important figure in the revival of English music in the 20th century, Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) often composed music that depicted his personal conflict with traditional religious beliefs and a more visionary spirituality. Although he was devoted to incorporating traditional English music into his own compositions, Vaughan Williams did study in Germany with Bruch and in Paris with Ravel. Discovered after his death, *Suite de Ballet* for flute and piano (ca. 1924) is an example of his tendency to write in a simple lyrical style, with a touch of modality.

French composer Rhené-Baton (1879-1940) conducted the Opéra Comique in Paris, the Pasedeloup Concerts and the Diaghlev Ballet in London. A composer of chamber, orchestral, and vocal works, his *Passacaille, Opus 35* for flute and piano (1924) is a beautiful romantic idyll with an energetic rhythmic interlude.

At the time of this recording my husband Mark Vinci (b. 1960) and I were about to celebrate our 25th anniversary in 2006. Hence, I was so happy when he agreed to accept a commission to write a piece for us! Mark writes this:

“My duo *When I See You* is a musical reflection on the instant attraction and life long bonding that occurred when Jan and I met when I was 17. The first movement reflects different stages of our life together from going on the road to Jan’s masters and doctoral studies in Cleveland and New York. No matter what was to befall us, we did it together!! I take off like a shot in the second movement and land on some common ground for Jan to join me — she follows suit and we’re off!”

The origin of the music for *Hatikvah* is unknown and has been used in many musical settings including Swedish, Polish, Spanish, Israeli, and Czech music. Composer and flutist Norman Thibodeau (b. 1959), wrote this about his *Introduction and Variations on the Hatikvah* for flute and piano (1980-2006):

“Introduction and Variations on the Hatikvah was begun in 1980 and grew toward completion in stages. It is an early/recent work, spanning 25 years, begun with a pencil, finished on a computer.

There is no programmatic intent or agenda to my treatment of the theme, just a musical and emotional response to it. The introduction is anchored by the beginning of *Hatikvah*, in long notes in the bass. The free lines over it were influenced by works of André Jolivet that I was coming to know back around 1980. The title, as well as the notion of an emotionally substantial set of variations (as opposed to fluffy ones), comes from Schubert’s variations on “*Trockne Blumen*,” music that, like the Jolivet, also very much occupied my flute life back in those days.”

In east Tennessee, I taught Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962) flute lessons when she was a high school student and I was back home earning money between two of my college degree programs. In 1990 the now prominent classical composer wrote *Lullaby for soprano, flute and piano*. In this recording of her own two-flute and piano version, my dear friend joins me, playing the first flute part (the original soprano line). Here are Jennifer's notes on the piece:

“In terms of the piece itself...it's a Lullaby written for the birth of Karen and Marty Claussen's first child, Samantha. I was classmates with Karen at BGSU and we're good friends. ...anyway...it's sort of a simple premise to a piece, but in today's world of complications, I like simplicity!”

Sonatina for flute and piano (March 1920) by American naturalized citizen Vittorio Rieti (1898-1994) reveals the composer's success in writing effective programmatic music, a style that depicts specific emotions or certain events or scenes. In fact he wrote ballet music for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, which was choreographed by the great Balanchine. Although the movements of the *Sonatina* are very brief, their emotional impact is remarkably powerful.

—Notes by Jan Vinci



Jan Vinci

First Prizewinner of England's International Performance Competition, Jan Vinci has performed at Alice Tully, Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall and Symphony Space and at events such as Blossom Festival, International Computer Music Conference in The Netherlands, Electric Music Festival in England, Killington Music Festival, Chamber Music Conference of the East at Bennington College, New York Flute Club concert series and several National Flute Association Conventions. She has also performed in Denmark and Ibiza, Spain, as well as at Stanford University, Ithaca College, Crane, University of West Florida, University of Central Oklahoma, and in return engagements at her alma maters. With a chamber music career spanning over 20 years. Ms. Vinci performs with *Iridescence - Flute and Harp Duo*, which has played venues such as Toledo Museum of Art, Troy Music Hall, Hyde Collection Museum and The Juilliard School. For 10 years with *Tritonis*, a flute, guitar and cello ensemble, Ms. Vinci performed throughout the USA, commissioned over 15 works, and recorded *Five Premieres: Chamber Works With Guitar* for Albany Records. *Percussia*, an ensemble with percussion, received numerous grants from NYSCA, Queens Council on the Arts and Chamber Music America for performance, educational and recording projects. Ms. Vinci has performed on the National Public Radio's program Performance Today and, as an orchestral musician, she performed with the Albany Symphony, Cleveland Opera Theater and Heidelberg orchestras. Dr. Vinci is Senior Artist-in-Residence at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY and formerly served on the faculties of Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College and Hofstra University. For more than

a decade, Ms. Vinci has directed and taught master classes at the Skidmore Summer Flute Institute and has presented the Skidmore Flute Festival. She served as President of the New York Flute Club. Ms. Vinci holds a D.M.A. from The Juilliard School, an M.M. from Cleveland Institute of Music and a B.M. from Bowling Green State University. Her primary teachers include Julius Baker, Samuel Baron, Maurice Sharp, Judith Bentley and Martha Aarons. (janvinci.com)



Hugh Sung

Pianist Hugh Sung debuted with The Philadelphia Orchestra at the age of 11 and has performed throughout the United States, England, Canada, Central America, South America, Japan, and Korea, and venues including Carnegie Hall, Weill Hall, Wigmore Hall, The National Gallery of Art, and The Ravinia Festival. His concerto engagements include performances with the Concerto Soloists Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, annual appearances with the Masterworks Festival Orchestras since 1998, and extensive tours with the South Jersey Symphony Orchestra. He has collaborated with The American Quartet, the Diaz Trio, Jeffrey Khaner, Julius Baker, Hilary Hahn, Leila Josefowicz, composers Jennifer Higdon, Robert Maggio, Harold Boatrite, and violinist Aaron Rosand, with whom he has recorded extensively under the Biddulph and Vox labels. He can also be heard under the I Virtuosi, CRI, and Avie labels. As a student at the Curtis Institute of Music, his principal teachers included Eleanor Sokoloff, Jorge Bolet, and Seymour Lipkin, along with Karen Tuttle and Felix Galimir for chamber music. In 1993, Sung joined the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music. Sung maintains an active website (www.HughSung.com)

which combines his love of music and passion for technology. He is an early adopter of technologies like the Tablet PC. (www.myspace.com/hughsung).



Mark Vinci

Saxophonist and composer Mark Vinci has toured as a soloist in Denmark, the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, Ibiza and the USA where he has performed in such places as One Step Down and The Nest in Washington, D.C., Catalina Bar and Grill in Los Angeles, and Birdland in New York City. He has performed, toured and/or recorded with artists such as Joe Lovano, Stefon Harris, Rosemary Clooney, Tony Bennett, Frank Sinatra, Zoot Sims, Benny Carter, Tommy Flanagan, Clark Terry, Mel Lewis, Michael Feinstein, Gene Bertoncini, and Joe LaBarbera. Mark is lead altoist with John Fedchock's New York Big Band and is a veteran of the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band conducted by Jon Faddis, Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra, and Woody Herman and Gerry Mulligan big bands. He has performed at numerous festivals such as North Sea, Kool, Montreaux, Monterey and Nice. Four-time Grammy nominee Mark has recorded on Bluenote, Capital, Concord, Telarc, SONY, Enja, Albany Records and Iris, among others. *Grand Slam*, *As I Think About You*, and *Interplay* present him as a leader and composer. With a full book of his original big band charts, Mark is frequently featured as soloist with big bands in the USA and Europe, performing arrangements of his tunes from *As I Think About You*, and other original compositions. He has received numerous commissions including a piece for the Empire State Youth Orchestra's upcoming "New Music for a New Generation" festival and a 200-piece concert band performance at the United

Nations. As an educator, Mark Vinci is on the faculty of Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York and has taught clinics and residencies at colleges and high schools throughout the USA, Denmark, Ibiza and, with support from the US Embassy, the Czech Republic. (markvinci.com)



Jennifer Higdon

Jennifer Higdon (b. Brooklyn, NY, December 31, 1962) maintains a full schedule of commissions and her music is known for its technical skill and audience appeal. Hailed by *The Washington Post* as “a savvy, sensitive composer with a keen ear, an innate sense of form and a generous dash of pure esprit,” she is one of America’s most frequently performed composers. Her works have been recorded on over two dozen CDs. In 2004, the Atlanta Symphony released the Grammy-winning *Higdon: Concerto for Orchestra/City Scape*. In fall of 2006, NAXOS released a recording of Higdon’s chamber works (performed by the Cypress String Quartet). At the same time, Cedille released a recording of *Zaka*, performed by eighth blackbird, and Crystal Records released a recording of *DASH*, performed by the Verdehr Trio. Higdon enjoys more than 200 performances a year of her works. Her work *blue cathedral* is one of the most-performed orchestral works by a living composer (100 orchestras have performed the work since its 2000 premiere). She teaches composition at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. (jenniferhigdon.com)

Publishers:

Der Abreiss-Kalender by Heinz Benker was published by Breitkopf but is now out of print. *Mei* by Kazuo Fukushima is published by Suvini Zerboni. *And Then, Things Changed* by Hsueh-Yung Shen is available from the composer (hyshen@earthlink.net). *Suite de Ballet* by Ralph Vaughan Williams is published by Oxford University Press. *Passacaille, Op. 35* by Rhené-Baton is published by Durand. *When I See You* is published by MV Music (markvinci.com). *Introduction and Variations on the Hatikvah* by Norman Thibodeau is available from the composer (thibmusic.com). *Lullaby* by Jennifer Higdon is published by Lawdon Press. *Sonatina* by Vittorio Rieti is published by Bongiovanni.

Acknowledgements:

To my beloved husband Mark, for an extraordinarily beautiful life of love and music, for your passionate and remarkable saxophone, and for our own special piece! To my dear family for your love and support throughout the years. A heartfelt appreciation to Hugh for lending your exquisite touch on the piano. To Jennifer for sharing your precious time and ethereal music. To Adam for your engineering expertise. To my teachers — great masters all. To Chuck Joseph for your sincere encouragement. To Skidmore College for extremely generous financial support.

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