

PROGRAM NOTES FOR FANTASY II : A PIECE OF THE RACH

It's always best to compose music for the performer or orchestra or chamber group which you prefer or know or admire. There is a special rapport ; things do not have to be explained; the performer knows at once what you have tried to accomplish; the realization of the work is a satisfaction and fulfillment and joy ; the details merge into a whole, a unifying experience . Elizabeth and Gene Pridonoff were brought to Cincinnati while I was still Dean of OCM. The rebuilding of our piano department was a high propriety. The coming of the Pridonoffs, of Bela Siki, and Frank Weinstock were the triple assault on an endangered part of the OCM faculty . Richard Morris and I felt intensely that following the accession of this group of splendid teachers and performers that once more OCM would achieve true international acclaim .

All these new colleagues have become close; I admire the individuality and the stylish differences each brings to his/her tasks and role at OCM . I made so bold as to ask Elizabeth to play with Sally Bloom on one of her concerts of several years back , feeling that the partnership would be a rewarding and successful one. And so it proved to be! As you shall hear later this evening, COLLOQUES VI for oboe and piano is one of the more pleasing and totally integrated works of mine- owing largely to the special closeness Elizabeth and Sally have . But the FANTASY II precedes that piece. At the first performance I was so moved, so deeply affected by the persuasiveness attending the playing that I asked if I might compose a piece for Elizabeth. She was at once taken by the idea and urged me on .

Pianists are all different. Some play " big " ; some play with especial refinement ; some play a restricted repertory ; some play from all segments of the repertory. Elizabeth combines all these aspects of piano performance. I knew that I could compose a piece of demanding technical character and brilliance; I knew she would enjoy unpeeling it from the notes. In addition to a love of food [our soups are spoken of in hallowed tones by those who have sampled them] we share an outrageous and unshakeable love for the music of Sergei Rachmaninoff. We have shed tears - over a glass of 1975 Georges Latour - about his lack of a Concerto V , a Sonata III, and A Third Two Piano Suite. But we remain fixed in our affection for grand genius , behind whose dour and sombre facade there was ever a joy of life, a wit, a consummate perfectionism, and a domestic openness' let the critics attack his sequences his chromatic harmonies, his sentimental tunes - before our withering gaze such attacks fade away.

Therefore it seemed like a good idea to share our affection in a new piece of mine. FANTASY II is an homage to all of Rachmaninoff with many allusions to his various works and more obviously to his styles - the active left-hand parts, the cascades of chords, the varieties of his textures. But - as is almost a rule in my music there is always an underlay of coded or " secret " message. This is part of the residue of my work as a cryptanalyst but I suspect it is as much the sort of thing that Bach and Berg felt often; that there were outer layers and inner layers and the fun of discovering some puzzle or encrypted message was part of the fun of composing. To cite some examples in FANTASY II : the row underlying the piece [Horrified to think of such a thematized processes in connection with this fierce tonal composer] begins with D - A - C - ~~B~~ which is a kind of motto; a transliteration to alphabetic symbols this is R-A-C-H . Second one of his greatest works is the wondrous Second Piano Concerto ; The opening (I consider it to be in D minor) apes the gestures of that opening ; third, his most infamous composition is the great Prelude in C-Sharp minor. Listen for the motto from that piece incorporated in many places of my Fantasy . There are other such connections - but perhaps the title, supplied by the Prudential Life Insurance Company says more about my estimate of Rachmaninoff and Pridonoff : Truly artists of granitic power .