

CELEBRATE ASIA COMPOSITION COMPETITION SELECTION

World premiere: January 27, 2013

ZVONIMIR NAGY

Suizen for Shakuhachi and Orchestra

Hanz Araki, shakuhachi

Stilian Kirov, conductor

Zvonimir Nagy (b. 1978), currently assistant professor of Musicianship Studies at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, embraces an ecumenical view that draws from cognitive science, neuroscience and digital media as well as the world of spirituality. Unlike many in the West, he eschews the notion that science and spirituality are incompatible. On the contrary, his music and research reflect what he perceives as the intersection of aesthetics and spirituality on one end, and music cognition and philosophy on the other. In addition to his composing and performing activities, Nagy is at work on a book project in which he discusses how the creation of music and its performance shape the religious experience and how they affect musical creativity. In the realm of performance, Nagy is known for his gift for improvisation on organ and piano.

His education has been international: He has attended the Academy of Music of the University of Zagreb, Conservatoire de Paris, Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris, Texas Christian University, and Northwestern University, where he completed his doctoral studies. His music and performing skills have attracted much attention, and his awards and honors include the 2011 Craig and Janet Swan Composer Prize; First Prize in the 2011 Iron Composer composition competition; Second Prize in the 2010 César Franck & Olivier Messiaen International Organ Competition; finalist of the BBC/Aberdeen Music Prize; and several other instances of recognition.

Nagy kindly provided a précis relating to *Suizen, Symphonic Evocation for Shakuhachi Flute and Orchestra*, herein excerpted:

“Influenced by traditional Asian religious practices and music performance, this evocation for shakuhachi and orchestra is inspired by ‘*suizen*’ — a blowing meditation; *suizen* is known as a form of Zen practice characterized by the ritual of playing the shakuhachi bamboo flute (a Japanese end-blown flute) as a means of achieving a state of self-realization. *Suizen* may be best described as a tone poem for orchestra — a sound image of the moments of inner reflection and musical experience.

“My interest in spirituality in music could be best described by a personal relationship to sound, whose behavior bears a strong analogy to the human soul. One of the tenets of this explication may lay in the nature of musical material, where the dynamic qualities of sound color, harmony and rhythm, with their envelopes of growth and decay could be compared to the tremors of one’s soul. What is more, I would also say that this physical resonance of sound could be well compared to our inner, spiritual resonance. As such, I regard musical harmony as closely related to sound, an attitude that continues to shape my aspiration to search for the experience of one’s spirit as a possible prerequisite for the ultimate insight into the world of the divine.”

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