

Toshio Hosokawa: *Landscapes I* (1992)

Note contributed by Joan Tan (BMus4, Composition) and Xiao Wen (YAP)

Toshio Hosokawa was born in Hiroshima, Japan in October 1955. He first studied piano and composition in Tokyo, then studied composition with Isang Yun at Berlin University of Arts in 1976, and later with Brian Ferneyhough and Klaus Huber at Hochschule für Musik Freiburg from 1983 to 1986. Hosokawa first rose to prominence with the 2001 world premiere of his oratorio *Voiceless Voice in Hiroshima*, which focuses on silence about the traumatic events of the Hiroshima bombing.

Hosokawa has been a member of the Academy of Fine Arts Berlin since 2001 and was a fellow of Berlin's Institute for Advanced Study in 2006/7 and 2008/9. In 2013/14 he was composer in residence at the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra as well as at the Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra from 2019 till 2021. In 2018 he

received the Japan Foundation award, and in 2021 he was awarded the Goethe Medal for his services to cultural exchange between Japan and Germany. He is artistic director of the Takefu International Music Festival and artistic director of the Suntory Hall International Program for Music Composition.

Amongst his large compositional repertoire, Hosokawa's music theatre works have become repertoire of major opera houses, such as his first opera *Vision of Lear* (1998) and *Hanjo* (2004), which features elements of Japanese Noh theatre. Hosokawa considers the compositional process to be instinctively associated with the concepts of Zen Buddhism and its symbolic interpretation of nature, creating a unique sound that expresses the beauty of the world through music. In his own words, "We hear the individual notes and appreciate, at the same time, the process of how the notes are born and then die: a sound landscape of continual 'becoming' that is animated in itself". Hosokawa's works draw inspiration from Western avant-garde art as well

as deeply rooted in the aesthetic and spirituality of traditional Japanese culture, like calligraphy, and traditional Japanese court music, *gagaku*.

In Hosokawa's *Landscape I*, long sustained tones move fluidly between the foreground and background, morphing organically through timbral distortions and interruptions. The piece opens with a percussive attack, followed by a residue-like harmonic sustained tone in the cello — secco and sustained sounds which form the materials of this piece. This is repeated and varied in a myriad of ways, growing in intensity via tremolo fluctuations, increased rhythmic subdivisions, wider harmonic intervals and timbral changes (through introducing varying degrees of noise) executed through extended playing techniques. The piece is characterised by a constant tension between soft, continuous sounds and loud, abrupt interruptions, which escalates and de-escalates, but never resolves.

In the words of Hosokawa, “Music is the place where notes and silence meet.” Silence and its

relationship to sound presents a dichotomy in Hosokawa's *Landscape I*. Rests are used to accentuate sounds, while sounds, at times, veer towards inaudibility. Silence is also used as an interruption; a break in the tension, or perhaps, a means to build up tension and expectations of what is to come.

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Louis Andriessen: *The Hague Hacking Scrap*  
(2003)

Note contributed by Chong Heng Li (BMus4,  
Composition)

Louis Andriessen was a Dutch composer born in Utrecht, the Netherlands in 1939. His musical education began at a young age, as his father, Hendrik Andriessen, was also a composer. He later studied composition at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague with Kees van Baaren.

Throughout his career, Andriessen has been associated with various musical movements, including minimalism, post-minimalism, and the avant-garde. He has composed a wide variety of works, including operas, chamber music, orchestral pieces, and works for solo instruments. His music is characterized by its use of repetitive rhythms and rich harmonies. Some of Andriessen's most famous works include *De Staat*, a choral work inspired by Plato's Republic; *Workers Union*, an ensemble piece for any type of instruments or voices; and *La Commedia*, an opera inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

In addition to his work as a composer, Andriessen was also a teacher and mentor to many young composers. He taught at several music conservatories throughout the world, including the Royal Conservatory of The Hague, the Yale School of Music, and the

University of California, San Diego. He also received numerous awards and honors for his contributions to contemporary music, including the Grawemeyer Award, the Johan Wagenaar Prize, and the Prince Bernhard Culture Fund Prize.

*The Hague Hacking Scrap* (2003) offers a glimpse into the mind of Andriessen; one of the most important and influential Dutch composers of the 20th century. It is a work for piano duo characterized by its use of repetitive rhythms, rich harmonies, and intense hockets. It is believed that the title is derived from the Dutch word "hakselaar," which means "shredder" or "grinder", but it has never been explicitly confirmed by Andriessen himself.

This piece is divided into two sections, each with its own distinct character. The first section is characterized by a fast tempo and driving

rhythms while the second section, marked *meno mosso* is slower and more contemplative, featuring richer harmonies and a sense of tension between each chord.

While *The Hague Hacking Scrap* continues to be a staple of contemporary piano duo music, it was later used as a foundation by Andriessen himself for a traditional symphonic orchestra piece, *The Hague Hacking* (2008). It is worth mentioning that his music not only has influences of jazz in its rhythms and harmonies, but also consists of minimalist polyrhythms.

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Salvatore Sciarrino: *Il Silenzio degli oracoli* (1989)

Note contributed by Lin Ssu-Ting (BMus3, Composition)

Born in 1947 in Sicily, Salvatore Sciarrino studied visual arts before turning to music.

Although largely self-taught through independent study of early and modern music, he received some guidance from Antonio Titone and Turi Belfiore. The first public performance of his music took place in 1962. He completed his studies in Rome and Milan and was introduced to electronic music by Franco Evangelisti, whom he considers, along with Stockhausen, to be one of his “artistic fathers.”

He went on to teach composition at the Milan, Perugia, and Florence Conservatories and led numerous masterclasses. From 1978 to 1980, he was Artistic Director of the Teatro Comunale di Bologna, one of the most important opera venues in Italy. In 1982, he moved to Città di Castello, a small town in Umbria, to dedicate himself to composition and teaching until 2000. In 2014-15, he led a series of masterclasses at the Latina Conservatory near Rome.



Despite his affiliation with major figures of the musical avant-garde, notably Stockhausen, Salvatore Sciarrino feels that his music demonstrates strong historical continuity. His vast catalogue is characterized by a gradual evolution toward a musical conceptualization which has been described as “sonic ecology,” as opposed to stylistic leaps. Since the beginning of his career in the 1960s, the idea of a distinct “Sciarrino sound” was already present.

His music is intimate, focused, and refined, sustained by micro-variations in sonic structures comprising rich timbres and breaths. He has developed a sonic universe which is transparent, rarefied, and close to silence (or “sound zero,” which, for the composer, is also music); it is built upon a multitude of microscopic sounds and almost imperceptible noises, and is reduced to only what is absolutely essential.

The composer structures his works in the same way that one draws lines on a piece of paper, applying shades to sounds, fusing colors, and exploring the light in his timbral modeling. Vocal works figure prominently in Sciarrino's catalogue, and his desire to unify poetry and music is a recurrent feature in his work. In contrast, other vocal works often make use of commonplace language, albeit with irony, as in, for example, his setting of railway station announcements in *Senza sale d'aspetto* (2011), which were also included in the libretto (written by the composer) of his one-act opera, *Superflumina* (2010).

*Il silenzio degli oracoli* is a piece for wind quintet (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn). This piece was commissioned by the Festival delle Colline de Poggio a Caiano in 1989 in dedication to Roberto Calasso. In 1989, the first partial

premiere took place on May 30 at Carnegie Hall in New York by the Quintetto a Fiati Italiano, and on September 4, 1989, it premiered at Settembre Musica in Turin, Italy, again performed by Quintetto a Fiati Italiano.

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Sofia Gubaidulina: *String Quartet No. 2* (1987)

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## Biography

Sofia Asgatovna Gubaidulina was born in the USSR on 24 October 1931 in Chistopol, a small town in the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, not far to the west of the Ural Mountains which form the natural border between Europe and Asia. Her father was Volga Tatar and a surveyor by profession, her

mother of Russian and Polish descent, and the family language was Russian. While the composer was still a child, the family moved to the Tatar capital city of Kazan, and it was there she attended musical school, and then the Kazan Conservatory, studying piano and composition. Graduating in 1954, she transferred to the Moscow Conservatory, where she was taught by Nikolai Peiko and, later, Vissarion Shebalin, finally completing her studies in 1961.

After admission to the Composers' Union, an essential step for anyone wishing to earn a living writing music in Soviet times, she became a freelance composer, surviving by writing children's music and, more importantly, film scores. Music for cinema became her main source of income for the next 30 years.

As a young composer in Moscow, Gubaidulina benefited greatly from contact with her peers and from the relatively open cultural atmosphere in the later Khrushchev years. It was at that time that she first established contact with important performers including the percussionist Mark Pekarsky (for whom she wrote many pieces including the percussion concerto *The Hour of the Soul*, 1976, rev.1988), the bassoonist Valery Popov (Concerto for Bassoon and Low Instruments, 1975) and the free-bass accordionist Friedrich Lips, for whom she composed the solo piece *De profundis* (1978) and the chamber concerto *Seven Words* for free-bass accordion, cello and strings (1982), the cello part being for Vladimir Tonkha, another major champion of her music.

Even at this early period, the titles and character of her pieces made strikingly clear Gubaidulina's fascination with religion,

something which caused her trouble with the Soviet authorities, especially when her music was performed abroad. In 1980, she composed her first violin concerto, *Offertorium* (subsequently twice revised), for Gidon Kremer, who performed the piece widely across the world, thus garnering her international attention and commissions from many performers and orchestras in Western Europe, the USA and in Japan. In 1992, with the collapse of the USSR, she moved to a small village outside Hamburg, Germany, where she has lived ever since.

Her musical output over the last four decades has been astonishing, including a whole sweep of orchestral pieces from late Soviet works like *Stimmen... verstummen...* (1986) through early works from the post-Soviet period like *Zeitgestalten* (1994) and *The Light of the End* (2003) to the recent *The Wrath of God* (2020),

one of her most powerful utterances. She has also completed two more violin concertos, several concertos for cello and many other concertante works including one for her beloved free-bass accordion and another for Japanese instruments with symphony orchestra.

For the composer herself, her choral and orchestral works are especially important, perhaps most of all the massive full-evening diptych of the *Johannes-Passion* (2000) and its companion piece *Johannes-Ostern* (2001). But she continues to compose a great deal of chamber music and still relishes her relationships with individual performers.

Over the years, Gubaidulina has been given many prizes, honours and awards, and in 2021, the year of her 90th birthday, there were celebrations of her life and work, in many countries of the world. Her greatest wish,

however, remains that she should continue to write music, quietly and at home.

Sofia Gubaidulina is published by Boosey & Hawkes/Sikorski.

### Program Note

My second string quartet was written in 1987 to a commission from the Sibelius Quartet for the festival at Kushmo in Finland.

This was the first time in my life I set myself the task of realizing a certain musical problem of great importance to me personally, not in a large scale form but in a small scale one.

In the course of many years my attention has been persistently drawn to an idea I call 'Musical Symbolism'. This means that what appears as a symbol (i.e. a knitting together of



things of different significance) is not some sound or other, nor yet a conglomeration of sounds, but the separate constituent elements of a musical instrument or the properties of those elements. Specifically in this particular context, the discourse springs from the difference between the means of extracting the normal sound from stringed instruments and the means by which harmonics can be made to sound.

It is possible to consider the passage across this difference as a purely mundane acoustical phenomenon and to make no particular issue out of it. But it is just as possible to experience this phenomenon as a vital and essential transition from one state to another. And this is a highly specific aesthetic experience, the experience of a symbol. It is just such an experience which distinguishes between everyday time and true essential time, which distinguishes between existence and essence.

And this modulation, this transition between the two, happens not through 'depiction' nor through 'expression' but through transformation or transfiguration by means of an instrumental symbol. For this transition actually happens on the very instrument. In its acoustic self.

- Sofia Gubaidulina