

Piano Plus One

Footscray, Vic.: Red House Editions, 1995. The Duos Series 1. ISBN 0 646 23578 8. \$35.00. pp.68.

Guitar Plus One

Footscray, Vic.: Red House Editions, 1995. The Duos Series 2. ISBN 0 646 23579 6. \$35.00. pp.60.

The two publications reviewed here represent the beginning of what could prove to be a long, and certainly an interesting, series of volumes of contemporary instrumental miniatures. The ethos of the first two in the series, as outlined in the preface to *Piano Plus One*, is to place each volume's principal instrument in unusual duo combinations, and simultaneously to further musical relations between Australia and other countries by juxtaposing local works with those from a single other nation in each volume.

While the country paired with Australia in each volume may seem arbitrarily chosen, the choices are by no means inappropriate or unsuccessful. They provide Australians with a very useful introduction to the music of (mostly young) composers from overseas. This is especially the case for *Piano Plus One*, as contemporary Korean music in general is probably not as well known here as music from Germany, featured in *Guitar Plus One*, and Holland, to be found in the forthcoming piano duo book *Four Hands*.

The presentation is excellent, with high-quality typesetting and printing on durable paper in A4 format. Both *Guitar Plus One* and *Piano Plus One* contain performance notes, as well as short biographies of each composer. Each piece has been carefully presented and even the most complex scores are clearly and precisely laid out. Given that both volumes are quite affordable, it would be advisable for the aspiring performer of any of these works to buy two copies, as no separate 'part' is produced and, as with much contemporary music, both instrumentalists need a full score anyway.

In terms of creating unusual duo combinations, *Piano Plus One* is perhaps only partially successful. The more unusual partners are bass flute, trombone and percussion. Others are clarinet, oboe and violin, all fairly standard partners, while one work calls for any stringed instrument. One must acknowledge, however, the difficulty of finding an instrument which hasn't been paired with the piano!

There are nine works altogether in *Piano Plus One*, four from Australia and five by Koreans. Although some diversity of style and language is present, the works are, with one exception, a congruous selection of contemporary music, and one can easily imagine a concert programme or recording of the volume's contents.

Piano Plus One opens with Bonu Koo's *Adieu Senior* (1993) with oboe, an approachable piece which combines passages of driving rhythm and aggressive articulation with opportunities for lyricism, especially for the wind instrument. Some similarities to *Adieu Senior* are seen in the rhythms of Sunshoo Cho's quasi-minimalist *Rain V* (also 1993) with percussion. The piece is dominated by almost constant quavers with irregular accents, which are played initially on the principal percussion instrument, the traditional Korean *tadumi* (a granite block covered with folded cotton cloth and struck with long wooden beaters). The piano takes up the rhythmic figure in an oscillating pitch pattern focussed on E^b. Somewhat surprisingly in a volume of contemporary works, *Rain V* is one of only two pieces which require the pianist to leave the keyboard (the other is *White Wall*, also with percussion);

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convincing blueprint for interpretative revision of Bartók's output.

Bartók and his World is well and accurately produced, with good illustrations and reliable musical examples. The selections of letters, interviews, obituaries and recollections are mostly well translated, although the editorial notes are only adequate and con-

tain a fair sprinkling of errors. Two seminal texts, on Bartók's change in style by Edwin von der Nüll and Theodor Adorno's review of the Third String Quartet, are also included and will prove valuable sources for scholars.

Malcolm Gillies

the pianist's equipment includes wind chimes, a cotton cloth, dried beans and a large rimmed floor tom, to complement the percussionist's *tadumi*, marimba, wind chimes and bass drums.

Adieu Senior and *Rain V* are the only works which include in their performance directions a substantial artistic statement about the work itself which could be used in a programme note. Koo writes of the substantial changes taking place in South Korea today as a background to *Adieu Senior*, while for Cho, the stimulus for *Rain V* is a personal and an aural one: the composer recalls from her childhood the sound and use of the *tadumi* as an implement for smoothing cotton dress material.

Nami Hong's *White Wall* (1993) combines the piano with a percussion set-up comprising marimba, tam tam (played with soft mallet and double-bass bow), suspended triangles, sleigh bells and temple blocks, these last shared with the pianist. Creating an aura of fantasia, piano and percussion alternate passages of sparsely arpeggiated chords which hang vibrating in the air. The climax occurs when the piano and marimba finally play together.

A similar atmosphere is evoked in the opening and closing sections of Jae Eun Ha's *Quodlibet* (1984), where the sonorous quartal harmonies of the piano and the contrasting delicate, often cadenza-like, filigree of the violin are marked 'scorrevole, a fantasia'. A central section brings the instruments closer together in a fast, aggressive and tension-filled texture. This vividly notated score is, to me, one of the most appealing works in *Piano Plus One*.

Another appealing work is Joerg Todzy's somewhat misleadingly titled *Easy Music* (1994). This piece for piano and any stringed instrument—Todzy's suggestions comprise harp, zither, guitar and cello—has, as one of its virtues and probably its greatest element of difficulty, a large component of aleatory for the stringed instrument. The player is instructed to use the given sequence of pitches as the basis of arpeggiations covering the full range of the instrument. As there is, of course, an infinite number of possible realisations, this is a most interesting and potentially rewarding work, even for the pianist whose own part is fixed. My only quibble is with the composer's habitual use of short diagonal strokes on different lines of the staff to indicate treble and bass clefs; what is his justification for this slightly confusing practice?

'Easy' is an adjective one would also avoid in connection with Chris Dench's *mem(e)* (1994). The bass flautist is provided with substantial hints on the decoding of the notation and the realisation of the score, but great familiarity with the style of Dench's notation and

music is needed by both flautist and pianist for successful execution of this work. The performance notes direct the flautist in particular to the preface of another Dench piece, *Closing Lemma*, for further clues to the music. As in many other works in *Piano Plus One*, in the piano *mem(e)* often slips into an accompanying role while the bass flute dazzles with virtuosity in its six substantial solo sections, including the introduction and postlude.

The only piece which includes substantial solo sections for piano is Hyo-shin Na's *November Mountain* (1987), a duo with clarinet. The clarinet's trills, tremolos and quasi-arpeggio phrases offset the widely spaced piano tones and inwardly arpeggiated chords. This shimmeringly rapid piece could well be the pianist's showpiece of this collection.

Another difficult work is Elena Kats-Chernin's aptly named *Duo 1* (1984), where a close relationship is maintained between the piano and violin. The piano part makes frequent use of chromatic clusters, and these are echoed by the violin's four-string pizzicato arpeggios of indefinite pitch. Extremes of register, timbre, dynamic and articulation characterise the piece, as does the almost obsessive use of perfect fourths, both vertically and horizontally.

Finally, the inclusion in *Piano Plus One* of Warren Burt's *November Eighteenth* (1980) for piano and trombone seems rather incongruous: it is a slow, spacious, meditative work, of uniform dynamic, almost totally homophonic, 'soft, smooth, delicate, suspended and precious'.¹ It presents far less of a technical challenge, especially to the pianist, than the other works in the collection, and inhabits a different musical and aesthetic world altogether. To place Burt's work in this context seems to show it to disadvantage.

Patrica Shaw

Guitar Plus One contains ten contemporary works by Australian and German composers for two guitars and duos with either tuned glass, voice, flute, violin, viola, cello or piano. Apart from one piece written for electric guitar, the works are intended for the nylon-stringed classical guitar. Very few albums of contemporary music for guitar have been published, making *Guitar Plus One* an important resource for guitarists and one that will hopefully inspire both performers and composers to expand the repertoire.

All the pieces were written between 1992 and 1995, and reflect the diversity of the current scene. Stylistically and in terms of difficulty, there is a broad range to choose from. Guitarists who are not overly familiar