

What I Did on My Summer Vacation or *Why I Wrote a Piece Called “Lazy Dogma”*

Krisukas: *Lazy Dogma - A Piece for Trombone, Orchestra and Subconscious Protagonist*

I grew up with what used to be called wanderlust. I really didn't know why, but I always wanted to go somewhere, anywhere. Maybe it was the old hunter-gatherer checking in on the new kid. I later chalked this up to a simple search for mystery and the quest for the “as yet unknown.” It goes without saying that seeing and reacting to other cultures is a great lubricant for the mind and yet for all the differences it doesn't take long to settle into the understanding that most people, everywhere, at that core level, want the same for their life and their family.

When Allan Birney kindly asked me to write another piece for the Pennsylvania Sinfonia Orchestra, I knew right away what I wanted the piece to convey. I had written a piece a long time ago for the Sinfonia titled *The Black Sea Concerto*. I had never even seen the Black Sea, but for me it held the requisite mystery and unknown elements that would allow one's mind to roam. I did eventually get to the Black Sea and I had a very memorable reaction to the difference in the physical reality and yet the striking similarity in emotion. The complex built upon the simple.

In my travels, I was always drawn to the basic, most primal social gatherings. I felt privileged to hear music and celebrate at Birthdays, Coming of Age rituals, Weddings, Funerals and Religious Holidays (holy days)—marker points in the flow of existence common to all mankind. An “Active Dogma” if you will. Be they mythological, religious or sociologically based, these rituals and music were always founded on quite simple, similar and ancient motifs and traditions. Their very simplicity and repetition reinforcing and reassuring the communal spirit.

For much of human history these culturally separate but equal life markers were laid down in relative isolation. And, for most of that time the day to day social fabric (work, play, arts, etc...) maintained its individual integrity and its mutually established tempo at each locale.

With the advent of light-speed communication, our new “Small World” (now about the size of a laptop) has fast become a cultural fusion of sound bites, High School reunions in the Rain Forest, babushkas, Turtle nesting tours, Insurance Geckos, Croque Monsieurs with Sake, Bungee jumpers in Kilts and Para-Sailors on the Sea of Galilee.

Through it all, those fundamental simple motifs and traditions have survived yet it seems that the day to day aspect of life can easily fall into a kind of non-stop cacophony of simplicity. That “Lazy Dogma” sleeping on the back porch.

The piece itself uses a few very simple themes which develop quickly and change direction, tempo and tonal center often. The music is set inside the conscience of an evolving human with two departures to “outside” musical performances which our wandering protagonist witnesses.

Mike Krisukas

Mozart (1756-1791): *Symphony No. 35 in D, K. 385, “Haffner”*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's “Haffner” symphony (listed as his 35th by the traditional and highly inaccurate numbering) has an off history. Sigmund Haffner was a wealthy citizen of Salzburg who became the city's burgo-master or mayor. He had commissioned from Mozart in 1776 a serenade for the wedding of his daughter, Elisabeth. (It is, not surprisingly, known as the “Haffner” serenade.) Six years later Haffner was given a title of nobility. Feeling that a celebration was in order, he planned one for a few weeks later and had Leopold tell Wolfgang that another serenade would be appreciated. Wolfgang, about to be married and up to his elbows in work, was understandably ticked off at the short notice, but managed to submit the work in driblets by the deadline. Later he took four movements out of the piece, touched them up, and presented them in Vienna as a new symphony. The Emperor Joseph was in the audience, was clearly delighted by the music, and sent its composer a purse of money—which Mozart thought hardly reflected the pleasure Joseph had exhibited in the concert hall.

David M. Greene (1991)

Tchaikovsky (1840-1893): *Serenade for Strings*

Though Tchaikovsky was a solidly romantic composer, one of his idols was Mozart, whom he once referred to as “the Christ of music.” Indeed, Tchaikovsky wrote that a performance of *Don Giovanni* he attended at the age of 10 was what introduced him to the power of music to express deep emotion.

So it is no surprise that in September of 1880, at the same time he was working on his thunderous *1812 Festival Overture*, Tchaikovsky decided to write an orchestral serenade that would serve as an homage to Mozart's own serenades. Inspired, he completed the work relatively quickly and appeared much more satisfied with it than its sister composition, the overture. As he wrote to his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, “The overture will be very showy and noisy, but will have no artistic merit because I wrote it

without warmth and without love. But the *Serenade*, on the contrary, I wrote from inner compulsion. This is a piece from the heart." Later he told von Meck, "I am violently in love with this work and cannot wait for it to be played." It was premiered in St. Petersburg in 1881 and met with instant success. Tchaikovsky even received congratulations on the work from another of his musical heroes, pianist and composer Anton Rubenstein.

The *Serenade for Strings* is not a truly classical piece in its musical content—it is as romantic as any of Tchaikovsky's other works, and unlike Mozart's serenade for a small group of strings, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, Tchaikovsky's serenade requires a full string choir to do justice to its sonorities.

But though it does not sound precisely like Mozart, Tchaikovsky intended his work to be classical in form and spirit, especially in the stately opening theme of the first movement, recapitulated at the close of the final movement. This, he wrote to von Meck, "is my homage to Mozart; it is intended to be an imitation of his style, and I should be delighted if I thought I had in any way approached my model."

This first movement, Pezzo in forma di Sonatina, moves from the measured Andante introduction to a simple, four-note theme in the Allegro that develops into vigorous scale passages demonstrating the various orchestral colors available within the strings alone. Yet this section, though brisk, is never forced or rushed; the brilliant passages simply complement the lilting movement of the Allegro theme.

The Valse of the second movement is Tchaikovsky's 19th-century answer to the minuets of Mozart's serenades. This graceful dance seems never far from Tchaikovsky's ballets; in fact the movement, with portions of the rest of the work, was used by George Balanchine in his *Serenade* (1936). (Balanchine eventually expanded his ballet to include Tchaikovsky's entire piece, although with the second and third movements reversed.) Each string section takes a turn carrying the dancing melody in counterpart to rhythmic lines from the other sections. The movement ends in a gentle pianissimo, leading to the quietly stated Elegia. Like the previous two movements, the third is build on a scale passage, this one rising in quietly building fervor. The lower strings carry a good portion of the songlike melody which, though called an elegy, is more reflective than truly somber.

The Finale is subtitled Tema russo, and includes two Russian folk tunes, both catalogued by composer and musicologist Mily Balakirev. The first, a slow tune sung by Volga draymen, appears in the Andante introduction. The second is an animated Russian dance, which Tchaikovsky scores at points with some quickly pulsing, balalaika-like pizzicato in octaves. Contrasted with this second theme is a third, lyrical motif by Tchaikovsky that provides broadly sweeping movement against the vivacious dance. The theme from the first movement's Andante makes its reappearance, then Tchaikovsky cleverly transforms the descending portion of this stately theme into the pulsing descending scale of the dance, ending the piece with vigor.

Barbara Heninger (2003)

Prokofiev (1891-1953): *Symphony No.1 in D op. 25, "Classical"*

The creation of this important, and popular, little masterpiece took place at a time (1915) that coincided with some interesting turning points in both the development of music and in the career of its composer. The turbulent years just before World War I had seen a similar upheaval in the continuum of music; the more or less continuous development of elements of Western music—meoldy, harmony, rhythm, formal process—had been violently overturned by the new music of Debussy, Stravinsky and Schoenberg, and Prokofiev himself (his *Scythian Suite* is every bit as disruptive and revolutionary as Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*). The resulting vacuum left room for the pursuit of divergent directions for composers; some chose to replace the old rules with a new aesthetic, while others sought a new music in a resolution of the old with the new. Many composers, therefore, reverted to the usable aspects of the past, which they combined with the new harmonic, melodic and rhythmic ideas of their own generation; much of this music is seen as Neo-Classicism. Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* is a product of this combination of old and new. It is also a product of a time when his career as a virtuoso pianist was "in conflict with his ever-increasing concern for composition," and marks the turning point in his decision to become a composer rather than pursuing further his career primarily as a performer.

The result is a work that could only be considered one of the most charming, vivacious, ingenious, poignant and perfect statements of an ideal, which happens also to be a beautiful piece of music. The work is cast in the four-movement form of the symphony of Haydn and Mozart's time, conceived in the proportions of that style, and echoing the orchestral forces and structural principles of the early symphonists. It doesn't matter that instead of a Minuet Prokofiev gives us a Gavotte, or that this is the second rather than the third movement, or that it severely truncates the usual form. This movement, like each of the others, is "succinct, dry and amusing in its apparent burlesque" of the Classic style. Prokofiev himself felt that "if Haydn had lived to our day, he would have preserved something of the new. That was the kind of symphony I wanted to write; something just for fun, to tease the 'geese.'" To the old that he preserved, Prokofiev adds his own distinct and unmistakable hand—the sudden modulations to remote keys that almost jerk the listener around, the pungency of his chords, the angular melodies, and the bright orchestral timbres, and (something he shares with Haydn) a very personal sense of humor. Prokofiev premiered the work in 1918 in St. Petersburg, where it quickly won the acclaim that the remainder of the musical world has since accorded it.

William Melin (1987)