

STYLISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PIANO MUSIC BY DACE APERANS (APERĀNE)

Diāna Zandberga

Summary

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Dace Aperans' (Aperāne, b. 1953) works for piano, chamber ensembles, voice and orchestra have often been inspired by the poetry, art and folk music of Latvia and other countries. Her compositions have been performed in Canada, the USA, England, the Netherlands, Hungary, Germany, Russia, Mexico, and, since 1989, are also in the repertoire of many Latvian interpreters. Recordings of her music can be found in the Latvian Radio archives; they have been played on Latvian Radio 3 *Klasika* broadcasts, as well as American classical radio programs. There have been a series of her 'author concerts' in Riga (Wagner Hall, Latvian National Opera New Hall, Latvian Society House), Sigulda, Cēsis and other cities in Latvia. The majority of Dace Aperans' works are dominated by a light-filled or melancholic gentle mood. Aperans has received Latvia's Order of the Three Stars (2001), the Latvian Music Award (2007) and the Grand Music Award (2015).

Recognizing Aperans' significance, the Latvian National Record Label *Skani*, in collaboration with the Latvian Music Information Centre, released a CD of her piano works performed by pianist Diāna Zandberga, entitled *Skaņas un atskaņas (Sounds and Echoes)* in 2015. This CD was a release in the series *Latvian Composers*.

Musicologist Rob Barnett in the review of Music Web International characterizes her music:

"Aperāne takes communicative delight in directly spoken beauty. In her case there is no struggle to gain an appreciation of the blessed things that she has to say. They are laid out in front of the listener's ears without even the appearance of artifice. Aperāne's lambent and idyllic music is eloquent and silver-tongued." (Barnett 2017)

The album *Sounds and Echoes* includes original works and transcriptions for piano created between 1990 and 2015. The broad selection of works resonates with a stylistic variety – ranging from the ascetic neo-baroque *Sarabande* and impressionistic sophisticated *Haiku* to the French charm that permeates *Music from the Ballet "Edith"* – a tribute to the French chanson singer Édith Piaf (1915–1963).

To explore the multifaceted nature of the composer's music, pianist Diāna Zandberga has made arrangements for solo piano of the original music for two pianos and percussion (*The Red Balloon*), two pianos (*Haiku, Mosaic*), one piano four hands (*Allegheny Air and Dance*), music

for violin and piano (*Romance*), as well as from the orchestral score (*Music from the Ballet "Edith"*).

Based on specific sources of inspiration, the cycle *Mosaic* reflects the 5th and 6th Byzantine mosaics of Ravenna, Italy, though more often the compositions by Dace Aperāne are influenced by different folk music features. In *Allegheny Air and Dance*, elements from Appalachian folk songs are evoked. *Two Dreams (Dos Sueños)* are influenced by idiomatic Spanish flamenco folk styles as well as Arabic modes. Likewise, the imitation of special instrumental effects on the cimbalom, a Hungarian folk instrument, can be found in the piano work *Cimbalom*, while the refined impressionistic colourings of pentatonic scales prevail in the *Haiku* cycle. Successively, the Latvian folk song arrangements *Mistakenly I Entered* and *Kokle's Song* enchant with gently dissonant timbral coloristic nuances. Finally, *Three Nocturnes* reflect features of Latvian folk song melodies.

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