

GOLDSTEIN *Remembering Mariupol* • William Goldstein (pn) • NEW GOLD 0097 (Streaming audio: 14:26) available at <https://www.amazon.com/music/player/albums/B09XX23Z24>

Recent events in Ukraine will surely result in myriad responses, many of them musical as the world processes the scenes we watch daily via media channels. Willam Goldstein has created a four-movement suite for piano, “reflecting the world’s angst at the horror perpetuated upon Ukraine by Vladimir Putin’s unprecedented invasion of a sovereign country, and the complete disregard for civilian casualties, the elderly, women and especially children. The entire world is aware of this tragedy. Hopefully this suite will help comfort, spread empathy for the Ukrainian people, and perhaps in a small way, inspire humanity to unite against blatant evil.” In 2012, Goldstein was a guest artist in Ukraine, sponsored by the U.S. State Department, so this piece clearly lies very close to his heart.

There are four movements: “By the Sea,” “Under Siege,” “The Children,” and “A Prayer.” The first thing to strike one about “By the Sea” is its charming simplicity, as if hearkening back to a time of peace and stability; and happiness. This is a “remembrance of the beautiful seaside resort on the Sea of Azov.” It is shot through with Goldstein’s trademark expressivity, progressing in an unhurried unfurling through repetition of a core motif, with arabesques becoming ever more florid and even Debussyan. (You can hear—and see—this arresting movement at YouTube.) The mood changes instantaneously for “Under Siege,” as a dark bass and extreme treble create a registral gulf that is impossible to fill. It is a stark, memorable gesture and technique. A sense of timelessness presumably reflects the loss of the normal flow of time in such situations, while floating textures reflect the natural sense of disruption and uprootedness that surely must accompany such a threat to one’s personal spaces, and indeed one’s homeland. Goldstein suggests in his performance a sense of slow trudging forward, a heaviness of spirit and of heart; perhaps the syncopations at the movement’s close are even intended to imply a heartbeat.

The children of Mariupol have become something of a symbol for this time, and Goldstein’s “The Children” reflects the devastation of the bombing of schools and hospitals, and the use of a theater as a place of refuge, marked on its side with the word “children” in Russian. The tender sense of reminiscence of a time before the war suggests innocence now lost, or if not lost, transformed into something else. The chorale-like section is particularly touching. Finally, “A Prayer” is another chorale which seems, at least on some level, to link to the *Allegretto* second movement of Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony in its quietly relentless gait as well as to Goldstein’s stated inspiration, Handel’s famous Sarabande. This movement is intended to invoke the nobility of the human spirit, and does so through its elevating harmonic workings, with the harmonic lightnings implying the will to survive that is hard-coded into humankind. The close of the work leaves us with a quiet but profound sense of hope.

This is a memorable, touching response to recent events and one that will surely provide solace to many. **Colin Clarke**

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