

## ENCORE Sunday Unplugged: “Imagine No Country” (July 8)

by David Kulma



ENCORE Chamber Music’s final Sunday Unplugged concert of the summer on July 8 focused on composers of “diverse cultural backgrounds.” Its title, “Imagine No Country,” paraphrased a line from John Lennon’s peace anthem *Imagine*. The international music featured was by four composers: two living — American Richard Danielpour and Argentine

Osvaldo Golijov, both of Jewish descent — and two deceased — Japanese Tōru Takemitsu and Romanian George Enescu.

Danielpour’s piano quartet *The Book of Hours* represents a cycle of 24 hours. “Morning” opens with a piquant ladder of ascending fourths, and spends most of its lovely expanse emphasizing two-note sighs and spans of perky, Stravinskian modernism. The feeling in “Midday” alternates between calming strings and colorful piano. “Afternoon Into Evening” bounds around in a brawny romp that approaches fiddling. The *Gymnopedie*-like “Night” shares pretty melodies across its sarabande rhythm that shadow into bell-tolling at the end. Violinist Brendan Shea, violist Yu Jin, cellist Max Geissler, and pianist Itamar Golan played this wonderful, vivacious music with verve.

Takemitsu’s *The Bird Came Down to Walk*, for viola and piano, takes its name from a descriptive Emily Dickinson poem. The resulting music — as played by Jin and pianist Hyun Soo Kim — was full of vibrant colors and complex gestures, as if Takemitsu were

an abstract watercolorist. The chords are Debussian, but the ideas neither push nor pull. Jin and Kim played this slight, spicy work with great precision and care.

Golijov's string quartet *Tenebrae* builds something plangently beautiful out of liturgical melismas by French Baroque composer François Couperin. Here, Golijov has written an *Adagio for Strings* for the 21st century with slow-moving, clear tonality and regular, spacious embellishments. Violinists Shea and Rachel Sandman, violist Julia Clancy, and Geissler played this pained, eloquent work with firm control.

Enescu's nearly 40-minute early *Octet in C* is both a grand, late-Romantic statement and a celebration of energetic youth. Finished before he was 20, this sprawling composition for double quartet is thickly textured, with everyone playing almost constantly. The lengthy first movement begins with an ecstatic, spiraling melody atop a low drone. Jinjoo Cho's inspired first violin line above a long luminous chord calmed fifteen minutes of flurry, ending the piece in a magical stretch.

The following three movements bled together: a fiery scherzo, a serene slow movement, and a waltz-like finale that ended in a blaze of glory. Violinists Cho, Shea, Minye Choi, and Sandman, violists Ettore Causa and Jan Grüning, and cellists Amit Even-Tov and Geissler played with a burning fire and extreme energy that brought this crazed work of a young man into full flower.

*Published on ClevelandClassical.com July 11, 2018.*

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