

Giya Kancheli - Trauerfarbenes Land (1998)

Written by bluesever

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1 ...à la Duduki, for orchestra 19:19 2 Trauerfarbenes Land for orchestra 37:17 ORF
Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra Dennis Russell Davies – conductor

Georgian composer Giya Kancheli's music ranges from brash to deeply personal. His scores explore dynamic and rhythmic extremes, and almost seem to be a soundtrack for angular, rhapsodic dreams. At times the orchestra swells to a heavy Russian march complete with bells and drums, and at other times there is near silence. The two works presented on this CD are enigmatic, yet one can sense that the materials are steeped in history, memory and drama. The essay in the liner notes is highly philosophical, making references to Camus, Delacroix and Kenko as parallels to Kancheli's compositions.

Dennis Russell Davies leads a deeply personal performance well-played by the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, though it is difficult to find an appropriate volume setting to listen to this disc by. One minute it is near silence and the next it is blasting--this says something about the fragmented and rocky terrain which Kancheli's music inhabits. ---Rovi

The music of Soviet Georgia-born composer Giya Kancheli is at once patriotic and pessimistic, and those two traits add up to an elegiac sadness. Profoundly affected by conditions in his homeland, the composer has been living in self-imposed exile in Western Europe for several years. Kancheli has been absent from Georgia, but Georgia has not been absent from Kancheli; almost every major work of his can be heard as a response, direct or indirect, to the adverse economic and sociopolitical conditions that persist in the former Soviet republic.

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... à la Duduki (1995) and Trauerfarbenes Land (1994) both are "major works," and are no exceptions to the above rule. The title of the former work alludes, I believe (ECM's notes are less than clear about this), to a wind instrument played especially by the rural Georgian peoples. Kancheli has filled this 19-minute tone poem with biting color and, typically for him, dramatic dynamic contrasts. Melodically, it owes more to Asia than to Europe, although its opulent melancholy is very Russian.

Trauerfarbenes Land can be translated as "Land that Wears Mourning," or "Country the Color of Sorrow." Over 37 minutes long, it too is characterized by long stretches of slow, spare, and hushed material punctuated by tense outbursts from the full orchestra. The intensity of this music is almost unbearable. It speaks of unrecoverable losses and unforgettable memories, of ephemerality, and of the unforgiving persistence of our pasts. This is one of Kancheli's largest and most moving canvases, and to hear it is to know what it is to be politically disenfranchised.

The latter work is dedicated to Dennis Russell Davies, who leads it and ... à la Duduki on this new ECM recording. Davies, who conducted several prior Kancheli releases on ECM, is unstinting in realizing the music's contrasts and intensity, and the Vienna Radio Symphony throws itself into Kancheli's sound-world. Joseph Schütz is the excellent sound engineer. The only reservation I have is about Wolfgang Sandner's essay, which, in spite of its erudition, says too little about the works and their composer. --- Raymond Tuttle, classical.net

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