

## Reflections on the Suite for Mallet Duo by Daniel Berg

In June 2017 the music score *Suite for Mallet Duo* were published by Edition Svitzer in Copenhagen, Denmark. Enamel painting was made by Bengt Berglund, front cover by Gaia Gomes, the photos by Per Buhre and Harry Friberg and the engraving by Johan Svitzer.

Anders Åstrand, a virtuoso vibraphone player, called me and said:

- Let's make a new recording!
- What pieces should we record?
- Our own, of course!
- But, at the moment I don't have time to write material for a whole new CD.
- Think like this - write a short piece every month, around three minutes, and find inspiration from the month there are.
- Aha...
- Sure you have time to write a three-minute piece a month?
- Yes, you're right...
- In six month we will have twelve new songs if we write one each a month!

The artistic challenge was:

1. What sounds, rhythms, harmonies and instruments are specific for a certain season and/or month?
2. As a composer, how can I write six mallet duos in a way that each piece sounds different from another?

Because it was middle of January and very cold, I started to write a piece with focus on January. What's the sound of a cold winter day with a frozen lake? For movies, composers very often use cello (or double bass) bows on metal instruments like cymbals and tam-tam to vision something cold (or scary). The sound from a cymbal, played by a bow, will produce a noisy screaming sound - very hard to control and with different sounds from time to time.

I wanted a feeling of a calm, poetic and meditative atmosphere. If you hold the pedal down and let the vibraphone ring, all the tones will mix together and create a dreaming sound. If you blend this with a bow on crotales (a metal instrument), I think you come close to a meditative atmosphere. I found the melodic minor scale, with the ascending D# and E# (F#, G#, A, B, C#, D#, E#) perfect to get the melancholic touch. I decided to use only this scale in the whole piece when I choose chords and melodies for *January*.

To get the sound from a frozen lake, I wanted short and dark sounds. A soft mallet on wood blocks and log drums (also by wood) came pretty close to the sound I was searching for, a sound that is reminiscent of when it snaps into the ice.

I think the most difficult thing for a composer, is to write a new piece that will not sound like something you have written before. Therefore I tried to get inspiration from other composer I admire. I choose five composers and a piece from each of them. For every duo I had one specific composer in focus and tried to write in the style of this composer.

*February, another Mallet Dance* got inspiration from Anders Åstrand and his *Mallet Dance*. His dance for vibraphone and marimba is based on a rhythmic pattern in 12/8 played on a couple of harmonies. In *February, another Mallet Dance* the joy of snow is in focus and to use the 6/8 (or 12/8) really enhances the joy.

In *March, end of Winter*, I tried to find the sad feeling when ices are melting and when heavy snow transforms into the rain of grey. Here the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen and his *Tierkreis* was in my mind.

There is probably no other composer than Igor Stravinskij who better interpreted the primal force of spring. In *April* I have borrowed the typical syncopation of eight notes that in my version dances on all the twelve tones.

What can be more beautiful than the sound of two marimbas? Steve Reich has explored this delicate color several times, not least in his *Nagoya Marimbas*. Happiness of the light, the bright green color and the heat we been longing for *Springtime – it's May!*

What can taste better than a nice cigar after an evening with delicious meal and beverage in company with a sunset? Memories from the years gone by, memory of a friend somewhere else who still speaks to me, an euphoric ecstasy with faith for the future... *Night in June* is dedicated to Swedish composer Jan Tolf who was a master of writing fine melodies into a harmonious mix of contemporary music and jazz.