

# Ferruccio Busoni – The Six Sonatinas:

## An Artist's Journey 1909-1920 – his language and his world

Jeni Slotchiver

This is the concluding second Part of the author's in-depth appreciation of these greatly significant piano works. Part I was published in our issue No 1504 July-September 2015.

At summer's end, 1914, Busoni asks for a year's leave of absence from his position as director of the Liceo Musicale in Bologna. He signs a contract for his American tour and remains in Berlin over Christmas, playing a Bach concert to benefit charities. This is the first all-Bach piano recital for the Berlin public, and Dent writes that it is received with "discourteous ingratitude." Busoni outlines his plan for *Dr. Faust*, recording in his diary, "Everything came together like a vision." By Christmastime, the text is complete. With the outbreak of war in 1914 and an uncertain future, Busoni sails to New York with his family on 5 January, 1915. He writes to Egon Petri: "When shall we ever meet again? This state of uncertainty (*Planlosigkeit*), after ten years of deliberate constructive work, at the climax of my vital strength, is the hardest of all blows to bear!" He is battling disillusionment, yet hopes to proceed with his opera *Arlecchino*. Modelled on 16th century puppet plays, the composition is an organic link to *Dr. Faust*. Busoni takes the two librettos with him. His letters describe a growing isolation: "When one is no longer *master of one's own freedom of movement*, life has no further value." He abhors the provincial limitations of American audiences, and expresses fear that the war in Europe will cause cultural destruction. He is consumed by a paralysing anxiety about the future, and this precipitates a desperate emotional state. Busoni writes, "I shall never overcome this criminal amputation on my life." At a time when the composer's attention is tightly focused on the realisation of a masterwork, Busoni is obliged to proceed with the scheduled tour, and in so doing; he nervously anticipates a creative drought. Compounding these difficulties, New York is deluged with celebrated

artists in exile from Europe. Audiences are in thin supply. He writes to Edith Andrae, June 1915, "I didn't dare set to work on the opera... for fear that a false start would destroy my last moral foothold."

Busoni begins an orchestral composition as a warm-up for *Arlecchino*, the *Rondò Arlecchinesco*. He sets down ideas, hoping they might be a useful study, if all else fails, and writes, "If the humour in the *Rondò* manifests itself at all, it will have a heartrending effect." With bold harmonic language, Busoni clearly defines this composition as his last experimental work. The years give way to passionate reflection. The war will change him.

In America, Busoni completes *Sonatina ad usum infantis Madeline M.\* Americanae, pro Clavicimbalo composita*, *Red Indian Diary*, the *Rondò Arlecchinesco*, his editions of Bach's *Well-Tempered Klavier* Book 2, and *Goldberg Variations*.

Each Sonatina has a Latin title and bears a dedication. With *Sonatina ad usum infantis Madeline M.\* Americanae, pro Clavicimbalo composita*, Busoni obscures the dedicatee, omitting her full name. A photograph of Madeline Manheim, dated 1918, was found among his papers in Berlin. She was a friend of Busoni's eldest son, Benvenuto. He had American citizenship, born during one of his father's extended teaching and concert tours. Busoni composes *Sonatina ad usum infantis* in America and perhaps meets her then. The portrait of Madeline Manheim shows a beautiful young woman with a thoughtful expression. The title hints at the Sonatina's encapsulated innocence, and offers an insider's view of the composer's ability to regenerate his youthful enthusiasm. Now, he sees the world as a wide-eyed child, without the Mephistophelean cynic looking over his



shoulder. Mature Busoni compositions mirror the composer's ontological state, as well as his temporal environment. There are no dated sketches or surviving manuscripts. The piece is published in 1916 and performed by Busoni on 6 November, 1917, at Tonhalle in Zurich. *Sonatina ad usum infantis* is probably completed shortly before the composer's *Red Indian Diary*, dated 20 June, 1915.

Busoni references *Sonatina ad usum infantis* as, "A sonatina for a child which itself has the air of a child." Considering the catastrophic times, it is a rite of purification, a cleansing of self-doubt and uncertainty. He introduces a composition with clear and simple melodies, gentle harmony and transparent beauty. This Sonatina is not for a child, but graciously warm, and disarmingly uninhibited. Busoni writes to Edith Andrae in 1916: "My heart... is in a state of adolescence again; shy and full of longing and lacking practical impact."

The subtitle is *pro Clavicimbalo composita* (harpsichord). Busoni plays the piece on piano and the long silky legatos, with sustained pedal harmonies, contradict a harpsichord touch. The writing style points towards the rich warm tone of ▶

the piano, yet the elegant ornamentation is reminiscent of a remote past. By using the term 'harpsichord' the composer designates a youthful piano, constructing a symbolic recapitulation to an earlier period of time, recalling Gregorian chant, and the pure lines of Palestrina. This is Busoni's Gothic harmony, and the language of *Arlecchino* as well as *Sonatina in diem nativitatis Christi* MCMXVII.

The third *Sonatina's* visionary aspects are significant. After 1900, Busoni begins to use a pure form of polyphony ('free polyphony'). He often combines this technique with the development of melodic and constructive materials, forming motifs of usually two or three notes. In his definitive study of Busoni's piano music, the composer-scholar Larry Sitsky traces all musical material used in *Sonatina ad usum infantis* to the opening few bars of the composition. An exceptionally integrated work, motifs are treated to rhythmic variation, augmentation, inversion and other techniques used by great masters. Busoni is cognisant and hopeful for the path of new music, when he writes his treatise on 'Absolute Melody', 1913. Prophetically, this very style becomes widely popular after the Second World War. Busoni describes 'Absolute Melody': "A row of repeated ascending and descending intervals, which are organised and move rhythmically. It contains in itself a latent harmony, reflects a mood of feeling." He further explains that expression does not depend on a text or accompanying voices and declares, "It must be maintained here that melody has expanded continuously, that it has grown in line and capacity for expression and that in the end it must succeed in becoming the most powerful thing in composition." Busoni's discourse on 'Young Classicism', contained in a letter to Paul Bekker, 1920, gives further insights into his crusade for the future of music. Busoni calls for "The definite departure from what is thematic and the return to melody again as the ruler of all voices and all emotions ... and as the bearer of the idea and the begetter of harmony, in short, the most highly developed (not the most complicated) polyphony."

There are five numbered and connected movements: 1. *Molto tranquillo* 2. *Andantino melancolico* 3. *Vivace (alla Marcia)* 4. *Molto tranquillo* 5. *Polonaise*

(*un poco cerimonioso*).

The *Molto tranquillo* and the *Andantino melancolico* pair as prelude and fughetta. The *Vivace (alla Marcia)* has two variations with a brief coda. The fourth movement restates the *Molto tranquillo* theme, ascending towards the luminescent transfiguration of a chorale motif, drawn from the first movement. This brief passage serves as unifying bridge to the elegant and enchanting *Polonaise*.

The third *Sonatina* is born at a time when Busoni attempts to toss off his brooding spirits and re-enter his creative journey with *Dr Faust*. Despite his opera's quasi-autobiographical elements, the composer believes personal hardships could poison an objective perspective. After nine torturous months in America, Busoni returns to Europe and settles in Zurich, where he completes *Arlecchino*, classifying the composition as a "Marionetten Tragödie." Dent writes that the composer feels it is his "most individual and personal work," and describes it as a satire on war and human failings. Reality and illusion fuse. Grim humour combines with fantasy and philosophical paradox, resulting in a labyrinth of meanings and finely interwoven themes.

This is the era of Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, and the toy boxes of Debussy and Fauré. 'Commedia dell' Arte' returns to the stage in the 20th century. Despite the popular tide, Busoni has a long attraction to 16th century puppet plays; he is enthralled with the marionettes' contra-human characteristics.

Contrasting the outward gentle beauty of *Sonatina ad usum infantis*, the fourth *Sonatina* retreats inward. Busoni dedicates *Sonatina in diem nativitatis Christi MCMXVII* (1917) to his son Benvenuto. The composer gives the premier in Zurich on 24 January, 1920. A critical review reads: "Ringing of bells and Christmas atmosphere seen with the eyes and felt with the heart of an artist shaken by the griefs of the world." Busoni is isolated, broken hearted from his exile and wearied by the mounting ravages of war. He is also concerned for Benvenuto, who is called to military service in America. The fourth *Sonatina*, titled and dated 'Christmas 1917', is not a Holiday tribute, it is the composer's plea for peace. Busoni turns away from the world and embarks on an intense period of creativity. This is the first

of four compositions written in Zurich, with *Dr Faust* material.

The *Sonatina in diem nativitatis Christi MCMXVII* is a profound work. The manuscript, a modest eight pages, has enormously condensed emotional material. The entire composition maintains a serene beauty. Fortes are rare, emerging from Busoni's characteristic long lyrical lines, blended arpeggiated strands, and sonorous chorale reverberations. The melody is marked *dolce*. In a gently rocking three meter, the bass is slightly off centre, entering with the melody on the third beat of each measure. Although lyrically *dolce*, the music is not reassuring. An oscillating broken-chord strand rises from the quasi-berceuse accompaniment and begins to sound quietly subversive, implying an underlying menace. A structurally inverted motif from the *Pezzo serioso* of the *Piano Concerto* smoothly punctuates the end of this oscillating figure. First impressions of calm stability give way. Characteristic of a medieval folk song, a contrasting theme enters in intervals of fourths, articulated above *un poco vivace* triplets. This melody reaches a crescendo with four chiming F major chords, adamant and painful. This stagnant chord passage, mirroring Busoni's death motif, fades to a restatement of the opening thematic material. The next passage remembers the veiled world of the *Elegies*. The right hand weaves a Lisztian figured accompaniment, falling and rising above lyrical, *sotto voce* bass octaves. These low melodic lines are prayerful and questioning, while shifting harmonies glaze the transparent atmosphere. The music seems to be moving towards a resolution. The singing octaves crescendo to the opening theme, augmented and passionately restrained. The theme eventually subsides, dissolving into the opening lullaby.

A single line rises out of the lowest tones of the broken-chord accompaniment, floating plaintively, a memorial to the *Sonatina seconda*. This melodic strand is transformed, as if Busoni views it from a great distance, while always carrying it with him. The apparition imparts a feeling of rest and security. A chorale unfolds as an ancient investigation, still and meditative. Low bells toll, accompany the chorale, and contain a latent rhythm, while sounding timeless. A rustic medieval



dance, harmonically monotonous, enters. The dance dissipates into rhythmically augmented basses, marked *ritenendo* and suspended by continuous pedals. The chorale returns in a questioning dialogue with muffled bell tones. The closing section combines the theme in 4-part fugue, and disintegrates within a triplet accompaniment. In the final section, marked *quasi transfigurato*, the theme is resplendent, augmented and stated three times in rapturous bell-like clarity. Treble – tenor – treble, ending on A with ancient open fifths. Bleakness and apprehension give way to hope and firm foundation.

The *Sonatina in diem nativitatis Christi*, reminiscent of late Liszt, illustrates Busoni's ability to convey vastly profound feeling states, with very few gestures. The composer is at his peak, with a magnificently refined technique and crystallised thought process. He creates music of weightlessness, and communicates emotions of unfathomable density.

*Sonatina brevis in Signo Joannis Sebastiani Magni (in freier Nachdichtung von Bach's Kleiner Fantasie und Fuge d-moll)* is found at the end of the seven-volume Bach-Busoni edition, a testament to the singular importance the composition holds for the composer. The Bach editions occupy all of Busoni's adult life and range from visionary recastings of the great original works, to the immeasurable wisdom recorded in his edition of the *Well-Tempered Klavier* Book 2. There are two separate collections of Busoni's Bach editions. In 25 Volumes, the *Klavierwerke* (1894-1923) presents Bach's complete keyboard works. The other collection is a six-volume publication from 1916, and holds Busoni's transcriptions and arrangements. A seventh volume is added to the six-volume set and these are published in 1920. A posthumous eighth (1925) is the second edition of Busoni's *Klavierübung*.

The 1916 and 1920 editions differ only in the addition of the seventh volume, which has all new material. The compositions in Volume 1 and 2, *Bearbeitungen*, are arrangements. Volume 1, *Lehrstücke*, are study pieces, and Volume 2, *Meisterstücke*, contains compositions for concert use. Volume 1 opens with a dedication, *Widmung*. This miniature combines the tones B.A.C.H. with the C major Fugue from Book I of the *Well-*



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*Tempered Klavier*. There are, *eighteen short Preludes* and a *Fughetta* BWV 924-42, a revised version of the *Two-part and Three-part Inventions* from the 1892 publication, *Four Duets* BWV 802-5, and *Prelude, Fugue and Allegro in E flat major* BWV 998. Volume 2 has, the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, Concerto for piano and strings in D minor*, and the *Goldberg Variations*. Volume 3 holds the virtuoso transcriptions of organ works. These are, the *Prelude and Fugue in D major* BWV 532, the 'St. Anne' *Prelude and Triple*

*Fugue in E flat major* BWV 552, the *Toccatas and Fugues in D minor* BWV 565, and *C major* BWV 564, and ten *Choral Preludes*. The *Chaconne for solo violin* is also found in this edition. The transcriptions in Volume 3 date from the 1880s through 1909.

The works in Volume 4 are *Nachdichtungen*, original compositions based on motifs or themes from Bach. These are, *Fantasia nach Johann Sebastian Bach (Alla Memoria di mio Padre Ferdinando Busoni † il 12 Maggio 1909 †)*, and ▶



*Preludio, Fuga e Fuga figurata*, from *An die Jugend*. A realization of the *Capriccio on the Departure of a beloved Brother* BWV 992 bears a dedication to Arthur Schnabel. *Fantasia, Adagio and Fuga in C minor*, and *Fantasia Contrapuntistica (Versio minore and Versio definitivo)* round off this heroic collection. Volume 5, originally published in 1894, is the *Well-Tempered Klavier* Book 1, while Volume 6 is devoted to the *Well-Tempered Klavier* Book 2. Busoni notes: "Bach's 'well-tempered', Part 1 for pianists, Part 2 for

composers: my testament."

Volume 7 is compiled in 1920 and has, three *Toccatas* BWV 914-916, and a critical edition of the *Fantasia and Fugue in A minor* BWV 904, dedicated to Hugo Leichtentritt in appreciation for his 1916 Busoni biography. Here is Busoni's creative grouping of three separate Bach pieces; *Fantasia and Fugue* BWV 905, *Andante* BWV 969, and *Scherzo* BWV 844. There follows, a transcription for cello and piano of the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* (1917), *Improvisation for two*

*Pianos on 'Wie wohl ist mir'*, and new versions of the puzzle canons from *Musical Offering*. The final work is *Sonatina in Signo Joannis Sebastiani Magni*, a *Nachdichtung* of the little *Fantasy and Fugue* BWV 905, found earlier in this same volume in its original form. Just as *Widmung* dedicates the seven volumes, the fifth *Sonatina* is Busoni's signature on his completed effort.

Throughout his life, Busoni returns to Bach's works for inspiration and re-discovery, believing the music is both essential and potential. As a child, Bach is his favourite composer, and this is where he learns the art of structure and counterpoint. From earliest youth, Busoni was a natural, intuitive contrapuntist; he would joyfully combine unrelated themes to a victorious solution. By age ten, he had already developed prodigious skill improvising polyphonically.

The prophetic original compositions based on Bach themes and fragments, known as *Nachdichtungen*, stand as monument to a lifetime of study. *Nachdichtungen* expose the thinking process and colossal imagination behind many of Busoni's compositions, and confirm his creative perspective as intuitive, rather than intellectual. These structural masterpieces embody a free, visionary aesthetic, grounded in the composer's artistic ideals and his philosophical concept of the 'omnipresence of Time'. For Busoni, the past and future are one, and in the *Nachdichtungen*, they are inseparable. Busoni looks back for structure and counterpoint. He looks to the future, and frees polyphony from strict control, elevating it, both melodically and constructively, above harmony. The freed polyphony and the constructive adventures produce a new, fluid harmony.

The *Fantasia, Fugue, Andante* and *Scherzo*, in Busoni's seventh volume of the 1920 Bach editions, constitutes a synthetic grouping of Bach's compositions. Busoni feels they are related by thematic material and key structures, and encourages their unity as an effective concert piece. In this presentation, Busoni comments on the *Fugue*: "The counter-subject appears as a fragment of an obvious canonical leading which has not been developed." He suggests an appropriate realization, and in the *Sonatina brevis*, the *Fantasia and Fugue* are eloquently combined with unrestricted



use of his proposed solution.

*Sonatina brevis in Signo Joannis Sebastiani Magni*, composed in August 1918, is dedicated to Philipp Jarnach. A series of musical signatures are combined in a short, 'brevis', composition. The score consists of five printed pages. The music is rich in material, colour, texture and design, and there is a transparency in the natural improvisatory character of the piece. One thought flows, and binds into another, a continuous organic improvisation. The *Sonatina brevis* is a meditation on the future of 20th century polyphony.

Marked *Andante, espressivo e Sostenuto*, a canonic chain of sustained falling sevenths opens the *Sonatina brevis*. A common Bach figure (melody extracted from a series of diminished seventh chords), these sevenths are also one of Busoni's signatures, his Merlin motif. The sevenths serve as structural material for the 'Students' Theme', and announce the arrival of Megaeros, the fifth spirit of hell, in *Dr. Faust*. In *Sonatina brevis*, the sevenths are wrapped around a three-note motif. This three-note motif is found in many Busoni compositions, and it is one of Bach's signatures as well. These notes are a transposition of the first three notes of the second *Kyrie* from Bach's *B Minor Mass*, a work recognised for its dualistic nature. Another provocative characteristic of the *Mass*, as it relates to *Sonatina brevis*, is the transcription-transformation aspect. Albert Schweitzer lists six sections of the *B minor Mass* as 'rearrangements', and describes them as, "Not mere transfers...it is more correct to speak of their being suggested by the original than borrowed from it." Schweitzer's observation applies to Busoni's *Nachdichtungen* as well. The sevenths and the three-note motif serve as structurally unifying elements in various sections of *Sonatina brevis*. They symbolically join the musical souls of Bach and Busoni.

The Fugue subject enters in the second section of the composition, *Poco più mosso, ma tranquillo*. Natural extensions of the subject's melodic material produce adventurous harmony, the result of the vertical realisation of polyphonic development. The falling sevenths return and bridge the third section, *Tema dell' Andante*. Highly developed counterpoint blends all elements: the *Fugue* subject, the three-note motif of the *Andante*, the

falling sevenths. The Fugue subject becomes a *cantus firmus*, disguised among 16th-note accompanying figures.

In the closing section, the falling seventh motif inverts, rising purposefully. In this form, the motto releases its darkness, and speculates the reversal of fortune. As with *Sonatina in diem Nativitatis*, a coda announces a benevolent transfiguration. These final bars are closely tied to *Vorspiel II, Dr. Faust* (Adagio Theme). Expectations of a tranquil ending fail, when a cadence breaks off without resolution. The sevenths fall, and *Sonatina brevis* ends ambiguously, in an unstable A major.

The final conclusions of peace are made in the spring of 1919, and Busoni is able to travel once more. The Zurich years allow the composer an intense period of productivity, and although comfortably settled, he cannot plan for the future. Dent speaks of Busoni's growing isolation and oppressive loneliness. He is cut off from his great cosmopolitan world. He misses his friends and students, he is lost without his beloved library, and he longs for provocative artistic stimulation. Concerned that the majority of life is already behind him, Busoni experiences a mounting anxiety, his depression deepens. He writes to Isidor Phillip, "For four years I have lived in a state of inward hostility towards this remote world, from which I have shut myself off. While judging it to have become uncivilised, I have perhaps become uncivilised myself. On the other hand I think that my art has become more subtle, and that it expresses all that remains 'good' within me." He begins to think of his future, "Zurich is exhausted, and now that peace is concluded...I see that it is time for me to make an end of its limitations." He gives a series of five concerts in Zurich and makes plans for appearances in Paris and London.

Busoni writes to Phillip Jarnach from Paris, 10 March, 1920, "After the sanatorium existence of Zurich, Paris has a liberating effect. It is like a homecoming for me to find life on the grand scale again." He is renewed in this vibrant city, where he has always enjoyed a certain

freedom. He observes that Parisians do not judge a person according to their dress, personal wealth, or private companionship. Nine solo and orchestral concerts are sold out: "I shall never forget it. Not as a virtuoso but as a human being, I sensed this tremendous devotion from a public that scarcely knew me, in a spoilt and hardened capital city, as something quite phenomenal...the applause continued all evening." On 25 March, He describes the audience for his compositions' concert as, "very concentrated then increasingly enthusiastic...with the finest understanding and greatest warmth...one of the most wonderful evenings of my life...the end of the concert was indescribable, people stood up and shouted...the orchestra performed miracles."

While in Paris, Busoni finds many ways to occupy himself, including composition. He writes to Phillip Jarnach, 10 March, "As a gesture of thanks to my host I am trying to construct a brief *Carmen* fantasy, an interesting pastime." The overwhelming response of the Parisians leaves him "very inspired and full of ideas." With the city at his feet, Busoni completes his sixth *Sonatina* on 22 March, 1920. He writes, "The little *Carmen* fantasy is finished – It is 12 pages long, with five themes and four short sections."

The dedication to *Kammer-Fantasie über Bizet's Carmen (Sonatina super Carmen)* reads *En souvenir d'estime et de reconnaissance, à Monsieur Tauber, Paris, Mars 1920*. Busoni met Leonhard Tauber in Klagenfurt. Tauber was owner of an inn and frequently heard the young Busoni play. He becomes a successful hotelier, has many musician friends, and owns the luxurious Hotel Foyôt in Paris where the Busonis often stay. Their letters are evidence of their close friendship, and on the composer's final visit to Paris, in

1923, he dedicates his 'study for the Steinway piano with the third pedal' to Tauber.

*Sonatina super Carmen* is written while Busoni is staying at Tauber's home, during his series of orchestral and solo recitals. Busoni gives the first performance at Wigmore Hall in London, on 22 June, 1920.

Busoni plans *Carmen* as early as 1917. He ▶

...On the other hand I think that my art has become more subtle, and that it expresses all that remains 'good'

loves Bizet's French opera more than any contemporaneous Italian opera. In his essay titled, 'Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Liszt's *Don Juan Fantasy*', he proposes: "If it were a question of the paraphrase of *Carmen*, the transcriber, following Liszt's example, would begin with the suggestive scene in the marketplace in Act IV, and in the introduction as contrast to this, would join the pathetic *Carmen* theme built on the gypsy scale. The middle section would be composed of the Habañera (followed by variations), the finale, the bull-ring music." The final version is larger than the one imagined in his essay. Busoni understands that the Opera Paraphrase in Liszt's hands is more than a presentation of selected melodies for virtuoso display. The visionary aspects of Liszt's skills transform the Opera Paraphrase. Liszt's paraphrases are dramas in condensed settings, they project the emotions of the actual staged event, and bring a story to life.

Busoni often composes lighter 'antidotes' to serious works in an effort to achieve a creative equilibrium. In 1920, he wrote the orchestral *Tanzwalzer* (inspired by Johann Strauss) 'for fun', as an antidote to the powerful *Toccata* for piano. Music from both the *Toccata* and the *Tanzwalzer* contain potent *Dr Faust* material and appear in the opera. Although inspired by other composers' ideas, *Carmen* and *Tanzwalzer* are completely original in Busoni's formats: These 'light' compositions are shadowed, sometimes obliquely, other times intrinsically. The music's sinister whispers escape the casual listener.

*Kammer-Fantasie über Bizet's Carmen* (*Sonatina super Carmen*) opens in A major, inextricably linking itself to *Sonatina brevis*. For Busoni, the keys of A and C are



significant. The final sustained tones of *Sonatina brevis* melt into silence, easily embracing the opening pizzicato thirds of *Sonatina super Carmen*. Fate motifs play a major role in both compositions, and the two *Sonatinas* also pair for their interchangeable duality, both internal to themselves, and in relation to each other. The *Sonatina brevis* is Bach, encapsulating many of Busoni's strong Germanic traits, yet it is lyrically flowing, light, and flexible. The *Sonatina super Carmen*, with Liszt as creative source, celebrates Busoni's Mediterranean lyricism. At the same time, the sixth *Sonatina* is dark, with clearly ordered sections. Busoni said, "Truly Bach is the Alpha of pianoforte composition and Liszt the Omega."

Busoni did not intend *Carmen* for virtuoso exhibitionism, although the writing is extravagantly demanding. Edward J. Dent emphasises that, Busoni would never draw attention to difficult, extraneous passages in order to display his colossal technique. He was a master of melody, subjugating surrounding voices to an endless spectrum of imaginative colors.

The bright opening material, *Allegro deciso*, comes from the chorus of Act IV. Staccato octaves and double-thirds flutter in canonic variations. The second section, *Andantino con amore*, is a free arrangement of José's *Flower Song* from Act II scene 2. The melody is in the tenor voice, while the right and left hands spin darkly glittering ornamental arpeggios. The *Carmen* theme enters at the end of this section with a subtle, gloomy presence, a fateful premonition. This leads to the third section, where the Habanera from Act I is treated to a series of variations. Any expectation of a light operatic fantasy ends here. The variations, one marked *fantastico*, flicker with malice, and what appears in the opera as a lusty celebration of life, here, has the essence of a gleeful dance of death. The material of the fourth section is taken from the Prelude to Act 1. The familiar tune becomes mocking and increasingly malignant. The fifth section is marked *Andante visionario*. The fate theme, from the end of the second section, now levitates above the descending chromatic scale of the Habanera,

My heart is bursting,  
I leave my sons  
behind, I am going  
– at 54 – into the  
unknown.

while somber deep bells toll the spectral fragments of a dissipated dance rhythm.

*Carmen* and Busoni exemplify Jung's 'shadow' to the object of society. Both are liberated outsiders. *Carmen's*

uninhibited nature and unrestrained sensuality have portentous implications, making the character a symbolic companion to artists and philosophers in their pursuit of an anti-pragmatic ideal.

In 1947 Kaikhosru Sorabji comments on Busoni's *Sonatina super Carmen*: "I feel the metapsychic element to be present to a degree and intensity unparalleled in music... The gay and occasionally rather trivial Bizet tunes become indescribably 'charged' and even sinister, undergoing a sort of dissolution and transformation that is... fascinating and haunting to the mind of the suitably 'attuned listener,' so that at the end of the process one almost says to oneself – such is the impression of the ineluctable and immense power behind the whole business – this is a psychical invasion in musical terms."

With *Sonatina super Carmen*, Busoni demonstrates his characteristic ability to rejuvenate his spirits. He shakes off the horror of war years and the desolation of exile, he momentarily releases himself from the intense journey with his master work, *Dr. Faust*, and he sets aside his most pressing concern: For over a year, Busoni is unable to decide where the next chapter of life will take him. He ends his letter to Phillip Jarnach, " 'Home'? - the word invokes all the problems awaiting me; and this time I shall ignore them." Busoni is inundated with offers, and there are many cities he loves. His torturous indecision ends when he accepts an appointment from the Prussian Ministry of Education. He will return to Berlin and direct a class for advanced composition at the State Academy of Arts and Sciences. He writes to Isidor Phillip from Zurich, 7 September, 1920, "My heart is bursting, I leave my sons behind, I am going - at 54 – into the unknown." ■

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