

Note-Worthy Music Stamps, Part 2

By Ethel Bloesch

The previous article in this series described the final issues for the 1991 Mozart anniversary and gave supplemental information on stamps described in Jacques Posell's "Musical Notations on Stamps: Part 18". Most of the stamps described below were issued in 1992. The next article will include 1993 offerings. First, a bibliographic note is in order. Specific reference sources are given at the end of each entry, when appropriate. In addition, I should mention one general reference source that I find indispensable - the 20-volume *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Macmillan, 1980).

CHILE

Scott 1027

Michel 1532

Two stamps and a uniting souvenir sheet, issued November 12, 1992 to honor the Chilean pianist Claudio Arrau. Arrau, one of the great pianists of the 20th century, died June 9, 1991 at the age of 88. In a career that spanned eight decades, Arrau was noted for his aristocratic approach to the great piano works of the 19th century, particularly those of Liszt and Beethoven. His affinity for Liszt was natural - as a conservatory student in Berlin he had been a pupil of Martin Krause, one of Liszt's last students. Arrau played his first Beethoven cycle (the five concertos as well as the 32 sonatas) in a Mexico City series in 1938 and repeated the cycle around the world several times over the next decades. Born in a town in central Chile in 1903, Arrau showed his musical abilities early. He gave his first public performance - Mozart, Beethoven and Chopin - when he was five years old. Of his early years, Arrau once said: "All I wanted was music. I was even fed at the piano. Otherwise, it seems, I wouldn't eat. I used to play with my mouth open, and my mother put food in it." At age nine the Chilean Congress gave him a scholarship to study at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin; he later taught there for 16 years. He fled Berlin in 1940 and returned to Chile, where he lived briefly, founding a piano school in Santiago. He settled in New York, concertizing world-wide until his wife died in 1989. The next year he moved to Munich, where he was living at the time of his death.

The first of the two stamps depicts Arrau as a little boy studying a score, perhaps Mozart's *Fantasia in C Minor for piano*, K475. The notes themselves are almost indistinct, but nearby is a music cover with the words "Fantasie" and "W.A. Mozart". The second stamp shows the mature Arrau playing the piano.

(Obituary by Allan Kozinn in *The New York Times*, June 10, 1991)



FINLAND

Scott 895a

Michel 1186

Booklet pane of six stamps, issued June 8, 1992, featuring six influential Finnish women. The sixth stamp honors Kreetta Haapsalo (1813-1893), Finnish kantele player, singer of folk ballads, and composer. The kantele, an ancient folk instrument, is described in Finnish epic poetry as having supernatural powers. It is a zither-type instrument played by plucking its strings (from 5 to 38 in number). Kreetta Haapsalo was famous for her sincere interpretation of Finnish folksongs, singing and accompanying herself on the kantele. She supported her family (tenant farmer husband and 11 children) by performing, first in her Ostrobothian homeland and later on tours to Helsinki, Stockholm, and St. Petersburg. One Finnish newspaper in the 1870s wrote: "Among the best entertainments in the market was Kreetta Haapsalo's playing. The national sound of the kantele and Kreetta's simple Finnish songs made hearts throb with love to the father-land."

The stamp contains her portrait, a line drawing of her playing the kantele, and several bars of music. The music is the opening of "Mun kanteleeni kauneimmin," her best known melody, based on a Swedish ballad brought to Finland by Swedish speaking firms.

(Aaron L. Cohen, *International Encyclopedia of Women Composers*, New York, Books & Music, Inc., 1987, and information in a letter to Chuichi Maeda from the Finnish Philatelic Centre)



GERMANY

Scott 1764

Michel 1637

Stamp issued October 15, 1992 for the 50th anniversary of the death of Hugo Distler (1908-1942), a German composer and organist. Distler studied at the Leipzig Conservatory. He was greatly influenced by the Protestant chorale and by church music of the 16th and 17th centuries, particularly the works of Heinrich Schütz. While organist at Lübeck, he composed motets and other sacred music, much of which was for children's voices. In the 1930s Distler experienced increased hostility from the Nazis because of his affiliation with the German Church, first in Berlin and later in Stuttgart, where he was a professor of music at the Hochschule für Musik. Nevertheless, he achieved great public success in 1939 when his choir gave the premiere of sections of his Mörike-Chorliederbuch at the Graz Festival. In 1940 he returned to Berlin, where he taught composition, organ, and choral conducting at the Hochschule für Musik. Continued hostility of the authorities and the constant threat of military service caused a deep depression, leading him to end his life on All Saints' Day (November 1), 1942. In the words of his biographer, Larry Palmer, "Distler's firm belief in the human voice as the ideal expressive medium, his novel and complex rhythmic demands on choirs, his utilization of the full range of the voices are all facets of his choral composition that have served as bases for the composers who have come after him." The stamp for Distler features the first page of his autograph score of "Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ", a chorale setting for three treble voices. This same musical setting appears in Distler's chorale collection, *Der Jahrkreis, op. 5*, but with different words - the more familiar text, "Erschienen ist der herrlich Tag", an Easter hymn. Both the tune and the "Erschienen" text are by Nikolaus Hermann and first appeared in a hymnal of 1560. The text on the stamp, "Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ" is one of seven versions of this hymn listed in Fischer's *Kirchenlieder-Lexikon*. This particular version is an Easter hymn, written by Thomas Hartmann and first published in 1604. It is always sung with the Hermann melody.

Albert F. W. Fischer, *Kirchenlieder-Lexikon* (Gotha, 1878-79); Larry Palmer, *Hugo Distler and His Church Music* (Concordia, 1967); and German postal bulletin, provided by Chuichi Maeda.



KOREA, REPUBLIC OF

Scott 1531

Michel 1711

Music Series VIII, issued July 13, 1992. The underlying theme for this set, according to the designer, is to symbolize the hope for unification of the two Koreas. The first stamp pictures the song "Guriun-Keumkangsan" (Longing for the Mt. Keumkang), composed by Choi Young-Shurp to words by the poet Han Sang-Ok. Written in 1962 and incorporated into a cantata of nine songs on the motherland, the song has become very popular as an expression of the national aspiration for unification.

(Article by Kim Im-Yong, the stamp designer, provided by Chuichi Maeda)



KOREA, REPUBLIC OF

Scott 1532

Michel 1712

Music Series VIII, issued July 13, 1992. The underlying theme for this set, according to the designer, is to symbolize the hope for unification of the two Koreas. The second stamp pictures the song "Guinae" (A Swing), composed by Geum Su-Hyeon to words by Kim Mal-Bong. The swing is enjoyed in Korea as traditional folklore, and this song has become popular in the daily life of people. The designer ties the two stamps together by noting that they "describe the idea that a woman aspires after the unification looking at Mt Keumkang an, having a swing in the blue sky, symbolizing our wish for the one united Korea."

(Article by Kim Im-Yong, the stamp designer, provided by Chuichi Maeda)



NIUAFO'OU

Scott 150

Michel 229-230

Se-tenant strip of three stamps, issued July 4, 1992, as part of a joint issue with Tonga, commemorating the Silver Jubilee of the Coronation of His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. The National Anthem of Tonga appears on two of the stamps, with English words and a portrait of the King and with Tongan words and a group of singers. The middle stamp in the strip contains the words of the Coronation Prayer. Karl Gustavus Schmitt (1834-1900) composed the music of the National Anthem, and Prince Uelingatoni Ngu Tupoumalohi (1854-1885) wrote the words. The English version begins: "Oh, Almighty God above. Thou art our Lord and sure defense." The song has been in use since 1874, and possibly longer. The spelling of the King's name on the stamp (Taufa'ahau) is at variance with the spelling on the postal bulletin (Taufa'ahau). Born on July 4, 1918, His Majesty was crowned King of Tonga on his 49th birthday. He holds two degrees from the University of Sydney and has broad interests, ranging from poetry and music to soccer.

(Bulletin from the Philatelic Bureau of the Kingdom of Tonga, provided by Chuichi Maeda)



PALAU

Scott 298

Michel 501-505

Se-tenant strip of five stamps and sheet, issued for Christmas 1991. The bottom margin contains the music for the beloved Austrian Christmas carol "Stille Nacht" (Silent Night), composed by Franz Gruber to words by Josef Mohr. The stamps illustrate the words, phrase by phrase. Palau is the fifth country to make philatelic use of this popular carol. The music appeared previously on issues by Nicaragua (1975), St. Vincent (1979), Austria (1987), and Gibraltar (1991).



UKRAINE

Scott 102

Michel 73

Stamp issued March 22, 1992 for the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mykola Vytal'yevych Lysenko (1842-1912). Described on the stamp as founder of Ukrainian classical music, Lysenko was a composer, pianist, conductor, and ethnomusicologist. After graduating from the University of Kiev, Lysenko studied at conservatories in Leipzig and later in St. Petersburg, where he took orchestration lessons from Rimsky-Korsakov. He devoted much effort to collecting and arranging Ukrainian folk songs, realizing that he could best express his political ideals through the folk music of his country and through settings of Ukrainian poets. He wrote over twenty stage works, including the epic opera *Taras Bul'ba*. His refusal to allow a Russian translation of the libretto to *Taras Bul'ba* probably cost him the chance of having the opera performed in Moscow in his lifetime. His death in 1912 caused an outburst of national grief. It is natural, therefore, that Lysenko was chosen to be honored on one of the first stamps issued by the Ukraine after the breakup of the Soviet Union on December 26, 1991. The stamp shows a portrait of the composer and the opening theme from his opera *Taras Bul'ba*. (*Biographical Dictionary of Russian/Soviet Composers*, Greenwood Press, 1989)



VENEZUELA

Scott 1446

Michel 2664

Se-tenant strip of five stamps, issued July 4, 1991 for the 50th anniversary of the Venezuelan / American Center for Cultural Information. The Center, founded in 1941 and located in Caracas, is responsible for promoting cultural exchanges between the two countries, particularly in the performing arts. One of the five stamps pictures Caroline Lloyd (1924-1980), an American composer and musical director of the Center from 1955 to 1968. Born in Uniontown, Alabama, Caroline Parkhurst Lloyd studied music at the University of New Mexico, Eastman, and Columbia University. Her compositions were inspired by the themes of Venezuela and other Latin American countries. Her most notable work is the opera *Doña Bárbara*, based on a novel by Rómulo Gallegos, a famous writer and onetime president of Venezuela. The opera was performed eight times in Caracas in 1967 to commemorate the city's 400th anniversary. She wrote one other opera, *Doña Rosita la Soltera*, as well as works for solo voice, chorus, keyboard, and string quartet. The music on the stamp seems to be a manuscript score for voice and piano. The words "Doña Bárbara" appear at the top, suggesting that the music might be an excerpt from Lloyd's opera of that name.

(*International Encyclopedia of Women Composers* and postal bulletin)

